

"FORMS IN CONFLICT": Dramatic Complete Cliff House
School Story Inside

The Schoolgirl

2nd

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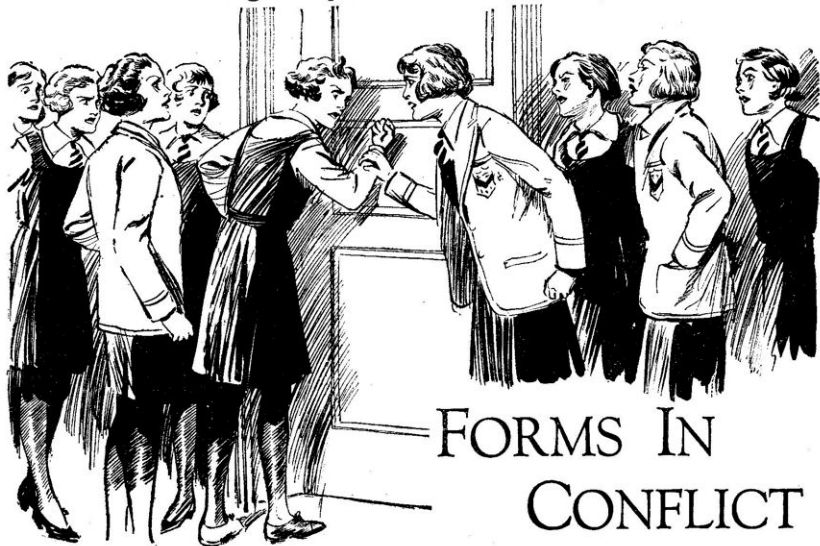
Every
Saturday
INCORPORATING
"SCHOOLDAYS"



**BABS'
THRILLING
"GATE-CRASH"!**

A dramatic moment in this week's exciting long complete Cliff House School story—"Forms in Conflict"

A NEW SERIES: Barbara Redfern & Co. Feature in This Grand Long Complete Cliff House Story



FORMS IN CONFLICT

A Friend in Distress

"ANY signs of the bunnies, Babs?"
 "Can't see them, Clara!"
 And Barbara Redfern chuckled a little breathlessly, waiting for Tomboy Clara Trevlyn to join her.

Very trim and attractive the two chums looked, in pale blue running shorts and white woollen polo jumpers. Faces glowing, eyes sparkling, they stood by a stile, eagerly looking across the big green field which stretched before them.

"We mustn't let the bunnies beat us, Babs," said Clara.

"Perish the thought!" agreed Babs. Let it be said that the "bunnies" Clara so blithely referred to were not rabbits, but hares; not four-legged hares, but two-legged hares. For the chums of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School were enjoying a paper-chase across the Kent countryside on this crisp, sunny afternoon.

Janet Jordan and Jemima Carstairs, the two hares, had certainly succeeded in leading the hounds a merry dance, and giving them the slip.

But the hounds—Barbara Redfern, Clara Trevlyn, Mabel Lynn, and Leila Carroll—were still hot on the trail.

"Which way have they gone, Babs?" called out Mabel. She came running up, her glorious golden curls bobbing as she ran. Beside her was Leila, Eton-cropped hair as immaculate as always.

"They can't be far ahead," Babs said, speaking to the party in general, and then broke off as a shout came from Mabel.

"Wait a moment!" she cried. "Come and have a look at this!"

Mabs was staring at a large poster which was stuck on a big board and

fastened with iron bands to the trunk of a tree beside the stile.

Clara began to trot down the lane. "Haven't time," the Tomboy shouted back over her shoulder. "Come on, old thing, or we'll never catch up with Janet and Jimmy."

But Mabs was obviously very interested in the poster. She still stood staring up at it, reading it eagerly.

"What's it about?" asked Babs.

"The Courtfield Pageant!"
 "Oh!" Babs herself sounded interested now, and she could understand why her golden-haired chum was attracted.

HOW the Fourth and the Fifth Forms at Cliff House School are brought into conflict, and how this unexpected rivalry threatens to handicap Babs' determined efforts to help Avril Rayner is told in these exciting chapters by

HILDA RICHARDS

Anything connected with plays, concerts, and pageants interested Mabel Lynn, who was the leading light in the Cliff House Junior Dramatic Society.

And everybody was talking about the forthcoming Courtfield Pageant. It was an event of great importance in the civic affairs of Courtfield, that busy, populous town situated only a few miles from Cliff House School.

The pageant, indeed, was quite famous in its way, and attracted visi-

tors to Courtfield from all over Kent. It was not an annual event, being held only once in every twenty-five years.

But on pageant day Courtfield went gay, and preparations for the procession, the dancing, the fireworks, and many other attractions were already well in hand, though the pageant was not due to take place until Saturday week.

They all gathered round the trunk of the tree, gazing eagerly at the poster.

To Celebrate the Granting of a Charter to the Town of Courtfield by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth,

THE HISTORIC COURTFIELD PAGEANT

will be held on Saturday, April 4th. The Programme will be as follows:

A GRAND PROCESSION

With Tableaux showing the Growth of the Town of Courtfield Through the Ages.

(Julius Braggott, Esq., has kindly offered to entertain the performers in the grounds of Braggott Manor at the conclusion of the procession.)

A MASKED BALL

at the Town Hall, commencing 8 p.m. (Julius Braggott, Esq., has kindly consented to be present to distribute magnificent prizes, donated by himself, for the most original Fancy Dress Costumes.)

FIREWORKS DISPLAY

and many other novelties.

Mabs turned away from the poster and regarded her chums with shining eyes.

"I wonder if Cliff House will be invited to take part in the procession?" she asked eagerly.

"We ought to be," said Babs. "After all, Cliff House is one of the oldest and most historic places in the county. I think it'll be an awful slight on the school if we aren't represented."

"I'll say!" agreed Leila Carroll.

There was a grunt from Tomboy Clara. She had been eyeing the poster with a frown.

"Who the dickens is this Julius Braggott person?" she asked. "He seems to be having a lot to do with the pageant—and wants everybody to know it."

That was the impression gained by the other girls, but it was like blunt, plain-speaking Clara to put her thoughts into words. Babs' blue eyes clouded.

"Daddy knows Mr. Braggott—they've done business together," she said. "He's very, very wealthy, but a hard business man. Daddy didn't like him much."

"I'm not surprised," retorted Clara. "I haven't met him, and I don't want to, but from that poster he strikes me as being a man with an exaggerated idea of his own importance. Conceited, in other words!" she added bluntly.

Babs nodded. That was just how her father had described Mr. Julius Braggott. Only just recently had he taken up residence in the district, having bought a huge estate on the outskirts of Courtfield. A millionaire, a man of big influence, it was very evident that he wanted everybody to know of the part he was taking in the forthcoming pageant.

Clara jumped down from the grassy bank on which she had been standing to read the poster.

"Come on, you old cripples!" she exclaimed impatiently. "I've wasted enough time already. We'll never catch up with the hares now."

But Clara was determined to have a good shot at doing so, and off down the lane she went, swiftly and gracefully like the born athlete she was.

Babs, Mabs, and Leila followed close on her heels.

Down the lane sped the Cliff House chums, Clara and Babs in the lead now, running side by side, smiling, carefree, and happy.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Clara suddenly. "Where's the giddy trail—jiggered if they haven't cut across fields again!"

Just in time she saw that the hares had turned left into a large meadow. But Babs frowned a little anxiously as she noticed that two lines of barbed wire encircled the field.

"Oh, the duffers!" she exclaimed. "This is private property—it's part of the Braggott estate. Primly is awful strict about Cliff House girls trespassing—"

"Can't help that!" grinned Clara, already diving between the lines of barbed wire. "The hares went this way, and the jolly old hounds are following! Mind your jumper, Babs—don't know why people have to barricade their land with this beastly stuff!"

With a shrug, Babs followed, and held up the tongue of wire while Mabs and Leila crawled through. Then on they went again, across the meadow, which led into a wood.

The deeper they penetrated into the Braggott estate the more worried Babs became. She was surprised that Janet and Jimmie should have chosen this route—quite obviously they had not realised where they were going. The Fourth Form captain had heard one or two unpleasant stories about Mr. Brag-

gott, and she had no wish to cause trouble by trespassing on the millionaire's property.

Clara, impulsive and less thoughtful than Babs, had no such qualms, however. She rushed on, running all out now in an endeavour to overtake the hares, and hardly noticed the imposing Georgian mansion which loomed up beyond the woods on the right.

Babs looked about her anxiously. Drive very far away was the tree-lined road which led from the Manor to the picturesque, ivy-covered lodge-keeper's cottage.

She saw a figure walking down the drive, saw another figure standing by the big bronze gates which led into the road. That must be the lodge-keeper, and he seemed to be staring in the direction of the running girls.

Now Janet and Jimmie were scrambling through a hedge. They had lost time in looking for a convenient gap, and Babs & Co. were closing on their heels swiftly, running all out.

Clara was grinning excitedly. "Up the hounds, and at 'em!" she cried.

Regardless of torn shorts and jumper, the sports captain plunged through the hedge and raced after Janet and Jimmy, who were now sprinting down the road towards Friardale.

After they tore the hounds. They had to pass the lodge-keeper's cottage, and Babs cast an anxious glance in the direction of the grizzled old keeper, who was even then in the act of opening a small side gate.

The figure which Babs had seen walking down the drive passed out through the gateway. It was the figure of a tall, slim girl. With stumbling steps she walked out into the roadway, eyes to the ground, not looking where she was going.

And then Babs, staring curiously at the girl, pulled up with a sudden jerk. Instant recognition flashed into her blue eyes.

"Why, it's Avril!" she exclaimed breathlessly, and smiled with pleasure at this unexpected meeting of an old friend.

For Avril Rayner was an old friend. Hearing her name spoken, she looked up with a start. She saw Babs, but for the moment did not seem to recognise her. Perhaps it was because of the tears which were streaming down her pale cheeks.

Instantly the joy died out of Babs' blue eyes. Amazingly she stared at this distressed girl, who was the daughter of the housekeeper employed by Mr. and Mrs. Redfern, at their home, Holly Hall, in Hampshire.

"Avril!" exclaimed Babs again, full of concern now. "Avril, whatever is the matter?"

"It's—it's—my 'Barbara'!" Hastily Avril Rayner dabbed a small handkerchief to her eyes and tried to stem the flow of tears. "Barbara, something terrible has happened!"

"Not bad news from your mother?" Swiftly Babs tried to recall if, in the last letter from her own mother, Mrs. Redfern had mentioned anything about the housekeeper being unwell.

"No, no! It's nothing to do with mother!" Avril was very agitated, very distressed. "She mustn't know about—about this, Barbara. And what will Mr. Redfern think when he hears—Oh, Barbara!" And again the tears began to course down Avril's cheeks.

Anxious and puzzled, Babs regarded the weeping girl. Out of the corner of her eye she was aware that Clara and Leila had gone rushing on in pursuit of Janet and Jimmie. Mabs, faithful

lieutenant and study-mate that she was, had halted some yards on, waiting for her chum.

