

THREE FINE COMPLETE STORIES INSIDE

The Schoolgirl

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Every
Saturday
INCORPORATING
"SCHOOLDAYS"



**WHEN EVERY
MOMENT MATTERED**

See this week's enthralling
long complete story of Cliff
House School.

Clara Trevlyn Stars in This Brilliant and Exciting Complete Cliff House School Story

TOUCH AND GO FOR THE TOMBOY

GRIMLY determined to prove Ralph Lawrence's innocence, "Tomboy" Clara Trevlyn is fighting a lone battle against terrific odds. Many another girl might have given in—but not the Tomboy! It is when things are going badly that she is at her best.

So Much at Stake

"Oh, good shot, Babs! Rip-pling!" Clara Trevlyn cried enthusiastically, and beamed, even though that shot had left her hopelessly beaten. "That's hot stuff!" she cried. "And it's your service, too. Well, go easy with me next time."

Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, laughed.

"Hot enough for the tournament, you think?" she asked.

"Hot enough!" And Clara Trevlyn, captain of junior games at Cliff House School, but more especially at this moment captain of the team which was to compete for the challenge shield in the Courtfield Tennis Tournament, simply glowed. "My hat, I should say so! Play it again, Babs!"

Babs, with a laugh, caught up the ball, winking at her partner and chum, Mabel Lynn.

She looked very bright, very pretty, very flushed as she tossed the ball in the air, and, with an easy overarm stroke, whizzed it across the net.

The scene was the playing fields of Cliff House School. The time, early morning. Clara, energetic skipper that she was, believed in plenty of practice, and Clara meant to take advantage of every available minute, even though to-day was a whole holiday.

For the tournament now was only a matter of days off and, though Babs and Mabs and Jean Cartwright were splendid, Clara was acutely conscious that she had leeway to make up herself.

The same applied to Margot Lantham and Peggy Preston, newcomers to the team. They needed every ounce of extra practice they could cram in.

"Ready, Babs!" Clara cried.

She laughed as she took her stance, though, in reality, Clara felt far from her usual happy self. Her high spirits, her eagerness for the game, were very largely assumed.

For at heart Clara was very worried. At the back of her mind, all the time was the thought of Marjorie Hazeldene, her best chum, lying ill in the "sanny." She was worrying, too, about Ralph Lawrence.

But there it was. For the time being she must concentrate upon the game—must never let these chums of hers see that she was secretly so very troubled by the problem that had been created by the coming of Ralph Lawrence to Cliff House.



She played the ball Babs sent down to her.

Biff! Over the net it flew. Forward raced Mabs, playing it up with ease.

"Too hard, Miss Trevlyn!" announced an unexpected voice.

Clara spun round, and then her face lighted up as she saw the figure which had strolled on to the scene.

A tall, good-looking young man, with a little black moustache, wearing a pair of slightly tinted glasses, dressed in white flannels and thoughtfully chewing a wisp of hay.

"Why, Mr. Grantham!" she cried. "You here—so early!"

"So early!" And Mr. David Grantham, the new games coach, smiled—a rather inscrutable smile. "Thought I'd buzz along and get the nets out, but I see you've forestalled me. Good-morning, everybody!" And cheerfully he nodded at the others. "That's a neat back-hand stroke you've developed, Miss Redfern!"

"Oh, is—is it?" Babs asked.

But she flushed confusedly. Some of the animation had died out of her face. Mabs, too, seemed strangely uncomfortable. Jean, in her court, was looking almost hostile. Margot Lantham was biting her lip, while Peggy Preston, who was umpiring the game, frowned.

Glad as Clara seemed to see the new-

By
HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrations by Laidler

corner, it was at once obvious that a felony was not shared by the others.

There was a reason.

For David Grantham, good coach though he was, had acquired a rather bad reputation during his brief tenure of office at Cliff House.

He was hinted at as a "mystery man." It was said of him that he was callous. He had been accused of encouraging Clara when Clara had been caught in fierce conflict with Nancy Bell, the sneak of the Fourth Form, in Friardale Woods.

The illness of Marjorie Hazeldene, who at the moment was recovering from concussion and a slight nervous breakdown in the sanatorium, had also been laid to his door.

Small wonder, then, that his welcome by the chums was not boisterous.

He noticed it. Clara noticed it. Clara flushed hotly. The colour flamed at once into her cheeks, and an indignant outburst was only checked by the slight, warning, imperceptible inclination of the head that the games coach gave.

She bit her lip. For a moment she paused; then, suddenly turning to Peggy Preston, she spoke.

"Peggy"—in a voice that was a trifle stifled—"take my place, will you, please?"

"Why, aren't you going on?"

"I want to talk to Mr. Grantham."

Peggy nodded, but rather doubtfully. It was Peggy's private opinion, shared by the whole of Cliff House School, that Clara Trevlyn talked a little too much to David Grantham. That was one of the strangest mysteries about this man—Clara's strange friendship for him, her fierce defence of him.

It was a mystery which had been made much of by Nancy Bell, who hated Clara with a bitter hatred, and which had reflected upon the Tomboy with a certain amount of criticism.

But Clara did not care. Clara, as long as she felt herself justified, never cared. And she felt justified now in her defence of the new coach.

She went over to him. Defiantly she smiled at him. He leaned towards her.

"How's Marjorie?" he whispered.

A rather more serious expression came to Clara's face. Strange that he, who was Marjorie Hazeldene's cousin, should have had to ask her for information about the girl he loved better than any on earth.

But, then, he could hardly go to the sanatorium himself. That would be inviting too great a curiosity, considering he was supposed to have no more interest in Marjorie than the casual interest of a visiting games coach.

For David Grantham, as the school knew him, was not David Grantham at all. He was Marjorie Hazeldene's cousin, Ralph Lawrence—Ralph, the misjudged, who had been accused of Noah Bell's crime at Friardale School, who, with Clara's help, was still desperately trying to prove his innocence; Ralph, believed to have stolen Dr. Barrymore's collection of ancient gold coins from Friardale School; who had been accused of injuring his Cousin Marjorie, whom—mockery of Fate!—he loved with every fibre of his manly being.

Sharp anxiety came into his handsome face now. More searchingly he regarded her.

"Clara, is she worse? If you don't tell me, I shall go into the sanatorium!"

"Oh, my hat! Don't be silly!" Clara muttered. She looked swiftly towards the courts. "There's no need to worry, Ralph. I haven't seen her this morning, but she was quite all right last

night—"

And there she stopped as a figure came fluttering across the fields—the figure of Sally, the maid. "Yes, Sally?" she asked, with a frown.

"Oh, Miss Trevlyn!" Sally gasped, "the matron sent me! Miss Hazeldene—"

"Yes?" Clara asked.

"She's—she's asking for you. She's delicious, Mrs. Thwaites said. The doctor's been, and the doctor says she's got something on her mind. Could you come right away, please?"

"Yes, yes!" and Clara stole a sidelong look at her companion—Ralph—whose face had suddenly gone grey, whose lips were twitching. "I'll be across right away," she said, "as soon as I've changed my shoes. Steady up!" she added, in a mutter as Sally, with a nod, turned to go back. "Don't give yourself away. It's probably nothing. Something I can set right in two jiffs. Stop here until I come back."

Ralph's eyes gleamed.

"And if you don't come back within ten minutes, I'll risk everything and come for you," he cried.

Clara bit her lip. She rushed off. Her heart was fluttering now. There was a groan on her lips.

Marjorie! Marjorie! She had fancied her chum was getting along so swimmingly. All breathless, she reached the sanatorium door.

"Oh, Clara, please do come in!" Mrs. Thwaites said anxiously. She looked quite worried in the morning sunlight.

"Marjorie—"

"Yes, I know!" Clara gasped. "Let me see her!"

She was shown into the ward, and then she stopped. Marjorie lay in a snowy white bed, her face the colour of a peony, tossing restlessly from side to side. Strange words came from her lips.

"Ralph! Ralph! Ralph, they won't let you go—"

"Marjorie!" Clara cried.

"They've arrested you, Ralph!"

"Marjorie! Marjorie!" Clara caught her hand. "Marjorie—oh, great goodness, look at me!" she cried.

"Marjorie, don't fret! Please, please don't!" she cried. "Ralph's all right."

Slowly the stricken girl turned her head. Her eyes, bright with fever, momentarily dulled. She muttered.

"To Clara, they've got Ralph! They've arrested him for—for taking those coins!"

"But they haven't—they haven't!"

"They have!" Marjorie asserted.

"They must have. If they haven't, why hasn't he been to see me?" she cried.

"No, Clara, you're trying to deceive me. You're only trying to put my mind at rest. I tell you I saw the police take him."

Clara gasped.

"But, Marjorie dear—oh, listen!" she cried pathetically. "I tell you it's all right—all right! I've just been talking to him. He's here—here! Marjorie, look—"

And wildly the idea came to her. "If I bring him to you, if you see him yourself, will you believe then?"

"Yes, yes," Marjorie whispered.

"But only then. Only—if I see him myself."

Clara rose. She flung a look at Mrs. Thwaites. Out she rushed, back to the tennis courts. The games coach started eagerly at her approach.

Clara groaned. But she had to tell the truth.

"She's worse," she muttered. "She wants to see you, Ralph, only you can ease her mind. You've got to see her. You've got to make her think everything is all right!"

He bit his lip.

"But how?"

"Only one way," Clara frowned. "You'll have to go as yourself. Listen, Ralph, I've an idea. Nobody at Cliff House knows about the Friardale affair, do they?"

"Only Nancy Bell."

"And she only suspects," Clara put in swiftly. "Ralph, it's all right. Oh, my hat—"

And she shook her head, gazing at the tennis players who were still disporting themselves on the courts.

"Wait a minute!" she said. "Listen now. There's no risk as long as you play your cards well. Obviously you can't go to see her as David Grantham—but you can go to see her as Ralph Lawrence. Nothing more natural, in fact," she added, "than that you should come along to see her, now that she's ill!"

His eyes gleamed.

"Well?"

"But we'll have to be careful," Clara went on. "No use in taking unnecessary risks. Look here, you buff off now. Turn up at nine o'clock at the gates—without disguise. I'll be there to meet you—just in case Nancy Bell is snooping about. Get that?"

Rather grimly he nodded.

One look he threw at the players on the courts, one nod in Clara's direction, and he turned on his heel, walking across the grounds in the direction of the gates.

For a moment Clara stood looking after him, uneasy in her mind, asking herself, after all, whether that apparently desperate plan was absolutely waterproof.

Well, after all, where was the risk? Nobody, except Nancy Bell, the sneak of the Fourth, knew what had happened at Friardale. Nobody knew that Ralph, at Friardale, was still being sought for the coins he was supposed to have stolen and which had not yet come to light.

As Ralph Lawrence, he was a popular figure at Cliff House School, and it was natural, seeing that Marjorie was ill, that he should come and visit her.

But Nancy! Clara's jaw squared a little. Right! She'd keep an eye on Nancy!

