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# The Schoolgirl

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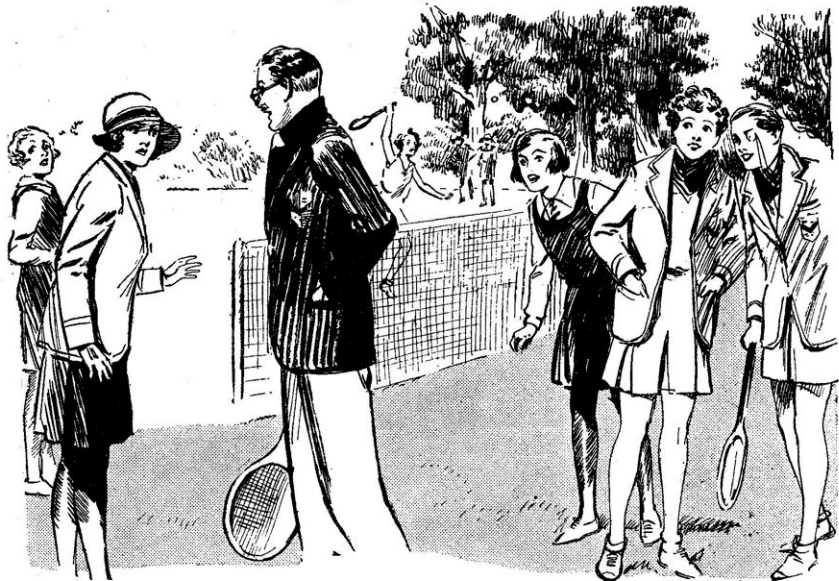
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## BEGINNING a New Series of Complete Cliff House School Stories, Featuring Marjorie Hazeldene



# THE SECRET THEY SHARED

### Shock for Marjorie

"**F**ALL in, the tennis team!" The cheery voice of Clara Trevlyn, junior games captain at Cliff House School, echoed along the Fourth Form corridor.

"My hat, buck up, you slow coaches!" Clara cried exasperatedly. "We've no time to waste. Apart from which the new games coach arrives this afternoon. We ought to be on the courts when he turns up!"

The door of Study No. 4 opened. Barbara Redfern, captain of the Form, looking extremely neat and pretty in her tennis outfit, appeared.

"Great goodness, don't you make a row!" she cried, and inclined her head over her shoulder. "Mabs, are you ready?"

"One tick," the cheerful voice of Mabel Lynn answered.

"Well, thank goodness somebody's shown up," Clara glowered. "Here have I been, hawking my lungs out for about three hours! Where are the others? Jean! Jean!"

"A-dsum!" Jean Cartwright's cheerful voice answered. The door of Study No. 8 swept open, and out stepped the long-legged Scots junior, swinging her tennis racket. "Everybody else ready?"

But everybody else was not ready. Frances Frost, for instance, was a conspicuous absentee. Neither had appeared Clara's own particular chum, Marjorie Hazeldene, from Study No. 7. Clara, bursting with enthusiasm, anxious to be up and doing, looked exasperated.

"Frances! Marjorie!" she cried.

By

**HILDA RICHARDS**

*Illustrations by Laidler*

"Come on, you slackers! We're waiting!"

"Frances is on the court already," Matilda Tattersall volunteered, peering out of Study No. 12.

"Then Marjorie— Oh, my hat! Wait a minute! I'll go and get her!"

And Clara, clucking her impatience, strode off towards Study No. 7. She threw the door open. A girl swung round at her entry—a girl whose face was pale, whose eyes wore a rather worried expression. But she was not dressed for tennis. She was dressed for going out.

Clara stared.

"Marjorie! Don't you know it's practice-time?"

Marjorie bit her lips.

"Yes, but— Oh, Clara, do you

**MARJORIE HAZELDENE**

is at first the only girl at Cliff House who knows David Grantham's secret. And Marjorie, loyal friend that she is, pledges herself to aid the new Cliff House tennis coach—when she knows who he really is!

mind—dreadfully?" she asked. "I—I have to go out!"

"But where?"

Marjorie crimsoned.

"Well, to—to Friar-dale School—"

Clara's eyes widened.

"But why?"

"Clara!" came Barbara Redfern's voice from along the corridor.

But Clara was paying no heed. Rather strangely she was staring at Marjorie. Marjorie, whose lips were twitching nervously, whose gentle face betrayed the most disturbing of emotions. Clara frowned in mystification. She felt a little disappointed; a little resentful.

For Clara had worked hard to include Marjorie in the tennis team, which was to take part in the forthcoming Court-field Tournament, even though, finally, she had only included Marjorie as a reserve.

The height of Clara's present ambition was for Cliff House to win that tournament, especially as a male coach had been specially commissioned to train the team.

"But why?" she pressed now.

"Well—" Marjorie shook her head.

"Clara, it's Ralph!"

"Ralph? Your cousin at Friar-dale, you mean?"

Marjorie nodded.

"Well, what about Ralph?"

"That—that's what I don't know."

Marjorie spoke in a troubled whisper.

"But—oh, it's not like him, Clara. You know, don't you, that he usually comes to see me every week? He—he hasn't been near for a fortnight, and—and—"

The faltering voice broke a little. "Four days ago I sent him a signet-ring for his birthday."

Clara shrugged.

"Well, my goodness! I thought it was something serious! There's nothing the matter with old Ralph. You've got to remember, what with cricket and sports fixtures, and so on, he's probably been busy. After all—"

"Yes, I know," Marjorie agreed. "But—oh, Clara, you don't understand. I haven't told you yet. I—I sent that ring to Friardale. I got a note back from Ralph. But it wasn't from Friardale. It was from London!"

Clara blinked.

"You mean—he's left Friardale?"

"I—I don't know. That's what I want to go to find out."

Clara frowned. Her mood had changed. She was all sympathy now. She knew how Marjorie loved that reckless, dare-devil cousin of hers.

"Poor old kid," she said tenderly. "But cheer up! I don't expect you'll find anything very terrible has happened. But, anyway," she added, "it's no use your going to Friardale yet, because the next bus is not due for half an hour. Come down and have a look at the tennis. All right!" she shouted through the study door as Babs' impatient voice came again. "We're coming!"

Marjorie hesitated.

"You—you don't mind, Clara?"

"Of course not. Come on!"

They went out, arm-in-arm, rejoicing the rest of the team at the head of the staircase.

"And about time, too!" Babs sniffed. "What on earth have you two been chattering about? Hallo, Marjorie! Not dressed for tennis? Aren't you playing?"

Marjorie flushed a little.

"No, I have to go out later."

"Oh, I say," cried Jean. "Aren't you going to wait to see the new coach?"

Marjorie smiled faintly. Cliff House was just wildly excited about the new coach. Nobody had seen him yet, though it was a well-known fact that, in the company of Major-General Mabbeson, the new chairman of the board of governors, who had sponsored his appointment, he had visited the school yesterday while the girls were at lessons.

Great was the speculation and the interest. For David Grantham was coming to Cliff House with a reputation. He had won his tennis belt at his Varsity.

An unfortunate young man, apparently, whose Varsity career had been interrupted by the crashing of his father's business in London. He had left the University after only twelve months' tuition there, and was now obliged to take up coaching in order to make a living.

Half the Fourth Form were on the courts when the team arrived—not attracted by the team itself, but by the news that the new coach would be turning up that afternoon. There was a sprinkling of the Sixth there, too, and quite a few of the juniors from the Upper and Lower Third.

The team was hailed with a good-natured cheer.

"Has he come yet?" Clara asked eagerly.

"Who?" Jemima Carstairs asked owlishly.

"Why, the new coach, of course."

"No coach," Jemima assured her seriously, "has crossed my line of vision, fair Spartan. I saw Miss Primrose's Daimler staggering down the drive just now, but one would hardly describe that as a coach in these merry modern times."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Quite a laugh there was at Jemima's sally—from all except haughty Frances Frost, who, disdainfully holding aloof as usual, sneered.

"Why all the fuss? Most girls' schools I've heard of have not only men coaches but men masters."

"Oh, but then," mocked Jean Cartwright, "your schools are so frightfully exclusive, aren't they?"

At which there was another laugh, and at which Frances Frost, with a shrug, turned away.

"Well, we may as well start," Clara Trevlyn said. "No sense in wasting time. Standing about like this won't help our tennis, and it may be hours before Mr. Grantham turns up. Hi, there, clear the court everybody! Mabs, will you partner me in a double against Babs and Jean?"

"What-ho!" grinned Mabel Lynn. "Frances, will you be umpire?"

"Why should I be umpire?" Frances asked.

"O.K.! Keep your feathers on. Marjorie, will you?"

Marjorie paused.

She looked anxiously at her wrist-watch.

"Well, you won't be long, will you?" she asked haltingly.

"No, of course not! You cut whenever you want to!" Clara said.

Marjorie nodded, with a sigh. Dear, gentle Marjorie—who could never endure disappointing anyone or hurting their feelings! But, all the same, she looked anxious.

She was most desperately anxious to get to Friardale. A deepening conviction that something was seriously wrong had grown upon her until she felt she would never rest until she had seen her cousin and heard his explanation.

"Away!" Clara Trevlyn cried gaily. "Marjorie, keeping the score?"

"Fifteen—love!" Marjorie said.

"Right! First point!" Clara chuckled, and snatched up the ball. "Now, Babs, mind your eye!" she called merrily, and banged it over the net into the opposite court. "Too bad!"—as Babs missed. "Thirty—love to us, Marjorie!"

Marjorie smiled. She was keeping the score all right. But her mind was still on Ralph. She was only giving half her attention to the game. She did not hear the sudden stir about her, did not see the form which came and stood beside her, until, following a really marvellous return by Babs, who met a full volley at the net, a pair of heavy hands applauded in her ear, and then she looked up—and stared.

For beside her stood a man—a young, strikingly handsome man in white flannels, with a short, black, clipped moustache, and wearing a pair of faintly tinted, horn-rimmed spectacles.

He grinned at her, disclosing a set of white teeth.

"Good stroke!" he said, approaching. "Very good! Er!"—and then meeting her gaze, for some reason turned his head away—"er—are you umpiring?"

"Yes, Marjorie said faintly.

"Oh, well, supposing I relieve you?" he said. "I'm the new games master, David Grantham. I gather this is the team I'm expected to coach. Good shot, Clara!" he applauded.

Marjorie blinked. Clara! She stared in sudden fascination at the man, feeling oddly that she had met him somewhere before. Something about him was familiar. Was it his build, his hair, some quality in his

voice? She could not be certain. How did he know it was Clara? He was new—

"I—I—" she stammered.

But Nancy Bell, the sneak of the Fourth, whose thin, spiteful face was animated all at once, pushed her way in front of her.

"Oh, Mr. Grantham," she smirked, "let me be the first to introduce myself! I'm Nancy Bell."