"Avril," said Babs tenderly, "don't tell me if you'd rather not, but you know I'm your friend, don't you? And perhaps I can help you, if it's something to do with daddy?"

Tearfully Avril looked at the Cliff House junior. She was some years older than Babs, but, looking at them, one might have thought it was the reverse.

Avril was taller, yet at a glance it could be seen that she had not the strength, mental or physical, of the glowingly healthy Babs. There was a pathetic droop about her shoulders, a lack-lustre look in her brimming eyes. She had not the strong characteristics of Babs.

Never, as long as Babs had known her, had Avril been assertive; always she had been content to allow someone else to take the lead.

For these reasons, perhaps, Babs, in spite of being the younger, had always taken a sort of protective interest in Avril when they were together. She did so quite unconsciously, and Avril, though sensing it, had never resented it, had rather wanted it.

"I know you're my friend, Barbara," whispered Avril, dabbing at her eyes again. "But you can't help me—no one can help me. At least, Miss Pearl can, but she won't!"

Babs frowned. "Miss Pearl? Do you mean Mr. Braggott's daughter? But what's she got to do with your troubles, Avril? Won't you please tell me!"

For a moment longer Avril hesitated, and then, in a torrent of words, she poured out her pathetic story.

"Barbara, you—you know your father got me a position as junior secretary with Mr. Braggott?"

Babs nodded. Yes, Mr. Redfern had done that a few weeks ago, when he had been having business dealings with the millionaire. Babs' father, knowing that Avril had not the constitution for strenuous office work, and hearing that Mr. Braggott required a junior secretary, had recommended his housekeeper's daughter for the position.

"Well, I was very happy up at the Manor, although the work was hard and Mr. Braggott was inclined to be a bit of a bully," went on Avril. "Then Miss Pearl, his daughter, came home from an art school in Paris. Oh, she was a beast, Barbara! She made my life a torment, treated me as if I was her servant, and turned Mr. Braggott against me. And then—then—Avril's voice faltered. "Then Mr. Braggott's gold wrist-watch disappeared."

Babs uttered a horrified gasp. She could guess what was coming now.

"I knew Miss Pearl had taken it," continued Avril, "but she told her father that I was the thief. He was very angry. He bullied and raved at me. I told him the truth, but Miss Pearl denied it, of course. I tried to make him believe me, and in his fury he—he struck me! And then—then he said I was discharged without a reference, and threatened to call in the police if I didn't leave the Manor at once!"

Babs felt her face flush with anger. She did not need telling that Avril was speaking the truth. Whatever her weaknesses, Avril was not a thief. And she had been accused of stealing a gold wrist-watch; Mr. Braggott had struck her, like the bully he was!

"Oh, the brute—the brute!" Babs exclaimed passionately. "But he shall know the truth, Avril! I'll see this Mr. Ballybragg Braggott myself, and then—"

"And then what?" Suddenly the

harsh voice broke in on Babs' words. "I'll have you know, young lady, that I do not like children calling me names!"

Babs spun round, biting her lip. Striding towards her was a short, stout man, whom she knew must be Mr. Julius Braggott.

By his side, a savage glint in its eyes, padded a large, black Alsatian dog.

And, quite obviously, the millionaire had heard her passionate, bitterly condemning words!



The Rivals

"WELL, what have you got to say for yourself, eh?"

His fat, blue chin thrust out pugnaciously, two pig-like eyes glowering from under bushy eyebrows, Mr. Julius Braggott was not a pleasant object as he confronted Barbara Redfern.

Avril, with a low cry, shrank back. Mabs, hearing the threat in Mr. Braggott's menacing voice, stepped forward a few paces, as though to be near her chum, should she need protection.

"Come on, come on!" rasped the man. "What do you mean by calling me names? And what are you doing here, Miss What's-your-name?" he added insolently, glaring at Avril Rayner.

"I thought I told you to clear out of my sight!"

His tone, as he addressed Avril, made Babs stiffen. Just for a moment she had felt at a loss for words, but now she eyed him fearlessly.

"The name I gave you, Mr. Braggott, seems to be justified!" she replied cuttingly.

The millionaire's features went almost purple with rage.

"You—you insolent young hussy!" he raved. "Who are you to talk to me like that? Do you know who I am?"

Another cutting remark came to Babs' lips, and then, catching an imploring glance from Avril's scared brown eyes, she hastily bit back the words.

Who was he, indeed? This was Mr. Julius Braggott, the millionaire, a big man in the business world, whose power was enormous. This was the man who, on her father's recommendation, had employed Avril, who also had business dealings with Mr. Redfern.

And it suddenly struck Babs that perhaps it would be as well to put a curb on her tongue. Deliberately to offend the millionaire might have far-reaching repercussions.

She had promised to help Avril. And the only way to help her, as far as Babs could see, was to reason with the millionaire on Avril's behalf, and plead with him to reinstate her. That, much as it went against the grain, she proceeded to do.

"Mr. Braggott," she said hesitantly, "I—I'm sorry you heard me make that remark; but Avril has just told me that you discharged her for theft—"

"And so I did—so I did! I want no thieves about my house! Let me tell you, my girl," the millionaire said harshly, "that she's lucky to get off so lightly!"

With difficulty Babs restrained her anger.

"But, Mr. Braggott," she said desperately, "are you sure you haven't made a mistake?"

"I never make mistakes!" Braggott sneered boastfully. "Now, look here, if you're trying to plead for this girl, cut it out!" he added coarsely. "She's dis-

missed, and that's an end to it! I'll have a bone to pick with Redfern when I see him!" he muttered, as if to himself, never realising that the daughter of the man to whom he was referring stood before him. "Him and his recommendations!"

Babs looked a little uneasy. She was glad she had held her tongue in check. Yes, Mr. Braggott would be a dangerous man to cross. But, still thinking of Avril, who clutched her arm so pitifully, she made yet another attempt to plead with him.

"Avril's a very old friend of mine, Mr. Braggott," she said quietly. "I know she couldn't have done this thing—"

"Oh, you do—eh? Well, since you're so clever, young lady, perhaps you can tell me who did do it?"

But to that, of course, Babs made no reply. Avril had told her that Pearl Braggott, the millionaire's own daughter, had been guilty of the theft.

She had only Avril's word for that; but, knowing the girl as she did, she believed her implicitly. Yet it would be sheer folly even to breathe a word of that, especially in his present frame of mind.

So Babs remained silent, biting her lip. But this silence seemed to incense the millionaire perhaps more than words would have done.

"Ha! So you've no reply—eh?" he stormed. "And another thing!" he added. "You've been trespassing on my land, you and your precious friends! My land, d'you hear? What do you mean by it—eh? Look at all those bits of paper strewn everywhere! Come from Cliff House School, don't you? Well, you'll be hearing a bit more about that! I'll make it my business to tell your headmistress that I don't want her schoolgirls trespassing over my land! Now beat it! Go on! Go on!" he

shouted, waving his arms. "Be off with you!"

For a moment Babs hesitated, longing to tell this bullying man just what she thought of him, yet keeping herself in check with an effort.

"Clear off, I say!" bellowed the millionaire. "Get out, or— Heh, Rajah!"

At the word of command the black Alsatian crouched, his crest bristling, his lips drawn back in a snarl to show his gleaming fangs. For a moment it seemed that the dog would spring at the girls.

Avril gave a shrill scream of fear. She did not wait for more, but, tugging at Babs' arm, drew her away. Mabs had now sprang forward beside her leader.

"Oh, come on, Babs!" she said, and glared contemptuously at the quivering bully. "No good arguing with this—this—"

"Shush!" whispered Babs.

But, realising the wisdom of her chum's words, seeing it was useless to argue further with the millionaire, she turned and made off down the road.

With a coarse, bellowing laugh, Julius Braggott watched them go. Then, with a curt command to Rajah, the Alsatian, turned on his heel and strode back into the drive of Braggott Manor.

While a hundred yards or so down the road, Babs and her two companions once again halted. The Form captain was looking worried as she rather belatedly introduced Mabs to Avril.

"Avril," she said, "what are you going to do now? Will you be going back to Holly Hall?"

"Oh, no! I mustn't do that!" Avril gulped. "I—I can't do that! What explanation could I give? Mother



"CLEAR off!" thundered Braggott. "D'you hear—clear off, before I set my dog on you!" Babs had no fear of the bully's threat—but she realised that if Avril was to be helped it would be unwise to argue with the millionaire.

mustn't know what that has happened! And your father—"

She stopped fearfully
"Don't you worry about daddy," Babs said reassuringly, though inwardly she felt a trifle apprehensive. Avril's dismissal from Julius Braggott's employ might possibly place Mr. Redfern in a delicate position.

"Well, if you're not going back to Holly Hall, what can you do?" Babs asked worriedly. And then, before the other could reply, added eagerly: "I know! I have some friends in Friar-dale village who could put you up for a few days—Mr. and Mrs. Crawley, dear old couple whom you'll love. Mabs and I will take you along there now and get you fixed up."

"Oh, Barbara, you are so kind!" said Avril gratefully. "And you do believe me, don't you? And—and you will help?" she asked anxiously.

Babs smiled.
"Of course I believe you, and I'm going to help you all you. That's a promise. Now then up! Everything will be all right. I'll go along and see Mr. Braggott when he's in a sweeter temper. But, look, here's a bus! We'll take you to the Crawleys, and then Mabs and I must nip back to the school."

An hour later, after having safely disposed of Avril, and having had a hasty cup of tea with Grandma and Grandpa Crawley, Babs and Mabs arrived back at Cliff House School.

Dusk was falling fast by this time, and a chill wind had sprung up from the sea. The two girls shivered a little, for they were still only wearing their running outfits.

The school was at tea, in studies and dining-hall. But in Big Hall, Clara and Leila, Janet and Jimmie, were rather anxiously awaiting the belated pair.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed the Tommy. "Where have you two been?" And then, without waiting for a reply, she went on with a rush: "We caught the hares, Babs—ran them off their feet! But where did you and Mabs get to? We waited for you to come along, and then trotted back here."

But to Clara's question the Form captain made no reply, merely smiling rather vaguely as she and Mabs passed on up to the dormitory to change into school tunics.

For, truth to tell, Babs was feeling rather worried and preoccupied. She was thinking of her promise to Avril—was thinking uneasily of the difficult task which lay ahead of her.

She had made that promise, and she meant to keep it. To Babs a promise was a sacred thing. But not then had she realised the true nature of the man with whom she would have to deal.

That afternoon she had seen a sample of Mr. Julius Braggott's behaviour, and she wondered, with not a little dismay, how she would fare in a second interview with the bullying millionaire.

CRASH!

Barbara Redfern, seated in the armchair before the fire in Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form passage, started up with a jerk from her preoccupation as the door crashed back against the wall. Tommy Clara Trevlyn stood framed in the doorway.

"Come along, dreamy!" she exclaimed boisterously. "Haven't you heard the bell? Special Assembly in Hall! Wonder what's in the wind?"

Special Assembly?

Babs looked bewildered.
Truth to tell, she had heard the bell, but not heeded it. Tea had been over about half an hour now. Her two

study-mates, Mabel Lynn and plump Bessie Bunter, had gone along to the Common-room, leaving Babs alone with her thoughts.