Had Clara only known it, Nancy was watching at that moment. From the door of the tuckshop, which was opposite the playing fields, Nancy had seen the head of the games master and the Tomboy's inclined together, and guessed at that muttered conversation.

Her thin, sharp face grew cunning suddenly. She couldn't hear what had passed, but she guessed that Clara and David Grantham were planning something. As Ralph came towards her and passed out of the gates, she dodged hurriedly back into the tuckshop.

She watched him as he stamped into the road. She saw him hail the Friardale bus which stopped outside. She saw him get in, longed to follow, but dared not. She watched Clara—Clara, who had taken her racket again now, who was playing.

She watched as the game finished and the team tramped off to breakfast. Nancy, for her own reasons, had no intention of letting Clara out of her sight—not even for a moment.

When Clara at nine o'clock sauntered down to the gates, she followed her. Behind one of the old elms she hid as Clara lounged there, looking anxiously up and down the road.

Presently there was a rush of wheels. The green top of the Friardale omnibus appeared over the hedge, and came to a halt outside the gates. Nancy saw Clara rush forward with a whoop.

And then—what was this? For there was Clara swinging back through the gates on the arm of a boy. A handsome, clean-shaven, smiling boy,

it was, wearing the Friardale tie, the Friardale blazer, the Friardale cap, a reckless smile upon his lips, the swagger in his walk suggesting that he hadn't a care in the world.

Ralph Lawrence! Ralph Lawrence—here!

"Well, the nerve!" Nancy breathed. Her eyes gleamed. The nerve, indeed! But a moment's shrewd reflection forced her to understand. She guessed his purpose now—Ralph had come here openly as Ralph Lawrence to see Marjorie, knowing full well, of course, that nobody would suspect him as being David Grantham.

Nancy's eyes glittered. What a chance, she told herself, to bowl Ralph Lawrence out—to show him up, to expose him!

But how could she? She only suspected that he and David Grantham were one and the same. She had no proof.

One, two, three moments Nancy remained wrapped in thought. Then, swiftly leaving her hiding-place, she flew. Into the school she went, up to the prefects' room.

Thank goodness, it was untenanted! She closed the door behind her, lifted the receiver of the telephone. In two minutes she was in conversation with her brother, Noah Bell, at Friardale School.

"What?" he cried, when she told him her startling news. "Lawrence is there—as himself?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, my hat! But, of course, they don't know. Nancy"—his voice grew eager—"wait a minute. Don't go away. Look here, keep him there somehow."

"But—"

"I'll come over right away," Noah Bell said eagerly. "Oh, for goodness' sake, don't argue. Don't you see? Lawrence was not afraid to go to Cliff House because nobody knows about him there. But here—well, as you know, he's wanted here badly. They still think he's got those coins. If I went to Dr. Barrymore now he'd come over like a shot."

Nancy gasped.

"But you're not going to Dr. Barrymore?"

"Of course I'm not! Take me for a fool?" Bell snapped. "Barrymore might smell a rat if I told him you had specially phoned me that Lawrence was there. No, I've a better wheeze. I'll come over now, right away. After all, there's no reason why I should not drop in and see my sister, is there? It's just too bad, of course that I happen to come over at the same time that Lawrence is in the school, and that I happen to know that he's wanted at Friardale."

"I'll show him up. I'll ask Miss Primrose to detain him while I get into communication with old Barrymore. After that"—grimly—"it won't be hard to prove that he's David Grantham, as well as Ralph Lawrence, and—"

"Yes!" Nancy gulped.

"And he'll be out of the way—for good!" Bell went on. "You know, Nancy, he's after those coins which you lost in the woods. I'm afraid that—afraid he'll find them, I mean. If he does, well it's all UP with me, because they're in a leather bag that's got my initials on it. I know he's been searching—for days. I've watched him; that's why I haven't been able to search myself. But once he's out of the way—You understand?"

Nancy did not understand. She put down the receiver with a rather trembling hand. Noah Bell was afraid of Ralph Lawrence—with every justification.

She was afraid of him. For it was certain, if the precious conspiracy in which these two were engaged ever came to light it would mean expulsion, at least, for both of them.

The coins which Noah Bell had stolen had, at one time, been in her custody. And she had lost them in Friardale Woods!

Ralph Lawrence knew that. Night and day Ralph Lawrence had searched, so diligently, so frequently that Noah, on the same track, had been frustrated in his own desperate efforts to find them.

But removal of Ralph Lawrence would change all that. With Lawrence out of the way, she and her brother could search for the coins at leisure.

Nancy's eyes glittered. Out of the prefects' room she raced. No need to ask where Ralph Lawrence had gone. She guessed that.

Down the stairs, three at a time, and out of the rear door. Until, coming within sight of the door of the sanatorium, she paused. For, outside that door, obviously on guard, was Clara Trevlyn.

Nancy gritted her teeth. She had not bargained for that. Hastily she dodged back. At the same moment Clara looked in her direction.

Was she spotted?

Nancy did not know. But she could not afford to take risks. There was a door on her right—a door partly opened. That door belonged to Miss Wright's study.

One swift glance through the crack showed Nancy that it was unoccupied. She slipped in.

But Clara had seen. A glimmer came to the eyes of the Tomboy. She had no idea what Nancy's little game was, of course, but the very lurking presence of Nancy filled her with suspicion.

Very quietly she tiptoed to the door.

very quietly she drew it to and turned the key, which was on the outside of the lock.

At the same moment Ralph, a quietly satisfied smile on his face, emerged from the sanatorium.



The Latest

"RALPH, is—is it all right?" Clara asked eagerly.

He nodded.

"Quite. She's sleeping now," he said. "She seems more contented. Her mind's at rest. I didn't tell her anything, of course." He paused. "Clara," he said, "whatever you do, don't ever let her think that things haven't come out all right again."

"You mean?"

"I mean that she's assured at the moment. The very fact that I've turned up here in the flesh has convinced her that everything must be all right. She didn't ask many questions, she just seemed—glad. The matron says she'll get along all right now—as long, of course, that nothing happens to upset her."

He frowned a little, and a rather dogged look came into his eyes.

"At the moment she thinks everything in the garden is lovely. I've deliberately encouraged her to think it, because I want her to get well again. But—" He paused. "There's a chance that others may say things to her—a chance that she might get an inkling that everything isn't as it should be. I do ask you to use everything in your power to prevent Marjorie from



BELL saw a chance to prove his suspicions.

He lunged at Ralph, attempting to snatch off his moustache. But in the nick of time Ralph jerked his head aside. "What's the game?" he snapped.

being disturbed. "Whatever happens, keep the truth from her. You understand?"

"Leave it to me," Clara said determinedly.

"Thanks! I rely on you, then," He smiled a little. "Well, that's that," he said. "And now I must toddle. No, don't come with me. I'll just dodge back into the woods, get into my David Grantham outfit, and see you on the courts in an hour's time. So long, then!"

He strode away. Clara, admiration in her eyes; followed his athletic figure as he strode off across the quadrangle.

Then she heard a footstep in the corridor behind her. She started, all at once remembering the girl she had left locked in Miss Wright's room. She turned, with a little start, and then fell back.

Coming up the passage was Miss Wright herself!

Clara stopped. Now—oh, idiot! Why hadn't she thought of Nancy Bell before? She saw Miss Wright stop at her door; she saw her try it. She saw the frown of puzzlement in her face as she found it was locked, and turned the key. Then her voice—

"Nancy, what ever are you doing here?"

Clara groaned.

"It—it wasn't my fault, Miss Wright," came Nancy Bell's quavering voice. "It was Clara Trevlyn."

"Rotten little sneak!" Clara thought fiercely.

"Clara pushed me in here and locked the door!" Nancy cried.

"I see," Miss Wright's eyes glistened. "Very well, Nancy, you may come out. Find Clara Trevlyn and send her to me at once!"

"Yes, Miss Wright."

Quite a spiteful satisfaction there was in her tone. Wouldn't Nancy just love telling Clara Trevlyn that fresh trouble awaited her? But Clara saw that the game was up, saw that nothing now was to be gained by keeping in the background. She'd save Nancy that pleasure, at least. She stepped forward.

"You want me, Miss Wright?"

"The mistress swung round."

"Clara—you!"

"Yes," Clara favoured Nancy with a rather grim look. "I heard, Miss Wright. I didn't push Nancy into your study."

"Indeed? Then how comes it that the door was locked on the outside. You are not suggesting that Nancy locked herself in?"

"No, I'm not suggesting that," Clara said levelly. "I did lock her in."

"But why?"

"Because she was spying on me."

"Spying on you? But why should Nancy want to spy on you? What were you doing that you should fear someone was spying on you?"

Clara bit her lip.

"I was doing nothing," she said.

"Only waiting outside the sanatorium for Marjorie Hazeldene's cousin. I spotted Nancy hanging about the passage. Nancy must have realised I had seen her, and dodged into your study. I turned the key in the lock."

"Intending," Miss Wright said coldly, "to make her a prisoner?"

Clara hesitated.

"Well, yes!"

"Thank you!" Miss Wright's lips compressed.

"It is a most unsatisfactory explanation, Clara. Most unsatisfactory. It is an explanation, moreover, which suggests that you had guilt on your conscience, otherwise why should you be afraid of anyone seeing what you were doing? What your purpose was, I do not know, but I do most

strenuously object to your locking another girl in my study. You will take a hundred lines."

Clara heaved a deep breath. She threw one bitter look at her enemy of the Fourth.

Nancy Bell answered it with a sour, triumphant smile, which fortunately for her Miss Wright did not see. For one moment the Tomboy's hands clenched at her side. It looked in that moment as if she would have hurled herself at the sneak of the Form.

But she remembered in time. She was in quite enough disgrace. With a shrug she turned and tripped off down the corridor.

Meanwhile, Ralph Lawrence had reached the woods. Rather relievedly he was breathing as he plunged in among the trees, for it had been no easy task to run the gauntlet at Cliff House.

Along the path which led to the old ranger's hut in the clearing he walked. There he had hidden his David Grantham disguise. With a swift look right and left, he pushed open the creaking door, let himself in, and closed it again behind him.

There, rapidly, he stripped himself of his Friardale uniform, donned the white flannels so inseparable from the character of David Grantham, fixed on the small moustache, adjusted the tinted glasses, and grinned at himself in the fragment of cracked mirror that stood on the rotting mantelshelf. Well, here he was!

Just a hurried bundling of his own clothes under a pile of brushwood and rubbish, and smart, immaculate, he stepped out into the clearing again.

As he did so he gave a start, swinging round swiftly towards the left, whence the snapping of twigs underfoot heralded the approach of some other woodland wanderer.

He saw a cap through the bushes, heard a deep, rasping breathing as though the owner of that cap was out of breath. And then his eyes narrowed. All the ferocity, bitterness, the hatred of which he was capable flamed into Ralph Lawrence's face as he swung round. Through the bushes came the slouching figure of a boy.

Noah Bell!

Noah it was—Noah, having missed the bus, hurrying from Friardale, bent on his exposure.

Ralph did not know that, of course. He didn't care.