"Eh, Bell?" He jerked upright. "Oh, yes—Bell—Nancy Bell!" he laughed, immediately covering the trace of embarrassment which had characterised his recognition of the name. "Er—glad to meet you, and all that. That was a good stroke!" he added, as Mabel Lynn hooked down a high shot just in the nick of time.

"Good tennis you play here, Miss Bell. You a member of the team?"

"No," Nancy said. "But I play tennis, you know."

"Oh, is that so! Then we'll have a game later—eh?"

"I'd love it!" Nancy smirked.

And she smiled delightedly, flinging a look at the girls clustered round, which was obviously meant to imply that she had made a conquest.

But very few were looking at Nancy. They were all regarding the new games coach. In more than one eye there was a glint of admiration; in more than one face an expression which showed an eagerness to be introduced. Whispers were going round, admiring whispers, some of which the young man must have heard.

"Isn't he handsome?" "What a nice-looking man!" "And how smart his flannels!"

But if he did hear he remained impervious to the compliments. He was watching the tennis with keen and critical eyes.

"No, no," he cried, "too hard!"—as Clara made a bold stroke.

And at that Clara looked round, for the first time aware of his presence, and guessed who he was. Immediately she waved her racket, calling the game to a conclusion. She stepped off the court.

Very frank, very searching the Tom-boy's gaze at she looked up at David Grantham.

"Oh, I say, are you Mr. Grantham?"

"My name," he said, with good humour.

"Oh, topping! I'm Clara Trevlyn, the captain of the tennis team. This is Barbara Redfern, and this—"

In turn she introduced the girls, while the man, laughing boyishly, shook hands all round.

"Well, I'm glad to meet you," he said, "and as there's no time like the present, supposing we start work at once? Now, Miss Trevlyn, you first, as you're captain. There are a few faults I must correct at the outset. Wait just a minute." And he peeled off his coat. "I say," he said to Marjorie, "will you look after this for me?"

"Yes," Marjorie said, as one in a dream.

She threw the coat over her arm. With eyes that were almost mesmerised, she followed the tall, athletic figure, as, surrounded by the team, he strode on to the court. That walk, his build, his face—how well they fitted in with—

But no, no! It could not be! It was preposterous, Marjorie told herself—until, happening to look down at the blazer left in her hands, she saw written in marking-ink beneath the tab a name. And at sight of that name Marjorie suddenly strook, feeling as if

she had been suddenly dealt a violent blow. For the name was:

"R. LAWRENCE."

Ralph! Her own cousin! Was it possible? Could it be that Ralph Lawrence and David Grantham were one and the same?



Brother and Sister

"NO. Miss Trevlyn! One or two slight faults," the new master said cheerfully. "First the stance. Don't stand with your feet too wide apart. Stand like this—the weight on the toes, ready to fly off at once. Second fault—the way you grip your racket. Grip it here—just at the end of the handle. Leave your wrist free and loose. At the moment, you know, you hold your racket rather as if it were a ping-pong bat. Try it now."

Clara flushed. She took her position on the service line again, clutching her racket.

Krately she gave the new games master full marks there and then. It was obvious at once that he knew his job. She had been conscious that something was wrong with her grip. This young man smoothed the whole difficulty out with just a few words.

"Now, take your stance. That's it. Just a little more on the toes—see? Now, don't you find that better? Now serve to Miss Redfern."

Clara served. The crowd gathered round, watching—attracted, it is to be feared, not by the tennis, but by the new coach. No doubt he knew his job. No doubt at all that he was the expert they had all been forewarned he would be. Clara's service under this new tutor was a delight to watch.

"Good!" he said. "I see we're going to get on well. Now try it again, Miss Trevlyn. And again, and again. We've

got to work hard. We just must win that Courtfest Tournament, you know."

There, wasn't he just delightful! Entering like that into the very spirit, not of the game, but the school itself.

We must just win—just as if he were a member of the school itself, and that tournament were the dearest thing in life to him.

If Clara had been filled with admiration before, she became now absolutely overwhelmed with hero-worship. Here was a young man after the Tomboy's own heart, indeed.

Ten, twelve times he made her serve; then, nodding, went over to coach Barbara Redfern.

Then Mabs—he wasn't at all satisfied with her backhand stroke, he said—she should keep her wrist down.

Even Jean Cartwright, reckoned to be the best tennis player in the Fourth, had to come in for her share of criticism and correction. And Jean, accepting it at its true value, quickly learned. But when the new master endeavoured to correct Frances Frost, she scowled.

"I don't see what is wrong with my service," she said. "You're the first one who's noticed anything."

"Exactly," he smiled, in no wise put out. "That's my job, you see. What I'm sent here for. If you were all like Helen Willis, then I, poor beggar, should be out of a job. Now, please, Miss Frost, just let's do it again."

Frances scowled. But she did it, winning a handlap from David Grantham as she performed.

"Good," he said, "very good! Now, once again—and then, if you like, I'll take you all on for five minutes each, just to see how you do shape. Now, Miss Trevlyn. Singles, please. Your serve—and remember what I told you."

Delightedly Clara took her stance. Oh, this was great! The crowd around the court, swelling every moment, looked on. Now they would see what the new master himself was made of—and didn't they see it before the game was one minute old! Clara did her best, but Clara was hopelessly beaten.

"You'll come on, though," he told her. "One or two little faults you still have. Just tiny ones, but they must be

remedied. Hail, Caesar, who's the next?" he added. "Miss Lynn?"

A storm of rapture greeting his service against Mabs. What a player the man was!

Then Jean—and the school stood on tiptoe, for the new master was playing the champion. To and fro across the net the ball flew. For a few moments there was nothing to choose between them, it seemed. Then a strong volley beat Jean.

"Fifteen—love," sang out Clara. "Mind your step, Jean!"

Jean did mind her step, putting every ounce of her skill into the game. She scored points, but it was obvious the new master was altogether too much for her. Frances Frost, who possessed supreme confidence in her own ability, never even scored a point.

"I'm sorry," the new master said. "I told you I was going all out. Now Clara—"

"But I say, wait a minute," and Nancy Bell pushed her way forward. "You did promise me a game, you know, Mr. Grantham."

He paused. "Do you mind, girls?"

"Well, Nancy's not in the team!" Clara objected.

"Oh, bother your old team!" Nancy pouted pettishly. "Mr. Grantham did promise, didn't you, Mr. Grantham? We've a right to ask him to play if we want to, haven't we?"

"Yes, hear, hear!" Lydia Crossendale supported from the crowd.

Clara bit her lip. A hot retort trembled on her lips. But she wasn't going to provoke a quarrel in front of the new master, and she turned away, joining Marjorie Hazeldene on the side lines.

"Blessed cheek!" she said angrily. "Of course, Nancy would push herself forward! But—and she became aware then of something strange in the expression of Marjorie's face. "Marjorie, old girl, what's the matter? You look as if you were seeing ghosts!"

Marjorie, with a guilty look at the blazer under her arm, forced a faint smile.

"Oh, I—I'm all right!"



TO the chums' amazement, Marjorie suddenly broke away from them and raced after the departing figure of the new tennis coach. "Marjorie!" Clara yelled; but her chum took no notice. It was vital that she should speak to Mr. Grantham!

"But you're not," Clara said, in concern. "Marjorie, what's happened?"

"Oh, nothing!" Marjorie cried distractedly. "I say, look at that!"

Desperately she withdrew the Tom-boy's attention from herself to the game.

It was a game at which, however, most of the girls were tittering. Nancy was playing so fiercely. Really, Nancy was straining every nerve, but it was obvious that the new master was just doing as he pleased. A shot that would hardly have deceived Bessie Bunter, he allowed to slip past him.

"Mine!" Nancy cried jubilantly. "Oh, my hat, I'm beating you!"

"That's right, Miss Bell," he agreed. "Your service," and threw the ball to her.

Nancy was beating him, but it was obvious to everybody except the sneak of the Fourth that he was allowing her to beat him—perhaps to get the game over and get on with the real work.

But Marjorie, looking on, shook her head. Again—how like Ralph! Just the sort of trick he would play.

She was no longer doubtful about the real identity of the games master. It was Ralph. But Ralph here—Ralph masquerading in somebody else's name. Ralph, who must have left Friardale without breathing a word. What did it mean?

No wonder Marjorie was feeling agitated.

The game came to an end. Nancy, flushed red with victory, flung up her racket and caught it in her glee. She rushed forward.

"Thank you for the game, Miss Bell," the master said genially. "I enjoyed it."

"But I beat you," Nancy said eagerly.

"Without a doubt you did." Nancy laughed. She felt happy then. Nancy had an opinion of her tennis which was very Bunter-like. And, Bunter-like, was shared by nobody else in the Form.

She felt she really had played a good game—and, judging by Nancy Bell's standards, she had. For Nancy had put forth every ounce of energy to score off the man who had beaten the champions of the Form with such consummate ease. She returned, glowing and breathless, to the side lines.

Straight up to Clara Trevlyn she went, facing her arrogantly. Her eyes were challenging.

"You saw that?" she said.

"It was," Clara agreed owlishly, "a sight for sore eyes!"

"I beat him!" Nancy puffed.

"And how!" asserted Leila Carroll gravely.

"Then," Nancy asked, "what about my place in the team now, Clara? You've always tried to make out I'm no good—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came an involuntary titter from Eleanor Storko.

"Well, what about it?" Clara asked seriously.

"Mr. Grantham beat you; I beat him."

"And that," Clara asked, "entitles you to your place in the Courtfield Tournament team?"

"Well, doesn't it?"

"Ask Mr. Grantham."

"Why, what—"

And then Nancy, staring around her, became aware of the grinning faces; she blinked, not understanding.

"Look here—"

"We're looking!"

"Jemima said humorously. "Odds bods! I never knew you could be so funny, Nancy—what?"

"Who's being funny?"

"Well, aren't you?" And Jemima adjusted her monocle and stared in surprise. "No, no, Nancy, don't ring off just yet!" she implored. "Keep it up—do! This is the richest dish of mirth since Bessie Bunter's millionaire uncle came to Cliff House to borrow half-a-crown!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Jemima!" expostulated the fat one.

Nancy glared.

"But why," she demanded furiously, "are you all grinning? I did beat him."

"Oh, stop being a duffer!" Rosa Rodworth put in shortly. "Any idiot with a blind eye could see that he was just fooling with you."

"What?"

But it dawned on Nancy then that there was something amiss; it dawned upon her that Rosa had hit upon the truth. Quite white turned Nancy for just a moment; the colour of triumph gave place to a pallor of anger.

Like so many other girls of her nature, Nancy, while enjoying in full measure the joke against others, could never take a joke against herself. Ridiculed, humiliated, she flung round upon David Grantham, as that much-admired new master came up.

"Aha! May one share the joke?" he asked. "I also have a sense of humour, you know. Miss Bell, you don't look pleased."

Nancy's spiteful little eyes glittered.

"I suppose you think that was funny!" she exclaimed.

"I beg your pardon."

"I suppose," Nancy asked bitterly, "that you're indulging your sense of humour, as you call it, by just playing cat and mouse with me?"

The master looked taken aback.