The clanging of the bell for special assembly had disturbed them; Clara's typically breezy entry into the study completely shattered them. So much so that even Babs herself began to feel excited.

"Well, supposing we go and find out!" she said. "Come on, old thing!"

And, linking her arm in that of Clara, the two girls strode briskly down the corridor, joining in the stream of other chattering Fourth Formers who were making for Big Hall.

Silence descended on the assembled ranks when Miss Primrose, the kindly headmistress, appeared on the platform.

"Girls," she said, "I have rather an important announcement to make, with which I wish to acquaint you without delay. It concerns the Courtfield pageant, in which, I know, you are all interested. As this pageant is only held once every twenty-five years, it is an historic event which you will probably not meet again."

She paused, while a low murmur of interest went up.

"As you are all aware, this year the pageant is being organised with a double purpose—to celebrate the granting of a charter to Courtfield Town by Queen Elizabeth, and also to benefit the various charities in the immediate neighbourhood. I hope all of you will support this very laudable aim. Miss Charmant, the mistress of the Fourth Form, will receive all contributions, or, of course, you may prefer to place your donations in the collecting boxes on the day of the pageant."

Again she paused.

"As the pageant will be held on Saturday week," the headmistress went on, "every girl will have the opportunity of witnessing this spectacle." She glanced at a paper which she held.

"I have here a communication from Mr. Julius Braggott, one of the organisers of the pageant. In fact," added Miss Primrose with a rather distasteful glance at the letter, Babs thought, as she watched, "I gather that Mr. Braggott is the main organiser! He invites Cliff House to participate in the pageant, which will be a number of tableaux representing the growth of Courtfield through the ages. This school will send a complete tableau, which the participants may themselves provide with the approval of the organisers; but Mr. Braggott makes one stipulation—a rather unnecessary stipulation, in my opinion."

Miss Primrose frowned, glancing at the letter again.

"That is, that only senior girls must take part. In the circumstances, therefore," she said, quelling with another frown the murmur that welled up from the juniors. "I have decided that the honour shall go to the Sixth Form."

A loud groan greeted those words. A groan that even Miss Primrose could not suppress.

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn hotly.

"What a shame!" supported Rosa Rodworth.

While Mabel Lynn looked bitterly disappointed, and a flush of annoyance overspread Babs' face. What an overbearing, unpleasant man this Mr. Julius Braggott was!

"Silence, girls!" commanded Miss Primrose, though her glance was sympathetic. "I hope the Sixth Form will make every effort to ensure that their tableau is worthy of Cliff House. I shall be pleased to receive suggestions

from any girl as to what form it might take. That is all, girls. You may dismiss."

Immediately she had vanished from the platform uproar broke among the girls as they marched out of Big Hall. The Sixth looked very satisfied. But they were the only ones to do so.

The Upper Third, the Fourth, and the Lower Fifth were in open revolt, voicing their disapproval very loudly and emphatically. The seniors of the Upper Fifth, too dignified to protest openly, were, nevertheless, deeply offended.

As if by common consent, the whole of the Fourth Form made their way to the Common-room, where the din of many indignant voices upraised in protest became almost unbearable.

Clara, in her tomboyish fashion, seized a chair and mounted it.

"Girls," she shrieked, trying to make her voice heard above the uproar—"girls! I say, you duifers, can't you stop making such a row? I want to speak to you!"

"Well, my hat, you're making more row than all the rest of us put together!" exclaimed Janet Jordan.

"Girls," bellowed Clara again, "I say it's an insult to the Fourth—"

"Hear, hear!"

"We've got to do something about it, and—"

"Rather!"

"What do the Sixth know about making a tableau—?"

"Nothing!"

"It's up to the Fourth—"

"Yes, yes!"

"And so," yelled Clara, "I vote we form a deputation, with Babs as the leader, and put it to Priddy that the Fourth, as the most talented Form in the school, should represent Cliff House in the pageant!"

A perfectly thunderous shout of agreement greeted that modest statement by the junior sports captain.

Babs, as indignant as her Form-fellows, deciding that for once the hot-headed Tommy had made a sensible suggestion, agreed to lead the deputation.

Of course, everybody wanted to go, but finally it was decided that Babs, Mabs, Clara, Rosa Rodworth, and Margot Lantham should approach the headmistress.

With the hearty good wishes of the Fourth to speed them on their way, the deputation quitted the Common-room. Straight along to Miss Primrose's study they went.

They turned into the passage where that sanctum was situated, and then drew up in surprise as they saw, approaching from the other end of the corridor, another body of girls, headed by Flora Cann of the Lower Fifth.

Almost instinctively both parties quickened their pace as they sighted each other. They met outside the headmistress' door.

"What are you kids doing here?" asked Flora shortly.

"We're a deputation from the Fourth," replied Babs.

"And we're a deputation from the Lower Fifth," said Flora. "If you want to see Miss Primrose you'll have to wait."

"Oh, jolly well will we!" exclaimed Clara. "We were here first!"

"No, you weren't!" snapped Flora.

"We're going in to see Miss Primrose now, and you can wait until we've finished!"

"Who says so?" Clara glared.

"I say so!" retorted Flora, glaring back.

"Oh, come on, Babs!" said Clara,

with a grin. "We can't stand here arguing with these kids!" And, playfully snapping her fingers in Flora's face, the Tomboy stretched out a hand to open the door.

But that action was too much for the hasty-tempered Flora.

"Why, what check!" she cried. "Leave that door alone!" And, with the words, she jumped forward, intending to pull Clara away.

But alas for Flora! She trod on her own undone shoelace—which was typical of the untidy Fifth Form—and, stumbling forward, gave Clara an unintentional push in the back.

The Tomboy by that time had just turned the handle. She gave a gasp, staggered as the heavy push caught her in the back, and hurtled forward, the door flying open before her.

From Babs came a low cry of alarm as that door crashed back against the wall on its hinges.

And Clara, carried forward by her own impetus, tripping over the edge of the carpet as she went, sprawled on to the floor in an ungainly heap—right at the feet of a tall figure standing there!

Miss Primrose, grim and forbidding, glared down at the hapless Tomboy.



Good News—and Bad!

FOR a moment there was a stunned silence.

Clara, rather dazed and bewildered by what had happened, found her horrified gaze wandering upwards, and finally alighted upon the stern features of her headmistress.

The deputations representing the Fourth and Fifth Forms stood crowded in the open doorway, hardly daring to breathe.

Miss Primrose drew a deep breath and adjusted her pince-nez.

"Girls," she thundered, "what is the meaning of this? How dare you burst into my study in this unseemly fashion! Clara, stand up!"

Red-faced and crestfallen, the Tomboy picked herself up, glancing sheepishly at Miss Primrose.

The headmistress, breathing wrath, glared back at her.

"You girls were quarrelling outside my door!" she snapped. "May I ask why, pray?"

Uncomfortably the girls eyed each other. Then Babs stepped forward. She said Flora.

From both girls, at precisely the same moment, came the words:

"We're a deputation from the Fourth Form, Miss Primrose!"

"We're a deputation from the Fifth Form, Miss Primrose!"

Then both broke off at once, and glared furiously at each other, while a nervous giggle came from one of the girls in the doorway.

But Miss Primrose was frowning.

"One at a time, please!" she said tartly. "A deputation, indeed? Flora, about what?"

"W-well, you—you see, Miss Primrose—"

Now that the time had come for Flora to make her speech, the carefully prepared words completely left her. She stammered, coughed, and finally lapsed into a nervous silence.

Miss Primrose looked annoyed.

"Barbara, perhaps you will explain your mission!"



CLARA'S unintentional entry into Miss Primrose's study was as sudden as it was ungainly, and although it was not the Tomboy's fault, her entrance was hardly calculated to improve the chances of the Fourth Form deputation!

Rather red-faced, Babs stepped forward.

"Well, you see, Miss Primrose, we Fourth Formers feel that it is rather unfair that only the Sixth should take part in the pageant. And so we—we came along to ask you if it would be possible for the Fourth also to take part."

Miss Primrose was still frowning.

"And I suppose," she said severely, "this is the disgraceful way in which you come to ask favours of me. Every girl here will do me fifty lines by to-morrow morning. But you, Clara, will be detained—"

The headmistress broke off as Flora stepped forward.

"I'm afraid I was responsible for Clara falling into the study, Miss Primrose," she admitted. "I—I fell against her."

"Then you will be detained, Flora, on the next half-holiday. Clara, you will take one hundred lines; I heard your voice distinctly provoking a quarrel. But wait!" Miss Primrose called, as all the girls prepared to take their departure. "You do not deserve to hear the news I have just received concerning to pageant, but since you are here I will tell you."

The girls waited expectantly.

"The Mayor of Courtfield has just phoned me," the Head went on, "saying that there is another vacancy in the pageant, and that one more tableau from Cliff House can be included in the procession."

"Oh, Miss Primrose!" enthused Babs.

Faces shone now; eyes sparkled.

"Unlike Mr. Braggott," continued Miss Primrose, "the mayor made no stipulations whatever. I think it is

only fair, therefore, that the girls should be chosen from either the Upper or Lower Fifth, or the Fourth or Upper Third Forms.

"Since it will be rather difficult to discriminate, I have decided that it will rest entirely upon the Forms themselves. In other words—with a grim glance at the girls ranged about her—"the Form with the best record of behaviour for the coming week will be the Form chosen to take part in the pageant. You all have your chance. Make the most of it. That is all—Oh, Barbara, and you, Mabel, please remain behind with Clara. I have something further I wish to say to you three girls."

Rather uneasily, the three chums eyed each other as the other girls filed out. Wondering if some misdemeanour of theirs had come to light, they waited anxiously for the headmistress to speak again.

"You three girls," she said, "took part in a purchase, I believe?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose," answered Babs.

"I received a telephone call from Mr. Julius Braggott, who was very annoyed because you girls had trespassed on his estate." Miss Primrose's expression hardened. "As I have told you before, I absolutely forbid your trespassing on private property."

"Oh, we're awfully sorry, Miss Primrose!" said Babs quickly. "But, really, we didn't do any damage."

"That is quite beside the point," said the headmistress inflexibly. "To help you remember school rules in future, you three girls—and any others who took part in the purchase—will take a further fifty lines. This is hardly an auspicious start if the Fourth Form hopes to win a place in the pageant."

Remember that the Form with the best record will be chosen. Now you may go."

And hurriedly the chums went, breathing a sigh of relief as they reached the other side of the door.

"HERE THEY come!"

"Babs! Babs!"

"What's the news?"

"What did Primmy say?"

An excited chorus greeted the return into the Common-room of the Fourth Form deputation. A crowd of eager girls surrounded Barbara Redfern and her companions as they marched in through the doorway. They had come straight back from the headmistress' study. Rosa and Margot having waited for Babs & Co.

Babs laughed merrily, her blue eyes twinkling.

"My hat, one at a time!" she chuckled. "It's good news, girls—at least," she amended, "fairly good news."

"Come on, then, out with it!" said June Merrett impatiently.