For one moment—but only one—he almost forgot what and who he was supposed to be. Instinctively his hands clenched at his sides. Irresistibly within him rose that ardent desire he had been so conscious of these last few days to have it out with Noah Bell; to go for Noah Bell, to thrash the truth out of him.

This boy, the author of all his wrongs, the cause of Marjorie's suffering, of Clara's unpopularity!

But he refrained. His hands, half-raised, fell to his sides. He'd take no notice of Noah Bell. In his official capacity and his character of David Grantham, he was naturally not supposed to know Noah Bell.

No more than a casual glance he gave him as Bell came blundering into the clearing, and then, aware of him, stopped as if he had suddenly been stung.

Something like a hiss left his lips.

"You!" he gasped.

Bell blinked. Coward he was, but even his coward's impulse was held in check at that moment.

Triumphantly, feeling gleefully that he had his enemy at his mercy at last, Noah Bell had been hurrying to Cliff

House School, never dreaming but that when he got there he would find this man, whom he suspected as being Ralph Lawrence, at his mercy.

But here he was, cool, debonaire, obviously having thwarted that intention. His little eyes, so curiously like Nancy's, glittered.

"You?" he said again.

"I beg your pardon," Ralph, remembering his role, looked up. "You seem surprised about something, my boy."

Bell's eyes goggled.

"You?" he breathed again.

"Yes, it's me," Ralph sighed. "Mr. David Grantham, at your service," he said. "I don't think I have the honour of knowing you."

Bell's fury flamed at that. He was so sure, so confident in his own mind that this man and Ralph Lawrence were one and the same. Realising he had had his walk for nothing, crazed with the fear that this boy might forestall him in his own object and thus bring about his own exposure, Noah Bell did a foolish thing.

He said no word. But he lunged forward. His hand made one grab at Ralph's moustache.

Just in the nick of time Ralph saw the movement and jerked his head aside. He caught Bell's arm.

"Now," he grated, "what's the little game?"

And then Bell became aware of what he had done; became aware that at last he was in the grasp of this boy he had so terribly wronged.

Fright took the place of fierceness; that coward streak, always uppermost, came with a rush to the fore.

No, no! He could not stand there and face the cold hatred in this other fellow's face. He could not bear it. He squirmed.

"Let me go!" he shrieked.

And crash! In an access of that craven spirit which was upon him, up came his foot. Crack! It went the impact of his shoe against Ralph's shin, and oh! a great cry from Ralph as in sudden agony he released his hold. Bell turned to run.

But not fast enough did he turn.

If Ralph had been angry before, he was furious now.

He stopped not to think of the pain of that blow.

Infuriated by the coward's attack, he took one leap towards Bell. One hand caught Bell's collar, spinning him round. Ralph showed his teeth.

"Now, you outsider! You're going to fight for that?" he cried. "Put 'em up!"

"I won't! Ow!"

Crash! Swift and hard came the blow that sent Bell's teeth chattering. Desperately, instinctively he put up his fists. Even now he had no wish to fight, but he was cornered.

Crash! Biff! Smack! Three times Ralph got through his feeble guard. Three times Bell staggered. Like a panther Ralph was upon him.

Biff!

Again and again! Bell screamed, and five girls coming through the woods, stopped.

The five were Babs, Mabs, Peggy Preston, Jean Cartwright, and Margot Lantham, the tennis team taking an after-breakfast stroll before the more strenuous tennis practice of the morning.

They stood still.

"What was that?" gasped Babs.

"Listen!"

"No, don't listen, look!" Jean shrielled, and pointed.

In the clearing twenty yards in front of them two boys were fighting.

"Noah Bell!" cried Jean.



"IT'S Noah Bell and the games master—fighting!" the cry went up from the Cliff House girls, as they rushed into the clearing.

"And the games master!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Mr. Grantham!" cried Babs.

But Ralph did not hear. Noah Bell did not hear. Bell, at that moment, had got through Ralph's guard. It was a lucky blow, and it connected with Ralph's chin. Back went Ralph's head. It was cowardly Noah's opportunity. He turned and ran.

"Come back!" yelled Ralph.

But Noah Bell was not coming back. He was sobbing as he ran, tearing and crashing through the bushes in blind panic. Ralph followed—a dozen paces he took, then shrugged. Hang the fellow! Why should he run after him? He stopped, turned savagely, and dropped into a walk.

But Bell, unaware that he was not being pursued, flew on. Like the wind he rushed, heading he knew not where, and as heedless as long as he got out of range of those savage fists.

One guilty, panic-stricken glance he flung behind him as he ran. He did not see—never realised, in fact, that the old quarry yawned beneath him. One more step he took. Then—

"Oh!" screamed Bell.

Five startled faces heard that cry. Five startled faces looked at each other. Mobs turned suddenly white. Babs bit her lips. It was Jean who led the rush forward.

"The quarry—quick!" she cried.

Towards the quarry they pelted, and then, breathless, gasping, they stood staring down.

Forty yards below them, his face white, the unconscious body of Noah Bell lay.

"Oh, great goodness!" gasped Babs. "Come on!"

There was a path, leading into the quarry, near by; the five girls rushed down it.

Babs was the first to reach Noah Bell. Gently she took his head and pillowed it on one arm.

Bell's eyes opened. He groaned.

"Oh!"

"Noah!" Babs gasped. "Are you hurt?"

Bell's lips parted in a bitter smile.

"I—I— He got out, and then squirmed feebly. "Oh, goodness, my foot! My leg! Is that you, Babs? Did you see what happened?"

"No, what did happen?"

"That—that games master of yours." Noah Bell gave a shudder.

Actually he was not hurt—just shaken by his fall, but he thought he saw a

chance of levelling up scores once and for all with his old enemy.

"We—we were fighting," he said.

"Yes, we saw that," Babs cried.

"He—he chased me. We struggled, then he pushed me over the edge of the cliff, and ran away. Oh, dear!"

And Bell, pretending unconsciousness, closed his eyes again.

"OH, MY HAT!"

"The man's crazy!"

"He might have killed him!"

It was an hour later. Everybody in Cliff House seemed to be talking, and the talk, once again, was all of Ralph Lawrence.

It was too beastly, too utterly brutal.

That was the opinion heard on every side.

And there was no gainsaying the evidence this time. Babs & Co. had seen that fight, had seen the games master chase Bell. They had found Bell at the bottom of the quarry. Bell himself had named David Grantham as his attacker. "He's got to go," Rosa Rodworth said fiercely.

"Yes, rather!"

"Babs—"

Babs shook her chestnut curls.

All the trouble, which had seemed to be dying down, had again boiled up, more fiercely than ever before.

She didn't understand, but she had seen, and disgust filled her.

Clara had heard the news, too. She had heard it with incredulity. She had heard it with scorn. For the first time in their long friendship Babs and Clara had come dangerously near to quarrelling over the new games master, for Clara stubbornly refused to abandon the faith she had in him.

David Grantham was a white man, she declared. David Grantham would never have done a thing like that!

But Babs could not disbelieve the evidence of her eyes. She could not refuse to heed those words which Noah Bell had uttered—Noah who, fortunately little she heard of his fall, had gone limping back to Friardale.

Puzzled and angered she was by Clara's attitude. But matters, she saw, had got to come to a head now. The Form was up in arms, the team was up in arms.

Quite heated was the discussion on the tennis courts, where the five members of the team stood awaiting the arrival of Clara Trovlyn.

Quite loud the clamour, led by Nancy Bell, that David Grantham should be got rid of once and for all.

Unfortunately the man was a good coach, but he was also a disgrace to Cliff House.

A man who was so callously capable of smashing up another boy, who had before proved himself a bully, ought not to be allowed to mix with a crowd of reasonable, fair-minded girls.

There was wild talk of a deputation to Miss Primrose.

"No, wait a minute," Babs cried.

"Oh, good gracious! Clara—"

A murmur followed her words.

"We must see Clara!"

"But why?" shouted Lydia Crossendale.

"Because— Oh, let me get a word in, you duffers!" Babs tried to make herself heard. "Because Clara says he's still necessary to the team."

"Rubbish!"

"We'd rather lose the tournament than play under the orders of a man like that."

Hot indeed the feeling at the meeting. While Clara, in Study No. 7, was working at her desk.

Clara was furious. But she was still, pre-eminently, captain of the tournament tennis team, and Clara was almost fiercely concentrating upon her duties.

To-day was a whole holiday, and there was a list of practices to be made out, a list of games to arrange. That fixture with the Upper Fifth to be fixed up.

As far as Clara was concerned, the incident of the quarry was dismissed. Staunch as ever was her faith in Ralph. She knew Ralph too well to believe for a moment that he could be guilty of this latest cowardly action attributed to him.

But— Oh goodness! If only this wretched business were over and done with! If only she could be left alone to concentrate upon the tennis which was so vitally necessary to Cliff House if they were to win the tournament!

3 "Touch and Go For The Tomboy"

But there—the lists were ready at last! She rose with a sigh. Out of the study she walked, across the fields, to come face to face with the hostile crowd which had collected round Babs at the pavilion. A sudden silence fell.

Clara frowned.

"Well, what's all this?"

No reply.

"Babs!"

Babs licked her lips.

"I—I suppose I've got to tell you—as captain! We've had a meeting."

"About what?"

"The whole Form is up in arms against David Grantham."

Clara's lips set.

"The whole Form has come to a decision," Babs went on. "Oh, Clara, I hate to have to tell you, but—well, we don't understand your interest in David Grantham, but we feel that it's only right to tell you that we don't share it. Whatever you may say, David Grantham has proved himself nothing but a bully and an outsider."

Clara's eyes flashed, her hands clenched.

"Go on," she said, with dangerous quietude.

"And we—we want to tell you," Babs forced herself to go on, "that we refuse to be coached by him any further. One has to draw the line somewhere, and since you're so unwilling to let David Grantham go, the Form is taking the matter into its own hands."

There was a heavy silence. Clara stood, her face working, her eyes flashing from one condemning face to another.

But before she could speak another voice broke in.

"Which means," that other voice said quietly, "that my resignation is asked for, eh?"

And Ralph, a grim smile upon his face, lounged into the group.

But Babs did not look back. Off the field, surrounded by Mabs and Peggy, Jean and Margot, she went. Clara took a furious pace forward.

"Babs, you ninny!"

"No, hold on—hold on!" It was Ralph—Ralph, speaking with a curious thickness. "Clara, don't go and make it worse!" he cried. "It's very obvious they don't want me."

But Clara did not heed. Clara, at that moment, was torn between frenzy and fury. Her team was walking out on her—that team she had, with such infinite pains, got together for the tournament; for whom she had been making such plans to-day. The team was deserting her because of this infamous lie that had spread abroad against Ralph Lawrence.

Almost violently she wrenched herself free. No, they shouldn't go—they shouldn't!

She was captain—she was—

"Babs! Mabs! Margot! You duffers!" she cried.