"Oh, come, now—"

"Well, thank you!" Nancy said bitterly. "But I don't like being made to look a fool, especially"—with venom—"by someone who's so down on his uppers that he has to come to teach tennis to a crowd of silly schoolgirls!"

"Nancy!" cried Marjorie.

"Nancy, you awful thing!"

"Mr. Grantham—"

"Well, he asked for it—and he deserves it!" Nancy flashed. "Perhaps he won't be so jolly clever next time!"

And then she struggled fiercely, as she found her wrists gripped, and, spinning round, discovered Clara's angry face within two inches of her own. "Let me go, you cat!"

"In a minute," Clara said. "That was an insult, Nancy. You'll apologise to Mr. Grantham."

"I won't!"

"No, please don't bother," the master said, with a smile. "I understand. I'm sorry, Miss Bell. I didn't really intend to play cat and mouse with you, you know. I thought you might be pleased to beat me."

But Nancy did not reply to that; with a bitter look in her eyes and hate in her expression, she tore herself away from Clara Trevlyn.

She was shaking with fury, beside herself now with the temper that consumed her. She felt suddenly that she hated this man—yes, hated him. And Nancy had such a capacity for hatred. She buried her face in her hands and ran.

The master's voice floated after her, full of contrition.

"Miss Bell! Miss Bell!"

But Nancy did not reply; she did not even turn round. Hatful, hateful!

She wanted to be out of it.

Just wait, though! She'd get her own back on him, showing her up like that!

Towards the gates she flew, almost without realising she was through them, flung out into the road.

And there she stopped with a sudden start as her name was spoken.

"Nancy!"

"Oh, go away!" Nancy cried.

"Nancy, you idiot!" And a hand gripped at her arm, tearing her hands from her face. A boy much older than Nancy herself, but whose lean and rather crafty features were startlingly reminding of hers, and who was dressed in the uniform of Friardale School, looked at her. "Nancy, it's your brother—Noah."

At that Nancy's tumult did subside; she stared wonderingly at the boy.

"But why—"

"Nancy, I want to talk to you—I must talk to you! I've been hanging about for an hour on the off-chance of seeing you." He looked guiltily up and down the road. "Nancy, you know Ralph Lawrence?"

Nancy blinked. There was something urgent, almost desperate, about Noah Bell's attitude.

"You mean Marjorie Hazeldene's cousin?"

"I mean," he said, "your new games coach—David Grantham. You didn't know, did you, that he and Lawrence are one and the same? And I only found it out by accident."

Nancy looked at her brother as if he had taken leave of his senses.

"Noah, what do you mean—one and the same? But it's impossible!"

He shook his head.

"It jolly well isn't! David Grantham and Ralph Lawrence are the same! But, Nancy—"

"Well, what's the matter?" The shock of her brother's astounding declaration had unnerved the sneak of the Fourth. The new coach Ralph Lawrence—Marjorie's cousin!

"Nancy, you've got to help me!" Noah rushed on. "You've got to help me to get rid of him! While he's at Cliff House I'm in the most deadly danger—deadly, I tell you! But come into the woods and I'll tell you all about it."



The Masquerader!

"MR. GRANTHAM, do come!"

"Yes, please have tea with us."

"Yes, rather, you know! We've got sus-some ripping cream puffs!"

But David Grantham laughingly shook his head.

"I'm sorry, girls—frightfully!" He glanced at his wrist-watch. "In precisely half an hour I have an appointment in Courtfield with your chairman of governors, Major-General Mabson, who, keen old Johnny that he is, has asked for a first-hand report upon your tennis prospects. Some other time—eh? If I may?"

"Oh!"

There was a chorus of disappointment. But perhaps the most disappointed of all was Clara Trevlyn, whose admiration for the new coach had soared to a pinnacle of hero-worship. Never before had Clara felt she made such strides in a single afternoon as from the tuition of this gay young coach.

"You're sure?" she asked.

"Alas, quite sure!" he said regretfully. "I must be pounding the merry old hoof right now. Miss Hazeldene, may I have my blazer, please?" And as

he turned towards her Marjorie surprised a look in his eyes that made her flush faintly. "No, please don't come and see me to the gates, girls," he added. "Till to-morrow, then! I'll give your love to the dear old general, shall I?"

"Oh, please do!"

They laughed; David Grantham, with a smile, turned away, followed by a dozen pairs of admiring eyes.

Very manly, very athletic was the back view he presented as he paced the ground with surprisingly tireless strides, that had in them no hint of the aftermath of the fatigue with which the afternoon's very strenuous exertion must have left him.

Marjorie stood with them, biting her lip, a cloud of uneasiness in her eyes.

Then as he vanished through the gates she suddenly broke loose. Clara stared.

"Marjorie!"

But Marjorie, like Nancy Bell, pretended not to hear. Mystified and amazed, the chums watched her as she pelted after the vanishing figure of the new coach.

"My hat, what's come over Marjorie?"

"What the dickens is she doing?"

"Marjorie!" shouted Clara.

Marjorie must have heard that, but she took no notice. She flew through the gates into the road. Ahead, the new coach was in the act of leaving the road to climb the stile that led through the woods. Marjorie desperately panted a name:

"Ralph!"

The coach stopped, stared, and looked round.

"Ralph, please—stop!" Marjorie jerked out.

He stopped. He climbed down into the road. Then as she came up, flushed and breathless, he caught her arm.

"Whoa, steady!" he cried. "You'll run yourself out of breath. Where's the fire?"

"Ralph, don't joke!" Marjorie gasped agitatedly. "Oh, Ralph, I've been on thorns all the afternoon. Ralph, what's happened? Why have you left Friardale? Why have you come here in another man's name? Ralph—"

He frowned a little, then shrugged. "Sounds like a newspaper competition," he said lightly. "Why, why, why? Hail, Caesar! How should I understand? Miss Hazeldene—"

"Ralph, please don't keep that up."

"Don't keep what up?" the other asked. "And why Ralph—just to put in a why of my own?" He smiled merrily.

Then Marjorie, who was just beginning to question her convictions, saw the gold signet ring she had sent him as a present for his last birthday, and conviction came rushing back.

"Ralph, please!" she begged desperately. "Don't fool me! I know who you are. Do you think I didn't recognise your name on the top of your blazer? What about that ring?"

He paused. For a second he stood looking at her. And then he shrugged.

"O.K.," he said. "I see you've hit it. That's what comes," he added, "of a mere man attempting to throw dust in the eyes of the gentler sex. Behold, Marjorie, the mask of David Grantham falls, and the true personality of Ralph Lawrence shines through!" And, so saying, he put a hand up to his face and plucked at his moustache.

"Ralph—" Marjorie begged desperately again. "Oh dear, put it on—in case anyone comes! Ralph, explain!"

He shrugged

"What is there to explain?"



WATCHING with bated breath, Marjorie saw the bag change hands. So Nancy Bell was now in possession of the coins. "And I've got to get them, if I'm to prove Ralph's innocence!" was Marjorie's instant thought.

"Well"—Marjorie gazed at him—"what isn't there to explain?" she asked. "Ralph, you must have some reason for doing all this."

"I must," he nodded. Then he shrugged—the same careless, devil-may-care shrug so characteristic of him, but which Marjorie had such good cause to dread. "I have reason," he said softly—"yes, and a very, very good reason. But it wasn't any part of my plan in coming to Cliff House to drag you into this masquerade, and I just want you to forget now all that you've seen and know, and run back like a good girl."

But Marjorie shook her head fiercely. No! Ralph was in some sort of scrape—that was obvious. When Ralph was in a scrape of any kind, Marjorie's duty shone out crystal clear.

"I'm not," she remarked quietly, "going back until I know the whole story, Ralph. So, please, start at the beginning and get it over."

He shrugged again. "All right," he said, "have it your own way." A rather bitter smile came to his lips again, however, and again he shrugged. "It's a case of the old bad name, Marjorie."

Marjorie looked at him. They were tramping through the woods now. "Not so long ago," Ralph went on, "I was the cause of a little dust-up. Nothing to speak of—just one of those ripples that occasionally disturb the placid waters of my existence. I'm not even going to tell you what it was. Cutting a long story short, this dust-up led to a row with Dr. Barrymore, our headmaster at Friardale, and got me once again into his black books."

"I suppose I was a silly ass—I am—but I felt rather keenly over this, and made remarks about Dr. Barrymore, which, unbeknown to me, that gentleman was listening to all the time. The result—well, you can guess!"

"You were expelled?"

"Great Scott, no! Not then; but the old doc wasn't too pleased. Said I was unfit to be a prefect, and all that sort of tosh. Deprived me of my stripes—which meant, of course, that my games captaincy went with it. Another fellow—a fellow called Noah Bell, whose sweet little sister was the victim of my recent regrettable joke—got the job."

Marjorie's face was pale. "Marjorie's face was pale. "Yes, go on!" she said, in a stifled voice.

"Then—well, I broke out again," Ralph went on. "I hadn't asked for the old bad name to come back, but there it was again, sitting pretty on my shoulders, like old Sindbad the Sailor. I started off on my usual silly-ass career, breaking bounds, cutting lessons. Doc Barrymore got to hear of these goings on, and there was another row."

Marjorie bit her lip. "The old doc, bless his heart, handed out some pretty stiff upper cuts."

I flatter myself—perhaps wrongly—that I took them on the chin. Anyway, he said to me—not exactly as I'm telling to you now, of course—but this is the gist of it. Anyway, he said, I'll give you one more chance, Lawrence. Behave yourself and all will go well. But the next serious misdemeanour of yours which comes to my notice, I'll expel you!"

"Oh, Ralph!" Marjorie muttered. "Bored—no?" Ralph laughed lightly, though there was a note of bitterness in the laugh. "O.K., then! Off we go again! Well, you can guess that didn't do me any good. It was in the nature of a dare, you see, and, foolish and Lawrence ever yet failed to take a dare? No, sir!"

"And that night, as it happened, my old friend Rommy's theatrical company happened to be on at the Court-

field Hippodrome, and, as I promised dear old Rommy that I would give him a look in, what do you think I did?"

"You broke bounds," Marjorie said. "Oh, Ralph, why do you do these things?"

"Because, I suppose," Lawrence said, with a sigh, "I'm what I am—just poor, weak flesh, hung on a few healthy bones, you know. I went. In the still hours of the night I crept back to school. I was passing old Barrymore's study when I heard the chink of money in it. The door was open a crack, and I stopped, waiting for an opportunity to slip past. Then I saw it, Marjorie. It wasn't the old savage himself in the study—it was someone else!"

Marjorie looked apprehensive.

"It was," her cousin went on, "a boy, Marjorie—a boy of my age. A Sixth Former. He was at old Barrymore's cabinet, where he keeps the golden coins he collects—he must have a few hundred of 'em, and worth no end of money. I saw this chap stuffing his pockets with 'em."

"Well, Margie, much as I disliked old Doc Barrymore at that moment, I couldn't watch him being robbed under my very eyes, so, like the gallant hero of the paper-covered book, I gave one jump, precipitating my heroic body through the door."

