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ARTICLES

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

2<sup>D</sup>  
EVERY SATURDAY

*Incorporating  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"*

No. 200 Vol. 19  
Fourth Edition  
JAN. 1931. 1937.



## DEFIANT TO THE FINISH

Diana Rayson-Clarke in a dramatic incident from this week's powerful long complete CHH House School story

# FIREBRAND AGAINST FORM CAPTAIN: This Week's Brilliant Long Complete Cliff House School Story



## A MISFIT at Cliff House

Lily Walters Had Hoped For Happiness At Cliff House—and instead there was only Heartbreak. And it was all Diana's Doing!

### "Up With The Lark"



"LILY—Lily! Lily Walters!" And Diana Repton Clark, of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School im-

patiently nudged the sleeping figure that was huddled beneath the bed-clothes next to her.

Lily Walters stirred, muttered something in her sleep, then dreamily turned over.

"Lily!" Diana spat out again. "Lily, *dash it!*" And then she nudged more fiercely, so that Lily Walters suddenly came out of her slumbers with a sideways blink to stare across the long dormitory with its double row of unbedridden beds.

She shivered in the chill of the morning air. Outside dawn had not yet broken. Chatter and gloomy, the atmosphere—was one of those mornings, indeed, which simply urged one to roll over and watch another delicious snooze before grudgingly rising.

"Oh, lark, what's the time?" she asked.

"Seven o'clock! Half an hour before rising bell!" Diana answered.

Yet, in spite of the earliness of the hour, in spite of the fact that she herself had only awakened two minutes ago, the Firebrand of the Fourth looked as fresh and sparkling as ever. Her glorious billowy mass of blonde hair seemed to glow even in the grey

light of the dormitory. Lily blinked in awe.

"Get up," Diana said. "We're going to have half an hour's practice in the music-room."

"You mean singing?" Lily asked wonderingly.

"Of course, I mean singing, stupid. Did you think I was suggesting four-dancing? I've got a new song for you to practice."

Lily bit her lip. "But, but—oh, Diana, what about Miss Barbara?"

Diana gazed at her in exasperation. When Diana was excited or glared she liked to find response to her mood.

"Bother and blye," Miss Barbara," she said now, and wasn't Lily ever going to get out of the habit of giving unnecessary hardness to her *Foam-fellow's* names? A little overbearing was Diana in one of these moods.

Hardly aware she was doing it, Lily

adored Diana, even though there had been that terrible scene yesterday. She owed everything to Diana. Diana, who had rescued her from the slams, who had brought her to this magnificent school, who had promised to make a lady of her and who, more extravagantly, had promised to make her *important*! So admiring her admiration of Diana, that Lily, child of poverty as she was, had not the faintest doubt that she could and would do all those things. But—

Ah, there was that last! Doubtful, tantalizing. Straight from Scribble Alley bewildered Lily had come, to be plunged into the exciting life at Cliff House, to be made one with the girls who comprised its establishment.

Irresistible as a whirlwind, dominating no any dictator, Diana had put her through her paces, ending up, as Diana inevitably ended up, in disaster.

Thanks to her caprices Lily had been involved in a series of rows. The slams had come when Miss Frances, Cliff House's worthy headmistress, had taken Lily out of Diana's control and had given her into the charge of Barbara Radford, captain of the Fourth.

But apparently Diana was taking no heed of that. As if Diana ever took heed of anything which did not fall in with her own programme!

Diana was anxious to make Lily practice. Lily just had to go her way. Diana had dreams, ambitions about Lily. She discovered that Lily had a most promising voice and, with various

By

HILDA RICHARDS

found herself climbing out of bed.

"Be quick!" Diana tossed impatiently.

"But—"

"And stop 'butting,' goat!" Lily looked apprehensive. She

of herself presenting Lily to the world as a future prima donna, she was all agog to exploit the possibilities of that voice without delay.

Heartily Lily dressed. Over-hauled with gratitude as she was, she couldn't refuse Diana anything. But she wondered, vaguely, if she were doing right, whether this was not against Miss Primrose's orders. Diana smiled.

"Don't look so scared, goose! Such up now! There's your belt. There's your shoes! And for goodness' sake take that chastely crimson off your hair. Ready?"

"Yes, Miss—I mean Diana."  
"Good enough. Come on!"  
She stepped towards the door. At that moment a figure rose from a bed at the other end of the dormitory. Barbara Redfern, staring deeply, suddenly became wide awake.

"Lily!"  
"Oh, Miss—I mean, Babe—"  
"Where are you going?"  
"She's going." Diana shined in, with her—  
"Babe's eyes glinted.  
"You heard Miss Primrose's order? You know that Lily's in my charge now!"

Diana scowled.  
"Oh, for goodness' sake, forget it!" she snapped. "Lily, come on."

And giving the hesitating Lily no chance to say more, she snatched at her arm and just tugged her through the doorway.

Down the stairs they went, while Babe, a rather grim smile on her face, got up and dressed.

Into the music-room Diana plunged, closed the door, switched on the light, and, taking up a piece of music, put it into Lily's hand. She beamed.

"These are excellent," she explained. "Now Lily—wait, don't look at the door when I'm talking to you. Lily kid, she added more gently. "So here—" And while Lily heartily took a seat, Diana smiled so utterly at variance with the impatience of her moment a second ago that Lily felt a jumpy little lump in her throat. "Lily, I haven't had the chance to tell you yet, but yesterday—"

"Yes?" Lily whispered.  
"Yesterday, Lily, I went to see Professor Larkin—you know, the famous singing master at the Courtfield Opera House. I told him about you—about your voice. I persuaded him to give you a course of lessons."

Lily blinked.  
"And you're going," Diana went on, "to have the first of these lessons to-day? This afternoon, is that it? In the meantime there are one or two exercises that he's given me to try you out on." She pushed the sheet, (in Lily's hands) "There we are! Initial exercises, not? The scales!"

Lily bit her lip.  
"Yes, Miss—Diana. But—but—" She looked troubled. "Oh dear," she said, "did you say we'd got to go and see this professor this afternoon?"

"Yes. Well!"  
"Nothing!" Lily stammered. "But Miss Clara—I mean Clara Trevlyn—did say something about playing 'oh-er this afternoon, and—and I'd like to play 'oh-er—hookey, if you don't mind, Diana."

A gleam at once came into the First-bred's eyes.

"Well, you can't," she returned tartly. "What do you think I'm taking all this trouble about you for? Don't you want to be famous?"

"Yes," Lily said doubtfully.  
"Well, come and be famous! But

remember," Diana said. "I'm the only one who can make you so! I know what's best for you, whatever Babe & Co. and that crowd may say. I've brought you here because I'm going to make a lady and a singer of you. I repeat," Diana announced resolutely, "a little gratitude, at least. Now, no more nonsense! You're coming, aren't you?" she added with such toxicity that Lily jumped.

"Oh, yes, Diana, if you say so!"  
"Then O.K.! That's a promise! No, don't look out up, kid," she added, more gently. "Let's get going. Ready?"

"Yes."  
"Right! Now— Ah!"  
The piano tinkled. Lily began to sing. Clear, bell-like, every note smooth and distinct, the scale rolled forth.

"Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!"  
"Topping!" Diana said. "Lovely, Lily! Go through it again! And now again! Now again! Oh, splendid!" she cried, and her own pretty face flushed with the enthusiasm she felt.  
"Now, wait a minute; let's do those two lines from 'Hark, Hark, the Lark!' There! Mind the trill bit. You're supposed to warble like a bird in this. Now, ready?"  
"Yes," gasped Lily.  
"Right! Go!"

But after a moment Diana stopped playing, impatiently shaking her head.

"Oh, you're, no, no, no! That doesn't," she cried despairingly. "You must learn to pronounce it like this. How the diabolical am I to make a singer and a lady of you if you go singing, 'Hark, Hark, the Lark'! It's 'hark.' Say 'hark.'"

"Ah-hark!" Lily exploded.  
"Not quite so much emphasis. Just 'hark.' Try it again now. And Diana

lifted her hands to strike the keys once more, while her pupil, a gemstone red, quivered beside her. But Diana's hands never actually struck the keys, for at that moment the door opened. A crowd of gaping faces stared into the room.

There were a dozen girls congregated outside, all attracted by the singing, all staring.

Barbara Redfern was among them, frowning grimly. Missed Lynn, her golden-haired lieutenant, was with her. So were Clara Trevlyn and Janet Jordan from Study No. 7, Lolla Carroll and Justina Chestnut from Study No. 5, and Lydia Crossroads, the drawing girl of the Form, attended by Freda Ferriter and Frances Frost. Lydia blinked.

"My hat, what's going on here!" she asked. "Who's 'hark' 'hark' the lark at this time of the morning? Give her something else, Diana—something that'll suit her style a bit better. What price 'It ain't gonna rain no more'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Get out!" snapped Diana.  
"Oh, really," Frances Frost murmured, "you wouldn't be deprive us of such a treat! Diana, ask her to sing 'Och, och, my little honey Jack'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Lily looked deeply crimson. Diana's lips tightened. She looked round furiously, her hand closing upon a book. She lifted it.

"Will you get out!"  
"Yes, hear it!" Clara said tersely. "Here, Diana, don't throw that book! Book, Lydia, and take your beauty sleep with you! And you!"—with a glare at Frances Frost.  
"Oh, but look—"

But Clara had her own eyes glancing, gave them a peep, and with Babe, Mabe, and Justina and Lolla, stepped into the room, deliberately closing the door in their faces. Diana glared.

"Well, what do you want?"  
"We want," Babe said distinctly.

"Lily."  
"Oh, looks!" muttered Lily, in disgust.

"Well, you can't have her!" Diana snapped.  
"No!" Babe looked contemptuous. "I think we can," she countered.

"Lily," she said, "we're going for a turn round the track before breakfast."



"LILY'S gone to Courtfield—with her dear friend, Diana," Lydia told the Tomboy, with a malicious grin. Clara's eyes flashed. So Diana had forced Lily to miss the hockey match!

You said last night you'd like to join us. Are you coming?"

There was a silence. In hesitant dismay Lily looked at Diana. Appearing, however, that look; passing the glance which followed it, showing very, very plainly where the new girl's indignation lay. But Diana's eyes were glittering now. Red the colour which stained her rose-complexioned cheeks as she rose to her feet.

"Never mind," she said to Lily. "I'll attend to this. Lily," she added defiantly, "will remain with me. I've got a job for her to do, and she's jolly well going to do it!"

"In other words," Babe returned, "you're still treating Lily as your own private property!"

"Oh, Miss Barbara!" Lily lifted her. "In other words," Diana stood back. "I'm doing for Lily what you idiots could never do for her. And if you've got a cold, my dear Evelyn—" as to the latter. "At which Clara turned red. "Lily's my protégée. Lily's my friend."