"Well, Primmy said that there is room for one more tableau in the pageant, but— Wait!" Babs yelled above the roar of cheering that arose.

"Unfortunately, there's a catch in it!"

"Shame!"

"The Form which behaves itself best during the week will be the one chosen," explained Babs.

"Oh!"

The Fourth Formers eyed each other rather dubiously. Only two well did they realise their own limitations when it came to a question of best behaviour. The Fourth had the reputation of being the most high-spirited Form in Cliff House—and deserved it!

"Therefore," continued Babs, "it's up to us. From now on we've all got to be perfect little angels, or there'll be no taking part in the pageant for us!" The captain's eyes twinkled. "It might be a little difficult for some of us, but we can do it."

"Hear, hear!"

"We've jolly well got to do it!" cried Clara Trevlyn enthusiastically. "The pageant won't be anything without the help of the Fourth."

"Rather not!"

The Fourth Formers were solid upon that point. They felt the whole success of the pageant depended on their taking part.

Everybody was enthusiastic and excited. One and all, the girls signified their intention of being on their very best behaviour for the remainder of that week, at any rate.

"And that's a promise?" laughed Babs.

"Rather!" came the roar.

"Then," said Babs, "we'd all better start by making less noise, or we'll have a prefect here, and that'll be a black mark against us."

As if by magic, the din died away. Someone of the girls started talking in whispers—which, if a little overdone, at least showed that the Fourth was very serious and wanted to take part in the forthcoming Courtfield Pageant.

Mabs became the centre of an animated group which began discussing ideas and suggestions for the tableau. Already the Fourth had no doubt in their minds that they would share with the Sixth the honour of representing Cliff House in the historic spectacle.

And Mabs, as the clever producer of all the shows run by the Junior Amateur Dramatic Society, found her-

self given the responsibility of organising the whole affair. Mabs was in her element.

"You know, Mabs," said Lucy Farraday seriously, "I think it would be a good idea to have a scene depicting Cliff House when it was a monastery—you know, with monks, and all that sort of thing."

"That's a little bit too obvious, Lucy," criticised Mabs thoughtfully. "The Sixth will probably do that."

"I sus-say, you girls," burst in plump Bessie Bunter, stuttering as usual in her excitement, "what about Queen Elizabeth knighting Sir Walter Scott when he sailed for the Crusades?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie glared indignantly.

"I kik-can't see anything funny in that," she said witheringly.

"But we can!" chuckled Phyllis Howell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"And," went on Bessie, her eyes glimmering behind her thick round spectacles, "I'll be Elizabeth. That's only fair, you know, because I was named after her! She—she's an ancestor of mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll see, Bessie," said Mabs tactfully, not wishing to offend the lovable duffer. "But where's Babs—Babs is the girl for ideas. Babs, where are you—"

But Barbara Redfern was no longer in the Common-room. Unobtrusively she had slipped out and was now in Study No. 4.

Looking very thoughtful, she sat at the table, a sheet of notepaper before her, nibbling the end of a pen as if seeking inspiration.

Babs, the pageant momentarily forgotten, was composing a letter to Mr. Julius Braggott.

She had not forgotten her promise to help Avril. It had been her original intention to interview the irascible millionaire personally; but upon reflection had decided that first she would approach him by letter. She felt that often written words could be more expressive than spoken words, especially when dealing with a man of his temperament.

Carefully, tactfully, she worded the letter, stating her conviction that a mistake had been made, and asking the millionaire to reconsider his decision.

It was with some misgiving that she signed the letter. Of course, now Mr. Braggott would recognise that name—would know who she was. But it couldn't be helped—she had said nothing at which the millionaire could take offence.

With a little sigh she placed the letter in an envelope, addressed it, and sealed it.

"Well, that's that," she murmured. "I'll post it straight away."

And with that intention in mind she crossed to the door. But before she reached it was flung open, and Mabel Lynn and Clara Trevlyn stood framed in the doorway.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Mabs. "Been looking for you. We want some of your super-brainwaves for the pageant. Got any ideas?"

Babs shook her head.

"Not at the moment," she confessed. "Haven't thought about it. But let me post this letter first, and then we'll put on the jolly old thinking cap. Coming down to the post with me?"

They went down to the post-box together. And it was as she slipped the letter into the box that an idea came to the Form captain.

"Mabs!" she exclaimed. "I've got it! That old book in the library—you

know, the one which was found in the crypt."

"Well?" queried Mabs puzzledly.

"It's just the thing," Babs enthused. "If I remember rightly, it mentions something about the granting of the Charter to Courtfield by Elizabeth. We might be able to dig up something useful from that—a really effective tableau, which nobody else will think of doing!"

Mabs' eyes shone.

"Oh, Babs, that's a wonderful idea."

"Absolutely tophole," agreed Clara.

"Come on, race you to the library."

"Clara, no!" gasped Babs, just managing to grasp the impetuous Tomboy as she darted off in her usual harum-scurum manner. "Remember—no black marks!"

"Oh, sorry!" grinned Clara. "Then we'll walk, like good little girls!"

And with exaggerated quietness, taking small mincing steps, she tiptoed across Big Hall.

"Chump!" laughed Babs, while Mabs giggled.

They reached the library, making a bee-line for the shelf on which Babs had last seen the volume they were seeking. But where the book should have been was a gap.

"Well, where the merry dickens—"

Babs frowned.

"What's the matter, Barbara?" a voice asked quietly from the other side of the spacious, book-lined room.

For the first time the Form captain became aware that another figure was in the room. Miss Thelma Bland, the easy-going mistress of the Upper Fifth, now came across to the trio.

"You are looking for something?" she inquired.

"Yes, Miss Bland. That old book giving the history of Courtfield—I'm afraid I can't remember the title."

The mistress smiled.

"Ah, you mean 'A History of Ancient Courtfield.' Is that the book? Why, that's curious, Barbara. Flora Cann, of the Lower Fifth, took it away with her only ten minutes ago!"

"O-oh!"

It was almost a groan which broke from the lips of the three girls. Dismally they gazed at each other.

Once again, it seemed, Flora Cann had been smitten with the same idea. But this time she had got in first. The pageant was producing an unexpected rivalry between the Fourth Form and the Lower Fifth.



Trouble for the Fourth

BARBARA REDFERN, Mabel Lynn, and Clara Trevlyn stood outside Flora Cann's study in the Fifth Form passage.

They were looking very determined.

"Now, Clara," cautioned Babs. "Let me do the talking. You know what an old hot-head you are—and Flora's the same. No black marks for the Fourth, remember."

"O.K.," agreed Clara. "But come on, let's get on."

And, raising her hand, the Tomboy gave what she considered to be a gentle tap on the door.

Bang!

The door which, unknown to Clara, had not been properly shut, flew back, hitting the wall with a resounding crash.

An angry bellow rose from inside the study.

"Here, I say—!" And then, as Flora Cann spotted who her visitors were: "Why, you cheeky kids! Must

you Fourth Form children go barging about like you elephants?" Clara glared. The Tomboy objected to being called an elephant. A hot retort trembled on her lips, but a nudge from Babs made her bite it back. She contented herself with a fierce glower at the Fifth Form captain.

"Hem!" Babs coughed delicately. "Sorry, Flora," she said sweetly, "but we didn't know the door was open, and it— it slipped." Flora looked suspicious. So did Ena Sparling and Sheila Ford, the other occupants of the study. They were not used to Fourth Formers being so polite.

"Well, don't let it occur again," said Flora ungraciously. "What do you want, anyway? We're busy."

Babs' gaze, roving the study, alighted on a small, musty-looking book which lay on the top of Flora's bureau. "The fact is," said Babs, still very politely, "we've come to ask if you've finished with that History of Courtlife you borrowed from the library?"

"Yes—that is, no!" Flora quickly contradicted herself. "Why do you want to know?"

"Well, if you have finished with it, Flora, we'd like it," said Babs.

Flora considered that point for a moment, then she flashed a significant glance at her companions.

"Well, you can't have it!" she snapped. "I—I haven't finished with it."

Clara snorted. "Why, you awful fibber!" she burst out suddenly. "You know jolly well you've finished with it! You're just being awkward, Flora!"

Flora flushed. That shot went home. Truth to tell, Flora had finished with the book, she and her chums having decided that there was nothing to be got out of it which would assist them in selecting a subject for a tableau in the pageant.

But the fact that these Fourth Formers wanted the book made Flora cautious. Perhaps there was something in it which Babs & Co. knew of and which she had overlooked.

So Flora decided to play for safety. Flora Cann was not an unpleasant girl by any means. Perhaps her one real failing was a hasty temper. But she took her responsibilities as captain of the Lower Fifth very zealously; and, having vowed that her Form should have that coveted place in the pageant, she was determined to allow the Fourth no loophole to score over them.

Now, at Clara's tone, she flared up. "Who's being awkward?" she demanded. "And I won't have you calling me a fibber, Clara! You'll apologise for that immediately."

"Apologise be blowed!" the Tomboy hooted. "Why should I?"

"Then get out of this study and don't come here trying to cause trouble. You've already earned me one detention!" said Flora furiously.

"You know jolly well that was your own fault for being such a clumsy idiot!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Flora, her hot, hasty temper already bubbling over.

But Babs, with an anxious glance towards the door, stepped in between the two indignant girls.

"Clara—Flora!" she said desperately. "Don't start a quarrel, for goodness' sake. We only came here to ask you for that book, and I must say, Flora, you're being rather beastly." Then I presume, though you don't want it yourself, you won't let us have it?"

The Fifth Form captain flushed. "Then you presume jolly well right!" she glowered. "And now clear out, and don't come bothering me any more."

With a withering glance at the four Fifth Formers, Babs, Mabs, and the quivering Clara turned on their heels and stalked from the study.

Already bitterness prevailed between the two Forms—a bitterness which, if ignited by the slightest spark, seemed likely to flare out into open rivalry!

"WE JOLLY WELL ought to have taken the book! Flora didn't really want it any longer; she was just being funny!"

SPRINGTIME IS BEAUTY-TIME

If you are to look your best for the warmer days, now is the time to begin



In the spring a young girl's fancy— Not quite the quotation, but I think you'll agree that now is the time for the fancy to turn to this good looks question.

We all want to look our very best for the bright days, and there's nothing quite so remorseless in showing up faulty complexions as old Mr. Sun. So the first thing to do is to get rid of all winter's blemishes, isn't it? Then we can start fresh and lovely, ready to acquire a golden tan and look our very best in warm-weather's flattering clothes.

NOT TOO RUSHED

So we can't do better than start with a thorough cleansing of the skin. And I don't mean an extra flick over of the face flannel, with perhaps an additional rub of soap for luck.

No, I mean you to make a real business of this—so don't attempt it between rushing home from school and dashing off to the pictures.

Save yourself a whole evening if you're really serious, or at least an hour if you're already nearly perfect.

First, I'll tell you what I'd like you to have ready for this performance. Some I'm sure you can borrow from mother or sister, some you may already own, and the rest are well worth saving for.

First a tin of cold cream. This can be bought for twopenny. Next a little bottle of skin tonic. This will cost sixpence if you buy it ready made, or threepence if you ask the chemist to make it for you from witch-hazel.