She broke into a run

Ralph heaved a breath. Oh, Clara, Clara, you mutinous duffer! Clara, as usual, was heading for trouble. Plain as a pikestaff it was coming to her! Out of the corner of his eye he saw Miss Primrose, the headmistress, sailing across the quad, knew that a scene would result.

"Clara!"

His turn to call now; his turn to sprint after the Tomboy.

But too late. Clara, the passion flaming in her face, had caught up with Babs and Mabs. She did not see Miss Primrose sailing towards her. She was heedful of nothing in that moment. She caught Babs by the shoulder, spinning her round.

"Babs—"

Babs was quite white.

"Clara, don't make a scene!"

"Never mind about that," Clara said grimly. "I'm not the only one who's making a scene! What about the practice?"

"Well, you heard what the Form said?"

"I heard—yes." The words came from between Clara's teeth. "But who's captaining this team—the Form or myself? No, don't go away, you idiots," she cried. "Listen to me! We've got three days before we play in the tournament. Three days—"

At that moment Ralph came up. He caught the furious Tomboy by the arm.

"Miss Trevlyn!"

"No; wait a minute!" Clara flung off his hand. "I'm going to have this thing," she cried, fiercely—"here and now!" Unconsciously she raised her voice. "You've laid down the law to me, now I'm going to do a bit of laying down the law to you. I didn't ask to be skipper of this team. You all asked me. I took the job on, expecting a little loyalty and a little co-operation. And look," she cried bitterly, "what I am getting!"

Babs flushed.

"But Clara—"

And then into the gathering marched Miss Primrose. One withering look she flung at Clara, one inimical glance at Ralph Lawrence. Her lips set.

"Clara, please moderate your tone!" she cried sharply. "Your voice can be heard all over the quadrangle. What are you quarrelling about here?"

Clara bit her lip.

"Well, these girls—"

"Yes—yes!" Miss Primrose looked impatient. "But never—mind—never mind!" she said. "I think I under-

stand. I saw the girls walk away from the tennis court. I gather that there has been some difference of opinion between you."

She looked significantly at Ralph, who stood there staring uncomfortably at his feet.

"Mr. Grantham," she added quietly, "I shall be very much obliged if you will leave this school at once."

Ralph started.

"You mean—"

"I mean—" Miss Primrose said stiffly, "that I have just received a message from Dr. Barrymore, the headmaster of Friardale School. Dr. Barrymore has complained rather angrily that after assaulting one of his boys in the woods this morning, you then deliberately pushed him over the edge of the quarry, and left him to his fate. That," Miss Primrose said accusingly, "is not the sort of conduct we expect from one who is virtually a master at Cliff House."

Ralph looked staggered. This was the first he had heard of his crime.

"But Miss Primrose—"

"Thank you! You need not explain," Miss Primrose said icily. "I do not wish to argue the matter before these girls, Mr. Grantham. You were brought here to teach them tennis. It was not mentioned, but it was understood that you would behave yourself as became a gentleman, while you were teaching them. That you have failed to do."

"Oh, my hat!" burst out Clara.

"Clara, you will kindly refrain—"

But Clara was not in the mood for refraining, kindly or otherwise. Clara was bitterly up in arms. Every sense of fair play, of justice, of tolerance in her was outraged at this latest denouncement.

If they only knew what she knew—if she could only tell them that this man was a villain in that minute a dozen Miss Primroses would not have stopped hot-headed Clara from speaking her mind. She flamed round.

"And who says he's failed to do it?" she burst out. "Whose words have you got that he pushed Noah Bell into the quarry? Who saw it? Oh, yes, I know Babs & Co. saw him and Noah Bell fighting, but they didn't see him pushing Noah Bell into the quarry! And Noah Bell, sneak that he is—"

"Clara!" Miss Primrose thundered. "Clara, how dare you!"

"Miss Trevlyn—" Ralph muttered. But Clara was on her high horse now. All the king's horses and all the king's men wouldn't have subdued her.

"You talk about him not behaving like a gentleman!" she flamed. "You talk about him disgracing Cliff House. But it's we who are disgracing Cliff House—yes, we," she burst out—"disgracing it by not giving him a fair chance—disgracing it because we're just throwing away our reputation for fair play! Condemning a man before he has had a chance to speak in his own defence!"

"Clara!" Miss Primrose was quivering. "Clara, stop—stop this instant!" she cried. "Clara, go to my study!"

"But—"

"Go!"

"Yes, for goodness' sake go!" Babs muttered. "Oh, my hat! Steady down!" she hissed.

Clara stood panting. She looked around her, at Miss Primrose's flint-like face, at the startled, outraged faces of girls about her. At Ralph—Ralph, who now came forward.

"Thanks, Miss Trevlyn!" he said evenly. "It's decent of you; but you see, I'm kicked out, in any case.



Worse and Worse

ELECTRIC the tension, ominous the silence which descended. Every girl turned; every eye, suddenly startled, stared at the handsome figure which had appeared in their midst.

Again Ralph smiled, a rather bitter, cynical smile.

"Pardon me for crashing in," he said, "but I just couldn't help hearing. I gather that I'm in fresh disgrace."

Rosa Rodworth eyed him scornfully.

"And of course you don't know why," "I only know," he said gently, "what I heard. That wasn't, however, very illuminating."

But Rosa turned—turned with a furious look. Lydia turned with her. Half a dozen other girls, after a little hesitation, also turned their backs. They were too disgusted, too furious to argue the matter out. Babs paused.

"Clara—"

Clara's eyes were like gimlets.

"Don't you think you'd better tell him?"

"Tell him what?"

"Well, if you don't know, of course—" Babs said quietly.

She hesitated, marked the line of girls departing, and then looked at Mabs. She also turned.

"Babs!" cried Clara. "Babs! Babs!"

Better for me to go. Better for you, too, Miss Primrose," he said levelly.

"Please go!"

"But may I intercede a word for Miss Trevely?"

"You may do nothing of the kind! Please go! Clara—"

Clara bit her lip. Her anger had spent itself now. Oh, what a horrible mess she had made of things! Of course, she should have held herself in check. Of course—

Wearily she trailed back to Miss Primrose's study. In a flutter of righteous indignation, Miss Primrose followed her in. Angriest she stared at the Tomboy, who stood before her, at the red roses of mutiny still colouring her cheeks; but that mutiny tempered her cheer; with a dread of the words she knew must fall, Miss Primrose was quivering.

"Clara, never—never have I witnessed such a disgraceful exhibition!" she cried. "I refuse to be spoken to as you spoke to me in the quadrangle! Do you forget that I am your head-mistress?"

Clara moistened her lips.

"I am sorry, Miss Primrose."

"Indeed, I sincerely hope you are!" Miss Primrose said stiffly.

"But—but I just had to stick up—"

"No doubt. I am not condemning your spirit in championing the cause of a man who you probably feel has been wronged, however greatly I may feel you are erring," Miss Primrose said. "At the same time, Clara, I cannot condone your methods of doing it. I am not punishing you for your sticking up for this man, as you call it, but I assuredly am going to punish you for your high-handed insubordination. For the rest of the day you will do special detention tasks in the classroom."

Clara winced.

"But Miss Primrose—the tennis?"

"Tennis," Miss Primrose icily informed her, "is of secondary importance, Clara. Discipline comes first. Tennis may be an admirable game, but the importance you have given it in your life at this school, Clara, is out of all proportion."

"If," Miss Primrose added, a glint in her eyes, "you give me the slightest cause for complaint, Clara, I shall take a more drastic step. Since tennis is allowing you so far to forget your other activities in school, I shall withdraw you from the team and tournament altogether. Let that be a warning."

Clara set her teeth. Hot the words that rose to her lips, but fortunate the momentary cool reflection which left them unuttered. Flaming mutiny raged once again within her, but she choked it down. But she didn't care, she told herself. She didn't care. Tennis was the most important thing in her life, was it? It wasn't. To Clara the most important thing now was the clearing of Ralph's avowance.

All that morning Clara slaved away in the Fourth Form class-room, listening grimly to the happy shouts of the girls on the courts.

Dinner-time came, and with it dismissal. At which Clara savagely threw her books into her desk and went off to see Marjorie.

Mrs. Thwaites, the matron, met her in the ante-room.

"She's better?" Clara asked.

"Much, much better," Mrs. Thwaites said. "The visit of her cousin seems to have cheered her up wonderfully. The doctor has been, and he is pleased—yes, very pleased indeed. Her mind seems to be at rest once more."

In the sanatorium she found Marjorie, pale and wan, sitting up reading a magazine. How her face brightened at sight of her chum!

"Oh, Clara," she whispered, "I'm so glad—to see you, I mean. Clara, you knew that Ralph came?"

"Yes," Clara said.

"And you know, of course," Marjorie said softly, "that everything's all right again? The coins are found. Ralph's innocence proved. Oh, Clara, I'm so happy! I can just lie here feeling myself getting better."

Outwardly Clara smiled. But inwardly she shivered. Dear, dear Marjorie! If only she guessed the truth!

"And they tell me," Marjorie went on

happily, "that if I only go on making the progress I am making now, Clara, that I shall be out again in a couple of days. I shall be out," she added, "a little thrill creeping into her tones, "to see you play in the tennis tournament. Won't that be lovely?"

Clara said "Yes," but to herself she was thinking, with something of panic, that it would be anything but lovely. Once Marjorie got out into the school again, nothing on earth could prevent her from hearing the truth.

Like a bomb exploding in her paradise of illusions would come the announcement that everything, so far from being well with Ralph, was worse and worse and worse. Inevitably then



HAPPY FEET— MEAN HAPPY FACES

Your feet can be such good friends
to your happiness—and to your Good
Looks!

cheap—is another tonic for the feet
this weather. And boracic powder
will do if you haven't any talc yet.

WELL WORTH THE CARE

Extra sensitive feet just love a
little spoiling now and again.

The time for this is at night. Give
them a good soaking first in hot water.
Dry thoroughly, not forgetting in
between the toes, and pushing down
the nail cuticle as you do so.

Then give them a generous smearing
with cheap cold cream or vaseline.
Rub and smooth this in, working from
the toes towards the ankles. It will
soon disappear.

Then apply the eau-de-Cologne or
methylated and finish with a luxurious
dusting of talc powder.

Try this the night before an im-
portant tennis match—and you should
certainly win!

Blisters are other painful little pests
that worry feet in summery weather.
These are caused chiefly through
rubbing, so first you must remove the
cause if you're to avoid them.

Examine your stockings and see
if there is a seam that presses extra
hard on that part of your foot.

It may be the back of your shoe
slips. A piece of chamois leather
placed inside will prevent this.

But once the blister has arrived it
mustn't be treated lightly.

Prick it with a needle that you've
held in the flame of a match for a
second. Then wash the spot and
apply a touch of boracic powder to
dry it.

Next, you simply must apply either
a tiny bandage or a piece of lint to
keep it quite clean while it is healing.

You may find that your shoes that
fitted you so snugly in winter are too
tight for you in summer. This is quite
usual, and many people make a habit
of buying summer shoes half a size
larger than winter ones.