"Round swept the burglar, the bag from which he was pinching the money in his hand. I stopped a beauty full in the face, but managed to clutch the bag as he went down the corridor."

"Oh dear! And you—you saw the boy?" Marjorie asked.

"I did!" Ralph's lips tightened grimly. "It was our dear friend Noah Bell."

There was a pause. For a few yards he tramped on in silence. Marjorie, conscious of a feeling of stupefaction, was shaking her head again as she looked at him.

"But, Ralph, that doesn't explain why—"

"Oh dear, I hoped you were tired!" Ralph said. "Well, here's the rest, then. I went out, as I said; how long I don't know—only for a few seconds probably. Then I heard a row—many rows. I rose to my feet, the money-bag still in my hand. Drama, Marjorie! Bang goes the door. In comes Dr. Barrymore. Guess the rest?"

"Ralph, no; what was it?"

Ralph shrugged.

"More than half of the old board was missing. I was accused of pinching it. I wouldn't have blown the gaff on Bell or then, but the robbery was a serious matter. But would you believe it, Marjorie, that blighter had an alibi cut and dried. The Head thought I was playing some prank—I was still his black sheep, remember. He gave me till four o'clock the following day to restore the money he said I'd taken. Otherwise—pause—I was going to be handed over to the police!"

From Marjorie went up a cry.

"Well, what? I wasn't going to be handed over to the police for a theft Noah Bell had committed. In any case, I was booked for certain expulsion. The only way I could save myself, I figured, was to get hold of the missing doughnuts and blow Noah out at the same time. I gave the matter a lot of careful thought, and then, as if to help me in the face of this most horrible of dilemmas, comes a letter from my old friend at Wrenhurst, David Grantham."

"David was in London, ill—about to undergo an operation, poor blighter. He told me in that letter about this appointment at Cliff House School—"

"Now begin to see?" Ralph went on.

"I hooked off to London. I met dear

old David; but, like a fool, I left his letter in the school. The plot you can guess. We fixed it up together. I'm here taking his place. But"—with a flush—"being at Cliff House also gives me contact with Friaralee School, and being a visiting master leaves my hands untied a great part of the day to do what I want to do. That, if you haven't already guessed, is to get hold of Bell and to find the money he pinched. Now, Marjorie—"

Marjorie, however, was silent. She was thinking. What a mad, what a harebrained scheme! How much better for Ralph had he stopped and faced it out!

But that was like Ralph. Ralph never did do the thing expected of an ordinary human being. Careless, devil-may-care, reckless, and mutinous Ralph always had been and always would be a law unto himself.

"Oh, Ralph!" she cried.

He smiled. They had reached the edge of the wood now.

"Well, here we are," he said, with a cheerfulness that, outwardly at least, was genuine. Ralph never did believe in showing his emotions. "This is where we part, Marjorie, until tomorrow. Now, old girl, go back, eat, drink, and be merry with Babs & Co. But don't breathe a whisper of what I've told you, or you'll completely upset my plans."

"And no," he added, putting a finger to her lips as she would have spoken. "No protests, please. I know what I'm doing, Marjorie, and I'll do it—never fear. Just leave me to work things out in my own way."

Marjorie could not speak. Her mind seemed blank, dull, numb. Ralph, Ralph! her heart was crying out. She was fearful, afraid. Ralph couldn't go through with this.

She, knowing his nature, was aware that he couldn't go through with it. Already he had shown his careless ineptitude by first leaving David Grantham's letter behind, by failing to notice the tab on his coat, by wearing the signet ring.

"Ralph!" she cried, and spun round, to find that Ralph had disappeared.

Marjorie stood still. Oh, what a tragic business it was!

But she saw her duty. She had got to help Ralph! She must help him! Silly, careless he might be, but he was true blue. A boy with a heart of the brightest gold, the cousin with whom she had weathered so many storms, who time and time again in difficulty and danger, had proved his cool courage, had been an infallible comrade in distress. He, often enough, had helped her. It was her turn now to help him.

But how—how?

Heavily, miserably, her mind tormented, Marjorie turned back. The sun shining through the branches of the trees beat down upon her face. The birds carolled blithely in the branches. But she noticed nothing now.

If she could only tell Clara—or Babs! She couldn't! She daren't! While Ralph continued his reckless masquerade at the school nobody must know except herself. She, and she alone, must find some way out of this difficulty. Must find—

She stopped.

Quite suddenly she stopped, staring into the space before her.

"What was that?"

"Voices!"

And then instinctively Marjorie shrank back. Before her was a small clearing. At the other side of that clearing, barely ten feet away, were two people—a boy of Ralph's age and a

girl of her own. She recognised them at once. Nancy Bell and her brother Noah!

Marjorie, remembering all that Ralph had told her, caught in her breath with a little hiss. Quick as thought she dodged behind a bush, and, screened from view by the interlacing foliage, watched what took place.

She saw the boy bending forward, speaking urgently and rapidly. Nancy looked a little more sallow, a little more disturbed, than usual, and was shaking her head. Then suddenly she nodded.

Her next words reached Marjorie as a whisper.

"All right," she said, "I'll do it. But I don't see why you don't give him away."

"I can't give him away—not until we're sure," Noah Bell said. "Don't be a fool, Nancy. I only suspect that David Grantham is Ralph Lawrence. I've no proof. It's up to you to find that out. Besides, if I do give him away, how am I to account for knowing all about it? It would be bound to come out then that I had stolen his letter—"

Unconsciously, feeling they were safe and unobserved, they had raised their voices. Marjorie quivered.

"At the same time," Noah Bell went on, "I can't keep these things in the school, Nancy. Dr. Barrymore's got an idea that Lawrence might have hidden them away, and he's been searching high and low."

"But I want 'em. I must have 'em. They're no good to me as a collection, of course, but I know somebody in London who will give me twenty quid or so for 'em as melting-down price. But I can't get to London until the end of term, and, meantime, there's the danger any minute that they may be found on it? I don't fancy even Doc Barrymore is altogether unsuspecting. I told you that old Lawrence gave me away before he left."

"But supposing they're found on me?" Nancy objected.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" he said roughly. "Who would suspect you? There must be a hundred places at Cliff House where you can hide them safely. And I'll give you a fiver out of the bundle for your trouble. Well, will you take them?"

Nancy flung a swift, furtive glance around.

"Hand them over," she said. Marjorie held her breath. Oh, what was this? She wanted at that moment to run forward, to shriek her denunciation of these two young scoundrels. Only by an effort did she retain her self-control.

She saw Noah look round. Then suddenly his hand plunged into his pocket, and emerged with a small leather bag which gave out a faintly musical chink as he handed it to his sister.

Nancy took it. Her face was white as she rammed it swiftly into her tiny pocket.

"Right—ho!" Noah said, in great satisfaction and relief. "But careful, Nancy! Hide it in some safe place. And, meantime, do your best to get Ralph Lawrence out of the school."

"I will," Nancy promised.

Her brother spoke again. "But, look here! We mustn't hang about any longer. I'll meet you tomorrow, and you can tell me how you got on. O.K.!"

Nancy nodded gaspingly. Then they parted, leaving Marjorie dazed and stunned, but quivering, still in her hiding-place, as she mentally digested all that she had heard and seen.

# LONELINESS CAN BE BLISS



—WHEN you've a difficult piece to practise at the piano. An audience may be welcome when you're note perfect; but even sympathy is not always sweet when you're struggling to master "Storm at Sea," or "Moonlight on the Water."

—WHEN you're perplexed, and have a little problem that needs concentration. Sometimes a friend can help, but there are worries that need solitude to solve them.

—WHEN you want to have a good cry. No girl looks her best in the middle of a flood of tears, and as these are rare, they are better shed in secret.

—WHEN you first try on a new hat. This way and that, the sight of you might evoke mirth from even the kindest sister, for hats can do the strangest things to the prettiest face. Show it to the family when the "set" is just right, but acquire it with only your reflection for company.

—WHEN there's a thrilling last chapter of a book or story to be finished, and the clock hands are getting perilously near to half-past eight.

—WHEN there's homework to be finished in a hurry. Interest in the map you're drawing, or in the essay you're writing, is nice when you've time to pause, but it can be most distractingly unwelcome when you haven't.

—WHEN you've a very special letter to write that requires careful thinking out, and very best handwriting. Messages to Cousin Doris and love to Aunt Chris, are to be expected during ordinary letter-writing time. But you don't want even your handwriting admired at others, for even such a pleasant

interruption may mean a slip of the pen.

—WHEN you determine for the first time to attempt to swim the width of the bath. But, alas! how seldom solitude is possible at such a time!

—WHEN you make your first telephone call. Then there's no one to hear you greet the telephone operator with the request for some carrots, cauliflower, and cooking apples, please.

—WHEN you try out your new camera. Well-meaning friends often give very sound advice at such times; but it's worth spoiling even one picture to find out for yourself how it works, if you're the sensitive kind who feel you're being treated as if you've never handled one before.

—WHEN you're day-dreaming of the future; building castles in the air, and planning what you'll do when you're quite grown-up.

—WHEN you're making mother a birthday present that's to be kept a secret. Much as you'd like to have it approved of, there's a risk of the secret leaking out if you're not alone.

—WHEN you're really down in the dumps. You don't want other people to see you like this, and a little time of aloneness will soon make you realise what a silly girl you've been, and how pleasant company can be.

charge for which he was adjudged guilty—that was the return of the spoils to its owner, together with an account of the circumstances of the recovery.

If she were to help Ralph at all, her best, and her only method, obviously, was to retrieve the golden coins which Noah Bell had stolen from his headmaster.

She must find out where Nancy hid them.

That decision arrived at, Marjorie firmly determined to put it to the test. She waited perhaps three minutes to allow the two precious plotters to get away. Then swiftly pushing through the woods, she arrived at a point almost opposite the gates of Cliff House to see Nancy disappearing rather rapidly up the drive.

She guessed that Nancy's immediate task would be to conceal the loot she

had in her pocket, and so she hurried her step.

On the steps of the tuckshop Clara Trevlyn, Bessie Bunter and Barbara Redfern were standing sipping cool lemonade, after an extra strenuous game of tennis. Clara halted her.

"Hey, Marjorie! Why the dickens did you rush off?"

"Yes, rather! I sus-say, Babs is standing treat! Come and have a ginger-pop!" Bessie squeaked.

"Oh, I'm sorry; I'm in a hurry!"

"But—"

"No, please; some other time!" Marjorie said. And, seeing that Nancy had disappeared into the school, hurried her steps, leaving the chums blinking.

"My hat! What's come over her?" Clara asked. "What the merry old dickens! First she dashes out of the school; now she's rushing into it, just as if— And then she frowned as Marjorie's being figure disappeared into the schoolhouse, for this sort of conduct was utterly unlike her genteel-natured chum. "Must be something wrong with her," she added.

Babs did not reply. But her nod betrayed her own puzzlement. Bessie, greedily sipping lemonade through a straw, was not even interested.