"And Lily," Babe quietly reminded her, "is entitled to do as she likes." She looked at her steadily. "Diana, I don't want to spend three hours. I know you've done a lot for Lily. I know Lily's grateful, as she ought to be. But don't you think you're being selfish to insist upon taking over every minute of her time?"

"What has Lily done since she's been at this school? Just exactly as you've told her. She's missing everything. You're just depriving her of every interest she might have in the Form. Well, I'm sorry, but I don't want to row with you, but I'm going to insist! Diana, Lily is in my charge now, and Lily, whether you like it or not, is coming out with us—"

"Which," as an unexpected voice at the door interrupted, "is very right and very proper." And into the room walked another figure—the tall, dignified figure of Miss Primrose.

She looked steadily round while Lily shrunk back, and Diana stiffened more.

"I hope," she said, "that you understood the instructions I gave concerning Lily yesterday, Diana."

Diana breathed hard.

"But Lily—"

"Lily," Miss Primrose jolly interrupted, "has been taken out of your hands. You know why. Until she falls into our ways and our habits at this school, my decision is that Barbara shall look after her. Now, please do not glare at me in that way! I am really tired of punishing you, Diana, and I shall leave." Miss Primrose rambled. "I warn you again that I am dangerously near the end of my patience. Lily, you will go with Barbara!" she added.

"Yes!" stuttered the indomitable Lily. "But Diana—"

"Please!" Miss Primrose said, and turned to Babe. "Barbara, if you have any more trouble with Diana, please report to me."

She disappeared Lily out into the passage, and then, with a warning look at the Fitzwarren, followed the chienne out herself. Diana stood, the colour coming and going in her face, her hands clenching at her sides.

The intervening cats! They meant to rob her of Lily, did they? They meant Lily, for whom her father had paid school fees, for whom she had taken the trouble to secure singing lessons, to be torn from her influence altogether!

If Babe & Co. had anything to do with it, Lily would never have those lessons which she had arranged with Professor Larkin—lessons, she was sure

now, that would lift Lily to a lofty pinnacle of operatic fame.

They didn't know! They didn't understand!

But she wasn't beaten! She wasn't even dismayed. She had set her mind on making Lily famous—on making herself famous, too, as Lily's discoverer.

Come what would, Lily should go her way!

### Diana's Defiant



"PHEW! Hold up!" Clara Trevyn gasped, and stopped, laughing and breathing. "My hat, Lily, you can run!" she added admiringly. "Where did you learn it?"

Lily laughed, too. A very different Lily she looked from the half-soured girl of the music-room. Pinked and breathless from her exertions, her eyes sparkling with the light of health, she looked positively pretty.

"Oh, I didn't learn it. I just ran at the Council school, you know. They used to say I was a pretty good runner there."

"Pretty good! Oh gorgeous and glib!" Miss Jewison panted, running up, and pretending to swoon. "Pretty good!" she cried. "Wow! For me, someone! What a shame, my Spartan! What a merry old dance you led me!"

Lily blushed.

"Well, I tried to beat you, Miss Jewison—"

"Jimmy," Jewison said solemnly, "Jimmy, Lily, is my name, with no frills or fluff to talk. Call me Jimmy."

"Jim-Jimmy," Lily replied awkwardly.

"There's a girl! Coming on!" Jewison murmured.

Lily laughed excitedly. It had been a good run, and she, who loved all forms of athletic exercise, had met thoroughly enjoyed it.

In an admiring group the chienne surrounded her. Clara grinned.

"Well, if that's what you can do, you're the girl for us," she said admiringly. "Which reminds me, Lily, it's a half-holiday to-day, and I haven't seen you how you shape as booker. You do play hockey, don't you?"

"Well, yes," Lily replied modestly. "I was captain of the team at Lantham Council School."

"What position?" Clara asked.

"Centre! All I mean half!"

"No!" cried Clara. "My hat, you're the very girl we're looking for. Phyllis Howell usually fills that position for the junior team, but Phyllis is off colour at the moment, and she'll be hopeless for Saturday. She gazed at the sparkling interest that came into the other's eyes. "Look here, there's a second eleven match on this afternoon," she said. "We're playing the Third. Supposing I include you?"

"What, in the team?" Lily gasped breathlessly.

"Why not?"

"Why not? Lily's eager face flamed again. And then suddenly the light died out of her eyes. She couldn't. She dared't. For she had already promised Diana that she would go with her to Professor Larkin this afternoon.

"Well," Clara cried, "wouldn't you like to play?"

"Oh, I'd love to, really!" Lily replied.

"But—"

"Then that settles it!" Babe put in. "Jolly good, Lily! Right, Clara, you put her down!"

"Oh, but—" Lily protested.

"That's all right!" Clara said heartily. "Now, don't go getting all modest again! If you can play hockey half as well as you can run, well, I guess you've wanted! Well, what about booker?" she asked broadly. "I'm hungry!"

"What-eh?" Jewison beamed.

"But, oh, miss, oh, Clara—" Lily blurted.

But Clara, in a great good humour, took her arm. Off in a merry group, they all rushed into the school. Booker! Lily's eyes sparkled. How she would love to play hockey again, and what a wonderful chance, she thought, to win her way into the junior school team. But there was Diana. Diana, to whom she had made that promise.

During breakfast she made a decision. She'd speak to Diana! She'd ask Diana to let her off her promise. Diana liked her, she knew. It would be the very first favour she had asked of her.

Immediately after the meal she presented herself, rather awkwardly, in Diana's study. The Fitzwarren, busy running through some music exercises, looked up as she entered, the expression on her face very plainly proclaiming that her intention was to read the unwanted visitor parking. But the frown melted into a smile of welcome as she beheld her protégée.

"Why, Lily! How topping of you to look in! I was just thinking of you!" Lily gasped.

"Oh dear! Ahem, Diana!" she said distastefully.

"Well, did?"

"I—I—I—" And then, somehow, Lily blurted out the request that she had come to make. She kept her face averted from Diana's, and did not see the flint-like hardening of those pretty features. "You see—" she added lamely. "Oh, Diana, I—I didn't give any promise, but Barbara and Clara are expecting me to play now."

Diana's eyes flashed.

"And you want to play?"

"Well, yes!"

"Even, Diana asked cuttingly, "at the risk of letting me down?"

"Oh, no, no, no!"

Diana heaved a deep breath.

"Lily, look at me!" she ordered.

"Look at me! And don't," she added, "stare at me as though I were going to hit you. Sit down!" she cried. And Lily, almost against her will, sat down. Diana took a seat opposite her.

For a long time she stared at the girl. Lily wriggled under her steady scrutiny.

Then, at last:

"I thought," Diana said, with a sort of savage bitterness, "that you understood, Lily! I thought that you had some spark of gratitude in you. When you came here, the only girl in the school you knew, was me. I looked after you, I stuck up for you.

"Then you met Barbara Redfern & Co. From that moment you seemed only too anxious to throw me overboard and get up with them—"

"Diana, no, no!" Lily blurted.

"But it is so!" Diana said rebelliously. She strove herself against the pain which shewed in the other's features. "Since Babe took an interest in you, you've been itching all the time to get away from me—"

Lily shrunk back. Oh, it was unfair, unfair. Not one of those things had she asked Diana to do! Diana had done them, not because she wanted her to do them, but simply because it had pleased herself to do them! She thought those things, but being Lily, could not find the words in which to express them.

"Well," Diana said, and again heaved that deep and somehow terrible breath. "All right, kid, that's all! I'm not standing in your way. If you like Babo & Co. better than me, why—go and fawn upon them! Go to their piffing hooky matches!"

Something like a moon came from Lily's lips. She steeled forward blindly.

"Diana?" she choked.

"Well!"

"Diana, y-you've got me wrong," Lily quavered. "Oh, I'm so sorry! I—I didn't know. I do do like Barbara, but I don't like her any better's you. Not 'alf as much!" she added feebly.

"Diana, I—I ain't deserted you. I—I don't care really what 'appens about the hooky match! Really! I want to come with you."

"Then," Diana said, and vaguely her face broke into that sunshine smile of hers. She had won her battle as she knew she would, and immediately all that was most generous and lovable in her nature was uppermost again.

"Clear up, kid!" she ordered, and gently stroked Lily's head. "I shouldn't have said those spiteful things, but you know, Lily, it's only because I'm so fond of you. It's only because I like you so much, and don't want to see you frittering your time away on silly things. Forgive me, old thing!"

"Oh, Diana, I do, b-but—" and Lily's lips quivered. "Diana, would you do something for me?"

"Anything in the world!" the Firebrand promised recklessly.

"Then—oh, Diana! Would you mind telling Barbara and Clara?"

Diana frowned.

"But you didn't promise them any thing."

"No; but they seemed so sort of take it for granted."

Diana laughed. With a jauntily step she walked off at once.

Clara, as it happened, was in Study No. 4 with Babo and Mabel and Beanie Hunter, and Diana, without provoking, came to the point. Not, as Lily doubtless hoped, in that humble and contrite way in which she herself would have approached the matter, but in her own haughty and arrogant way, calculated at once to put her hearer's backs up.

She said:

"I believe you tricked Lily into the hooky team this afternoon."

Clara, with a glare:

"Tricked!"

"I said 'tricked,' Diana retorted. "Well, she just doesn't want to play. The fact is," she added, "she was bound by a previous promise to come out with me, and I think it's like your cheek to make arrangements for her without consulting me first."

Babo eyed her dangerously.

"And you intend to take her out, after what Miss Primrose said?"

Diana's lips curled.

"I don't consider it necessary to discuss my intention with you. I promised Lily I'd let her know she couldn't play hooky. That's all."

With that, she flounced out, leaving the four chams looking at each other.

Assembly hall was ringing as she re-entered Study No. 10, where Lily hopefully looked up. Diana smiled.

"O.K.," she said.

"Oh, Diana, Babo didn't mind?"

"Well, she wasn't too keen, but how could she mind when you'd already given me your promise?" she asked.

"But come on now! We'll be late for assembly!"

Late for assembly they nearly were, scrambling into their places just in time.

Morning school presented any further discussion and it break before either Babo, Mabel or Clara had a chance of getting hold of Lily. Diana tucked her arm in hers.

"Everything's O.K.," she said. "And, kid, just as a special treat, I'm going to take you along to Courtfield for lunch. Nip into the cloak-room now and put on your best bits and jackets."

Babo was worried. She had not seen Lily since lessons and it was now as late as her dinner time.

Barbara looked into Study No. 12. Margaret Lantham was there. She smiled.

"Margot, have you seen Lily?"

"Margot shook her head.

"Nor Diana?" Babo asked.