Next, a lemon. (No, that's not the old joke.) If you live near a market, this should cost only a halfpenny, but in smart shops it will very likely double its price. But a lemon's a lemon whatever the cost.

That's all! Not a very staggering list, is it?

Now for the method, as a cookery teacher might say.

A GOOD START

First, I want you to give your face a really delicious washing in only lukewarm water. Rinse it well in warm water for once.

Next, dry it, and smother it with cold cream. Work this well into the skin with an upwards and outwards movement until, to your surprise, you'll find most of the cream has been greedily absorbed by your hungry skin.

Wipe the surplus cold cream off with any old cloth, providing it is clean, and then rinse your face again in warm water.

When it is dry, dab the lemon juice—neat—on to your skin, paying particular attention to the forehead, the sides of the nose and mouth.

This is to remove those little discolorations that heavy winter foods and indoor days bring about.

After this, another little massage with your cold cream, please. You see, the lemon juice tends to be drying, so we must immediately counteract this.

After rinsing off the cold cream again with a final splash from the cold tap, dab your face all over with your witch-hazel solution or skin tonic.

You'll feel like a new person, I promise you—and all the fuss and "splotter" will have been more than worth while.

HAIR NEXT

If the beauty mood is still on you after all this—and you'll be either very enthusiastic or very sturdy if it is—your next task should be your hair.

Give it the brushing of its life in front of an open window. Make your head feel as though it is in an earthquake with the violence of the brush disturbances.

Brush it backwards, forwards, upwards and sideways, with long sweeping strokes.

Then, if your hair is the dry variety, massage some pure olive oil into the scalp. If it tends to be oily, use bay rum instead.

You'll find now that all your waves—that may tend to disappear under the storm of brushing—will easily re-set themselves with a little coaxing by you.

THE REST OF YOU

Now that your hair and face is so lovely, concentrate on your hands. Give them the cold cream and lemon treatment as for your face, and give your nails an extra-special manure.

Your nice schoolgirl feet, too, should have a little spoiling from you at this time of the year, so that they are dainty and pretty to display as well as strong enough to resist hot weather tiredness.

So now, looking your lovely best in good time, there's no reason why this shouldn't be the happiest spring and summer you've ever known, is there?

Clara Trevlyn's tone was indignant. Babs & Co. were returning to the Fourth Form quarters, decidedly ruffled in temper after the scene in Flora Cann's study.

But Babs shook her chestnut curls, though truth to tell, she was feeling every bit as angry as her tomboy chum.

"And if we'd done that," she pointed out quietly, "there would have been a first-class row, and we should have been reported by a prefect or mistress. No, Flora isn't playing the game, but she won't gain anything by it. If she hasn't returned it to the library by tomorrow morning we shall be within our rights in demanding it. So it's just a question of patience!"

The following morning, however, there was an unexpected development; and an unpleasant one, too.

Immediately after breakfast Babs & Co., still eagerly intent on seeking ideas for the Fourth Form tableau on the Courtfield history book, hurried along to the library.

But who should they run into, coming out of the library just as they were about to enter, but Flora Cann. And the Fifth Form captain was in a very angry mood.

"I want to see you, Barbara!" she hooted. "What do you mean by taking that book from my study last night?"

"Eh?" Babs was dumfounded.

"Flora, what do you mean—?"

"You know very well what I mean! That book's gone from my study, and it must have been you who took it. Where is it?" demanded Flora hotly.

Babs shook herself free of the Fifth Former's grasp.

"How should I know where it is?" she said warmly. "I haven't touched the book. You know very well you wouldn't let us have it yesterday, Flora!"

"Then somebody's taken it!" snapped Flora. "It wasn't in my study this morning, and it's not in the library, because I've just looked. You've taken it, Barbara—you or someone in the Fourth!"

Babs, very startled and mystified, swung round on Clara, remembering that the Tomboy had said the previous evening.

"Clara, have you—?"

Her chum flushed indignantly.

"Of course I haven't!" she said at once, and then faced Flora, a light of accusation in her eyes.

"This is only one of Flora's tricks!" she added contemptuously.

"She doesn't want us to have the book and so she's pretending we've taken it!"

But words, spoken hastily by the thoughtless, impetuous Tomboy! But they acted upon Flora as a red rag to a bull.

"Clara, you'll take that back!" she shouted furiously. "I tell you the book's missing, and there's going to be trouble when—"

"There'll be trouble right now, you kids, if you don't stop shouting at each other so that the whole school can hear!" came a stern voice.

And Stella Stone, head prefect of Cliff House, walked swiftly up to the group.

"Now," she added, "what's all the fuss about?"

All speaking at once, Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Flora indignantly explained the situation, and Stella had to threaten lines before she understood.

Flora wildly accused the Fourth of taking the missing book; Clara, just as wildly, repeated her opinion that Flora was only making it up because she didn't want the Fourth to get the book.

The upshot of it was that Stella had perforce to report the matter to Miss Primrose. And the headmistress took a serious view of the affair.

The volume was quite rare and valuable; indeed, it was the only copy known to exist. Miss Primrose was very perturbed to hear that such a treasure of the Cliff House library was missing.

She immediately caused inquiries to be made throughout the school—inquiries which sent Miss Thelma Bland hurrying to the headmistress' study. There she stated that she knew Flora Cann to have borrowed it, and that Barbara Redfern had seemed very anxious to get possession of the book.

So, when the Fourth was at morning lessons, they received an unexpected visit from Miss Primrose. Very grave and stern she looked as she addressed the class.

"As you are all doubtless aware," she said, "Flora Cann of the Fifth has reported the loss from her study of a valuable book entitled 'A History of Ancient Courtfield.' This volume must be found, and from inquiries I have been making I learn that certain girls in this Form were asking for it yesterday evening. Barbara, Clara, and Mabel, please stand up!"

Looking somewhat uneasy, the three obeyed.

"You three girls," continued the headmistress, "were inquiring for this book—is that so?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose!" muttered Babs. "But—"

Miss Primrose held up a hand, enjoining silence.

"I understand," she said grimly, "that, finding Flora had already borrowed it from the library, you went to her study and demanded the book."

"Well, Miss Primrose, we—we didn't exactly demand it," Babs said a little hesitantly.

"But you wanted it badly—so badly that you provoked a quarrel with Flora?" persisted the headmistress.

Babs bit her lip.

"Yes, Miss Primrose," she admitted slowly.

Miss Primrose pursed her lips.

"I see," and then point-blank she asked: "Have any of you girls removed the book from Flora's study?"

"No, Miss Primrose!" chorused the three together.

"You know nothing about its disappearance?"

"No, Miss Primrose."

"Very well!" The headmistress' eyes glimmered. "This affair is most unsatisfactory—most! The book must be found. I suppose no other girl in this Form can throw any light upon the subject?"

There was a general shaking of heads, a chorus of negatives.

Miss Primrose, looking very annoyed, swept out of the class-room.

Babs & Co., crimson and dismayed, sat down. Lessons recommenced, with Babs now rather worried. What could possibly have happened to that book she did not know; but she did know that she and her chums would be under a cloud until it was found, and that the Form would indirectly suffer in consequence.

After lessons, in the interval before dinner, the girls made a beeline for the common-room, where this latest development was discussed with some concern.

"Flora's jolly well hidden it herself!" shrieked Lucy Morgan. "Just so that we shouldn't have it!"

And that seemed to be the opinion shared by many of the girls—an opinion which was to be strengthened into cer-

tainty by the dramatic events of the next quarter of an hour.

There came a loud thump on the door of the Common-room, and it was thrown unceremoniously open.

Framed in the doorway stood Flora Cann herself, supported by Sheila Ford.

The Fourth bristled. A dead silence fell over them all, which was suddenly shattered by Clara.

"Oh, it's you, is it!" she exclaimed. "I suppose you've come to apologise for hiding the book and trying to get us the blame!"

Flora's look was bitter as she advanced into the room, leaving the door wide open.

"Apologise to you?" she snapped. "You took the book, and you jolly well know it! And now I suppose you're too frightened to own up!"

Clara's hot blood rose at that taunt.

"A case of the pot calling the kettle black, isn't it?" the Tomboy said, in a dangerously quiet voice. And then suddenly her manner changed, temper taking possession of her. "Get out of our Common-room, Flora, and don't come here making insinuations!"

"Yes, scat!" Lydia Crossendale said, and, before anybody realised her intentions, she flung a hard pellet of blotting-paper at the Fifth Former from the end of a ruler.

Flora gave a yelp as the pellet hit her painfully on the ear. At once she saw red. She looked wildly round for something to throw at the Snob of the Fourth.

A cushion in a near-by armchair caught her eye. She grabbed it, swung it back over her shoulder, ready to hurl.

And then, with the cushion held in mid-air, she stood transfixed, staring with wide-open eyes at something which now lay revealed in the armchair.

Everybody else in that room, too, was staring at the object that held her attention. Nobody noticed the tall, imposing figure which had appeared in the open doorway, and now came striding forward.

"Flora! What are you doing?" a voice suddenly thundered. "What are you doing with that cushion, girl? I could hear you shouting at the other end of the corridor!"

The girl, noticing how rigidly Flora Cann was standing, how everybody in that room was staring, Miss Primrose's gaze went in the same direction.

She, too, saw that object in the armchair. Her face seemed to freeze.

"So!" she said quietly. "The missing book! Then the Fourth Form does know something about its disappearance!"

TEN MINUTES later a white-faced Barbara Redfern came slowly out of Miss Primrose's study and wended her way to the Fourth Form Common-room. A battery of anxious eyes fastened upon her, as she entered that famous apartment.

"Babs—"

The Form captain shrugged helplessly.

"Primmy blames us," she said dully. "She says one of us must have taken the book. It's a black mark for the Fourth, girls—and a big one at that! Primmy's terribly wrathful about it!"

For a moment there was silence. The girls looked at each other bitterly. And then came a sharp exclamation from Rosa Rodworth.

"It was that cat Flora!" she said vindictively. "She framed that scene purposely!"

That theory spread like wildfire.

"That's right!" agreed Janet Jordan.

"She provoked that quarrel purposely, because she knew Primmy was coming along—"

"Of course!" broke in Rosa excitedly. "She must have put that book in the chair beforehand. Jolly funny she picked up the cushion to throw just as Primmy came in!"

"Sure was a frame-up!" declared Lella Carroll.

Even Babs was inclined to that view. It certainly looked as if Flora had deliberately engineered this catastrophe to spoil the Fourth's chances in the pageant.

It was, they all declared, a mean trick—a trick, moreover, which the Fourth decided could not be allowed to go unavenged. There and then they planned reprisals. The threatened rivalry had now developed into open enmity!



Reprisals!

"SHUSH!"
"He, he, he!"
"Bessie, stop giggling, chump!"

Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter, aware of four stony glances cast in her direction, hastily checked another giggle which rose to her lips.

Five girlish figures, clad in dressing-gowns over pyjamas, crept on tiptoe along the passage which led to the Lower Fifth dormitory.

The figures were those of Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, Bessie Bunter, Clara Trevlyn, and Janet Jordan. That the chums of the Fourth were bent upon some surreptitious mission, was evidenced by the secretiveness of their movements.