But Marjorie at that moment had no time to spare for anything, save her quest. Almost breathless she arrived in Big Hall, just in time to see the hem of Nancy's skirt whisking round the balustrade.

Upstairs she went, after casting aside her coat and hat, almost colliding with Dulcinea Fairbrother, the games captain, who at that same instant came strolling along the gallery, chatting to Mary Buller, a prefect of the Sixth Form.

Just a breathless "Sorry!" Marjorie gulped out, and rushed on.

Hot on the track she swept along to the Fourth Form corridor. Nancy darted to the right, Marjorie after her, listening a moment at the foot of the stairs as she heard her footsteps climbing.

She breathed a little more deeply now. Carefully she listened, gazing up the well that was formed between the wall and the stairs. Up, up; and then the footsteps stopped.

Marjorie breathed gently. Her eyes shone with quite a startling gleam. Right! She knew where Nancy had gone now—to the attic.

Very swiftly she climbed the stairs, careful to make no sound. Above her she heard a rather scrabbling movement. Then a rather rumbling sound of clumping footsteps.

She reached the stairs which led to the attics, and halted, her eyes widening in surprise.

At the top of those stairs she saw Nancy, not in the act of entering one of the rooms which composed the attics, but balanced precariously on the top of a flight of steps, and pushing furiously at the trapdoor which led to the lofts.

Marjorie stood tense. Apparently Nancy was taking no risks.

Without stirring she stood. Crash! the door went back. She saw Nancy catch at the side of the trap, hoist herself and stood, wondering. In the loft, she knew, were the water tanks which supplied the school, the pipes which led from them, and also part of the electric wiring system.

Unless something went wrong with the wiring or the water, nobody ever thought of going into the loft, and one might hide anything there for an indefinite time.

Marjorie nodded. Right! Well, she



## On Nancy's Trail

"WHAT now?"

But Marjorie knew, even as she debated the question. Chance so early had placed her cousin's salvation in her own hands.

No use whatever her denouncing Nancy and her brother. Glib fabricators both of them, they would simply deny all knowledge of the missing coins, and her own relationship to Ralph, her well-known solicitude for his welfare would only make it appear that she was faking up fresh charges in order to get her cousin out of the difficulties which beset him.

There was but one answer to the



knew now! No sense, she told herself, in remaining here, and possibly being discovered by Nancy.

Now that she knew, she could wait her own time. She shot one more glance towards the loft in which faintly she could hear her enemy moving about, and then, with a slight compression of the lips, tiptoed back downstairs.



### Sowing the Seeds

"MY only summer bonnet!" Clara Trevlyn gasped. "Oh, my only aunt! Babs, friend of my youth, fling yourself into my tender arms, and weep your glee upon my shoulder! Whoopee!"

And Clara, just as if she couldn't help it—and she couldn't at that moment—grabbed the astounded Babs by the shoulder as she came downstairs into Big Hall with Mabel Lynn, and ecstatically hugged her.

"But what— Here, let go, you ninny!" Babs gasped. "What's all the fuss?"

"The fuss, darling, is this!" And Clara, whose face was flushed, whose eyes were dancing, caught her by the arm and fairly rushed her towards the notice-board, before which a crowd of girls were standing. "Read that!" she exclaimed triumphantly.

Babs looked. Rather breathlessly she plucked a strand of hair out of her eyes, which Clara's rather boisterous treatment had caused to fall over her forehead. Then her face lit up.

"Oh, I say!" she cried. For there, confronting her, signed with Miss Primrose's own well-known signature, was an announcement calculated to give rise to the greatest jubilation in the being of any member of the selected Courtfield Tournament team.

It read:

"At the special request of Major-General Mabbeson, Chairman of the Board of Governors, all girls belonging to the Junior School who are taking part in the forthcoming tennis tournament, are excused first lesson of the morning period until further notice.

"These girls, under the captaincy of Clara Trevlyn, will report at half-past nine precisely to Mr. Grantham, the tennis coach, in the sports pavilion each morning.

"(Signed) P. PRIMROSE,  
"(Headmistress)."

"Well, what about that?" Clara chortled. "Isn't that just the best news that ever was? And especially first lesson to-morrow morning—which is math's." And again Clara did a series of hops, skips, and jumps to show her jubilation. "Bet you what you like that Mr. Grantham is responsible."

"But why should he be?" Mabs asked.

"Why? Well, didn't he say we needed extra practice? And didn't he say when he went off that he was going to see the old general? The general's frightfully keen on sport. It's just the sort of idea he would put up. Anyway, who cares?" And Clara laughed boisterously. "What do you think, Mabs?"

"I think it's ripping," Mabs said, with shining eyes.

The whole of the team, naturally, thought it ripping. Even Frances Frost for once had no adverse com-

ment to make. Jean Cartwright grinned from ear to ear, and even Marjorie, whose face had borne signs of worry ever since her return to the school, was smiling.

But there was no jubilation on the part of the other girls who crowded round. Some looked envious, some looked jealous, one or two looked positively spiteful. Nancy Bell sneered.

"Blessed if I know what the school's coming to!" she grumbled.

"And blessed if I do, with you in it!" Clara Trevlyn merrily replied, at which there was a laugh.

Nancy scowled.

"Oh, keep your cheap jokes!" she said. "All the same, it's a bit thick. Why should you be excused lessons, while we have to grind away in the Form-room? It's unfair!"

"Yes, rather!" Lydia Crossendale supported. "Oh rats!"

"Well, look at it."

"Well, look at it!" Clara scoffed. "Don't be geese! You'll be keen enough when we bring the shield back to Cliff House, won't you?"

"When?"

Freda Ferriers sniffed contemptuously.

"And what," chimed in Babs, "is the good of employing a games coach if we're not going to give him work to do? Apart from being a member of the team, I think it's a ripping idea!"

"You would!" Rosa Rodworth scoffed.

"Sour grapes!" taunted Clara.

Rosa shrugged. It wasn't exactly sour grapes. Rosa, perhaps, would have been less than human if she had not been envious. Even Leila Carroll, Marcelle Biquet, and others who were staunch supporters of Babs & Co., looked a little disappointed.

"Well, I guess you have all the luck," Leila said. "And, gee, am I jealous! Still, it's all for the good of the old school, I guess, so one mustn't complain. I suppose"—wistfully—"you couldn't persuade old Primmy that the team is a dozen instead of six, and try to include me and a few others?"

"Yes, rather, you know. I think that's an awfully good suggestion," Bessie Bunter said.

Clara only laughed. Willingly enough would she have included all the Form had she had her way, but Miss Primrose was hardly likely to share that view.

And, thinking of tennis, what a ripping way to start the day, by the way! Thinking of meeting the good-looking games coach again, she was in high feather. Call-over bell rang, however, and for the time being jubilation was nipped in the bud.

But if the team was jubilant, discontent was very apparent in the rest of the Form. That discontent became intensified when the notice on the board was confirmed by Miss Primrose in her address at call-over, when Miss Primrose remarked, to Clara's delight, that the chairman's request had been inspired by a suggestion from the new games coach. Clara laughed her glee.

"That," she explained in the dormitory later, "is the sort of coach we've always wanted. It stands to reason you can't get shipshape for an important tournament like the Courtfield affair right at the beginning of the term, without extra-practice."

"Without cutting lessons, you mean!" Nancy sneered.

"Oh, rabbits! Don't be so mean about it!"

"And don't you be so jolly cock-

hop about it!" Nancy retorted bitterly. "It's all very well for you and your precious pal. I notice"—with a sneer—"that it's the old gang again—Babs & Co., always getting whatever's going. I suppose you're only sorry now that you didn't include one of your other precious friends, like Peggy Preston, or someone, in place of Frances Frost."

Clara's brow darkened.

"Nancy, are you trying to make a row?"

"No, I'm not, but I'm just telling you what most of the Form thinks," Nancy remarked, determined, however, to provoke the quarrel. "We're rather sick of you and Babs, and all the rest, getting the tit-bits, and we're jolly sick, if you want to know, of the way you're buttering up to the new coach!" she added, with a sneer. "I suppose you and he put your heads together to bring this about."

"Nancy!" cried Marjorie.

"Oh, be quiet!" Nancy retorted furiously. "Anyway, isn't it right? Look at Clara! You can tell from her face that there's something in it. Didn't Primmy say at call-over that it was his suggestion—and who suggested it to him in the first place?"

"Yes, rather! Hear, hear!" Lydia Crossendale supported.

"He's just toadying to you," Nancy went on, gathering courage as she saw she had a certain measure of support—"and why? Because you all just flung yourselves at his feet when he appeared on the scene!"

"Nancy!" Clara breathed sulphurously.

"Well?"

"Nancy!" And in three strides Clara was across the room, her eyes glittering dangerously. "You say one word against Mr. Grantham—"

Nancy laughed outright.

"Oh, my hat, getting angry now!"

She said no more. For Clara, looking very warlike, was advancing on her. One arm suddenly reached out, pushing Nancy in the chest. And Nancy, stumbling back, went sprawling on the bed.

"Why, you—you—"

"Well, leave Mr. Grantham's name out of it!" Clara said, between her teeth.

"And why should I?" stammered Nancy. "Why should I? You—you—"

And desperately she looked round for something as Clara made another threatening move towards her.

"Here—keep off!"

"Yes, keep off!" Lydia Crossendale cried, interposing. "Don't be a bully!"

"What?"

"Leave her alone!"

"Why, you—"

Taken—how it happened no one noticed. But suddenly, from the other side of the dormitory hurred a slipper. It caught Clara on the side of the head. Like a tigress she flung round, catching the slipper as it fell and aiming it back at Freda Ferriers. Freda howled.

Furiously she caught up a pillow. That went flying towards Clara, missed her and hit Leila Carroll.

Now, Leila was not the sort of girl to stand that treatment. In a flash her nightdress case had spun across the room.

"Take that!" she yelled. Who was Brenda Fallace who "took" it. The girls were angry now. Resentment and jealousy, fanned by the remarks which Nancy had made, flared out. Girls who had no idea of participating, found themselves

embroidered in the altercation. There was uproar.

"Girls!" shrieked Barbara. "Girls! Oh, my hat!"

"Take that!"

"Hurrah!"

Then—

"Girls!" cried a shocked and terrible voice. "Girls, why— My goodness gracious! Cease this unseemly behaviour immediately!"

The "unseemly behaviour" ceased as though a bomb had been dropped into the midst of the Fourth Form. Every girl stood stunned and startled facing the doorway, in which Miss Primrose had appeared.

"Why, bless my soul!" she cried. "I never—never— Clara, put that pillow down! This," went on Miss Primrose bitingly, "is a dormitory, not a bear-garden! And, since every girl in this room seems to have been embroidered in this disgraceful exhibition, I shall punish you all. You will all remain in class an hour after lessons to-morrow. Now go to bed!"

Then groans, grumbles. An hour's extra detention!

Babs hesitated.