"Not since lunch," Margot replied. Babo withdrew. She looked into



WITH that queerly air which she so liked to adopt, Diana took a half-crown from her bag and pressed it into Jerry's hand. "That's for some cheer," she said—knowing full well how Lily's friends would be impressed!

Lily stared. She felt vaguely terrified. Diana's idea of lunch, she knew, was a four or five course meal at the luxurious and expensive Royal Restaurant in Courtfield; and Lily, uncertain and nervous in her new station in life, went through such meals in fear, confusion, and trembling. But she couldn't offend Diana now! Not after this morning. Godlessly she bolted.

Together they dressed. Together they went out. Lydia Crosswade, meeting them as they came down the stairs, looked surprised.

"Oh, my hat! You going out?"

"That," Diana loftily returned, "is my business! Come on, Lily."

And while Lydia stared after them, she led the way with hardly a strut down the stairs into the drive. Lydia watched just long enough to see them step on a Courtfield-bound bus, and then, grinning slyly to herself, made her way indoors.

Friends of Other Days



"WHERE'S Lily?"

"Anybody seen Lily Walcott?"

Babo, Mabel,

Clara, and Leila were asking those questions as they looked into study after study along the Fourth Form corridor.

But nobody seemed to know the answers.

Study No. 3 next door. Its complete roster, Elaine Ethington, Amy Jones, and Marcell Reed, were there but again she drew blank. Green Cook in No. 8 stared at her blankly when she asked the same question. Meanwhile, Clara was taking the opposite side of the Fourth Form corridor.

Clara was wrathful. Not at the best of times was the Tomboy of the Fourth a patient girl. She had wanted Lily for the match, and half-off was already half an hour late. She expected, as the rest of the team were ready, that Lily would be ready, too. She poked her head into Study No. 2.

"Seen Lily?" she asked of Marcelle Bepert, the sole occupant of that room.

"Main non! Is it that you have lost her?" Marcelle asked with a wide-eyed stare.

Clara grunted.

In Study No. 2, Jane Merritt met her inquiry with a shake of the head. Clara tapped at the door of No. 1.

Lydia Crosswade was there, in company with Freda Frazier. There was a haze of cigarette smoke in the study and both girls turned with a guilty start as the Tomboy entered.

"What do you want?"

"I'm looking for Lily Walcott."

"Well," Lydia replied, "go and look in Courtfield."

"Eh?"

"You heard. She's gone to Courtfield"

She's gone," Lydia added, finding glowing satisfaction in the stars above as she gazed in the Torney's eyes, "with her dear friend, Diana. I see them both on the box together as late as so ago."

Clara's eyes flashed. Quite suddenly her face became grim. She nodded.

"I see, Thanks," she said. "Well, I'll see Diana when she comes in." And she withdrew into the corridor and was just preparing to close the door, when a voice behind her spoke. She turned with a start.

"Ah, Clara!" It was Miss Pringle. "I have just been looking at the team list in the hall. I see you have Lily Walters down to play this afternoon."

Clara purred her lips.

"I have her down—yes, Miss Pringle."

"That is very nice of you, I like," Miss Pringle explained, "to see new girls given their chances as soon as possible. I will look in at the match later, Clara," and these passed to direct a quick glance at Lydia who, at that moment, stroked to the door—"I do hope," she added, "that you will find her a valuable acquisition to the team. I do feel that she should be given interests which will absorb her into the life of the school. I beg your pardon, Lydia! Did you speak?"

"Well, yes," Lydia smiled. "I'm sorry," she said, "I did not mean to interrupt. But, well, I should hate to see you waste your time, Miss Pringle. Lily won't be playing!"

"What? Clara—"

Clara coloured.

"Why will she not be playing?"

"Because," Lydia replied innocently, "she doesn't want to play. She's gone to Courtfield with Diana, you know."

Clara shot her a look. That was speaking, Lydia knew & but Lydia only smiled as though she had said the most innocent thing in the world. It amused her to see the sudden gleam in her handmaiden's eyes, to see the quick flash of anger which manifested in her cheeks. She again quickly turned.

"Barbara," she sharply called.

"Babe," half-way along the passage, came wandering on to the scene.

"Yes, Miss Pringle!"

"I thought," Miss Pringle returned cuttingly, "that it was understood that you took control of Lily Walters, Barbara. I thought I made it clear that she was to have nothing further to do with Diana? Yet I hear that you have allowed her to go off this afternoon with that graceless girl! Is this fulfilling your duty, Barbara?"

"Babe turned red.

"But—oh—oh, goodness, I didn't know—"

"You should make it your business to know!" Miss Pringle retorted sharply. "I am extremely displeased, Barbara! When Diana and Lily come in, tell them that they are to report to me!"

And, leaving Babe looking utterly dismayed and Clara considerably nettled, she turned on her heel and walked away.

## "Easier now, Lily?"

"Yes, thank you, Miss—"

"—mean, Diana?" Lily Walters blbed callously.

"Not a bad spot—what!" Diana drawled nonchalantly, and smiled as she languidly drew on her gloves in the vestibule of the Royal Restaurant at Courtfield. "Not so marvellous as some of those big London places, of course. But, then, what can one expect in the provinces? One of those days, Lily, we'll take a trip up to town, and I'll

show you something that really will open your eyes!"

Lily smiled with uncertain gratitude. She felt that her eyes had been opened enough, thank you.

An ordeal it was for the girl from Courtfield's shoes to be among such luxury as this. Accessories, she had endured it, feeling all the time like apologising for her presence.

Now, thank goodness, that was finished. But with a second ardent longing, how—! that of meeting this rightfully important-sounding Professor Larkin—

"We'll walk, I think," Diana said, with a glance at the sky. "The appointment's not till two, and that means we have ten minutes to spare. Come on, kid! Don't look so jolly! The professor won't wait for you!"

"Nonsense!" gasped Lily.

Together they stepped out into the sun-bathed High Road of the busy Kentish town.

Diana was smiling; Diana was pleased. Extraordinarily pretty she looked in her fashionably colored suit, with tendrils of blonde hair peeping from beneath the brim of the new hat she had bought in London during the Christmas holidays. More than one admiring eye was cast towards her as she strolled along by the side of her protégée.

Diana loved it. She loved all limelight. To attract, to be taken notice of—oh, that was the very breath of life to the First-year of the Fourth!

In Lucy's room, she already saw her name linked with that of Lily's in news lighting outside fashionable Continental opera houses, emblazoned on expensive programmes, shouting from the advertisement pages of fashionable magazines.

She pattered the interviewee who would give to admiring reporters. She saw herself as Lily's hostess and manager, presenting Lily to peers, princes, and crowned heads. She could almost hear them saying—

"Hi! Coe, if it isn't Lily!"

"Not that! More certainly not that. Shall, soot, that cry brought Diana out of her dream with a jerk. At her side, she felt Lily now dead.

"Yucks!" she muttered, in dismay.

For these, concerning upon Lily, were four girls. They had emerged from an alley on the opposite side of the road; were sweeping across that road, with shrill whoops of delight.

Too late, Diana halted; too late regretted that she had not made this journey, short as it was, in a taxi. Never in her life had she met this quartet, but she guessed at once who they were.

Lily's friends from Scrabble Alley!

"Awful little archers!" was Diana's first thought. To shove them away or hurriedly walk on, her first impulse.

That, however, was changed the moment she saw the look on Lily's face—a look of almost hungry delight, of such joy, that it was obvious for the moment she had completely forgotten her aristocratic companions.

With a squeal, the four launched themselves upon her.

"Hi!"

"Coe, Lily! Don't you look grand!"

"Oh, Lily, we're you getting on at the big school?"

"Oh, Lily, we haven't half missed you!"

"Oh dear!" laughed Lily. "Oh goodness! I say, fancy meeting you here—Lou, and you, Ada, and you, Jenny! And there's Tilly Coote! Hello, Tilly! How's your father's leg?"

"Abe!" Diana said.

And at that direct cough, Lily, remembering, blushed to the roots of her hair and turned.

"Oh dear! Oh, Miss Di—"

"Don't mind me," Diana smiled.

"But I think—meaningly—"you might introduce me to your friends, Lily! I take it they are your friends!"

The four blushed in awe.

"Girls!" breathed Tilly Coote. "Do you know 'er, Lily?"

"She—this is the young lady I've told you about—Miss Diana Repton-Clarke!"

"Coe!" Ada Mayo choked, and Lou Bailey was heard to murmur, in an overpowered voice: "Ain't she lovely!"

Diana laughed. In a moment she had made up her mind. In a moment she saw how the lead lay. If Lily was delighted to meet her old friends, Diana was going to be no less. Her own great aim now was to keep Lily's affection and confidence while she had it. She laughed.

"Well, that's me!" she condemned.

"But don't stare! Friends of Lily's," she added jovially, "are friends of mine! Jolly nice to meet you, girls! Lily, do introduce me!"

"Oh, look! You—you're sure you don't mind, Diana?"

"I shall," Diana darkly threatened, "be extremely annoyed if you don't!"

And so, there, in the Courtfield High Road, Lily's friends were introduced.

Louise Bailey. "She's got a dog named Junco," Lily confided in a whisper.

Then Ada Mayo, "who used to play counter-forward with me in the Leathers Council hockey team."

Jenny Green, whose mother kept the fishshop at the corner of Scrabble Alley.

Lastly, Tilly Coote, who had abandoned droolery, and whose father, it transpired, a photographer on the railway, had broken his leg three weeks ago.

Cordially Diana shook hands with them.

"Well, this is jolly!" she declared.

"Yes, it really is! You know, I'd love to talk to you girls sometimes. I'm sure you should have an awful lot to say to each other. One of these days you must come and see Lily at the school and—have tea with her," she added.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"What! Up goes to Cliff House!" Tilly Coote cried, aghast.

"Why not? You're Lily's friends, but—"

She thoughtfully opened her pigskin handbag. "Fond of chocolate?" she asked, with a lift of her arched eyebrows.

"Just try us!" Jenny invited, with a grin.

"Well, I will. Don't mind buying them yourselves, do you?" Diana asked, and pressed into Diana's hand a bright half-crown.

"And don't make piglets of yourselves!" she chided, with a laugh.

"Bye-bye, now! Lily, we really mean it!"

And, with a gay wave of her hand, she passed on, leaving Lily in her wake and leaving her friends staring after her like four girls in a dream.

"Well, then," Tilly Coote announced, "is what I call a lady! Coote, ain't it? Lily gave up in the world to be out with a 'right-stopper' like her! I didn't know where to put my 'ead when she spoke to us like that! And a 'ole half-crown," Tilly went on, staring, shiny-eyed, at the silver coin which sparkled in her hand. "Come on, kids! We ain't spending this on chocolate. That'll keep us in tiffin-apples for the rest of the month!"