The girls should have been in bed. Dormitory bell had rung for the Fourth half an hour ago. But thoughts of sleep were far from the minds of Babs & Co. They had work to do. Reprisals against their rivals of the Fifth were afoot.

"They've just come up," whispered Babs. "Now, Bessie, you know what you've got to do!"

Plump Bessie stifled another giggle and nodded so vigorously that she almost dislodged her spectacles.

Babs had planned this reprisal on the Fifth to a minute, and voo betide the chums if anything went wrong.

There were heavy penalties for girls out of bed after lights-out, and lights-out for the Fourth had occurred half an hour ago.

The Fifth, with the extra privileges of the Upper School, were only just preparing for bed, however; from their dormitory came a hum of laughter and chatter.

Babs & Co. crept nearer. They knew that Miss Bullivant, duty mistress of the day, would shortly appear to put out the lights, and they must get the jape over before that acid-tempered mistress arrived.

And Bessie Bunter was to work the jape. Bessie, being an expert ventriloquist, was obviously the girl for that task.

The chums halted now just outside the closed door of the dormitory.

"Ready, Bessie?" Babs hissed. "Then do your stuff, Fattikins!"

Bessie grinned. Her fat little mouth pursed up into a round "O"—which was Bessie's trade mark, so to speak, when she was about to ventriloquise.

Suddenly a voice rang out from the corridor. Astonishingly enough, it was

the stern voice of Miss Penelope Primrose, the headmistress of Cliff House School. Bessie might be a duffer at most things, but in the art of ventriloquism she was a past-master.

"Flora Carr! Joan Carson! Florence Ellison! Ena Sparling!"

Bessie reeled off those names, imitating Miss Primrose's voice to perfection.

And certainly the effect her words produced could not have been greater had the headmistress herself uttered them. There was a sudden silence in the dormitory; the buzz of laughter and chatter in the Lower Fifth dormitory ceased as if by magic.

"I find that all you girls have left your studies in a disgracefully untidy

go and get it over! Orders are orders," she grinned.

And Babs & Co. were grinning, too, as triumphantly they watched the Fifth Formers quickly descend the stairs, bent on a false errand, and they but known it.

Bessie beamed. "I sus-say, that was jolly kik-clever of me!" she stammered modestly. "Only a Bunter kik-could have done that!"

And, for once, Babs & Co. agreed with her. But suddenly a look of consternation overspread the junior captain's face. She tossed as she saw an angular figure approaching from the other end of the corridor.

"Goodness!" hissed Babs. "The Bull!



FLORA snatched up a cushion. But even as she raised it to throw it at Clara her gaze fell upon a book that lay revealed in the chair. The Fourth Formers saw it, too—and knew it at once as the missing volume. How had it come there?

state! Miss Primrose's voice appeared to rap. "I will not tolerate this slackness, especially among girls of the Upper School. You will go down immediately and tidy them up. You hear me!"

Bessie stopped, glancing at her chums for approval.

"Bunk!" hissed Clara Trevlyn tersely.

Like five streaks of lightning, the chums raced up the corridor and concealed themselves round the first corner. There they waited to see the results of their jape.

A second or so passed, and then suddenly the door of the dormitory was flung open. The four seniors whose names had been called came striding out, looks of indignant bewilderment on their faces.

"Miss Primrose—" began Flora, then blinked around her in amazed surprise. "Why, she's gone!"

"Funny!" muttered Ena Sparling. "I'm sure my study was fairly tidy when I left it."

Florence Ellison scowled.

"Oh, well," said Joan Carson, "let's

She's come before her time! Not a sound, or we're for it!"

Unaware of those crouching figures, Miss Evelyn Bullivant stalked into the Fifth Form dormitory, her expression even more acid than usual. The Bull did not seem to be in the best of tempers.

Babs & Co. heard her voice raised in wrath. Miss Bullivant's gimlet eyes had immediately detected the absence of Flora and her Form fellows. There followed a murmur of voices as the girls in the dormitory began to explain, but again came the Bull's voice!

"Silence, all of you! How dare you all shout at me in that way! If there is another word I will punish you all! I will have an explanation from Flora herself when she condescends to return."

Babs & Co. were filled with dismay. They had intended to jape Flora & Co., but not to get them in trouble with the mistress.

And silence there was in the Fifth Form dormitory. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, with the sound of Miss Bullivant's heavy steps pacing up and down.

Then up the stairs came pattering footsteps and puzzled voices. Flora & Co. were returning.

"Jiggered if I know what to make of it!" Flora was saying. "All our studies seemed all right!"

Still talking loudly, they burst into the dormitory; then their voices suddenly died away into strangled gasps.

"Well, Flora," came Miss Bullivant's grinding voice. "I suppose you have some explanation to offer. What do you mean by bursting into the dormitory at this hour? Are you not aware that you should have been in bed twenty minutes ago?"

"But — but —" stammered Flora. "Miss Primrose told us to go downstairs."

"Miss Primrose?" thundered the mistress. "Do not prevaricate, girl. I have been with Miss Primrose all the evening. I left her to come up here."

"But I tell you she did —"

"Silence! Do not shout at me!" stormed Miss Bullivant, shouting herself. "I have never heard such nonsense —"

"But it's true —"

"I will not listen to your ridiculous excuses. You four girls will each take one hundred lines, and I shall report you to Miss Primrose. Now get to bed — immediately!"

—And almost quivering with wrath, Miss Bullivant waited while Flora & Co. in glowering silence hastily undressed and climbed into bed.

But before Miss Bullivant had quitted

the dormitory Babs and her chums had had a swift retreat. They felt that discretion was the better part of valour, especially with the Bull in that mood.

Their jape had gone wrong, and for that Babs was sorry. But she and her chums could do nothing. To own up would only get the Fourth another black mark. The Fifth had been paid back for their earlier trick, but not in the way Babs had wanted.

While the Fifth were furious.

For it had not taken them long to realise what had happened—only they thought the juniors had done it deliberately. And in that realisation, bitter were their feelings against the juniors.

The Fifth did not intend to take it lying down.

"ANY LETTERS for me?"

Barbara Redfern asked that question cheerily the next morning as she strolled towards the letter rack.

"Yes; one," replied Brenda Fallace. "Here you are."

Smiling her thanks, Babs took the letter; then her heart leapt as she saw the ornate gilt lettering on the flap of the envelope, "Braggott Manor, Courtfield." It was from the millionaire.

Hardly able to contain her eagerness, Babs skimmed up the stairs to Study No. 4. Not even in all the excitement of the forthcoming pageant and the feud with the Fifth had Babs forgotten the heart-broken Avril Rayner—Avril, with that terrible charge hanging over her innocent head.

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THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN
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With trembling fingers Babs slit open the envelope. What would he Mr. Julius Braggott's reply to her appeal—that appeal so carefully worded, which had taken such a lot of thought? Surely that must have touched even his hard heart.

Her fingers groped inside, and then—

From out of the envelope fell a shower of tiny scraps of paper. Like flakes of snow they fluttered round her feet. Dazedly Babs regarded them, as if unable to believe her eyes. Unsteadily she knelt and gathered some of the pieces in her hand, running them through her fingers. She saw the writing on those fragments—her writing!

This was her own letter, which Julius Braggott, in his own objectionable way, had torn into scraps and contemptuously returned to her.

Babs' face went white.

Then her appeal by letter had failed! She stiffened. But somehow she must help Avril; she would help Avril, even if she had to beard the lion in his den! She had promised, and to Babs a promise was sacred.

"I'll go and see him to-day before afternoon lessons," she vowed grimly. "I can do it if I cut dinner."

And that Babs did.

Immediately after morning lessons were over she hastened to the lobby, donned hat and coat, and set out. Only to Babs had she mentioned where she was going, asking her to make what excuse she would to Miss Charmant, who would be sure to notice her absence in the dining-hall.

Babs was fortunate in catching a bus, which dropped her right at the ornate bronze gates of Braggott Manor.

For a moment she stood surveying them; then, steeling herself, she stepped resolutely forward and tugged at the rope of the big bell.

Clang, clang, clang!

She heard its reverberating echoes ringing in the keeper's picturesque lodge. There was a sound of shuffling footsteps. The grizzled old keeper came to the gate, and peered at her through the thick iron bars.

Babs smiled sweetly.

"I would like to see Mr. Julius Braggott, please!" she said.

The keeper eyed her sourly.

"I recognise you," he said. "You're Miss Redfern, aren't you?"

Babs was a little taken aback.

"Why, yes! But—"

He scowled.

"Then you can't come in here!" the man said surlily. "The master's orders are that you're not to be admitted!"



Barbara's Brainwave

REFUSED admittance!

Babs felt suddenly helpless in the face of that unexpected rebuff. The overbearing millionaire was making it only too plain that he was not going to see her.

But he must see her; he must be made to realise that he was making a terrible mistake—that he was doing an injustice to a girl who was now without a position, and over whom hung a dreadful charge.

Babs had not seen Avril since taking her to the Crawleys in Friardale. But she could imagine in what a pitiful state of suspense that girl must be. Oh, she must help her!

Babs looked appealingly at the keeper through the bars.

"Oh, but I must see Mr. Braggott!" she said desperately. "It's most important—"

"Can't help that!" cut in the man curtly. "If the master gives an order, it's got to be carried out, young miss! There's no admittance for you, and that's final. Stand away, there!" he snapped suddenly. "Here, comes Miss Pearl, and she don't like to be kept waiting!"

The keeper started jumping about like a cat on hot bricks, unlocking the gates with a massive key.

Babs swung round as she heard the brazen blaring of an electric hooter, and saw a big super-sports car turning off from the road into the entrance to the drive.

Blare, blare, blare!

The luxurious open car came swooping on. Babs had a glimpse of a rather hard-featured girl, dressed attractively in an expensive fur coat, sitting behind the wheel.

She made no attempt to stop, even though Babs stood directly in the path of the car and the agitated keeper had not yet opened the gates wide.

"Hurry up, Perkins, you fool!" shouted the girl imperiously.

With one anxious eye on Babs and the other fixed apprehensively on the driver of the car, Perkins fumbled with the huge gates. Inwardly he was telling himself that Pearl Braggott, the millionaire's haughty daughter, could not have arrived at a more inopportune moment.

He would lose his job if he allowed this schoolgirl from Cliff House to pass; and he'd got to open the gates for Miss Pearl, or she would report him to her father, and he'd get the sack for that.

But Babs' keen eyes were working swiftly. So the millionaire had refused her admittance? Well, she was going to see him somehow, and here was her chance.

Just in time she leapt aside as the big open sports car pulled up with a screech of suddenly applied brakes. Pearl Braggott glared impatiently at the unhappy lodgekeeper as he swung wide the gates.

Then, with a roar of its powerful engine, the car swept forward, and as it surged past her Babs made a flying leap.

Right on to the big bumper bar she nimbly jumped, clutching swiftly at the lowered hood of the car to save herself from overbalancing. Then she was being whirled up the drive towards Braggott Manor, the frantic shouts of the dismayed keeper unheard.