"Please, Miss Primrose—"

"Silence, Barbara! You, as captain should have known better than to allow this disgraceful outbreak to take place. Go to bed!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose. But—"

"That is sufficient! Good-night!"

The light snapped out. Miss Primrose's retreating footsteps thudded into silence along the carpeted corridor; then from Lydia Crossendale came a growl.

"Clara! Clara, you—you—"

"Hey, you calling me names?"

"Yes, I am! You started it; it's your fault!"

"Why—"

"Oh, please—please be quiet!" Babs begged distractedly. "Don't start all over again. If Primmy comes back—"

There were grumbles, mutters; an atmosphere of brooding sulkiness settled over the Form. In a rather disgruntled frame of mind the Fourth composed itself to slumber.

While, in her own bed, Nancy permitted herself an indulgent chuckle. Nancy was gated with the rest, but she felt that it was worth it.

She had, she felt—using Clara Trevlyn as her means—succeeded in sowing the first seeds of poison in the minds of the Fourth against the boy who called himself David Grantham.

Nancy had not yet gone to sleep. The events of the day were still racing in her mind. It is said that a guilty conscience makes its owner uneasy; and Nancy, a prey to the fears that night brings with it, was very uneasy indeed.

Nancy had few scruples. It caused her no disturbance to discover that her brother Noah had taken the better part of Dr. Barrymore's collection of gold coins.

Noah himself sank no lower in her estimation for having stolen them and very cleverly contrived to fix the blame for his misdeeds upon other shoulders. Her own greed for the possible reward

Nancy turned restlessly.

Then in the darkness she heard the faint rustling from Marjorie Hazeldene's bed as Marjorie got up.

Rather as if she had been bitten, Nancy jumped in her bed. In the grey light that filtered in at the windows she saw Marjorie dimly.

Immediately panic assailed her. Not Marjorie's usual habit to go out of the dormitory after lights-out; and Marjorie, she remembered with a pang, was Ralph Lawrence's cousin. Supposing Ralph Lawrence had already been in conversation with Marjorie? Supposing—



**ALL** was confusion in the dormitory. Freda Ferriers hurled a slipper at Clara, who caught it and flung it back. Clara was roused—goaded by the sneering remarks which had been made by Nancy and her cronies.

had urged her to accept custody of the booty.

On none of those points was Nancy's conscience troubling her and so keeping her awake. Nancy fancied that by dropping the bag into the open tank in the loft she had completely rid herself of the booty until it should be required.

But, lying there in the darkness and the stillness, all sorts of hitherto unthought-of questions kept knocking at the door of her conscience; all sorts of contingencies, earlier remarked as impossible, had sprung up in her mind.

Supposing, for instance, something went wrong with the Cliff House water supply, and workmen were sent to repair the tank? Supposing somebody had seen her crawling through into the loft?

Absurd really! But in the darkness those speculations took terrifying shape. Things had gone wrong with her tricks before now. And what, then, if her hoard were discovered? Apart from that, she felt none too easy about the new coach.

If the man were Ralph Lawrence, why had he come back to this district? What was he doing now? Supposing he bowled Noah out, and Noah—as he was quite capable of doing—told him that she, his sister, had the coins?

Nancy's fear completely got the better of her. She knew she would know no rest, no peace, until she discovered what mission took Marjorie Hazeldene out of the dormitory at this time of night.

As the door closed Nancy jumped out of bed; in a moment she had slipped on her dressing-gown, omitting her slippers in case her footsteps made a noise. She peered into the corridor.

"Now where?" she muttered.

She could see nothing, but a faint swishing sound on the stairs at the far end made her heart leap. That was Marjorie, and—Great goodness! She was going up to the attics!

In terrible fear now, Nancy sidled along the corridor, up the stairs. On the landing she shrank back as she saw above her a circle of light, that could only have come from a pocket-torch, searching the ceiling; it came to rest on the trapdoor.

Nancy shrank back. The trapdoor! Then Marjorie knew! Marjorie must have seen her. Marjorie was hunting for the loot she had hidden!

Nancy could have shrieked. But she didn't. Crouched motionless in the darkness, she waited and watched. Now she saw Marjorie moving; she was



### Alarm in the Night

**D**ONG!  
Half-past eleven!  
Marjorie Hazeldene, her face pale in the darkness, rose in her bed. Quickly she looked to right and left along the dim shapes that showed beneath the sheets.

Nobody seemed to be awake.

Tensely Marjorie climbed out of bed. She stood for a moment listening; then very stealthily she donned dressing-gown and slippers, produced the electric torch which she had secreted beneath her pillow, and, hardly daring to breathe, made her way to the door; there for an instant she paused to look round. Still no alarm. She let herself out.

But immediately the door closed behind her another girl sat up in bed.

That girl was Nancy Bell.

staggering under the weight of the steps.

Something seemed to snap in Nancy's brain. Fear deserted her suddenly; grim, vengeful purpose took its place.

Well, she told herself, if Marjorie knew those coins were hidden in the loft, she didn't know what part of the loft, because the tank was well back out of view of the manhole, and to have observed her hiding them the watcher would have had to be in the loft herself.

Burning-eyed she watched; she saw Marjorie place the steps beneath the trapdoor, saw her mount. Even as Marjorie had watched Nancy, Nancy now watched Marjorie as she pushed open the trapdoor, and, with a lithe spring, hoisted herself into the aperture, carrying her torch with her.

Nancy moved stealthily forward, breathing heavily. Without a sound she crept up the steps, and, her head only just above the trapdoor, gazed into the attic.

Marjorie was there, her torch switched on, searching round the attic. For a second Nancy watched, her eyes gleaming; then as stealthily she climbed down the steps.

An idea had sprung to her crafty mind. What if those steps Marjorie couldn't possibly get down from the attic; therefore, the thing to do was to remove the steps.

With one hand Nancy gave the steps a sudden push.

If a thunderbolt had suddenly fallen in the higher stories of Cliff House School a more terrific noise could not have resulted.

Over went the steps, balanced on the top stairs, and then, toppling over, went careering and thundering down the whole flight.

Desperately Nancy raced them to the bottom. Along the corridor she whizzed, into the Fourth Form dormitory, and breathlessly jumping between the sheets, pulled them over her head before the first sleeping inquiry as to what all the fuss was about cut through the dormitory silence.

While Marjorie, in the loft, was peering through the trap in horror.

"Oh, my goodness! Who had done that?"

Almost breathless silence followed the last booming echo of the steps as they crashed at the bottom of the stairs. Then sounds. A door opening and shutting. An alarmed voice. Two alarmed voices, upraised in startled inquiry. With a gasp, Marjorie staggered back, her tongue suddenly cleaving to the roof of her mouth.

Below, the voice of Miss Bland, the mistress of the Upper Fifth, snapped out a question.

"Who is there?"

And at the same moment Miss Bland appeared on the stairs.

No use retreating then. The open trap would have given her away in any case. Dismayed and dumfounded Marjorie stood, while Miss Bland gazed up at her in startled amazement.

"Well, good gracious! Whatever next!" she cried. "Marjorie, come down this instant! What are you doing up there?"

Marjorie shook her head. What could she say? She knew she could say nothing—unless she told lies.

Miserably she climbed down the steps when they were placed for her. Miserably surrendered herself to Miss Bland's rather grim change. Off to the headmistress at once they went. Miss Primrose looked stern.

"Marjorie, you must have had some reason for being in the loft?"

Marjorie, white-faced, shook her head. "I—I'm sorry, Miss Primrose."

"You mean," Miss Primrose interpreted, "that you won't tell me, Marjorie?" Her lips pursed. "Very well! It is too late to thrash the matter out now, but in the meantime you can take two hundred lines. And I shall expect them," she added sternly, "before call-over-to-morrow night!"

And Marjorie went, heaving a sigh, but thanking her lucky stars that she had got off so remarkably cheaply.

She turned a deaf ear to the inquiries which met her when she re-entered the dormitory, and quietly went to her own bed. On the way she threw Nancy Bell a sharp, suspicious look. But Nancy, apparently, was asleep.

Heavy-hearted, Marjorie climbed into bed. Oh, what a mess she had made of things! She had had the chance to save Ralph, and she had bungled that chance. Who had been responsible for upsetting the steps—or had there been an accident due to her own carelessness? Marjorie shook her head. Oh, bother!

Never mind! She'd try again—she would.

She turned, pulling the clothes about her. But she couldn't sleep. Wearily, her eyes unrested, she awoke late next morning, and after dressing, went down to Study No. 7. Clara, looking as fit and as fresh as a daisy, was there, standing by the window.

She fung round as Marjorie came in. "Hallo, Marjorie! Top of the morning!" she greeted blithely, and laughed.

"I say, Mr. Grantham's just come. There's an early bird for you, if you like. I saw him go to Miss Primrose's private house. But," she added, with quick concern, "what's the matter, old thing? You look sadly!"

Marjorie tried to smile. "Marjorie, Oh, I'm all right!" she said awkwardly.

"Are you, though?" And Clara regarded her critically. "You're not Marjorie, what's the matter?"

"Nun-nothing," stammered Marjorie. "Marjorie, there is!" And Clara came over to her. With a gentleness that was in strange contrast to her usual foisterousness, she put an arm round the other's shoulders. "Marjorie, please!" she begged. "I'm your chum, aren't I? There is something wrong. There's been something wrong ever since yesterday afternoon. You didn't fly from the pavilion for nothing, did you?"

"Oh, Clara, please!" Marjorie quavered.

"And then, when you came back," Clara said, "you had hardly time to speak to us. And last night, Marjorie. What on earth were you doing in the loft? But I'm not prying," she added, "don't think that, old thing. You're in a fix of some sort—now, aren't you?"

Marjorie was silent.

"Marjorie, why not tell me?" Clara asked. "Let me help. Whatever it is, two heads are better than one."

But Marjorie shook her head, though her eyes were swimming as she looked at her friend. How all in a moment she longed to tell Clara—but she daresn't. She couldn't! Clara, like the others, believed that Ralph Lawrence was David Grantham. Clara could not understand.

"It—it's nothing," she said. "Please—please don't worry me, Clara dear. Everything's all right now."

"You're sure?" Clara asked penetratingly.

"Y-yes, of course!"

But there was a catch in the voice that made that reply.

"You feel fit?"

"Y-yes."

"Well, if I were you, I'd rest," Clara

said. "Sit down, old thing. Can I get you anything?"

"No, no, thank you!" Marjorie faltered.

Very gently Clara deposited her in the chair. There was an uneasy frown on her face. But Marjorie, thinking, thinking, was desperate. What a wretched mess everything was all at once, she told herself. This couldn't go on—it couldn't. She must get hold of those coins, and get hold of them as quickly as possible.

And then, thinking, she gave a sudden start. Well, why not this morning? She, with the rest of the tennis team, was excused first period of morning lessons. All the school would be in class—the attic would be deserted. Moreover, it would be light.

"I'll do it!" Marjorie breathed.