"While Lily—"

"Oh, Diana!" she gasped.

"Yes, old thing!"

"That was—was lovely of you!" Lily whispered.

Diana patted her hand. The pat meant: "Forget it!" Lily, glancing up at her in shining-eyed devotion, gulped, wondering now, how, for one solitary instant, she could ever have doubted Diana.

What a spot she was! Nothing of the mob about Diana, even if she was a rich girl, who wore beautiful-looking clothes and went to expensive restaurants.

"Better than Babe!" a tantalizing high voice inside her asked. And Lily, flushing fiercely: "Yes!"

And, to show how much she loved Diana, she did her valiant best when, ten minutes later, she was ushered into the presence of Professor Larkin at the Courtfield Opera House.

Not a very alarming personality he turned out to be, after all. Small, fussy, bald-headed, with a disconcerting habit, Lily thought, of washing his hands in inevitable water as he spoke, and simply frowning over Diana—the Diana who, to him, was part of the cream of local society—too, was she not the daughter of Larchmont's important mayor?

"Oh, yes, Miss Royston-Clarke!" "Who, certainly, Miss Royston-Clarke?" "I'll do everything I can for you—at school, Miss Royston-Clarke!"

Lily, watching him, wondered why she should ever have been scared at the thought of meeting him.

Sneering—that's what he was! Just, she thought, with a hint of contempt that vaguely assuaged herself, a frowning old man who liked Diana because she happened to be a "somebody."

Furry! She didn't feel a bit nervous, somehow.

But whatever Lily's private reactions to Professor Larkin might be as a man, she had to admit that he knew his job when he came to patting her through her paces afterwards.

Not for nothing had Henry Larkin earned for himself the reputation of a great musician.

After the lesson: "Thank you, that will do," he said formally to Lily. "Remain here, please. Miss Royston-Clarke—with a return to his favoring smile—" have something to say to you. Please do follow! This way—this way, my dear young lady!"

Wondering, uneasy, Lily was left, hoping for Diana's sake that the verdict would be what she expected, in the professor's private room, Diana looked at him.

"Well, what do you think of her?" "Ah!" The smile spread almost from ear to ear. "Miss Royston-Clarke, I want to thank you—yes, indeed—for bringing her to me. For one so young, so untutored—ah, she has a glorious voice! Glorious!"

And here his eyes looked up to the ceiling in rapture. "Believe me, Miss Royston-Clarke, you have there a girl who will one day be a great singer—a great singer!"

Diana gloomed. "And you will take her in hand?" Tragically:

"My dear Miss Royston-Clarke, if I were refused that privilege, I should die of a broken heart!"

Diana cretched a grin. "Now listen," he added, "I have an idea."

"And that?" "In one month's time I am holding my junior musicale. I am holding it in this hall. The best singers from all parts of the country will be here—yes,

and the greatest patrons of the musical art. And your father is come—planned! In the meantime, if your Lily Walters practices hard—but it must be hard, mind you—then I will put her in!"

"And then?" Diana breathed. "Then—" He spread his hands. "Who can tell! Maybe, before the end of the year, we shall hang her fit for the stage. Now, listen. In three days' time, please do come back for the next lesson. In the meantime, practice, practice, practice! You understand?"

Diana did understand. Walking on air, bubbling with importance, with enthusiasm, she walked out of the classroom. She told the news to Lily. If the little girl from Scribble Alley received it with a quail, she was careful not to betray it. Back to the Royal they went for tea, and it being dark when they came out, Diana hastily hired a taxi to take them both back to Cliff House School.

She was elated. The month! From that moment Diana was living for the realization of those glorious dreams she had woven about the golden voice of the girl who was her protégé.

At the gates they stepped out of the car. Up the drive, arm in arm, they sauntered. Barbara Motters, standing on the school steps, in the company of a rather grim-faced Clara Trevelyan, met them as they came up.

"Just a minute!" she said easily. "Just a minute! Diana, I want a word with you!"

"No charge!" the Firebrand said flippantly.

"Why, Clara, demanded fiercely, "did you cart Lily off when you knew I had got her down for the hockey match? And why," she added, with equal fierceness, as she glanced at the new girl, "did you go?"

Lily looked amazed. "Oh, miss—oh, Clara, I—I didn't know! It was all right, wasn't it?"

"Of course it wasn't all right!" "But I—I thought—" And Lily, biting her lip, looked in sudden, dawning understanding at Diana.

But Babe understood. Her glance was rather contemptuous as she looked at the Firebrand.

"I suppose," she said quietly, "you deceived her, as usual? You know the orders. You know that she was longing to play. Instead of that—and here a flash came to Babe's eyes—you take her off for the whole afternoon, without even so much as saying where you are going. And I! Babe went on bitterly, "got into a row for it!"

"With Prissy?" "Yes!"

"Who told her?" "Perhaps," Babe replied grimly, "she'll tell you that. She wants to see you and Lily now!"

Diana stared at her. Then, with an insolent shrug, she walked on. Lily, rather nervous, hesitated, the look she threw at Babe expressing her condition. Then she followed Diana.

"Oh dear! Are we going to get into a row now?" she sighed. "Diana—"

"Never mind, kid, leave it to me—I'll see it through!" Diana replied confidently.

She tapped at the door of Miss Princess's study. Lily locked her lips. Into the room Diana boldly trod as Miss Princess's voice invited "Come in," and then halted, finding the headmistress's gilded eyes upon her. She wasted no time in preamble.

"Diana, you took Lily out against my orders!"

"I'm sorry!" Diana said unhesitatingly.

"And, Lily—you went with her! You know—"

Lily blinked. Diana hastily chipped in:

"Oh, don't blame her, please, Miss Princess! It was my fault. I told Lily that everything would be all right."

And she belched out, of course! Miss Princess's lips compressed. "Very



"WHY did you make Lily out hockey?" Clara demanded fiercely. Diana tossed her head. "That's my business!" she retorted. But Lily looked unhappy; for she was torn between her duty to Diana and her loyalty to Babe and the Tonboys.

well. In future, Lily, please remember this. You are to do nothing Diana asks you without first consulting Barbara. I am very, very annoyed! Very, very seriously displeased! When this was reported to me, I could hardly credit it!"

Lily trembled. Diana, however, smiled.

"And who," she calmly asked, "reported it?"

"That," Miss Primrose tartly told her, "doesn't concern you! Lily, you may go! Diana, you will remain here!"

Diana shrugged indifferently. Lily, with a half-closed look towards her, went outside. But she did not go down the corridor. Nervously, apprehensively, she waited until Diana came out.

In ten minutes Diana came. Her face was black as a thundercloud.

"Gated?" she asked. "That's the third time this week! You see," she added scoldingly, "what comes of trying to do you a good turn! But, unless because I ordered you off, turned round at once as soon as you were gone, and sneaked to Miss Primrose!"

Lily's face paled.

"Oh, Diana, Miss Barbara wouldn't do that!"

"Well, who else," Diana asked savagely—"who else would have done it! But clear up," she added, "don't look so glum. Here—come along to Study No. 10! I've got some lovely gipsy wine!"

Lily, however, bit her lip.

"Oh, Miss Diana, don't you think I hadn't ought to? It seems I'm always getting somebody into trouble."

"Oh rascal! Come on!"

"And—and Miss Primrose, she did tell me that I was to share Study No. 4."

"Well!" Diana glared. "Don't be so squeamish," she said. "What's the matter with you? Afraid?"

"No, but—Oh, I don't know!" Lily said wretchedly. "But it seems as soon as I do anything that—that you get you a row. And you did—did you see me, Diana?"

"Oh, all right; don't you start now!" Diana growled. "Are you coming?"

"Well, I'm sorry, but—"

"Then go and not come!" Diana snapped.

And she went off, leaving Lily looking after her, distressfully shaking her head. What a strange girl this Diana of hers! So free, so generous and happy one minute; the next, with every admirable trait of hers riding on the surface! She felt she never had her never would understand Diana!

"Which was not surprising. There were times when Diana hardly understood herself!"

that Barre liking and loyalty of hers for the Firebrand.

"Lily, no, I didn't speak," she said quietly. "Had it been left to me, nothing would have been heard of it."

"But Diana—"

"Diana," Babs guessed, "says that I did. But you mustn't, you know, Lily, take too much notice of what Diana says when she's in one of her pouts. She's not inclined to be reasonable then. No, I'm afraid, just. She's a nice girl on the whole. There are times," Babs added, with a sigh, "when I just adore Diana. Lily, you're not upset, are you?"

Lily gulped.

"Not—not now," she said. "Not now you've told me you didn't speak! Oh, Barbara, I do wish we could all be friends!" she added wistfully. "I do wish that we could all be truly together, because I do like Diana!" she added delicately. "But—and here she blushed a rosy red—but I like you as well," she added wistfully.

Again Babs smiled. A little hump came into her throat. She realized exactly the nature of the battle going on within the wall. And, perhaps, in Babs' heart Lily's sentiments found an echo.

What a powerful influence Diana could exercise upon the Form if it weren't for those outbreaks of hers which made her so surprising, so unstable. Now she had the idea in her mind that she was trying to steal Lily's affections from her. Now she was selfish and was precisely jealous because, indeed, like the spiteful child that she was; caring nothing that Lily's heart was breaking.

Babs came to a sudden decision.

"Lily," she said, "I'm going to see Diana."

Lily blinked.

"But—"

"I've got an idea," she said. "She likes you; I like you. We both want you to do things which we feel will be for your good. Very well, I don't see," Babs went on thoughtfully, "why it shouldn't be arranged. If we can only all work in harmony together—"

Lily's face radiated.

"Oh, Barbara, if you could only get her to see it like that—"

Babs smiled. She went out. A grating noise made her "Come in!"

And she rapped on the panels of Study No. 10's door. She opened, to find Diana slumped down in the depths of the armchair, smoking at the fire, a cigarette between her fingers. For once, although it was her duty, as captain of the Form, to protest, Babs took no notice of the cigarette. She closed the door and went in.

Diana glared.

"Well, Babs?"

"I beg your pardon—"

"I said 'Babs'!" Diana retorted offensively. "That's the name you should be called!" she sneered. "Babs! Who blabbed about me to Primrose?"

"Well, I didn't," Barbara said quietly "although, of course, if you've got it into your head that I did—"

She shrugged. Very deliberately she sat down, and for a moment remained staring at the persistently handsome face before her. "Diana, I wanted to speak to you about Lily!"

Diana's reply was to puff out a cloud of smoke.