Rubber soles tend to tire the feet in
warm weather, so when you've been
wearing them change out of these
as soon as you can.

Treat your feet as sympathetically
as you do your face this weather and
they will reward you many times over!

ON first thoughts feet don't seem to
have much to do with good looks,
do they?

Of course, pretty feet look charming
disporting themselves on high diving
boards or playing beach games. But
they mean more than that even—for
their fitness reflects in the face itself.

You must often have heard people
say—especially grown-ups—what a
tiring day they have had, just shopping.
Actually, they may not even have
walked more than two miles in all.

It's just because feet get tired that
people have that all-over feeling of
exhaustion. And how it shows in the
face! It dulls the brightest eyes,
makes tired circles around them; robs
the cheeks of bloom, and makes the
mouth weary-looking.

So this must certainly be prevented
in schoolgirls who value their bright
good looks.

AVOID ACHEY FEET

This weather you simply must wash
your feet every single day. Quite
apart from keeping them fresh and
sweet, this is a fine tonic.

But I'm going to be very stern and
warn you not to wash them in very hot
water first thing in the morning. You
can have a hot foot-bath last thing
at night if you like—but never, never
in the morning.

Very hot water softens the feet and
makes them tired and aching very
quickly. At night they get popped
between the sheets and have an
opportunity to get thoroughly rested
again.

So a warm water morning wash for
them, and a brisk rub over with
methylated spirit afterwards for extra
comfort.

That cheap eau-de-Cologne—a huge
bottle costs only sixpence from your
favourite shop—is just as good, if you
can afford it, and don't like the smell
of methylated spirit.

Talcum powder—which is also very

would come the relapse, and if that came—

"Clara, why do you look so worried?" Marjorie asked gently. "It is all right, isn't it?"

"Yes, yes, of course!" Clara answered. "Clara, are you sure?"

"Marjorie, old thing, of course," Clara gulped. "But"—she laughed shakily—"well, I've a lot on my mind, you know. Tho—the tennis, and all that. Time's getting short."

Marjorie smiled, that momentary flash of anxiety disappearing from her face. Ten more minutes Clara stopped talking inconsequently of trifles on which she could not keep her mind, that mind which now was in a state of turmoil.

Marjorie gained no inkling of what had happened, did not know that Ralph had been sacked, did not know that she herself was in deeper disgrace.

Almost glad was Clara, when the dinner-gong rang, to make her exit. She was feeling shaken and unstrung. She saw the sceptic that loomed ahead of her, wondered distractedly and fiercely how she could avoid it.

But there was no way of avoiding it. She could hardly enter into a conspiracy with the whole school to keep Marjorie in ignorance. Again she thought—if only everything were all right. If only Ralph were cleared.

Could she see Ralph? She must see Ralph. Once and for all, they must make one big last effort together to find those missing coins, and remove the stigma which clung to his name. Now that Ralph could no longer come to the school it became difficult indeed.

This afternoon she was detained. No chance then. To-morrow and the next day were full lesson days at Cliff House. The day after that was the day of the tournament itself.

Clara groaned. Well, she drew a deep breath, there was no help for it, it seemed. This afternoon was her only chance. It meant breaking detention, of course, but there was a sporting chance that she might not be spotted. If she were—and she flinched as she thought of that threat voiced by Miss Primrose. Still, that had to be risked.

No word to anyone did Clara say of her intention. After dinner she took herself off again to the class-room. At two o'clock Miss Primrose looked in to satisfy herself that she was getting on with her task. Almost as soon as she had gone, Clara rose.

Fortunately the school was almost deserted. Through the winding corridor she threaded her way, let herself out by the servants' entrance, and, going on through the deserted cloisters, gained Lane's Field with a sigh of relief. Nobody had seen her.

But somebody had. One girl had not joined the happy throng that had gone off walking, picnic-making, or to sports practice.

Nancy Bell still had her eye upon Clara Trevlyn. Nancy, still fearful that she would join up with Ralph in his search for the missing coins that lay somewhere in Friar-dale Woods, was not letting Clara out of her sight for a single minute.

And perhaps Nancy, knowing the Tomboy's mad, impetuous nature, had suspected something like this. That was why she had hung about all day under the class-room window.

From the door of the kitchen Nancy's eyes followed the athletic figure as it burst its way through the hedge. Then she turned. Two minutes later she was knocking at the door of Miss Primrose's room.



Her Spirit Unbroken

WHEN Clara Trevlyn entered the room which Ralph Lawrence, in his character of David Grantham, had leased above the Hathaway tea-rooms in Friar-dale, she found him in his shirtsleeves, an open suitcase on the floor, savagely packing. She stared.

"Ralph!" she cried. "Clara!" He rose to his feet. His face was white in the sunshine that poured through the window. There were obvious traces of the strain through which he had passed. He smiled a little grimly.

"Hallo, Clara!" "But those—" Clara stared at him. "Ralph, what is this? You're leaving?"

"I'm packing," he declared grimly. "I'm going, Clara. No, no, don't interrupt. It's about time I got out of it! I guess my luck's dead out, and it's no good playing your luck when you're down. It's beastly, of course, having to go, leaving the fort to precious Noah—"

"And cowardly," Clara flamed out. He seemed in no wise insulted. He shook his head.

"Not so, Clara, not so," he said. "Look at it. I'm the dog with a bad name. I was saddled with a bad name before, you remember, but, thanks to you and Marjorie I got rid of it. This time it's come back, and it's obvious it's come back to stick. I've got the push from Cliff House."

Clara's face was like marble. "But that, of course," Ralph went on, "is only a minor affair. That was bound to come before long. I doubt, anyway, if I could have kept up the David Grantham pose much longer. I'm going to London."

"You are, are you?" Clara drew a deep breath. "Now isn't that too lovely for everybody," she asked, wistfully, and then her eyes flashed. "You're not going to London, Ralph. You're not jolly well going anywhere until this business is cleared up. You've thought everything out from your point of view. Now listen to mine—and to Marjorie's," she went on bitterly, and she told him of what had occurred in the sanatorium.

"Now do you see?" she asked. "If you go off now, leaving the Bells to continue unmolested, what's going to happen to poor old Marjorie when she finds out the truth?"

"His face twitched. "And what," Clara demanded, "is going to happen to me? Oh, I'm not going to mince matters! I'm in disgrace up to my neck, up to the hilt. If I'm found breaking bounds this afternoon, my tennis chances go west; but that doesn't matter. If you're going to do nothing to help yourself," she added, "I am! I think too much of Marjorie—"

"Clara, don't!"

"Well, are you going to be sensible? Don't you see that the only way to put everything right is to get this awful business straightened out? And there's one way, and only one way of straightening it out—that is to find those coins and put the guilt on the shoulders of the right party. Now," she added, "put on your coat."

"Why?" "Because we're going out—now. We're going to Friar-dale Woods.

We're going to search and search and search!" Clara said fiercely.

"No refusing Clara in that mood. Leader as Ralph himself was, he was completely under the dominating Tomboy's spell from that moment. Unable to raise further protests. But his face glowed, his heart warmed. What a pal was Clara, what a splendid pal!

Into the woods they went, Clara fierce and determined, with Ralph catching some of her enthusiasm. Along the path where the coins had been stung by Nancy Bell they raced, crawling under bushes, lifting twigs and brambles, parting the long grass. For half an hour—after they searched. And then—

"Clara!" cried a shocked and scandalised voice. "Clara, what are you doing here?"

And Clara, turning with a gasp of dismay, saw Miss Primrose coming through the woods.

"OH, MY HAT!"

The words were wrung from Barbara Redfern in a groan of dismay.

It was dismay which was echoed by the four girls in whose company she found herself, the four being Mabs, Jean Cartwright, Peggy Preston, and Margot Lantham.

And cause enough for the tournament tennis team to be dismayed. Cause enough, in all conscience, when the date of the tournament was so near.

For Babs, sent for by Miss Primrose on her return from the courts, had received the news. Clara Trevlyn, their captain, was captain no longer. Not only was Clara deprived of her chance of playing in the team, but she was gated for the rest of the week and barred tennis altogether.

Disamaying—yes. Not only disamaying, but disastrous. Puzzled, misunderstanding they were of Clara's friendship with David Grantham, but one and all acknowledged that Clara was the best tennis captain it was possible to have. Chummy Clara might be, but there was no gainsaying that curious power she had of inspiring her team.

And now— Gloom descended upon Study No. 4 into which Babs had burst with the news. If a bombshell had exploded, the five could not have looked more concerned, more utterly dismayed.

"But why?" Margot Lantham asked.

"Why?" Babs shook her head. "Oh, I don't know!" she said wearily. "This Grantham fellow again. Primmy gated her for the day. Clara broke detention, apparently, to meet this Grantham fellow, and Primmy found them together in the woods."

"Clara's sacrificing herself for that outsider!" Jean Cartwright said bitterly.

"And letting us down. But who's the new captain, Babs?"

"Well, I am," Babs said unenthusiastically. "Somebody's got to be captain, suppose." But—she shook her head—"I'd give a term's pocket-money to be able to hand it back to Clara. Oh, the old idiot!" she groaned. "The fearful chump! Why the dickens is she so keen on this Grantham man? What on earth has he ever done for her? It will be hopeless without her—just hopeless!"

Gloom again! A sudden deathly silence. Then there was a step in the corridor, a tap on the door. Clara herself stood there.

Very grim she looked. Her eyes flew at once to Babs.

"I hear you're the new captain," she said. Babs nodded.

"Yes, but—"
 "Oh, don't apologise!" Clara said.
 "I know. If one can be glad, I am glad! There's nobody I'd rather see in the position than you, Babs. I just came in to give you a word of advice."
 "Oh, Clara—"

"You'll want another girl in the team in my place," Clara went on, curiously stiff. "The best girl for the job is Janet Jordan. That's all."

"But—but, no, Clara! Clara, you old goose!" Babs cried, and grasped her arm as she would have retreated through the doorway. "Wait a minute—come back!" she cried. "Oh, my hat! Clara, listen—you've got to listen! You know jolly well that we can't do without you. You know jolly well that we shall never win without you in the team. Come in, let's talk this over. There must be some way out!"

"There's no way," Clara said.

"But—"
 "I tell you," Clara said, "there's no way out. Primmy's gated me up to the hilt. She's not only gated me; she's barred me from the courts!"

"Oh, I say!"
 "I'm sorry!"
 "And—" Jean Cartwright bitterly exclaimed, "you ought to be?"
 Clara started.

"What?"
 "Well, don't you think so yourself?" Very levelly Jean faced her. "It hadn't occurred to you, I suppose, that you've let US down? It hadn't occurred to you that without you we haven't a dog's chance of getting through the tournament. We were your team," Jean went on. "Yes, Clara, I'm jolly well going to let you have it now. You got us together, you coached us. You trained us. We were jolly well willing to follow you. We did follow you, not only were we your team but we were your chums."