Her mind cleared a little at that. Once she had those coins, there would be no further need to worry. Having taken that decision, she felt as if a great weight had lifted from her mind. But it would have to be done quickly, of course.

She went into breakfast. Breakfast was followed by assembly. After which, followed by the envious glances of most girls, and the resentful growlings of others, Clara called her team aside. In a corner of the assembly-room they gathered, while the rest of the school shuffled off to lessons.

"Well, here we are!" Clara said, when at last they were alone. "My hat, what a chalk-up for us! All ready and fit?"

"Yes, rather!"

"O.K.! Then off you run and get your rackets and things. I'll meet you all in five minutes in the pavilion. My things are already there," Clara added.

"I left them yesterday. But, Marjorie, you might bring along that new box of balls; it's in the cupboard near the window."

"Yes," gulped Marjorie.

Off she went with the others. Now, she thought, was her chance. She was trembling as she entered Study No. 7. She found her racket, put it on the table. She found Clara's box and put that with it. Then she took up her position by the window.

As soon as she saw the tennis team go out, the coast would be clear.

But was it? If Marjorie had only known! There was another girl in the school who also was not at lessons—and that girl was Nancy Bell.

Nancy was afraid. Knowing now that Marjorie was aware of her secret hiding-place, she was on tenterhooks lest Marjorie should take advantage of her absence from morning lessons to make another attempt at getting hold of the stolen coins.

So Nancy, pleading a severe headache, had been excused by kindly Miss Charmant, the Form-mistress, and told to go to the sanatorium.

Nancy, however, had done nothing of the kind.

Nancy, at that very moment, was hidden in one of the attics. She meant to keep watch upon her treasure.

Marjorie, meantime, was watching Babs and Mabs and Jean Cartwright, and Frances Frost as they strolled out of the school, tensing herself as if for a great effort.

She saw her cousin, debonair, bespectacled, come out to greet them. She saw them shake hands. But she did not see his frown as his eyes roved over the group. Nor did she hear his question.

"Hello! But where's Miss Hazeldene?"

"She—she went to her study," Babs said.

"But—" He consulted the watch on his wrist. Very anxious was Ralph Lawrence for another chat with Marjorie. He wanted to tell her again not to worry. He frowned a little. "But she should be here, you know," he said. "She's three minutes over time as it is. As coach, I'm in charge, and I have strict orders, much as I dislike them, to report any girl who is not on time. But, look here, Miss Trevlyn, get a game going, will you? I'll go up into the school and hurry Miss Hazeldene up."

"Oh, no, let me go!" Clara cried. He shook his head.

"What, when you're supposed to be practising? No, thanks," he said dryly. "You get going, I'll do the rest. Thanks, I think I can find my way to her study. Miss Primrose showed me round the school yesterday, you know. Get going, Miss Trevlyn. Won't be a tick."

And, without waiting for a reply, Ralph Lawrence darted off.

But at that moment Marjorie was on the landing below the trapdoor which led to the loft.

From her coign of vantage Nancy Bell watched. Her face was vicious, desperate. She watched as Marjorie hoisted the steps. She watched as she began to climb up them. Then—

What Nancy did then, even she was hardly conscious of doing. She only knew that Marjorie, at any cost, must be stopped. She was frantic with fear, quivering with apprehension. In that minute, indeed, she was hardly responsible for her actions.

She saw Marjorie balanced precariously on top of the steps, reaching upwards to push the trapdoor back. Every atom of her strength was concentrated on the task.

Now—

In a flash Nancy had darted out. Right at the steps she rushed. One fierce thrust she gave them. They tottered, heeled over, and, like a flash, Nancy was down the stairs even as Marjorie Hazeldene, with a shrill scream of fear, came hurtling from the topmost step, to crash on to the landing, and go slithering down the flight of stairs.

Nancy fled.

But another who was coming up the stairs heard that cry. A good-looking boy in white flannels, wearing a small moustache and a pair of tinted spectacles. He started as if he had been shot.

"Marjorie!" he cried. "Marjorie!"

But from Marjorie there came no reply. She lay at the foot of the stairs on the landing, unconscious.

Ralph Lawrence caught his breath. Wildly he stared about him. He had heard that crash, had heard the cry. Loving Marjorie as he did, his first—his only concern was for her. No longer did he think of himself. No longer did he remember that he was not Ralph Lawrence, Marjorie's cousin, but David Grantham, the new coach.

One swift, hunted glance he threw around him, and then, springing for the stairs, flew up them.

"Marjorie!" he gasped, horrified.

And he stopped, stunned, as he saw Marjorie lying inert at the foot of the stairs. He bent down.

"Marjorie!" he cried.

Then, as Marjorie did not move, he straightened. With sudden decision he stooped, lifting her in those strong young arms of his.

With a firm stride he walked along the corridor, down the stairs, and into Study No. 7. There he gently laid Marjorie on the settee, and, taking off his spectacles, bent over her.

# TO WEAR ON ANY OCCASION

So very smart for spring-like days is this little jacket.

Now you must admit that this little jacket is one of the most useful you have ever seen.

How nice it would look over your tennis frock—adding quite a gay note of colour so that you can go anywhere in it, whether off the court or not.



Over a spring-like skirt and blouse it would also be just right.

And when I tell you how easy it is to make—well, the last possible difficulty will have vanished!

All you dress-makers-to-be will love it particularly, for there's no thrill quite like making up a garment from quite new material, is there?

For this you'll require only a yard and a quarter of material, and it needn't cost you more than a shilling a yard if you're anxious to have a fairly sturdy jacket, or sixpence a yard if a lighter one is what you have in mind.

At the same time, you'll want three-quarters of a yard of ribbon for the neck fastening, and you know as well as I do that this can cost anything from a penny to sixpence!

Fold your material in half, exactly as you see it is done from the diagram attached to the picture here.

Cut it out in a straightforward Magyar shape, letting the width from sleeve edge to sleeve edge be 32 inches.

Make the sleeves 8 inches deep, and 6 inches long.

That's all for the figures, which look rather complicated in reading, but is very easy when you have your material laid out in front of you.

Cut a small hole for the neckline and a slit right down the front for the opening.

Blanket-stitch all round the edges in any brightly-coloured embroidery wool or silk.

Trim the tops of the triangular pockets in the same way. These are cut from the oddments of the material left over, of course.

Sew your ribbon at the neckline, and tie it in a pretty bow as fastening.

Hey presto! Your jacket of many uses is completed.

And proudly you'll be able to wear it, telling your friends and admiring neighbours that you made it all by yourself, believe it or not!



Three in the Secret

"GAME to us!" Clara Trevlyn announced gleefully. "Good work, Babs!" and she laughed at the crestfallen faces of Jean Cartwright and Frances Frost, whom she and Babs had just beaten in a doubles match. "But, I say," she added, staring round, "Marjorie's not here! And what's become of Mr. Grantham?"

There was an anxious glancing round. It must have been ten minutes since the new games coach had taken his departure.

"Oh crumbs! I say," Babs muttered uneasily, and then quickly: "Heads up, here comes Primmy!"

Primmy—otherwise Miss Primrose, the dignified and austere headmistress of Cliff House School—it was. Obviously Primmy considered it was her duty to give the tennis practice a look in.

The girls stood still as she came across to them, smiling.

"Good-morning!" Miss Primrose said, with an affable smile. "What a lovely morning it is, to be sure. I trust you are enjoying your tennis practice?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Primrose! Thank you, Miss Primrose," Babs, Mabs, and Clara chorused together.

"But"—and Miss Primrose stared around—"I do not see Mr. Grantham!"

"N-no, Miss Primrose," Babs said. "I understood he was coaching you."

"Well, he—he is, you know."

"But where is he?"

Clara glanced at Babs. Oh crumbs! "Barbara"—Miss Primrose's voice was a little harder in its tone—"where is Mr. Grantham? And," she added, her eyes roving the faces of the five girls, "where is Marjorie Hazeldene? I understood that she was practising with you?"

There was silence.

"Well, Barbara?"

"Well, you—you see—"

"Indeed, Barbara, I do not see! On the contrary," Miss Primrose went on, "I am completely in the dark. Marjorie should be here. So should Mr. Grantham, in his capacity as coach. Where are they?"

Babs stood still. Clara flushed crimson. She knew, of course, that Marjorie was courting disaster by absenting herself so long from the practice.

But the chums sensed, also, that David Grantham had also put himself in the wrong.

"I am waiting," Miss Primrose said, with dignity, "for a reply. Surely you must know where they are?"

"Well, Mr. Grantham went into the school," Babs faltered.

"Indeed? Mr. Grantham has no right in the school without permission!" Miss Primrose said haughtily. "Why did he go into the school?"

"Oh dear! I—" and Babs checked herself. "She realised that to say, 'I don't know,' would be telling a fib. 'He—he went to speak to someone,' she finished lamely.

"Yes, rather!" Clara put in hastily. "He said he wouldn't be a minute, Miss Primrose. Shall I go and fetch him?"

"You may," Miss Primrose said. "Tell him to come here immediately. I wish to see him. Marjorie, also, if you find her," she added.

"Yes, Miss Primrose!"

And Clara, fearful for Marjorie and David Grantham, thudded off.

But she wondered as she ran. What

# MENDING NEED NOT BE DULL

There are ways of doing even such things as mending so that they become interesting



**T**HE days when mending stockings and sewing on buttons was considered character-building because they were so boring to do are over, thank goodness!

And now no one frowns when a schoolgirl says she wishes darnings were against the law, and someone would invent buttons that could be glued on.

But even though mending is considered a bore, and not "good for you, my dear!" it still has to be done.

So what about some short cuts, and making it almost—but never quite, I'm afraid!—a pleasure?

## TRY THIS

First, the hole in the school stocking that's always with us. Window-pane weaving is a very tiresome and lengthy job even if it does look nice in the end. And, sure as fate, the darn will be worn through again in a week's time.

So next time you find a really big "potato" in the heel of your stocking, try gathering the odd ends together with cotton first. (Make sure the cotton's the same colour as the stocking, I need hardly add.)

This will make the hole, oh, so much simpler, and the darn will be much simpler. You can either leave the cotton in, or remove it afterwards—just as you like. Providing it doesn't show, I say leave it.

A piece of net placed over a hole is another way of making a lovely darn well worth the trouble.

It's much easier to darn on something than just space, and the net will make your darn last much longer. Which seems a sound scheme to me, for I hate to think of such silk disappearing so quickly—as it does!

Buttons on blouses in these days need not have hundreds of stitches in them—unless you have the time, or prefer them. You can make your buttons stay on just as long and look even nicer, if you use a thick embroidery silk.

Only two or three stitches will be required with this, and it will keep on for ages.

The embroidery silk will enhance the appearance even of the shiniest pearl button, too!

## THOSE LADDERS

Next to holes, ladders are quite the biggest enemy in stockings, particularly in schoolgirls' week-end and best occasion ones.

If the stockings are really precious, it's well worth "picking up" the ladder with the aid of a crochet needle.

But if they're not, why should you spend miserable half hours of your precious free time over-sewing the ladder, when there's a quicker and even less conspicuous way of doing it?