"She's not happy. She's fond of you; wants to please you. On the other hand," Babs went on, finding it a little difficult to talk to one who appeared to be taking no notice of her whatsoever, "she's not fond of being dragged between the two of us. She doesn't want to see you and me in constant jeopardy with Miss Primrose. And—"

Babs passed. "I've got an idea—"

Again Diana puffed out a cloud of smoke, watching it with concentrated interest as it floated towards the ceiling.

"And—and—" Babs followed a little, trying to keep herself within the bounds of control. "Diana, I've come to make a suggestion," she said. "Neither you nor I want to see Lily miserable. I know you've made up your mind for her to have those singing lessons—well, that can be arranged. I want her to play hockey. I want her to do those things which will interest her in the school, Diana." Babs added pleadingly: "can't we work together?"

Diana just dashed a little more comfortably towards the fire. She did not even turn her head.

Babs bit her lip. She rose.

"Diana—"

Not a movement.

Babs' eyes glared; her face suddenly turned crimson. She made one last appeal.

"Diana! Diana, old thing!"

Diana might have been turned to stone.

Just one second more Babs hesitated. Then, with a bitter look the Firebrand did not see, she went out. The door closed behind her with an unaccustomed bang. Diana, looking towards it, smiled faintly.

"Oh!" she scoffed.

She sat on, puffing at her cigarette, her eyes closed in thought. The cigarette finished eventually, she rose, thought of getting tea, then, with a shrug went out. (Better tea! She'd have a snack at the backshop.)

No sooner had she reached the drive however, than she stopped. A sob came to her ears. She twisted round, staring into the darkness of the drive. A shivering, lonely figure, sitting all alone on a bench despite the chilliness of the air, sobbed openly in the gloom.

"Why, Lily?" Diana breathed.

Lily it was. She looked up at the Firebrand approached, her face stained red with very guilty. Confusedly she rose to her feet.

"Lily, you're crying!" Diana accused.

"I'm not!" Lily flitted fiercely.

Diana passed.

"Lily, what's wrong?" she asked quietly.

A dry sob came from the other's throat. Then suddenly she sang sweetly.

"Oh, everything's wrong! Everything!" she cried wretchedly. "I wish—and vehemently—I wish I'd never come to this school! It isn't right! I should be here! I can't bear you being 'illy with me and then, when that kind Miss Barbara tries to make it up, you treating her like dirt!"

And then, realising that she had let her feelings run away with her, she pulled up short.

"Oh, I—I'm sorry. I—I didn't mean that."

But Diana stood very still, the great stream of smoke on her face; almost as if she had been turned to stone.

"Diana!" Lily faltered.

Diana turned. She felt for a moment she hated herself. Poor kid! What had she done to her? And then that swift tary so characteristic of her boiled up again. Lily was not crying simply because she had hurt her, but because she had hurt Babs!

Bitter the web of jealousy that shot through her. She heaved a deep breath.

Then she said, very quietly:

"Lily, are you very fond of Barbara?"

"Oh, Diana, of course, I'm fond of her!" Lily quivered. "How can I 'elp it when she's been so nice to me!"

Four Unexpected Guests



"BUT, miss—but, Barbara, you—you didn't speak, did you?"

It was ten minutes later. The scene was Study No. 4, into which Lily, somewhat unhappily, had drifted after Diana, in stormier ill-temper, had flounced off and left her in the headmistress' passage. She and Babs were alone.

Babs looked at her. Gladly she shook her head. She liked Lily. Her heart ached for the orphan wall who had been plunged into an element so foreign and strange to her, who was doing her utmost best to show her gratitude and loyalty to Diana and at the same time conform to the school rules. She knew

that Barre liking and loyalty of hers for the Firebrand. "Lily, no, I didn't speak," she said quietly. "Had it been left to me, nothing would have been heard of it." "But Diana—" "Diana," Babs guessed, "says that I did. But you mustn't, you know, Lily, take too much notice of what Diana says when she's in one of her pouts. She's not inclined to be reasonable then. No, I'm afraid, just. She's a nice girl on the whole. There are times," Babs added, with a sigh, "when I just adore Diana. Lily, you're not upset, are you?" Lily gulped. "Not—not now," she said. "Not now you've told me you didn't speak! Oh, Barbara, I do wish we could all be friends!" she added wistfully. "I do wish that we could all be truly together, because I do like Diana!" she added delicately. "But—and here she blushed a rosy red—but I like you as well," she added wistfully. Again Babs smiled. A little hump came into her throat. She realized exactly the nature of the battle going on within the wall. And, perhaps, in Babs' heart Lily's sentiments found an echo. What a powerful influence Diana could exercise upon the Form if it weren't for those outbreaks of hers which made her so surprising, so unstable. Now she had the idea in her mind that she was trying to steal Lily's affections from her. Now she was selfish and was precisely jealous because, indeed, like the spiteful child that she was; caring nothing that Lily's heart was breaking. Babs came to a sudden decision. "Lily," she said, "I'm going to see Diana." Lily blinked. "But—" "I've got an idea," she said. "She likes you; I like you. We both want you to do things which we feel will be for your good. Very well, I don't see," Babs went on thoughtfully, "why it shouldn't be arranged. If we can only all work in harmony together—" Lily's face radiated. "Oh, Barbara, if you could only get her to see it like that—" Babs smiled. She went out. A grating noise made her "Come in!" And she rapped on the panels of Study No. 10's door. She opened, to find Diana slumped down in the depths of the armchair, smoking at the fire, a cigarette between her fingers. For once, although it was her duty, as captain of the Form, to protest, Babs took no notice of the cigarette. She closed the door and went in. Diana glared. "Well, Babs?" "I beg your pardon—" "I said 'Babs'!" Diana retorted offensively. "That's the name you should be called!" she sneered. "Babs! Who blabbed about me to Primrose?" "Well, I didn't," Barbara said quietly "although, of course, if you've got it into your head that I did—" She shrugged. Very deliberately she sat down, and for a moment remained staring at the persistently handsome face before her. "Diana, I wanted to speak to you about Lily!" Diana's reply was to puff out a cloud of smoke. "She's not happy. She's fond of you; wants to please you. On the other hand," Babs went on, finding it a little difficult to talk to one who appeared to be taking no notice of her whatsoever, "she's not fond of being dragged between the two of us. She doesn't want to see you and me in constant jeopardy with Miss Primrose. And—" Babs passed. "I've got an idea—"



Dianna," she added yearningly, "won't you make it up with her? It—It would make everything so lovely if you would."

Again that swift angry snigger, followed by a steady stiffening of her frame. Then, suddenly, amazingly, she laughed.

"Well, yoi-ko! If that's all you're worrying about! Here, dry your eyes, you goose! Now come with me!" And in a moment Dianna had tucked her arm into that of the still gasping Lily. To that girl's bewilderment, was pulling her back into the school, up the Fourth Form stairs, to hall with a lifting laugh outside Study No. 4 and fling the door open. "Girls, here I am!" she announced. "Behold the bringer of the olive branch of peace!"

There were four girls in the study. Babs, Maize, Bessie, and Clara. They were all gathered round Babs, who had a letter in her hand from which she was reading. They stared.

"Babs, I'm sorry," Dianna said, and strode across the room. "Forgive me," she added, "for being such a bear, but, well—just the nature of the old beast," she added, with a little laugh. "It really was sporting of you to make that offer—"

Babs' eyes opened wide.  
"And you mean—"  
"I mean," Dianna said gaily, "that I've been thinking it over. Since it seems impossible for one of us to accompany Lily's time—why, let's share her!" She studied gaily at the puzzled Lily's face. Now by a fluke she did the contrary the real thought, that was going on in that quick working mind of hers. "I'll have her for my staying—say, one lesson a day. For the rest of the time she's yours."

"Oh, Dianna!" Lily gasped.  
Babs' eyes closed.  
"Dianna, do you mean it?"  
"Well, do I usually say things I don't mean!"

Babs laughed. Her own face was happy now. Clara frowned. Maize smiled, while Bessie blinked. Delighted they all were for Lily's sake that Dianna should have come to such a decision. All in a moment the past was wiped out as if it had never been.

"Well, that's nice of you," she said. "That's topping, Dianna! But wait a minute," she added, and touched the letter in her hand. "Here's some news that will interest you. You remember Celeste Margesson?"

Dianna looked at her with quick interest. Why at Cliff House did not remember Celeste Margesson, that gay student, a millionaire's daughter who owned the magnificent yacht *Clariana*, and who, when she was at home (which was rarely) lived at the lovely *Bocasa Tower*, which was situated on the cliff overlooking Pegg Bay.

"Celeste," Babs went on, "has just returned from her world cruise. She's written to say that she's coming along to the school to-morrow, bringing her friend, Lady Laura Courtfield. She's coming along to tea."

Dianna's eyes glittered.

"Oh, sakes! What a break!"  
"And, well, we're going to have a spread in her honour, of course," Babs said. "Lily will be there. Would you like to come along, too, Dianna?"

"Well, that's nice of you."  
"You'll come."  
"Thank—Oh, yes!"

And Dianna is proud. Her the look in her eyes belied the pleased note in her voice. For another five minutes she laughed and then, on plea of prep, left the room. She was standing as she stepped down the corridor.

"Celeste Margesson and Lady Laura Courtfield," she muttered. "Yoi-ko! A good party, eh? Really," she added thoughtfully, "too awfully tough if anything went wrong—"

She crossed her own study, walked at Margot Lockman, who had come in in the excitement, and gave herself up to a good hard think.

"And if," she told herself, when she went to bed that night, "Lily's not on my side for good and all by this time to-morrow, it won't be her fault."

EVERY  
**SCHOOLGIRL**  
MUST GET  
ANOTHER  
**SCHOOLGIRL**  
TO READ  
"THE SCHOOLGIRL"

Very, very satisfied was Dianna. She had made her plans. She meant to carry them out. Fortunately Dianna was. When she wanted anything very badly, as she most certainly wanted Lily's undivided affection, she could be cunning as well.

Next morning she was up early. Despite her getting, she went to Courtfield and was back before lessons. For the rest of the day she was as sweet as honey to the chums of Study No. 4. And Lily, for the first time, really began to enjoy herself at Cliff House.

It was as lovely to see these girls, each of whom she was so fond, on such jolly terms again!

Fortuitous in the ranks of Babs & Co. that afternoon after lessons. What a scramble to get in the food, to lay table, to cook sausages and codfish! Dianna, with the best of good will, joined in. Lily, if a little apprehensive about meeting these awfully fine friends of the dream, was flushed and happy. An half-past four Celeste brightly and gaily stroved in to greet everybody with outstretched rapture and to introduce, with a merry wave of the hand, her friend Lady Laura, who had accompanied her on her round-the-world trip. Rather brightly was Lady Laura, rather, Dianna thought, "standish." And, thinking sweet thoughts, grinned.