"Done it!" chuckled Babs breathlessly.

Pearl, however, had seen what was happening. In the driving mirror she could see Babs clinging to the hood. Into the violet eyes of the millionaire's daughter sprang a vindictive gleam.

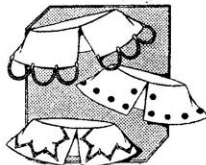
Suddenly she stamped hard on the foot-brake. The beautiful car slid to a standstill, with locked wheels scrunching over the gravel drive.

And Babs, completely unprepared for that mean action on the part of Pearl, was flung violently against the back of the car, lost her grip on the bumper bar, and fell heavily to the ground.

Fortunately, she was not badly hurt, although she might have easily suffered serious injury. But for a few moments Babs lay where she had sprawled, a little dazed, filled with a sense of burning indignation.

Pearl was scrambling out of the driving-seat, rather scared now of what she had done. Then anxiety vanished, and the haughty expression came back into her undeniably attractive face as she saw Babs scrambling to her feet.

ADD A TOUCH OF COLOUR



For brighter days, you simply must experiment with brighter colours. These plain collars can be transformed in a twinkling to extremely original designs.

Do you ever get moods—particularly during this weather—when you wish you had something new? Just something—no matter how small.

I'm sure you do—and it is for a mood like this that I have planned these collars for you.

Just a plain white Peter Pan collar, and you can make it into one of three different styles before that "wanky" mood can get a real grip.

For the first idea, all you'll want is a length of braid or fine cord. Arrange this around the outer edge of your collar, and catch the cord at intervals with matching loops, so that it forms attractive loops.

BRIGHT "SPOTS"

The second idea has small spots of colour sewn around the collar at regular spacings. Just small circles of contrasting material is what you want for this.

Since you all go to Art class, you know of course that green spots will look charming on a collar that's to be worn with a brown frock.

Red spots are always gay—particularly if your frock is navy. Royal blue, too, would look very delightful—even if you do favour Cambridge on Boat Race day!

The third notion needs braid or cord again. But this time it is sewn on to the collar itself. Just one or two stitches you'll require to keep it to the geometrical design.

That's all! Something new for next to nothing!

"You—you mean thing!" gasped Babs angrily. "You did that on purpose—"

Pearl surveyed the Cliff House junior superciliously, drawing up the collar of her fur coat about her smart cloche hat, so that only the face and a wisp of wavy, auburn curls showed.

"Who are you?" she demanded. "And what do you mean by hanging on to the back of my car like that? You asked for trouble, and you got it!"

Babs was controlling her temper with an effort. She remembered suddenly that this was Mr. Braggott's daughter—the girl whom, Avril had said, had taken the gold wrist-watch which had been the cause of Avril's dismissal.

She eyed Pearl levelly, wondering swiftly why this girl who obviously wallowed in the lap of luxury, whose fur coat must have cost all of a hundred guineas, should have stooped to so petty a crime.

"My name," the Form captain said, "is Barbara Redfern, and I would like to see your father—about Avril Rayner, the girl whom Mr. Braggott dismissed yesterday," she added, watching keenly for the effect those words had on the millionaire's daughter.

Pearl gave a faint start, then sneered.

"Oh, that thief!"

Babs flushed hotly.

"I'm sure Avril is not a thief!" she protested, and thought quickly for the right words. "Miss Braggott," Babs went on appealingly, "won't you please ask your father to reconsider his decision? After all, you will lose nothing by it, and this dismissal means everything to Avril—"

Two spots of flame rushed into Pearl's cheeks.

"What do you mean—I have nothing to lose?" she demanded; and by the way Pearl said that, Babs knew that the millionaire's daughter indeed had a guilty conscience.

She smiled disarmingly.

"What should I mean but that you are in a better position than anyone else to speak to Mr. Braggott? You are his daughter—he will listen to you. Won't you please help Avril, Miss Braggott? Your father refuses to see me."

"And quite right to do that. There was a relieved note in Pearl's tone. "And I want nothing more to do with you! Leave these grounds immediately!"

"But, Miss Braggott—"

How Barbara Redfern loathed pleading with this insolent young woman, who was willing to let an innocent girl suffer for her own sins. How she wanted to tell Pearl Braggott what she really thought of her!

Pearl stamped her feet imperiously.

"Get out, I say!" she said furiously. "Get out, or I'll have you thrown out!"

"Yes; and I'll do the throwing out myself!" came another voice.

Mr. Braggott himself came striding down the drive in short, jerky steps. He thrust himself in front of Barbara, glaring at her from under his bushy brows, swishing a heavy walking-stick.

"I thought I gave orders that you were not to be admitted," he hooted. "I'll see Perkins about this. I'll sack the fool—"

"If you mean the lodgekeeper," broke in Babs swiftly, "it was not his fault."

"No, daddy dear," cooed Pearl. "This—this girl had the cheek to jump on my car as I came in—"

"Impudence!" stormed the millionaire. "Listen!" he went on grimly.

"I absolutely forbid you to come into these grounds! I don't want to see you, and I won't see you—don't you hear? That Rayner girl is a thief; and then

she had the insolence to accuse my daughter!"

He almost choked in his wrath.

"You're Redfern's daughter, aren't you?" Mr. Braggott stormed. "Then if you come here again, I'll have something to say to Redfern which he won't like—remember that, my girl! And another thing. You're from Cliff House, aren't you? Then listen to this! If you pester me any more, I'll see that Cliff House doesn't take part in the Courtfield pageant. It's my money that's running the show, and what I say goes! Understand? Now"—he half-raised his stick—"now go!"

Barbara Redfern, humiliated as she had never been humiliated in her life before, held her head high. She couldn't help the contemptuous words which sprang to her lips then.

"Mr. Braggott," she said cuttingly, "your name should have been Mr. Braggart!"

And then, while the millionaire turned a purplish red, while Pearl watched her with that sneeringly insolent expression of hers, Barbara Redfern whipped round and strode off down the drive towards the gates.

VERY THOUGHTFULLY Barbara Redfern made her way up the steps of Cliff House School.

She had just arrived back after that very unpleasant interview with Mr. Julius Braggott, and certainly the millionaire's words gave her much food for thought.

The usual sunny smile was missing from the junior captain's pretty face. Those deep blue eyes of hers, usually so bright and sparkling with the joy of life, were clouded.

She had failed completely in her efforts on behalf of Avril Rayner. She had made not the slightest impression on the hard, overbearing owner of Braggott Manor.

The millionaire had significantly hinted that if she persisted in her attempts to approach him, he would have something to say to her father. If that was a threat—if, in any way, he could place Mr. Redfern in an embarrassing position—she did not know. But it was disturbing—very.

Equally disturbing was Mr. Braggott's open threat to use his influence in preventing Cliff House from taking part in the famous Courtfield Pageant. Babs herself was as keen as any in

the school to appear in that historic spectacle.

And yet— She did so want to help Avril.

It was a worried Barbara, therefore, who slowly made her way to Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form passage. Dinner was over, of course. It would soon be time for afternoon lessons.

And then, pushing open the study door, she gave a start of surprise, and her eyes lit up in a welcome greeting.

"Why, Avril!" she exclaimed. "I didn't expect to see you here."

Avril Rayner, sitting in the armchair where she had been talking to golden-haired Mabel Lynn, rose with a glad cry.

"Barbara," she said, "I came over to see you, and Mabel told me you had gone to—Braggott Manor. What—what happened?"

Mabs, excusing herself hastily, quitted the study, leaving Babs and Avril alone.

Rather miserably Babs told her story, omitting to mention anything about the millionaire's threats, however. Avril's eagerness faded at once, leaving her sad and troubled.

"Oh, Barbara," she said, "you were a brick to go and see him. I—I'm awfully sorry you had to suffer such humiliation." She sighed. "Please don't worry any more on my account. I—I'm afraid we can't possibly do anything. I'll look round for another job, but it—it's going to be terribly difficult without a reference. If only I could get hold of that ticket—"

"What ticket?" asked Babs.

"The pawnticket," explained Avril.

"You see, Pearl wanted money badly. She had spent all her dress allowance, and she didn't dare ask Mr. Braggott for the cash to pay a dressmaker's bill. That was why she took the watch. She pawned it—at least, I believe she got somebody else to pawn it for her. Now if I could only get the pawnticket, it would prove that I didn't take the watch. You do see, don't you, Barbara?"

"I see all right," replied Babs, thinking swiftly. "Do you know where the ticket is? Can't you get hold of it?"

Avril shook her head sadly.

"No," Pearl got it in her handbag. I saw her putting it there. She hopes to get the watch back again, of course, but by then it will be too late to help me."

Babs' brow wrinkled; she was thinking swiftly.

"You're right, Avril," she said. "If we could only get that ticket it would go a long way towards proving your innocence. But the question is—how?"

Yes, how—when she and Avril were barred admittance into the grounds of Braggott Manor? When the millionaire and his daughter would utterly refuse to see them on any pretext?

How—

As in a flash, inspiration suddenly came to the junior captain.

The pageant!

It could be worked through the pageant. Hadn't she read on that poster that the procession, after a triumphant tour through the streets of Courtfield, was to finish up in Braggott Manor, that there the performers were to be entertained to a lavish tea by the millionaire?

Then if she took part in the procession, she would be allowed in with the rest of the performers without question. She would actually be a guest in the house itself.

Then would she have a chance to get the vital pawnticket, for it was a certainty that Pearl would be there as the



DECORATED WITH WALLPAPER

What could be more elegant than this flowery notepaper? And it is so simply done, too.

I AM quite sure that stowed away in a corner of the house you'll find a roll of old flowery wallpaper. I don't suppose for one minute that anyone will mind your using it.

If you're unlucky you'll have to wait till spring-cleaning time, or, better still, ask a decorator to let you have an old book. He'll be pleased enough to see the back of it, and in time you'll find a use for every page.

My suggestion is that you begin by getting hold of some notepaper, envelopes, post and correspondence cards, and a box that will take the lot. Now you can set to work.

Cut as many small sprays of flowers from the wallpaper as you require for the notepaper and cards you intend to decorate. Simplify the sprays as much as possible as nigly leaves and tiny buds are a nuisance to cut out decently.

Stick each spray in the left hand top corner of a sheet of notepaper. Use a paint-brush for the paste as you'll spoil the spray if you get paste over the edge, and you'll also get colour coming off on the notepaper, too.

If the sprays are too large for the cards, cut smaller ones, putting them also in the left-hand top corner.

Now for the envelopes. Cut out single flowers for each envelope and paste on to the flap at the back. This is a very pretty finish, and does not take many minutes.

Cut out a large spray or a number of small ones and stick on the outside of the box, and strips one and a half inches wide to make the envelopes into packets.





CHUCKLING softly, the Fourth saw the four seniors emerge from their dormitory. The jape was working exactly as planned—so far!

host's daughter. And how she'd love to show off before everybody, in any case.

Oh, it was a wonderful thought! It was a solution to their problem.

Babs seized Avril by the arm, and almost whirled her round the room in a dance of gladness.