Clara winced.
 "And now?"
 "Now—" Jean heaved a sigh. "Oh, I don't know, we still are. But how could you treat us like this—just throw us overboard? I don't know, and I don't want to know, unless you tell us, about this Grantham fellow, but in sticking up for him as you have done, you've not only run your own hot head into a brick wall, but you've just betrayed us—yes, betrayed us," Jean flamed out.

Clara stood still. She did not look at all angry. Her voice when she spoke had a queer, strained note.
 "You think that?"

"Well, what are we to think?"
 "You'd still think it if I captained the side in the tournament?" Clara asked. "If I still played?"
 "Oh, don't be a chump! How can you play?"

"Perhaps," Clara said, "you'll see. Meantime—Babs, will you give Janet her chance?"
 "Why, yes."

"Thank."
 And Clara, leaving them all staring at her, went out. Straight to Study No. 7 she went, encountering Janet Jordan who was busy laying the tea. She shut the door. With her back to it, she faced her chum.

"Janet," Clara said. "I want to talk to you. I've just seen Babs. She's giving you my place in the tennis team."

Janet did not look overjoyed. She shook her head. "You'll accept," Clara went on. "I want you to accept, but—" she paused. "You don't seem very pleased."

"And I'm not pleased," Janet burst out. "How can I be pleased? Oh, Clara, you know it's a mockery. You

know jolly well that I just can't touch you when it comes to playing tennis."

Clara smiled wryly.
 "Thanks for the compliment," she said. "But wait a minute, Janet. I haven't come to the point yet. I told you I wanted you to take this chance—just to make the team up. But I want you to promise me now that if I turn up at the tournament on Saturday you'll drop out."

So amazing the effrontery of that action that nobody seemed to notice, much less interfere. Except one girl. That girl, always on the watch—Nancy Bell.

"Well, of all the cheek!" Nancy gasped.

But she gazed. She grinned. Oh, what a chance for her! Clara was asking for it right enough, and it



"So everything's all right?" Marjorie whispered. "Oh, Clara, I'm so glad!"
 The Tomboy could say nothing. Marjorie must never suspect the truth!

Janet started.
 "But how can you?"
 "Never mind. If I do, will you drop out and give me your place?"
 "Yes, of course, but what—"
 "That's a promise," Clara reminded her.

"Yes. My hat, you know there's nothing I'd do more gladly. But Clara, what do you intend to do? I don't understand."

Very unlikely was it that she would understand. Few understood the strange workings of rebel Clara's mind when she was in one of those moods. But Clara had set her course. Fiercely, unflinchingly she was going to steer towards it.

Whatever happened, she vowed, she was going to play! She was going to captain the side in the Courtyard Tournament if she suffered expulsion for it afterwards. And she was going to get in the practice—that practice denied to her in the school she would have outside the school.

Ralph should coach her!
 Something almost relentless there was about Clara during tea. Janet felt half-afraid of her. After tea, without a word, she went out. She should have returned to the class-room by right, where she still had an extra hour's detention to serve. But she didn't. Deliberately, without any attempt at concealment, she walked right out of the school.

shouldn't be spiteful Nancy's fault if she didn't get it. But even Nancy could hardly go and openly sneak twice in one day.

How, then, to draw attention to the fact that Clara for the second time within three hours had broken her detention?

"By jove, I know!" Nancy grinned. Out of the gates into the road she slipped. Fifty yards away was the unoccupied telephone box. She put in her pennies, dialled the Cliff House number and asked to be put through to Miss Primrose. The headmistress's voice—a little peevish, for Miss Primrose was busy—answered her.

"Oh, Miss Primrose, I'm frightfully sorry to disturb you," Nancy said, disguising her voice, "but this is Mrs. Trevlyn speaking. Can I talk to Clara—for just a few minutes?"

"Clara," Miss Primrose severely announced, "is in detention."
 "But this is very, very important, Miss Primrose."

"Very well!" A sigh! "Will you hold the line for a moment. I will send someone for her."

But Nancy did not hold the line. She replaced the receiver, and in gleeful mood she went out.

The search would be up for Clara Trevlyn now. By that crafty trick she had succeeded in drawing the attention of the school to the fact that Clara had once again broken the rules.



The Rebel's Resolve

"I'M in for it, Ralph, in any case. Another gating more or less will make no difference. And I'm going to play, but I want coaching. Will you coach me?"

"But where?" Ralph Lawrence asked.

"In the woods—there's a clearing at the end of the path along which we were searching. If we play there we can keep an eye on the path at the same time."

Ralph capitulated, but not without argument. Ralph, too, was feeling a little afraid for his hot-headed friend, but Clara was adamant. She was going to help him, but at the same time she was not going to allow Cliff House to accuse her of letting the school down because she was helping him.

No use Ralph arguing. No earthly use in Ralph refusing, because if he refused, Clara said, she would go to the Courtfield School of Tennis and get her coaching there. Ralph just had to give in.

They went to the clearing, taking rackets and balls. The net was an imaginary one, a piece of string tied from one tree trunk to another serving the purpose.

For half an hour Clara put in tremendous work, especially on the service which Ralph had taught to Babs. At the end of that half an hour, flushed and breathless, she stopped.

"Well," she grinned, "enough for one lesson, Ralph. But I say, that service is tricky. Think I'll master it in time for the tournament?"

Ralph grinned.

"I can't," he said gallantly, "imagine you not mastering anything upon which you set your mind, Clara. By Jove, no! But look here, hadn't you better get back to school now?"

"Not yet," Clara told him. "Call-over's not for another hour. I shan't be missed till then, I fancy. Well,

we've finished with the tennis, but there's no earthly reason, now that we're here, why we shouldn't have another hunt around for the coins. Come on."

And hunt around they did. Half, three-quarters of an hour went by, then Clara gave a sudden convulsive start.

"Ralph!"

Ralph Lawrence ran to her side.

"What is it?"

"Look!"

And Clara held up something—a round gold disk which glittered in the light. "Ralph, is—is this—"

Almost greedily he snatched it. One look he gave, then his eyes flamed.

"Clara, where did you find it?"

"It—it was there."

"It's one of the coins—a Roman!" he cried. "Oh, my hat, yes it is!"

"I found it here—sticking up in the ground." And Clara, almost as excited as he, was pointing to the long grass beneath her feet. "Just at the bottom of the mound here," she added, indicating a long parapet which was, in reality, a bank of a ditch, now full of a mass of slowly stirring mud. "It must have fallen out of the bag when Nancy threw the coins away; which means," she added, "that the bag itself is not far away. Look around, Ralph."

Look around he did, all excitement, all eagerness. At last they had a clue! At last it seemed they were on the track!

The shadows lengthened, and still they searched. Then, with a start, Clara came to herself.

"My hat, I must be getting back. Ralph—"

"You go," Ralph said thickly. "There's still another half hour of light. I'll have another look round."

"And—and to-morrow?"

"To-morrow—here, at five o'clock," Ralph said.

Clara nodded. She flew. Thank goodness the path was not far from the school. She wondered if she had been missed; wondered if Piper, the porter, had closed the gates yet.

Piper hadn't. He was in the act of closing them when she came up. He glanced at her surlily.

"Hey, Miss Trevelyn," he said dourly,

"so you've come, have you, at last! Which I'm instructed to tell you that you're to report to Miss Primrose," he added.

Clara's heart sank.

"Oh goodness! She's not found—"

"She found her," Piper announced, "that you were not in detention when you were supposed to be. And," he added lugubriously, "she's in a fine old wax!"

With a sinking heart, Clara made her way towards Miss Primrose's study.

ANOTHER WIGGING, of course! Miss Primrose was pardonably incensed. This time, she said, she was going to report Clara to her parents. The next time—

"Next time—if there is a next time," she informed the Tomboy ominously—"I shall take stronger measures, Clara. I warn you. Next time you will go to the punishment-room for solitary confinement."

Clara paled; but she didn't care. Fiercely mutiny raged within her. Fiercer still her resolve. She meant to clear up the mystery, and, heartened by the find, she believed now that the luck was changing—to clear up that mystery she'd break bounds, and go on breaking bounds!

Strange was Clara's demeanour that night. Babs & Co., who had heard of the latest trouble, took anxious counsel with themselves.

No doubt about it, Clara was just asking to be expelled. David Grantham, who seemed to exercise such a curious spell over the Tomboy, was at the bottom of it, of course. Babs felt that she hated David Grantham. Friendship caused her to speak to Clara.

But Clara, tight-lipped, ready to flare up at once, met her pleading with:

"Thanks, Babs! I know you mean well, but this is just one of those cases where you can't interfere. I know very well what I'm about, and I'm going my own way."

"Even if," Babs asked her, "that way leads to expulsion?"

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"Even that," Clara answered, without flinching.

Oh, she was hopeless—hopeless! Babs was worried. She knew the mood. In this humour Clara just wasn't capable of looking after herself. Expulsion sure and certain was heading the Tomboys' way. Clara seemed to know it, but Clara, on her high horse, didn't care.

For the rest of that night, for all the next day, Babs kept a careful eye upon her chum. But in that interim, at least, Clara gave no cause for anxiety. At lessons she was more attentive than usual, as if she had suddenly realised the folly of her actions and was trying to make up

At break she was the same careless, half-free Clara of old. Babs felt a little reassured. It was only when, after lessons, that she and Mabs and Bessie Bunter and Jimema Carstairs—a guest invited because she had received a new cake that day—were preparing tea in Study No. 4, that anxiety welled again.

That was when Jimema, looking out of the window, said:

"Jehosophat! Is that old Spartan Clara?"

"Clara!" Babs frowned.

"Going through the gates."

Babs jumped. In a moment she was at Jimema's side. But there was no mistaking the boyish, athletic figure of the sports captain of the junior school. Clara swinging along with careless stride; Clara pausing at the gates, now passing through them and heading for the woods on the opposite side of the road. Babs' face turned white.

"Come on!" she said fiercely. "This is one time when she doesn't get away with it. Thank goodness she's not been spotted! Come along—all of you!"

"But why?"

"We're jolly well going to bring her back!"

"But supposing—"

"Oh, never mind supposing—come!" Babs urged.

She was the first out of the study. Jimema and Mabs followed. Bessie remained behind. Bessie hated scenes, and she was pretty certain there would be one when they caught up with the rebel. Also, Bessie was incapable of running at the rate the three set off.

Down the stairs, into the drive, and out into the woods, Barbara leading the way.

Almost savagely she clambered up the path along which Clara had tramped five minutes before, and burst into the clearing. And then she stopped, facing each other across a piece of string, were two figures with tennis rackets in their hands—the forms of the truant Tomboy and the disgraced games-master!



By Lantern Light

"CLARA!" Babs cried.

"Jee-hosophat!" breathed Jimema Carstairs.

Clara Trevlyn turned. She saw them. For a moment her face was overshadowed, then gaily she lifted her racket.

"Hallo, Babs! Come and watch my new service!"

"But—oh my hat!" Babs strode forward. She threw one wondering look at Ralph Lawrence, who dropped his arms, shaking his head. "Clara, don't you know that you're breaking bounds?" Clara laughed.

"And don't you know, chump, that if you're caught you'll probably be expelled?" Mabel Lynn exploded.