"Well, topping to see you again," Celeste beamed. "You haven't changed much in the interval, Babs! And Maize! My!" she added, "how I do envy you that hair. And dear old Bessie—still looking sweet like a walking skeleton, eh?" At which there was a general laugh. "And, Dianna! My eye and nose! How are we all?"

"Oh, topping."  
"Nice evening," Celeste rattled on appreciatively. "If there's one thing I like better than tea at Cliff House, it's tea here at Cliff House. And—Hello! What's this?" she added gaily as she saw Lily, sitting in the corner desperately hoping that no one would notice her. "New girl, eh? I say, Babs, mind if I dump my bag on the bureau? Laura, put yours there, too. Now we're all cleared for action."

Breezy, like the breath of the ocean

herself, this jolly girl, who had a ripe acquaintance with the seven seas, to whom no country on earth was strange. Delightful indeed to see her again!

Celeste laughed.  
"Well, you must all come along to the old Clary," she said. "We're at home now for the next month or two, you know—probably until the summer. I've a whole heap of things to show you—and some special presents as well. Lily, you'll come, won't you?" she added.  
"Oh, I—I'd love to!" Lily said, blushing.

"Nice, this, Celeste! What wonderful friends! Babs has, she thought; and should, for once, forget her shyness. Impossible to feel nervous in Celeste's company, although she did feel doubtful about the haughty Lady Laura."

They sat down to tea. Celeste, as usual, talking at the top of her voice. Just as if she were still on her yacht with the wind roaring, and in the thick of a thrashing gale. And then, in the midst of that happy meal:

"Sounds in the corridor. A sudden melody of voices."  
"Oh, my hat!"

"Where have you come from?"  
"We've come from Courtfield," a perky voice piped. And Lily jumped up, turning pale. "We're Lily's friends, and Lily sent us a message telling us to come to tea. She said her room was Study No. 4."

Babs frowned. Lily suddenly choked.  
"Study No. 4! My hat!" It was Lydia's voice. "Well, well, they will be pleased to see you," she chirped. "My hat! I'll say that will. This way to Study No. 4!" And then, while the amazed company stared, the door was flung open, and Lydia herself, joyfully grinning, stood in the doorway.

"Ahem! Excuse us," she said. "But there are four guests here you seem to have overlooked. Nip in, kids!"

And the kids "nipped" in. Lady Laura took one look at them and gasped. Celeste looked at them and blinked. Babs & Co. looked to either and disconcerted amazement.

For the new guests were Louise Basing, Ada Major, Jenny Green, and Tilly Coote—Lily's friends from Scrabble Alley.

A Party—and a Parting

INTO Lily's cheeks came a deep flush.

For a fourfolded message Babs & Co. stared. Lady Laura, with a cough, half rose to her feet.

"Oh—oh—ahem!"  
"Sit down!" Celeste blazed quickly. The Scrabble Alleyans stood, blinking in the bright light. From the corridor a row of grinning Fourth Form faces looked in. Lily, pale and confused, rose.

"Then—"  
"Lily, you! There she is!" piped Louise cheerfully. "Gosh, Lily! I didn't see you in the crowd! Lamma, what a find!" she added, as her eyes beheld the maid. "Look, Jenny, they've got jolly! And look! There's Miss Dianna!"

"As large as life!" Dianna grinned. She flushed a smiler round the table. "Come in—all of you! Make yourselves at home—what? All friends of friends in this study are welcome—what?"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Clara. She looked at Lily, crimson and tongue-tied. She looked at Dianna,



dispensing hospitality with the greatest of good will. Four pairs of eyes stared warily at the Firebrand.

"Oh golly! This is lively!" Ada Maye announced.

"Jolly good! Thanks for inviting us, Lily!"

"What—" Lily began.

"Oh, hush!" Diana said quickly. "Now come and Chair there, Betty! Make room for our new guests! Tilly, you sit next to Lady Laura. You don't mind, Laura?" she added authoritatively. "Jenny, you here—next to me. Now what will you all have?"

"Oh crumbs! I'll start with iced cake."

"I'd like some of those sandwiches, please."

"Ooo! Look at the pork pie! Can I have some pork pie, Miss Diana?"

"Help yourself," Diana said while the chaos, in dismay, hardly knowing how to deal with this invasion, looked at each other.

"Boris, too, old thing! Boris, pass the watermelon, will you! Jenny, help yourself to pie. Tuck in!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Clara. "I say, whose party is this?"

Diana beamed. She was enjoying herself, Lily, recovering from the bewildered stupor into which she had fallen, blinked at her heroine, and then stared again at her friends as if only just realizing they were there. Jenny, by face half-buried in an enormous wedge of pork pie, was trying to eat and laugh at the same time, with disastrous results. The pie went down the wrong way.

In her ensuing convulsions, she managed to jog Tilly, who, seated next to her, was in the act of receiving a cup of tea from Boris Hunter. The cup slipped—pouring its contents into the lady Lady Laura's lap. Up from her ladyship went a cry:

"You clumsy thing! My dress—"

"Oh, dear!" Oh crumbs, I'm sorry!" Tilly said, in dismay. And then herself gave a shout: "Excuse me, Miss Rodgers! What are you kicking me for?"

But Boris hadn't noticed Lily. That do thence, delivered under the table, had come from Diana. She had aimed it from Boris' direction, however, fully intending that Boris should be blamed. Boris started.

"But I didn't kick you—"

"Oh, I say!" Diana murmured.

"Play the game, Boris!"

"But I didn't—"

"You, you did!" Tilly said. And while Lady Laura, at her side, was attempting desperately to remove some of the tea from her stained dress, she turned, accidentally jutting an elbow in her side. "Oh crumbs, I'm sorry!" she howled. "There you are! You kicked me again! Oo-oo-oo! Look 'ere, Lily, if this is the way you're going to let them treat me when I come to your party—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Boris!"

"But I didn't kick her!" Boris protested angrily. "I never touched the girl! I— And she hit her lip, her eyes gleaming now, feeling sick and dismayed at the ruin of her party."

"Oh, my goodness! Lady Laura!" she cried.

In quivering wrath, Lady Laura had risen to her feet.

"I—I'm sorry," she gasped; "I really am! I—I had no idea when Celeste asked me to come along with her that—that we should meet with a reception like this. If this," she added frostily, "is the sort of hospitality we receive at Cliff House—"

The chaos blinked. They couldn't blame Laura. But Lily stared at her. Again a crimson flush ran up into her cheeks. It was no longer a blush of shame, however. Lily had been so amazed as anyone to see those friends of hers stroll in. She did not understand how they had got here, or who had invited them. But they were here. That was good enough.

There, no matter what happened, were her very own friends. They looked to her for help, for assistance. Never in the past had she failed them. She was not going to fail them now. Diana had been decent to them. But Boris—and a momentary assessment filled her as she gazed at Boris. Boris, about all people, to treat Tilly like that!

There was a game. It was a game of dismay. Still, Lady Laura stood, Celeste having risen to her feet at her side. Tilly sobbed softly and bitterly. And everybody glared at the other with an angry suspicion, provoked by the general disconcerting atmosphere. Then Boris, remembering her own duty as hostess, jumped to her feet.

"Oh, Laura, please," she begged—"please, I assure you—"

"I return," Lady Laura said, with living emphasis, "to remain here another moment. I consider, Barbara, that I have been treated abominably!"

"But, please—"

"Either these—these wretches leave at once, or I do!"

That was enough for Lily. Straggling as she was, all her anger crashed to the defence of her friends at once.

"Curses yourself!" she blurted.

"Lily!" cried Boris.

"And—Lily's eyes blazed—"If you don't want 'em 'ere, you ain't 'avin' 'em!" Her lips quivered as she looked at Boris; her whole frame stiffened. "I thought," she added bitterly, "you were my friend; you always pretended to be fond of me."

Boris looked and felt distressed.

"Lily—she implied."

"Excuse me now!" Lily blurted out. "Diana's right. You only said so because you want to get your own back on 'er. It wasn't Tilly's fault she upset that tea, and you hadn't any right to kick 'er because you was wild with 'er. We don't," Lily added bitterly, "do that even in Scrabble Alley."

"Excuse 'em!" gleefully supported Ada Maye.

"I think," Diana said, "that the party had better break up—what?" She faced Boris with a look of scorn. "I must say," she said, "that I'm rather surprised. The kids might have peeped in unexpectably, but, dash it—well, they are Lily's friends; and if they'd been friends of yours, Boris, you'd have been only too glad to have welcomed them. No, Lily kid, don't go harping into tears," she said warningly; "the best thing you can do is to take your pals out of here and trip along to Study No. 33."

"Oh, Diana!"

"Oh, no, now, all of you!" Diana said authoritatively.

"But—"

Boris hit her mind whirling. For once, even she was incapable of dealing with this situation. Still, expertly, Diana shepherded her flock together. Watched in dismayed silence by the chaos, she put her arm round the quivering Lily's shoulders, and they all tramped along to Study No. 33. In a gloom, dubious group they collected, surrounding Lily, who, now that all was done, was rather miserable. Diana beamed.

"Well, that's that!" she said brightly.

"You ain't think, kids, that we're all like Barbara Rodgers at Cliff House. You sorry I've got no tea for you here, but I've got heaps of things in the cupboard. Look!" And she flung it open.

"Now," she added, laughing, "would like this tin of biscuits?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And this cake!" Diana beamed. "And here's a lovely pork pie—bigger than the ones they had in Study No. 4. Here, Tilly, you take that. And here—"

"Well, I declare," she added, "there's a new box of chocolates!"

Faces gleamed.

"Oh, Diana!" Lily added.

"And now," Diana said, "you'd better see about going. Wait a minute. How would you like to car back? Some like oh, rolling back to Scrabble Alley in a taxi?"

"But we ain't got no money," Ada protested.

"Well, I have," Diana laughed.

"Never see a cent!"

She flew out, checking to herself. Passing the door of Study No. 4, she glimpsed a very subdued party in session once more. She reached the prefect's room, coolly rang up the garage, and then, checking again, flew back to Study No. 13. Her guests gloved their admiration as she rejoined them.

"Well, all ready!" Diana beamed.

"The car will be here in a few minutes."

"Oh crumbs!"

And in a few minutes the car was there. Escorted by the Firebrand and Lily, and watched by a grinning crowd, the girls from Scrabble Alley were soon off the premises. In breathless excitement they strolled into the waiting taxi. Diana paid the driver, and they went off.

Lily, checking her good-byes, found Diana's hand in hers.

"Cheer up, kid!"

"Be—be—" Lily bit her lip.