"Avril," she cried, "I've thought of a way. We'll get the ticket yet. No, don't ask me how just yet. Let me get all the necessary arrangements fixed up first." But—sudden thought occurred to Babs which made her frown—"it won't come off until Saturday week. Will that be too late? I can't possibly work it before."

Avril Rayner, her eyes shining with a new hope, smiled eagerly.

"That should be all right, Barbara," she said. "Pearl gets her allowance every month, and she certainly won't be able to get the watch back until she's in funds again—and that won't be for a fortnight's time."

Five minutes later, after having said good-bye to a very excited Avril, Babs was dashing towards the library, her own blue eyes sparkling. On the way she met Mabs and Clara and Bessie and one or two others.

"Mabs," exclaimed the captain, "we'll have a look at that Courtfield history book now, shall we? It's back in the library now, and we've just got time before lessons. We must get out an idea for the tableau. The Fourth has got to take part in the pageant!" Immediate enthusiasm and a rush towards the library!

And there, in the lofty, book-lined apartment, Babs and other Fourth Formers pored over "A History of Ancient Courtfield."

Mabs and Babs and Clara sat down at one of the tables in the library, the volume before them, while the other girls stood looking over their shoulders.

Swiftly Babs turned the pages, looking for a chapter which she remembered having read, and which if her memory was not at fault, offered just the very subject for the Fourth Form tableau.

"Here it is!" said Babs eagerly. "Read this chapter, Mabs, and see if you don't think it'll work up into a marvellous tableau!"

They all read it, and faces glowed with enthusiasm as they read.

For that chapter was a vivid description of how, back in Tudor times, the good people of Courtfield had subscribed the money for the building of a man-o'-war to sail with the English fleet against the Spanish Armada, and for which patriotic action Queen Elizabeth had graciously granted a charter to the town.

And then had come the day when the good ship Courtfield had embarked from Pegg, to join Drake's fleet at Plymouth Hoe. She had been under the command of Captain Rover, whose fair and beautiful daughter, Patricia, had sailed with him.

For many months was the Courtfield away at sea. Her crew had covered themselves with glory when fighting the galleons of Spain. But Captain Rover had been fatally wounded—and on his death his daughter Patricia took command of the man-o'-war.

Skilfully and bravely had Patricia continued to give battle with the Spaniards. The book went on to describe how she had actually captured a galleon, loaded with gold and precious cargo, and how she had brought it back to England in triumph. For which the fair Patricia had become Lady Patricia, honoured throughout the land.

"Well"—Babs' blue eyes were pools of dancing excitement—"what do you think about that, Mabs? Can't you just see a gorgeous tableau—representing a man-o'-war, with the fair Patricia standing on the prow, leading her ship into battle against the Spaniards!"

"It's marvellous!" exclaimed Mabs. "Ripping!" came a chorus from the other girls.

"Then," Babs said gaily, closing the book with a snap. "I'm going along to see Primmy now. I'll tell her that this is what the Fourth proposes to do for the pageant!"

CURLED UP in a big, deep armchair, on the other side of the library, sat a girl who had listened tensely to every word of the animated conversation between the chums of the Fourth.

The girl was Florence Ellison of the Fifth Form.

Babs & Co. did not know she was there; and Florence had been careful not to reveal her presence.

Sunk deep in the armchair, with its padded head-rests and its broad back to the juniors, she was completely hidden from their view. That she should have been in the library at the time of the arrival of Babs & Co. was not due to design, but because she had been hunting up a reference on India which she would require in the geography lesson that afternoon.

But the book lay unheeded in her lap now. Her dark eyes gleamed with a cunning expression.

As a member of the Fifth Form—and not one of its most pleasant members, either—Florence had had no compunction in eavesdropping upon the Fourth as they discussed their plans for the pageant.

She smiled craftily as she heard Babs & Co. departed from the library, after having replaced "A History of Ancient Courtfield" in the bookcase from which they had taken it.

Five seconds later Florence was sitting up in the armchair.

"So that's what they intend to do, is it?" she muttered. "Well, I'll put a spoke in their wheel, or my name's not Florence Ellison! But it's a ripping idea—Flora must have been blind to miss it when she borrowed that book. Still, that's like her! I must put the Fourth out of the running, and then suggest that idea for a tableau to the Fifth."

It wasn't because Florence had the interests of her own Form at heart that she was saying that, but purely for a selfish motive. Very much did Florence want the Fifth to be represented in the pageant; but only because she herself wanted to be a performer.

Which was why Florence had already

seen to it that the Fourth Form had earned a black mark, owing to the discovery of the missing book in their Common-room. It was Florence who had taken the volume and hidden it under the cushion, although the Fourth had blamed, and still blamed, Flora Cann.

"My hat!" murmured Florence, rising to her feet and throwing the book she had been reading into the chair. "It was a bit of luck overhearing those Fourth Formers talking about their tableau. The Fifth will jump at that idea, and if I suggest it to them they'll have to include me in the show. And then—"

"She smiled. Then she would be able to impress that rich friend of hers who lived near by. And the name of that friend was: Pearl Braggott!"

"I'll get on the phone to Pearl now," Florence decided, her cunning brain working swiftly. "Mr. Braggott's practically running the pageant, and if he was to tell Primmy—"

The unpopular Fifth Form broke off in her thoughts and chuckled aloud.

Straight to the telephone in the Sixth Form Common-room went Florence Ellison, and after carefully closing the door, rang through to Braggott Manor.

She spoke to Pearl, and the subsequent conversation, whatever it was, evidently gave Florence cause for much satisfaction. There was certainly a satisfied smile on her mean face as she left the Common-room.

WHILE IN Miss Primrose's study, Barbara Redfern stood facing the headmistress.

Leaving her chums outside the library, she had hurried along to the Head's sanctum, and there explained her idea for the tableau with an eagerness and enthusiasm which made Miss Primrose smile.

"I must say it is a splendid idea, Barbara," the headmistress approved. "Really splendid. It captures the spirit of the age—it illustrates in the most picturesque way a scene which made history in Courtfield. You could not choose a better tableau for the pageant. But, Barbara," she added, with a slight frown, "you must remember that not yet have I decided which Form, other than the Sixth, is to take part."

Babs' eagerness faded suddenly. "I regret to say that the Fourth has this week earned one or two black marks, and I said that only the Form with the best record of behaviour should

have the honour of participating," continued the headmistress. "However, I see no reason why the Fourth should not begin to rehearse—"

Tr-r-r-ring!
She was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone-bell. Bidding Barbara to remain, Miss Primrose drew the telephone towards her and unhooked the receiver.

"Hallo!" she said, in her quiet voice. "Hallo! Is that Miss Primrose?" The voice which replied seemed to crackle in the receiver; it was so metallically loud and discordant that the headmistress was forced to hold the earpiece away from her ear.

While Babs gave a sudden start. Surely she recognised that voice—

"This is Mr. Julius Braggott, of Braggott Manor!" Over the telephone the millionaire's tone was gratefully harsh. "I have another complaint to make concerning one of your girls."

"Oh!" Miss Primrose frowned. "I am sorry to hear that—"

The name of the girl is Barbara Redfern," interrupted Mr. Braggott rudely. "She came here this afternoon, in defiance of my orders. She has been pestering me, Miss Primrose, and making a nuisance of herself. It has got to stop—to stop, d'you hear?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Braggott," Miss Primrose objected to being spoken to in that peremptory way.

But again the millionaire cut her short.

"Another thing! I understand this girl is in the Fourth Form of your school, and that she might be taking part in the pageant. Then if she is a sample of the girls in that Form we don't want them in the pageant. It's my money which is running the show, and what I say goes. Please see to it that the Fourth Form is not represented. You will be getting a letter from the Courtfield Council confirming this."

"Really! Really, Mr. Braggott—" expostulated the headmistress, flushing with annoyance.

The millionaire had already rung off, however. There was a loud click as he slammed down the receiver.

For a moment or two the headmistress sat looking at the telephone, as if hoping that the frigidness of her expression would be transmitted over the wires to wither up the man who had spoken to her so rudely.

Then, with a deep, deep breath she turned to Barbara. The junior captain stood like one stunned.

"Barbara!" said Miss Primrose.

"That was a call from Mr. Braggott. A—a most unpleasant gentleman, I must confess, but apparently he has every reason to be angry. He complains that you have once again annoyed him. What explanation have you for this extraordinary behaviour?"

"What could Babs say to that? Flushing and paling by turns, she stood there mutely. How could she explain, when to do so would involve Avril? Miss Primrose, not knowing Avril as she knew her, would not understand. In any case, Avril would not like her disgrace being made public.

So Babs remained silent.

"Then you have no explanation," the headmistress said grimly. "Really, Barbara, I am not at all pleased with your behaviour lately. You came in to see me about the Fourth Form being represented in the pageant. Then I must inform you that solely because of your action Mr. Braggott has apparently exerted his influence with the Courtfield Council and has prevailed upon them to demand that the Fourth shall not take any part in it."

"Oh, Miss Primrose!" cried Babs brokenly.

"You have only yourself to blame!" The Head's tone was unbending. "You should think before you do these foolish things. I trust that in future you will give Mr. Braggott no cause for further complaint. And now, Barbara, I am busy. You may go."

"But—but, Miss Primrose—"

"Please go!"

And Barbara, her cup of bitterness filled to overflowing, went.

IN AN agony of worry and despair, Babs sank down into the armchair in Study No. 4.

Bessie and Mabs were not there; they, with the rest of the Fourth, were already in the class-room. But Babs was heedless of the fact that she would be late for afternoon lessons.

She was thankful that her chums had not been awaiting her. How could she tell them the dreadful news? What would they say when they knew that the Fourth was barred from the pageant, and that she was to blame? Her efforts to help Avril had ended in disaster—for herself and for the rest of the Form.

Babs certainly did not know that disaster had been brought about by Florence Ellison. For, angry though the millionaire had been with her, he had not contemplated taking such drastic steps. It was his daughter who had urged him on to act in that manner, after Pearl had received the telephone call from Florence.

"Oh, what can I do—what can I do?" groaned Babs miserably.

She pondered that problem till her head ached, then suddenly a desperate resolve came to her.

She would not tell the Fourth that they were barred from the pageant.

"I'll let them think that everything is all right," she told herself grimly. "We'll start rehearsing—get absolutely perfect. And, meantime—"

Meaning she must discover a way of getting the ban lifted. It was a gamble—a big gamble—but she would win through if it were at all humanly possible.

She must win through! Not only for the sake of the Form, for the sake of her own reputation, but for the sake of Avril, to prove whose innocence she must take part in the pageant.

Thus Babs decided—a decision which was to have dramatic and unexpected developments.

Rightly or wrongly, Babs has made her decision—not to tell her chums that the Fourth is barred from the forthcoming pageant. This resolve has tremendous results, as you will see when you read next Saturday's enthralling long complete Cliff House School story, the title of which is:—

"THE CLIFF HOUSE CONSPIRATOR"

Hilda Richards is the author of this magnificent tale; and the Conspirator is—who do you think? Make sure of reading this absorbing narrative by ordering at once your copy of THE SCHOOLGIRL. And be sure to tell all your chums about the splendid stories now appearing in your favourite paper.