Again Clara laughed.

"Of course I know!" she replied coolly.

"But, Clara—"

"And I don't care—I don't!" The determine set came to the Tomboys' chin again. "I'm barred from playing tennis at Cliff House. Mr. Grantham is barred from coaching me. Right! What one can't do in the open one must do in secret."

Jimema took out her monocle. Very hard and penetrating was the stare with which she favoured the Tomboy.

"You mean—?" she breathed.

"Pretty obvious, isn't it?" Clara shrugged. "If we're going to win that tournament—"

"Well, but—you're not playing," Mabs breathed.

"That," Clara said defiantly, "is all you know about it! I am playing—I will play! The tournament takes place to-morrow, doesn't it? Right! Then I want every bit of extra practice I can get in. Service, Mr. Grantham!" she called.

Babs gasped.

"Clara, you're not going to stop here—"

"I am!" Clara said grimly.

And there was a flash in her eyes as she said it, a flash which dared anyone to challenge that resolution. Obviously, Clara's mutinous mind was made up. Obviously, there could be no turning the Tomboy from her purpose. Babs bit her lip.

She found herself in a quandary. She appealed to the games coach.

"Mr. Grantham, can't you persuade her? The idiot doesn't realise the risk she's running. You're her friend—"

Ralph smiled grimly.

"I assure you," he said, "that I have no more control over Miss Trevlyn's actions than you have yourself. I've almost worn myself out already trying to persuade her. Still—" He paused. Then, with a quick look at the trio, went over to Clara and whispered some words in her ear.

But Clara shrugged. She shrugged mutinously and offensively. Ralph turned again, spreading his hands in a helpless gesture. Clara, as though no one was present, tossed the ball into the air.

"Service!" she cried.

Babs & Co. stood still. Well, if Clara wasn't going to be beaten, neither were they. Babs had made up her mind to take Clara back—she was going to take her back. They watched.

They watched grimly, inimically at first. Then they watched with growing interest, with stirring admiration. The thrill of the tennis as now expounded by Clara caused it.

Faultless her service, faultless her returns, almost effortless the way in which she took the ball. With the grace, the coolness of a professional she made her returns. Three times she beat Ralph.

Babs' eyes almost popped out of her head.

"My hat, Clara, where did you learn all that?"

Clara waved her racket leisurely at her instructor.

"Ask him," she said.

Babs' lips parted a little. Again she could hardly believe her eyes. Certainly Clara had made wonderful progress. Certainly Clara now was as well trained as the rest of them. On form like this, Clara could not possibly fail to win the tournament. But—and Babs' heart

fell. She wouldn't be taking part in the tournament!

"Clara," she pleaded, "come back now—please!"

"Right! I've finished," Clara said almost gaily. "The stuff to give 'em, eh, Babs? I'll come along now, but won't we let 'em know all about it at Courtfield to-morrow."

And she chuckled, just as if nothing in the world had happened.

"Wait a minute! I must just have a word with Mr. Grantham." And she ran back to that worthy, who still stood looking rather uncomfortable and awkward at the other side of the clearing.

"Ralph," she whispered, "what about the search?"

"You go back. Leave that to me," Ralph said quickly. "I've a good idea where to look now. I'll phone you if anything happens."

Clara nodded. She went back. Fortunately, this time there were no unpleasant consequences to be faced, though it was obvious in her present reckless mood Clara was prepared to meet all contingencies.

Quite like the old Clara she was for a time—even consenting to have tea with Babs & Co. in Study No. 4. In the middle of the meal, however, Stella Stone, head girl of the school, looked in.

"Clara, you're wanted on the telephone."

"Thanks!" Clara said.

She rose, tingling. Had Ralph discovered the coins at last? She was almost quivering with eagerness when she lifted the receiver.

"Hallo, Clara, is that you?" It was Ralph. "Good news! I've found another coin—on the opposite side of the ditch this time. I can't do anything else for the moment, though, because there are keepers in the wood."

"Oh, Ralph, but what about—"

"Listen! I've an idea. The fact that we've found two of the coins on opposite banks of the ditch rather suggests to my feeble brain that the bag itself dropped in the ditch. It's rather muddy, as you know. If the bag is there, it will have sunk a foot or two. That means, of course, I shall have to dig it out."

"Yes; but when?" Clara cried.

"To-night. I'm off to Friar-dale now to get a lantern and spade. I've found out that the keepers won't be about late to-night, and I shall come back then. Can't do it before, in case I'm spotted and told to clear off. If I find the coins, I'll be at the school first thing to-morrow morning, and then we'll get the whole horrible tangle cleared up. Good luck, old thing!"

Clara put down the receiver. Her heart was racing. Oh, could it be that at last they were so near the climax? But if the bag of coins hadn't fallen into the mire of the ditch, where could they have fallen? They had searched every inch of the path for yards each side of it.

The more Clara thought of Ralph's theory, the better she liked it. But it seemed almost too much to hope for at this juncture. And the more she thought of it, the more resolved she was to have a hand in the find. Two pairs of hands made lighter work than one, and she knew she'd never rest until she heard what the morning's news was to bring forth.

That night she did not undress when she turned into bed. But as soon as midnight chimed from the clock-tower she rose. Everyone was sleeping, it seemed to her, as she let herself out by the lobby window and crept into the woods.

But one wasn't—that one was Nancy Bell.

It was dark outside. It was raining, too. Clara plunged into the wood. The light of Ralph's lantern showed where he worked, clawing and digging in the mud of the ditch. He looked up with a start as she appeared.

"Clara—you!"

"I've come to help," Clara said.

"But—"

"Come on, give me the spade."

Ralph shook his head. Together they worked. The rain, falling ever more heavily, soaked them to the skin. Then suddenly Clara, stumbling backwards, knocked over the lamp which was on the bank.

Ralph breathed hard.

"Well, that's finished it," he said; "we can't go on any longer. I guess the lamp's gone to join the coins—in the bottom of the ditch." He frowned in the darkness. "Clara, for goodness' sake, get back!" he said uneasily.

"Supposing you're spotted?"

"Oh, who will spot me?"

"Well, we can't do anything else now."

That was true. Savagely Clara stared towards the hole, an indistinguishable blur in the rainy darkness. Hopeless, of course, to work without light.

They said good-night then, and Clara, soaked through, hurried back to the school. Through the gap in the hedge she scrambled, on tiptoe approached the lobby window.

Her hand travelled over it. She threw it open and slid over the sill. Then suddenly lights flashed on. Clara jumped round with a start.

And Miss Primrose, her expression grim, her eyes glittering, stared at her.

"Clara!" she cried. "Clara! You disobedient girl! Take off those wet clothes at once—at once! And then follow me. This time I shall show you no leniency. You will spend the next three days in solitary confinement in the punishment-room!"



Tournament Day!

THE quadrangle of Cliff House presented a scene of busy animation.

Everybody was going over to Courtfield, of course. Cars and taxis and coaches lined the drive. Happy, laughing parties of schoolgirls and mistresses were climbing into them.

And from the barred window of the sunlit room high up in the school, where the workmen were repairing the roof, Clara Trevlyn watched, with savage, moody face, and a heart which ached.

Clara was raging. Every other minute she consulted her wristwatch. She had promised to be at the tournament, she had promised to play. Yet here she was—locked up!

She'd got to get out!

She'd got to pace the room.

Wasn't it just her luck to be caught last night, and wasn't it just her luck that the lantern should have fallen in the ditch when she and Ralph were on that point of finding those coins! Where was Ralph now? What was he doing?

Again she looked out. She'd got to get to the tournament! Yes, she'd got to! She saw coaches and taxis and cars blowing off, saw girls waving and cheering.

If only she could escape!

Again she turned. Then suddenly she started. Something came swaying and bounding in front of the window, accompanied by a hoarse shout from the workmen working on the roof above her.

The something was a huge bucket which, strung to a network of ropes, was used for conveying rubbish and bricks from the roof to the ground.

In a moment Clara had the idea. She would—she could get away!

Back she flew to the hard iron bed on which she had spent the night. Whiz! Off came the sheets. Thud! Off went the mattress!

The bare iron laths stood exposed. Clara wrenched one of them away and approached the window again.

Savagely, feverishly, she set to work upon the cement which held the middle bar, hacking and levering.

She'd show them!

Fortunately, the cement was not invincible. Frost and rain had done their work. Five minutes, ten minutes she laboured. Then, with a grunt, pulled the bar out of its socket. Now!

She saw the big iron bucket beneath her as she worked her way on the sill, staring without any sensation of dizziness or fear into the quadrangle which lay fifty feet below her. One deep breath she took, then—

"Go!" she muttered.

She dropped. Clank! And she was standing in the swaying bucket. That was that! Now feverishly she caught the rope above her, giving it a jerk. A bell above her rang, the surprised face of one of the workmen goggled at her from over the edge of the coping.

"My heye!"

"Let me down," Clara gasped—"quickly! I'll give you five shillings later on!"

The workman blinked.

"But—"

"Quickly!" rapped Clara. The workman grinned. He nodded. "Lower away, there!" he yelled to



HILDA RICHARDS REPLIES

send me their opinions. Best wishes, Veronica!

"Irish" (Bristol).—A most welcome letter, my dear. I'm delighted to know that you are so pleased with all the present features. Write to Jimmy Hanley, c/o Gaumont-British Studios, Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, London, W.12. Best wishes!

"An Admirer of Clara" (Dublin).—With your "wild" nature you sound to me as if you are very like your favourite, Clara. I don't think Clara would ever walk if she could run. She, too, has darkest hair—though her eyes are only grey—not very dark. So glad you like the Cliff House stories. Please write again soon!

Kathleen (Taunton, Somerset).—I receive a large number of letters from readers of Cliff House stories. They give me much pleasure, and I greatly enjoy replying to them. Juno thanks you for the pat, my dear, and sends you a paw-shake.

Betty (Warrington, Lancs.).—Have you and Lily got your make-up box yet? I expect you are planning some fun when you do get it! Who are you going to disguise yourself as? If you desire to write to Jessie Matthews, address your letter to her, c/o Gaumont-British Studios, Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, London, W.12. Sonnie Hale's address is the same.

Kathleen (Bradford).—What a topping letter, Kathleen! So you like all the stories in THE SCHOOLGIRL? That's fine! You're not too young to go to Cliff House, my dear. You would be in the Lower Third with happy little Mary Treherne, from Australia. Write again soon.

Joan (Beverly, East Yorkshire).—I expect you would be in the Fourth Form with Babs & Co. if you were at Cliff House. How would you like that! With your blue eyes and light-brown hair, my dear, you sound to me as if you are like Peggy Preston. The colour of your hair and your fondness for swimming, though, makes you resemble Janet Jordan, too.

Veronica (Hove, Sussex).—I would make the Cliff House stories longer, my dear, but unfortunately, my space in THE SCHOOLGIRL is limited. Still, I'm very glad indeed to hear that you enjoy them so much!