"Oh, I don't know!" she wretchedly cried. "Oh, I couldn't never—never 'ave thought of Miss Barbara! But you, Diana—you were so good, so—so splendid!" Lily burst out in a fervor of unconcealing gratitude. "You didn't mind a bit, did you?"

Diana smiled.

"Well, Lily, I only stuck up for you, you know. And certainly," Diana smiled, "I was a little bit to Diana. You see," she continued, hating to tell the bit and only really half telling it. "I was Tilly in Courtfield this morning. I told her that you would love to have her and the others to tea some time; but they must have made a mistake, and thought I meant this afternoon. All the same," she added angrily, "Boris had no right to treat Lily like that."

Lily was silent.

"But cheer up now," Diana said.

"You've still got me, Lily. And I," she added, "will never let you down. Lily—"

—after a considered pause—"do you still like Barbara?"

Lily did not reply to that question.

"Lily, do you?" Diana repeated sharply.

"Oh, dear! Oh, I didn't know!" Lily said unobtrusively; and then, stopped, as, having reached the Fourth Form corridor, she found her own and Diana's passage barred. And there, in front of her, was Barbara—a Barbara looking coolly warlike.

She stared at Lily.

"Have your friends gone?" she asked.

Lily rather defiantly answered:

"Yes."

Boris frowned.

"That's a pity," she said. "You see, Lily, something rather unfortunate has happened. Laura and Celeste's hand-



THE door opened suddenly and into the room trooped four of Lily's friends from Scabb's Alley. Nobody guessed that Diana had invited them—with the deliberate intention of creating a scene at the party!

bags have vanished and—well, Celeste has asked me to make inquiries."

It was Lily's turn to sigh.

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, you see, Lily," Babe went on unconcernedly, "there was money in those bags. Celeste and Lady Laura are terribly upset, and so I've had to make inquiries. I—well, I thought perhaps your friends—"

"My friends?" Lily cried. "Barbara, what are you saying?"

"I'm only saying—"

"That Lily's friends, because they don't happen to be as well off as you are, have stolen those bags?" Diana contemptuously put in.

Babe turned scarlet.

"I didn't! I only—"

"Well, why should you suspect my friends of stealing those rich girls' bags?" Lily loudly spoke up. "Why should they have stolen them?—The little face worked. "They may be poor, but they're not thieves. And I don't think it's very sporting to say things about them when they're not here to speak for themselves. If anybody took those bags, it's not them!"

Babe bit her lip.

"Lily, I'm not accusing them. But I must make inquiries—"

Diana interrupted with a cough.

"Don't you think—with a working glance—there might be another explanation?" Barbara's Lily's sight; those kids might not be your class, but they are at least honest. In accusing them you are as good as accusing Lily herself. Or perhaps," she added, with a sneer, "the bags haven't disappeared."

"Harcot? What do you mean?"

Diana shrugged.

"Well, it was pretty obvious during your previous party, wasn't it, that somebody was out to make trouble for the kids? It was pretty shabby, if you ask me, the way you treated them. Perhaps," Diana said thoughtfully, "you felt rather ashamed of that, Barbara?"

and perhaps, in an attempt to justify yourself by lambasting those kids in Lily's eyes, you hid the bags. I don't know, of course. But I do seem to remember," Diana went on, "you putting something under the cushion of your seat—"

Babe's eyes flamed; her hands clenched by her sides.

"Diana, are you accusing—"

"I'm not"—Diana shrugged—"doing anything of the sort! I'm merely suggesting that's all." And then she passed, as Mike came hurrying along.

"Oh, Babe, it—it's all right! The bags have been found!" she gasped.

Babe stoned.

"Where?"

"Well—and Mike shook her head—under the cushion of your chair, old thing. Goodness knows how they got those; but—"

And she stopped as Diana burst into a peal of scornful laughter. As Lily, shaking suddenly from head to foot, gave one choking, horror-stricken cry:

"Barbara!"

That was all she said. But it seemed to stab Babe's very heart.

"Lily?" she cried.

But Lily wheeled. Her white face wretched, she dashed past her, breaking into a run. Diana laughed again. Babe tapped upon her with blinding eyes.

"I believe you arranged the whole affair from start to finish!"

"Prove it!" the Firebrand taunted.

And she strode off.

### Diana Speaks Her Mind



"YES, Miss Primrose, I think you ought to know, Miss Primrose, I hope, Miss Primrose, you won't think I'm amusing, but—"

well, we all have the interests of Lily Walters at heart, you know, and it would be a shame, after all Barbara has

done for her if—if she—if Diana gets her into her clutches again!"

It was Lydia Crossendale speaking. Lydia stood in the headmistress' study.

It was half an hour later. Celeste and Lady Laura had gone. But the news of the row broke between Diana Repton-Clarke and Barbara Crossendale had spread like wildfire through the Form. Lily had gone back to Diana. Lily was once again installed in Study No. 12.

It was typical of Lydia to seize upon that chance, and, in the guise of the wail's well-wisher, go to Miss Primrose. Lydia, at this moment, hated both Diana and Babe. Miss Primrose's lips compressed.

"Thank you, Lydia."

Lydia turned as if to go, and then looked back a little anxiously.

"And—and you won't mention, Miss Primrose," she stammered, "that—that I—"

"Upon that score, Lydia, you may set your mind at rest," Miss Primrose said stiffly, but there was the faintest touch of contempt in the look she fastened upon the Snob of the Fourth. "You may go!"

Lydia went, a smile of triumph on her face. Miss Primrose, looking a trifle grim, straightened her spectacles, rose, and went majestically out of the room. She went straight to Study No. 4.

Babe, her head hovering above her preparations, looked up with a start, as she came in. She, Mike, and Bessie, who were in the room together, immediately stood up.

"Barbara, where is Lily?"

Barbara blushed in confusion.

"Well, you see, Miss Primrose—"

"I do not see, Lily," Miss Primrose said stiffly. "I expected to find her

in it true that she has returned to Diana?"

"Well, yes," Babe faltered unhappily.

"Why?"

"Well, there—there has been a—  
a sort of misunderstanding," Baba said.

"I see. Very well, Barbara, please  
come with me. I presume," Miss Primrose  
went on sternly, "that she is in  
Study No. 10?" And, with Baba trail-  
ing behind her, she made her way to  
that study, where Diana was in the act  
of getting out books for preparation.  
She turned, however, as the headmistress,  
accompanied by Baba, came in.

"Oh?" she said. And, crossing her  
hands, suffered herself to meet it.

While Lily peered at the table, looked  
up, going first white, then red, and  
starting her eyes from Barbara's plead-  
ing gaze. She gazed at once what was  
going to happen, and stammeringly rose  
to her feet.

"Lily," Miss Primrose began, "what  
are you doing here?"

"I'm doing prep," Lily said half-  
defiantly.

"With Diana? You know my  
rules?"

"Well, I—I'm sorry," Lily blurted  
out. "But—she let her lip—oh, Miss  
Primrose, I don't want to go in to  
Study No. 4. I don't like being in  
Study No. 4. I want to stop here, with  
Baba."

Miss Primrose's lips compressed.

"I am sorry, Lily, but you must allow  
me to know what's best for you. I have  
given my orders, and those orders must  
be obeyed. Diana has given me no  
reason to reconsider my decision, and  
until she does, you will do as I say.  
You will return to Study No. 4 this  
moment!"

Lily stiffened.

"But, I don't want—" she blurted.

Diana's eyes gleamed. Now, for the  
first time, she made a movement.  
Quickly she stepped forward. Rather  
nervously she faced the headmistress.

Diana had got what she schemed for.  
That scene in the study, culminating in  
Barbara's accusation against Lily's  
friends, her own glorious championing  
of Lily's cause, had rooted her more  
deeply than ever in the affections of this  
girl, whose future career she had  
planned to glow so brightly with her  
own.

Lily should NOT go back to Baba.  
Henceforth she was sharing Lily with  
nobody. Braving for combat, Diana  
faced the headmistress.

"Might I," she asked coolly, "have a  
word to say, please?"

"Diana, I do not see that—"

"But I do!" Diana flashed, without  
troubling to inquire what the headmistress  
did not see. "I think," she added  
firmly, "that, as one of the chief parties  
concerned in this, I ought to be allowed  
to have my say. I always understood,"  
Diana went on contemptuously, "that  
Cliff House prized itself upon its fair  
play and its sportsmanship!"

"I do not see—"

"Well, let me explain," boldly returned  
Diana, and even Baba wondered at her  
nerve. "Is it fair play to tell one girl  
to pull up with another she hates? Is it  
sportsmanship to make that girl do things  
against her will? Lily's my friend. I  
brought her here. She prefers me to  
anyone else in this school, so why  
shouldn't she be allowed to share my  
study? Why shouldn't she enjoy the  
same sort of night as my other Cliff House  
girls to pick and choose her friends?"

Miss Primrose frowned.

"Diana, you are very well aware of  
the contents. Had you shown yourself a  
decent sort of friend?"

"Is that for anybody to say except  
Lily?" Diana asked desperately.

"Diana, how dare you speak to me  
like that?"

"But I dare," Diana answered back.

"Ask Lily herself!" Barbara lit her  
defiantly. "She's seated on her; she's  
shown herself a model. Is that the sort  
of friend for Lily?"

"Barbara, what is this?"

Baba shook her head.

"Miss Primrose, it's untrue,"

"But it isn't untrue," Lily put in.

"Diana—"

"Lily, silence, please. Diana, curb  
yourself. This—this—" Miss Primrose  
shook her head. "No, Diana, I  
cannot believe it," she said firmly. "Not  
of Barbara. Lily, I order you—"

Diana showed her teeth.

"And I," she said, "think you're  
being very unfair, Miss Primrose."

Diana, flushed with anger now, cared  
not a bit what she said. Her respect  
for authority, at the best of times, was  
thin. When she was roused, as she was  
roused now, it disappeared altogether.

"Whatever you say, I am responsible  
for Lily," she said. "She's my friend!  
Nobody in this school is going to take  
her away from me!"

"Oh, please!" Lily cried.

"Diana, are you taking leave of your  
wits? I have never," Miss Primrose  
cried, her own anger on the surface  
now, "heard of such an affront!  
I commanded you at once to apologize,  
Diana!"

The Firstmaster's lips set.

"Diana, did you hear me?"

"Yes!"

"Well!"

"I am not," Diana stated between her  
teeth, "going to apologize. I'm right!"

There was an awful moment of  
silence.

Miss Primrose's eyes gleamed.

"Very well," she said. "Now, listen  
to me: I have tried my best to be  
patient with you. A number of your  
offences I've overlooked; for others I  
have given you fines and detentions,  
hoping they would bring you to your  
senses. As they have failed, I—will try

other methods! Barbara, go and fetch  
Mary Butler and Frances Barrett!"

"But—"

"Please go!"