Turn your stocking inside out, and fold it right in the middle of the ladder.

Make a strong back-stitch the length of the ladder, just as you would if you were making a very strong seam. (By the way, if mother lets you use her machine this is an even more sensible way of doing it.)

When you turn the stocking right side out again you'll find the ladder hardly shows. Much less than if you had repaired it by the long and arduous method, anyhow!

Patches aren't pretty, are they?

Especially on summery underclothes. Of course, I know they're necessary sometimes, but at other times you can avoid them and at the same time actually improve the appearance of garments.

If a favourite summer petti sits as you climb a stile, or catches as you're putting the gardening things away, examine it carefully before you decide to patch it with material that you hope will not look too odd.

Wouldn't a piece of lace look prettier? Try cutting out the tear and inserting a piece of lace. Even if it's on quite a sea of the plain material it won't look out of place, for lace is just inserted anywhere in the most modern undies.

And you'll admit that if the lace does happen to show—it will certainly look prettier than a patch.

Much more interesting to do, too!

had kept David Grantham? And what, in the name of mystery, had kept her chum, Marjorie?

She remembered Marjorie's distraught air of the morning, her unaccountable conduct of yesterday and during the evening. She remembered, too, with a sudden feeling of wonder, the anxiety the games coach had betrayed on her behalf. Was there any connection between him and Marjorie's strange new attitude?

But how could there be? Why, David Grantham was as complete a stranger to Marjorie as to the rest of the school.

But was he? Again Clara found her ruminations confounded. She remembered Marjorie's look as she had regarded David Grantham yesterday—that staring, startled expression on her face.

She remembered with a sudden pang that it was after David Grantham's exit that Marjorie had so amazingly torn herself away from her friends and had refused afterwards to say where she had been in such a hurry and what she had been doing.

For the first time it dawned upon Clara that those events must have a bearing upon each other.

Marjorie! Marjorie! Oh, what was the matter with the chump?

Into the school she raced, up the stairs, along the Fourth Form corridor. Without knocking she burst into Study No. 7.

And then, with a gasp and eyes that widened in horror, she halted.

On the settee was a girl—a girl whose face was white and strained. There was a dark, ugly bruise in the middle of her forehead.

Over her bent a man, a man in white flannels, who held a sponge in his hand and who had obviously been attending to the bruise. As Clara burst in Marjorie's head turned. The man also glanced round.

And then—

Clara recoiled, momentarily robbed of

breath. What was this she was seeing? This young man without his glasses, with his moustache all awry. A cry burst from her:

"Ralph! Ralph Lawrence!"

Ralph jumped. Too late his hand went up to his lips.

"Clara!" croaked Marjorie.

Down went the sponge in Ralph Lawrence's hand. While the amazed Tomboy stood, her eyes dilated, he came forward. Very gently he closed the door behind her, very deliberately he locked it. Then he faced her.

"Well, Clara?"

"You!" cried Clara. "Ralph!"

"Yes," Ralph nodded. "No use trying to keep it from you," he said. "It's me!"

"But—but what— Then—then you are not David Grantham?"

"I am not," Ralph agreed. "On the contrary. A deception, Clara, old thing—not quite innocent, but undoubtedly harmless, I assure you. You see—well, I suppose, seeing that you've bowled me out, I'll have to tell you the whole story."

Clara, in her consternation, her astonishment, forgot the mission on which she was bent—forgot that she had been sent there as a messenger to bring him and Marjorie back. She listened as Ralph related his story.

"Well, my hat!" she cried.

"But," Ralph finished, "that's not the end of it. Marjorie here—"

and briefly he related the adventures of his cousin which Marjorie in that interval had told him. "You see, Clara, Nancy had those coins. Nancy has hidden them in the loft. Marjorie did not see who tore the steps from under her, but I've a pretty shrewd idea. Nancy Bell found out and was on the track. Which means," he added, a glimmer in his eyes, "that as soon as she possibly can Nancy Bell will either change the hiding-place or give them back to her brother."

"Oh, my goodness!" Clara breathed.

"Clara, only you and Marjorie know. I do ask you," Ralph said, "to keep my secret."

But there was no need to ask that. If there was one person Clara idolised more than David Grantham it was Ralph Lawrence. Ralph who had proved such a trusty friend to her in the past, for whom she felt she would have done anything.

"Thanks," she retorted, "but there's hardly any need to ask, Ralph. As far as I'm concerned the secret is safe. I only wish to goodness Marjorie had told me when I asked her this morning. I told her that two heads were better than one, and if we'd both gone and looked for those coins this would never have happened. But, Ralph, what are you going to do?"

Ralph's eyes glinted.

"I'm going," he said, "right now. I'm going to find those coins. No, don't stop me, Clara. Nor you, Marjorie."

He moved towards the door; but Clara, interposing, defiantly faced him.

"No, wait a minute!" she cried. "Ralph, don't be a cuckoo. Supposing you're found. Supposing— Oh, my hat, I've just remembered. You go back. Miss Primrose sent me for you. Look here, leave it to me. I'll get the coins."

"My dear girl—"

"I insist!" Clara cried.

"No!"

Clara set her teeth.

"Ralph, you're not going!" she cried. "Your job is to go and see Miss Primrose. I can manage it—and Marjorie will come with me, won't you? Please," she insisted, "go back. Tell Miss Primrose some yarn." Clara

added, "that you came for those balls. We'll be with you in five minutes."

Ralph bit his lip. Obviously it was not in his mind to allow these two girls to take on his responsibilities, but Clara was so insistent that he could hardly refuse.

"Very well," he said; "but if there's any trouble—"

"There won't be!"

He nodded, not, however, without a frown. The box of tennis balls he picked up, tucking it under his arm. Marjorie, meantime, had risen from the settee.

She still looked pale, but her courage was unshaken. She faced Clara with shining eyes.

"Oh, Clara!"

"Come on!" Clara said gruffly.

They went out, Marjorie leading the way. Towards the stairs they went where the steps, lying athwart the stairs, remained as they had fallen. Clara picked them up.

"Now," she said, "one at a time. I'll go first, Marjorie. You still feel all right?"

"Right as rain," Marjorie said.

"And Clara—"

"Come on!" Clara muttered.

She placed the steps. Up she went. One little leap, and she was through the trapdoor, flying flat to extend a helping hand to Marjorie.

Rather more slowly Marjorie climbed up. A swift heave, and she was through the trapdoor. At the same time a startled face appeared along the corridor.

It was Nancy Bell.

Nancy, true to her instructions, had been to the sanatorium. Mrs. Thwaites had given her aspirin, and, suspecting Nancy was a malingering, had sent her back to the class-room.

But Nancy had no intention of going back to the class-room—not, at least, until she had retrieved those coins and found a safer hiding-place for them. Now, Nancy thought, was her chance.

So stealthily she had sneaked along the corridor—just in time to see Clara's anxious face peering through the trapdoor and Marjorie being assisted into the attic.

Nancy's heart seemed to stop beating.

Oh, my goodness! Clara, too, was in the secret now!

Once again panic assailed her. Once again she found herself trembling. Oh, great goodness, what was she to do! What—what— And then, as she stood hesitating, she heard footsteps, and, glancing down the corridor with a scared, guilty look, she saw Miss Bland coming along it.

Immediately Nancy's mind was made up. Clara and Marjorie must be stopped. They must! There was no time to think of any definite scheme of action. But the seriousness of the situation made her desperate. She rushed forward.

"Miss Bland!" she gasped.

Miss Bland stopped.

"Nancy, what are you doing here?"

"I—I was coming from the sanny, and—and I heard a sound!" Nancy gasped. "Miss Bland, there's somebody in the loft!"

"Nonsense!"

"There is! The steps are there. You can hear them moving about."

Miss Bland's eyes snapped.

"Nancy, is this a joke?"

"No, Miss Bland. Come—come and see for yourself."

Miss Bland advanced. Though she was easy-going by nature, there was nothing that offended Miss Bland so much as breaches of discipline. She had already dealt with the midnight escapade of Marjorie Hazeldene in this loft, and perhaps that was in her mind now as she briefly nodded.

Leaving Nancy to make her way back to the class-room, she climbed up the stairs. Her eyes gleamed as she saw the steps, the trapdoor yawning wide above them. Miss Bland drew in a sharp, rasping breath. No longer she hesitated, but, climbing the steps, poked her head and shoulders through the trapdoor.

And then—

"Clara—Marjorie!" she cried. "What are you doing here?"

And Clara and Marjorie, frantically searching, gave a start of dismay.

"You will," Miss Bland announced raspingly, "come out of this place at once! At once—do you hear? At once! The very idea! I thought you were supposed to be at tennis practice."

Clara and Marjorie gave each other a despairing glance.

"You will," Miss Bland said flatly. "Come with me. It is obvious that you are deliberately abusing the privilege accorded you. You will follow me to the headmistress!"

"YOU HAVE nothing to say?" Miss Primrose asked flintily.

Marjorie hung her head. Clara flushed.

"Why were you in the loft?"

"We—we were looking for something," Clara mumbled.

"What, pray?"

"Well—well, something."

"Indeed?" Miss Primrose's lips pursed. "It does not sound very convincing," she said. "Marjorie, last night you were discovered in the loft. This morning Clara— But why go on? I can only conclude," Miss Primrose went on harshly, "that you were both there for the purpose of playing some joke. What the joke is I do not wish to know. I am disappointed in both of you—deeply disappointed! It is my duty to punish you. I shall do so. Clara, and you, Marjorie—look at me!"

They looked at her.

"As," Miss Primrose went on, "you have shown yourselves so supremely indifferent to the great honour that has been accorded you, you will both do an extra hour's detention for the rest of the week."

"But—"

"Go!"

And, since there was nothing else for it, the two turned away. The door closed upon them.

In the corridor they stopped. Marjorie's eyes were brimming.

"Clara!" she muttered.

Clara clenched her hands.

"Clara, I'm sorry!" For answer, Clara put her arms round her chum's shoulders.

"Don't cry," she said huskily—"don't cry, old kid! It's rotten! Oh, my hat, if only we could have explained!"

"But never mind," she added, between her teeth, "we're not beaten yet!" She paused, drawing a deep breath. "Marjorie, for once there's something more important than tennis. There's Ralph! You and I can save him, Marjorie—you and I only. We've got to bowl out these Bells and get the coins back at the same time."

Marjorie bit her lip.

"But, Clara—"

Clara did not reply. Her only answer, indeed, was a fierce squeeze of Marjorie's arm. More even than her tennis Clara loved her gentle chum. Next to her she loved Marjorie's cousin Ralph. A great wrong was to be set right.

From that moment Clara's whole efforts would be concentrated to the task of fighting for Ralph.

That was the Tomboy's spirit!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Now turn over and read all about next week's magnificent long complete Cliff House School story.



TENSELY Marjorie watched as Nancy clambered up the steps and prepared to climb into the loft. So this was to be the hiding-place of the stolen coins!