"Admirer of Babs & Co."—Delighted to hear from you, dear reader. What a lovely time you have on your farm in the Welsh mountains! You will enjoy watching the little sheep-dog puppy being trained. So glad you like all our present features. Best wishes!

Milliecent (East Molesey, Surrey).—What a sweet little letter, my dear! By all means send one of your stories for me to read.

Betty (London, S.E.17).—Fancy having to "pluck up courage" to write to me, Betty. Dozens of school-girls write to me every day, you know, and I never set Juno on them! Not that she'd hurt them if I did, the lamb! You'd be a cheery little member of the Lower Third. Cary Grant's address is c/o Paramount Studio, 5451 Marathon Street, Hollywood, California.

Sheila (Beverly, Yorkshire).—Another member of the Fourth Form, if you were at Cliff House, my dear. Clara Trevlyn or Phyllis Howell would probably be your particular chum. Another letter when you can spare the time, Sheila.

"Cliff House Admirer" (Queensland, Australia).—What is Vigro, my dear? I've never heard of girls playing it in England. It must be an Australian game. Thanks very much for your sweet letter. I shall look forward to another.

Veronica (Richmond, Surrey).—I will certainly consider writing a story in which Leila Carroll plays a prominent part, my dear, because I think the American junior is very popular with most of my readers. Perhaps other readers will see this paragraph, and

his mates, and Clara had a sensation of whizzing through space.

Down, down, down! Then a thud as the bucket touched ground. In a flash she was out of it, while the workmen on the ground controlling it jumped in amazement.

She grinned breathlessly. "Here," she cried, "share that!" And while they stood gazing in greater astonishment than ever, she was flying for the gates.

No need for concealment now. Clara

her, unaware that two startled pairs of eyes had seen everything—until, regaining the bank, a boy stepped in her path.

His face was as grey as ashes. "You—you!" he gasped. "Give me those!"

"Noah Bell!" Clara cried. "Give me that bag!" Bell repeated thickly.

Clara's eyes gleamed. "Get out of my way!" But Bell, desperate, did not get out

"Oh my hat! What are you going to do?"

"I'm going," Ralph said grimly, "to take you back to Friardale School. Yes, and you, Nancy. Clara, come with me. Will you? We'll clear this up here and now."

"But—but the tournament?" Clara gasped.

"I'll get you to the ground in time for that," Ralph promised.

AND HE DID—after the most excited and crowded half-hour that Clara ever remembered spending.

Back to Friardale they rushed, Bell and his precious sister in custody. No need now for Ralph to disguise himself. He went boldly and fearlessly as himself.

Dr. Barrymore listened in scandalised amazement.



IN the murky night Clara came face to face with Ralph. "Clara! You here!" he gasped. She nodded. "I've come to help you."

didn't care a rap if she were seen. But everybody had gone. Strangely deserted the old school seemed. She'd have to hurry! In an hour the tournament was scheduled to begin.

Into the woods she rushed, up the path. And then suddenly she paused, thinking of last night's happenings, of what lay in the ditch. Was Ralph there? she wondered. Was Ralph perhaps searching?

Obeying the impulse of the moment, she changed her course, bursting through the bushes.

She reached the bank in which the black, muddy waters of the ditch swirled sluggishly. The spade was there. There, also, were Ralph's gloves, which he had neglected to take with him. She looked at the ditch—and then she jumped.

What was that? In a moment Clara had forgotten everything. She knew she must be dreaming. It couldn't be—and yet—Plainly sticking out of the mud was the neck of a small leather bag.

The digging of Ralph last night, the disturbance brought about by the rain, had evidently brought it to the surface. She stooped, she pulled at it. It came up in her hand, heavy with mud and with its contents.

Tremblingly, excitedly she peered into it. It was the bag of golden coins!

Ralph was saved! At last—at last! She turned excitedly, unaware that two white faces had been watching

of her way. As Clara rushed, he rushed, too. One hand fastened upon her arm, the other clawed at the bag. He shouted:

"Nancy—Nancy! Help me!" "Let go!" shrieked Clara.

But Noah, seeing all his hopes vanishing, seeing the ruin that her possession of those coins meant to him, did not let go. He had her in a frenzied grip now. Nancy rushed up and snatched at the coins. More by luck than judgment, Clara eluded the snatch. She struggled furiously.

"Let go! Oh, help!" "Hold on! Oh, help!"

"Hold on!" a grim voice shouted. And then quite suddenly there was a rush of feet. For an instant Clara glimpsed Ralph Lawrence. Like a whirlwind, Ralph flung himself at Bell. There was a crack as his fist shot true and straight to the point of that cowardly ruffian's chin. And Bell went backwards.

Nancy, with a gasp, turned to run—but too late! Jimmy Richmond and Lister Cattermole, of the Fourth Form at Friardale, headed her off.

"Thanks, Clara!" Ralph gasped. "That was jolly good of you. I was just coming to look for the coins myself. I let Cattermole and Richmond here into the secret and got them to come to help me. You coward, Bell!" he rapped. "Get up!"

"But, Lawrence, my dear boy—"

"Thank you, doctor, I do not blame you," Ralph said. "You, like me, were the victim of a cunning plotter. If it hadn't been for Clara here, however, you'd never have seen your coins again, and I should have gone down to Friardale posterity as the man who robbed you and ran away."

"But Dr. Barrymore, will you excuse me?" he added, with a rush. "Clara, here, has to play in a tournament, and I've got to get her to the ground. May I suggest, sir, that we all meet after the tournament at Cliff House?"

"Why, yes—yes."

"Meantime," Ralph went on, "Cattermole and Richmond will tell you how this lout"—with a withering glance at the quaking Bell—"was trying to bully Clara into giving up those coins. If you want further proof that his was the hand that stole them, look into the lining of the bag. I fancy you'll find his name on it. Come on, Clara, we've got to buck up."

Buck up they did. Down to the cycle sheds they rushed together. There Ralph wheeled out his motor-bike. Ten minutes to get to the tournament ground—and the ground five miles away! How they whizzed! How the bike roared! Clara, on the pillion seat, clung to his coat and shut her eyes.

Twelve o'clock. Through Friardale village, every

body staring goggle-eyed. Up the old High Street, the bike roaring, and Ralph, his face grim and dogged, looking neither to right nor to left.

Out into the lone country. Whizz-z-z! Courtfield at last! By the skin of their teeth nipping through the traffic lights. And then the tournament ground.

"Thanks!" Clara gasped. "Ralph, go and find Marjorie."

In a moment she was off the cycle, was running towards the pavilion. Babs and Janet, just coming out to take part in the first doubles, almost fell down at sight of her.

"Clara!"
"Janet!" Clara gasped. "That racket! Oh, my hat, hold the match up. Babs, for three minutes. Janet, let me have your clothes. I'm playing."
"What?"

But Clara had no time to explain. She had caught the amazed Janet by the arm, was rushing her into the pavilion.

In breathless gasps she explained, while Ralph, roaming around, found his cousin.

Thank goodness Marjorie had heard nothing to disillusion her—which was not surprising, perhaps, seeing that she was being closely guarded by Mrs. Thwaites and Dr. Longmore. How she beamed at sight of him!

"Oh, Ralph, I—I was beginning to think something had happened!" she said. "Have you seen Clara?"

"Yes, she's O.K.," Ralph said. "Here she comes."

Clara appeared at that moment—to be received from the Cliff House faction by a gasp of wonder. Clara! Clara—who was supposed to be in the punishment-room. But, Clara it was, looking smilingly confident. Clara, captain of the team. She tossed for service, she won.

From the first moment it was obvious who was going to win the game. What tennis! What craftsmanship! Fifteen-love, thirty-love, forty-love—all Cliff House points—most of them scored by Clara.

Even Clara's enemies could hardly restrain a cheer. Clara simply crashed her way through the game, making rings round her opponents. First set to Cliff House!

"Clara, how on earth did you get out?"

But rumours were going round, rumours which were telling the truth for the first time. Perhaps Ralph was responsible for them. Perhaps it was Clara herself. Half an hour later—here was Clara again, competing for the singles title against a Courtfield High School girl. She was amazing, unbeatable. The set ended in another smashing victory for Cliff House.

And a cheer went up that could have been heard in Friardale when the match was won. Clara, with a laugh, threw her racket into the air, and shouted—
"We've won—hurrah! And three cheers, everybody, for our games coach, David Grantham, who made victory possible!"

There was a stupefied silence. Then Clara, darting out of the court, dragged reluctant Ralph on to the courts. She laughed.

"Now, you ninnies, cheer—cheer!" she yelled. "Cheer Marjorie's cousin, Ralph Lawrence! Cheer him—for it was he, you cuckoos all the time, who was David Grantham, and you never even guessed it! Cheer him!"

And at that rumours having been linked with the name of Ralph Lawrence, Cliff House saw in one blinding flash the mistake it had made.

The cheers resounded to the skies.

MORE CHEERING there was that evening when Dr. Barrymore and Ralph arrived at the school, and Clara was summoned to the headmistress' study.

"Clara," Miss Primrose said, "come in and sit down. I have had reason to be annoyed with you recently. Indeed, I am not sure even now that I should not expel you, but Dr. Barrymore has interceded on your behalf. Ralph Lawrence has told me everything, and—well, taking his story into consideration, I have decided to overlook your offences."

Clara flushed.
"And now," Miss Primrose added, warmth in her tone, "now that is over, Clara, I would like to shake you by the hand. I have heard the whole story, and

I cannot tell you how much I admire you for it. If your methods have been irregular, they have at least brought you victory. You have saved this boy's honour and exposed two people who are unworthy to belong to decent schools. Cliff House is proud of you!"

Cliff House was. They were proud of her because she had won the shield. But they were prouder still when they knew the whole truth. And perhaps they were all a little ashamed, too, when they reflected upon their treatment of their games coach.

Later, it was learned that Nancy Bell was to be expelled from Cliff House, her brother from Friardale.

But that upset nobody. Perhaps everyone was secretly relieved. No real friend had the sneak ever had in the Fourth Form at Cliff House. Cliff House decided very happily that it would never miss her, and that its course in future was calculated to run more smoothly without her.

Clara was their heroine. At that moment Cliff House was too busy adoring Clara even to spare a thought for the unhappy fate of her enemy.

THAT SAME EVENING when most of the excitement had died down, Clara and Marjorie were alone together in Study No. 7. Marjorie was in the arm-chair, and Clara was perched beside her, one arm round her chum's shoulders.

For some moments neither of them spoke. From the lovely old quadrangle, lit by the evening sun, came the subdued murmur of talk, and an occasional merry cry from the courts, where a few girls were getting in a last gaffe before being called in.

Marjorie broke the silence at long last.

"Clara dear, what you did was wonderful!"

Clara laughed, squeezing Marjorie's arm.

"Rubbish! I'd be prepared to do lots more than that—for you and Ralph."

And Marjorie knew that she meant it.

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

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WHAT a thrill it is for Barbara Redfern & Co. when they know that they are to leave Cliff House for a few weeks and take up temporary quarters in an old Manor House on the outskirts of Friardale!

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