Baba flew off. Lily, feeling strangely  
afraid, looked at Diana, who stood  
there, defiant, with that "don't-care"  
reckless smile of hers on her lips. In  
a few minutes, Barbara was back with  
the two prefects.

"Take this girl to the punishment-  
room!" she ordered.

Diana stopped back.

"What? Look here—"

"Take her," Miss Primrose rapped.  
"Perhaps a night's reflection in solitary  
confinement will bring her to her  
senses."

And then, as Frances and Mary  
glintly advanced and caught Diana's  
arm, a low cry burst from Lily.

"Diana, no!"

"Take her away!" Miss Primrose  
ordered.

"No, no!" Lily cried wildly.

"Diana—"

Diana, going through the door, in the  
grip of her captors, laughed softly.

"Cheer up, kid! Don't worry! My  
back's broad. I can stand it. Sit  
upper lip, you know. And show clear  
of Barbara's!" was her final taunt.

Miss Primrose compressed her lips.  
She looked at Baba.

"I think, Barbara," she said icily,  
"I will leave you to make your own  
peace with Lily."

**B**UT Baba did not make peace with  
Lily. Though she ejaculated,  
pleaded, promised, argued, it was all  
in vain.

It was Lily's turn to stick up for  
Diana now, that even, unjudged  
Diana, who had suffered so much for  
her. Baba was Diana's enemy! Baba  
was the girl who had unaccompanied her  
downfall. How could she make peace  
with her?

But all the same, Lily's lonely heart  
was heavy with misery. She knew, in  
spite of all, that she liked Baba. She  
knew that she would go on liking her.  
Perhaps, she felt, in that dim, confused  
way of hers, that Baba had an explanation  
for all that had happened, but she  
was crushed under the misery of  
Diana's head humiliation.

Diana had been so splendid, Diana  
had done everything for her, protected  
her, looked after her and her friends,  
Diana, indeed, to turn a receptive ear to  
Baba's pleading when those thoughts  
weighed upon her mind.

It wasn't fair! It wasn't just!

But—

That night Lily lay wide-eyed in bed,  
thinking it all out. In her own bed Baba  
lay restless, her heart heavy with  
misery. Up in the punishment-room,  
Diana sat on her bed, a prisoner be-  
tween four walls, a sallow brown upon  
her hapless face.

She did not go to bed. She did not  
even think of going to bed. Quivering  
passions still governed her. She knew  
very well that she had come near to  
being expelled that day, but she did not  
care! She did not care! Proud and  
wild as she was, her determination  
was still unshaken!

Lily was here! Lily should do as she  
wanted her to do! And since her  
present method had failed others would  
have to be tried! For the moment  
Lily was forbidden to have anything to  
do with her, was she? Well, they would  
see! Miss Primrose, Barbara Red-  
fern, the threat of expulsion—nothing,  
nothing would stand in her way!

## ● SHE LONGED FOR THE LIMELIGHT

**S**OMEHOW Diana Royton-Clarke is  
resolved to achieve fame—no matter  
for herself a place in the limelight. And  
she, having been thwarted in one way, the  
Frederick tries now another.

You will read of her latest activities in  
our Saturday's tale, long complete Cliff  
House School story—"DIANA UN-  
DEFEATED!" by Miss Richards.

**NEXT SATURDAY**



**WAITING FOR THE MYSTERY GIRL TO SPEAK . . . Further Exciting Chapters of This Grand Morcove Serial**



**HER SECRET AT SWANLAKE**



**FOR NEW READERS.**

PAM WILLINGBORN of Morcove School has become a charge in order that she may have time to act as hostess to

**CLAIRE FERRARD**—a girl who, after living all her life in a cheap station in Australia, has come into a fortune. Until she is able to settle down in England she is to stay with the Willingborns at their stately home—Swanlake.

**VIVIANE MANSO**, having heard of Claire's fortune, schemes to take her place. She swears Claire and tries a plausible story to the effect that the fortune is managed by the police. She represents herself as an amateur detective and offers to help Claire in the West Wing at Swanlake until she can clear her name. Claire, however, and Viviane agrees at Swanlake to be watched as the real Claire Ferrard. **BETTY LINTON**, one of Pam's Morcove friends, is at once suspicious of Viviane.

The real Claire Ferrard is discovered, but she can tell nothing. A car arrives at Swanlake from Morcove School—where Viviane has been hiding. She is an impostor.

(See end of.)

impostor when Morcove and Swanlake alike knew as Claire Ferrard. She was putting on a vivacious, gushing air, to atone for any recent signs of fright.

"Polly's mother? How do you do, Mrs. Linton! I—er—I dare say you've heard about me?"

"Claire Ferrard?"

"That's right—yes!"

"The young lady who has come into such a big fortune?"

"That's right—just! Oh, and I'm having such a lovely time at Swanlake! At least, I was, until a day or two ago, and then—as you've heard, perhaps—oh, all sorts of spots! But—but I think things are going to be all right again, now!"

She turned to Pam as if to ask:

"Isn't it so, Pam?"

"Yes, well," said Swanlake's school-girl daughter, with her usual assurance.

"Yes, Mrs. Linton? Do come indoors!"

"My dear, I just mustn't, thank you at all, the way," Polly's mother said quickly. "Polly and I—we are going to Grandmother's school, just to see Jack, and I expect we'll have tea with his housemaid and Mrs. Chalmers. I drove to Morcove first, to pick up Polly—"

"And that gave me the chance,"

Betty interposed gaily. "to come to Swanlake! Mrs. Linton was good enough to bring me along. Mind having me to tea, Pam dear?"

"I'll make do with you only," Pam jerked back. "Any time, Mrs. Linton, you will come in by-and-by, when you and Polly are this way again. You'll be picking Betty up."

"But, Pam," was Mrs. Linton's sudden change from smiling agreement to grave concern, "how is that poor girl who has been lying unconscious upstairs?"

"Oh, splendid news about her," Pam cried. "Only an hour ago they brought her round. But they had to get her to go to sleep again—didn't dare let her come herself by talking. Any time now, though, they'll be getting a statement from her!"

"Splendid!" commented Polly's mother, going back to the car. "Perhaps, when Polly and I look in again, to pick up Betty, we shall hear more! Come along, Polly darling!"

That member of the Study No. 12 chamber, although she adored her brother Jack, and would usually give much for a chance of seeing him at his school, was not too eager to go off now. There was her honey face at the window, as she drove away with her mother, giving its cynical grimace to Betty and Pam, who burst out laughing.

Then those two chums turned round to find that the girl they knew as Claire Ferrard had already run indoors.

"Well, Pam!" said Betty, and "Yes, well!" said Pam.

Shortly they ascended to the porch and passed to the drawing-room, in eager talk.

"Their 'suspect'—'—Miss Tricky," as they had been calling her of late amongst themselves—was not there to have tea with them. So Betty and Pam could continue, over the tea, their review of the present state of affairs.

"Any chance of my being allowed in, upstairs, to see that other girl?" Betty asked at last.

"I don't see why not. We'll both go

**Conscience Makes The Coward**

**F**OUND out! And by Morcove, too, by "that Betty," from the very first a girl who had meant danger to the plot!

Viviane Manso, to her guilty state of mind, could have no other belief but this. The cocking hour, for her, had come.

So certain was she of being denounced, it would have become a moment for her to rush away—anywhere, so long as it saved her from having to face those three possessors who had arrived, so unexpectedly, by car from Morcove School, Betty Linton, one of them, Polly Linton another, and the third—a lady who was surely Morcove's housemistress!

But it was Viviane's despairing thought that sudden paroxysm might would be useless—utterly useless. She could get no start, could not hope to slip away. "I'm done for!" she was thinking.

So, in her secret despair, she simply stood there on the rolled gravel in front of Swanlake's handsome porch, trying desperately to prevent an unconcerned, smiling face to the car's passengers.

Pam had chanced to come out to her, and Viviane's watchfulness was increased by hearing that girl voice a happy welcome.

"Hello, Betty—Polly! So glad you've turned up!"

Then Pam, to Viviane's amazement, went up to the lady as if there were to be a handshake.

"Mrs. Linton!" cried Pam delightedly. "Fancy your looking in! I do so with dad and mother were at home; but you know, of course—they're abroad."

"Yes, my dear."

Viviane's mind went giddy again. But now it was relief from terror that clanked her. This English lady who had come with Betty and Polly—who was not a Morcove mistress after all! She was only—Polly's mother!

"Oh, do introduce me!" pleaded the

**By MARJORIE STANTON**

up, presently; then she may even be awake, and so we shall be able to get her to tell us about herself."

"When she does explain—[it] will be a relief," Betty smiled, a little pensively. "Goodness, Pam, have you been making a big mistake in respecting Claire?"

"I don't think so—no. Now and then just for a moment—Claire looks scared stiff."

"That's how I thought she looked when Pelly got I hurried up just now with Mrs. Linton. But here's the puzzling thing about it all, now. Our theory has been that Claire had that other girl hidden in the east wing for no good reason. And yet that other girl—judging by her looks, anyhow—is quite a nice sort! So one can't help feeling dumfounded. If there's been some underhand, tricky work going on, then surely one girl should be as tricky as the other!"

"I know," Pam nodded, "it is a mystery."

Then the door opened and Miss Tricky came in, looking quite at ease.

"Oh, have you girls had tea? I only want a cup myself. I suppose we can't very well do anything more about the antique theatricals? I mean, although you've turned up like this, Betty—until the patient upstairs has made a statement, we'd rather not do anything about the play?"

"That doesn't work, I'm afraid. Anyhow, it doesn't mean waiting long," Betty said, looking the much-older girl steadily in the eyes. "This evening should end the mystery quite cleared up."

"And we acquiesced," said Miss Tricky, tartly. She laughed. "Well! As Pam knows, I shall be ready to forgive you girls, if only for the sake of Pam's promise. I'm sure they would be very grateful if ever they know that I've been given such an unhappy time at Swanlake. But I don't say anything!"

"I shall," Pam quietly remarked. "If my change and I have done you an injustice, Claire, then it will be only fair for us to admit it."

"Just as you please!" shrugged "Claire Ferrard," and she helped herself to a slice of cake, after all. "For my part, unless I were ready to let the whole thing be forgotten, I wouldn't be staying on at Swanlake—as I mean to stay!"

Another lie! Even as she said it, this daring girl, who was only posing as Claire Ferrard, was thinking how she would have to vanish, any time now, at no more than a moment's warning.

She had moved herself for the terrible ordeal that it meant for her to wait—now wait. There was the real Claire Ferrard, lying asleep upstairs, only needing to come out of that deep sleep which the doctors had decreed, to meet to say at once who she was. "I'm Claire Ferrard!" Then for the accusation amongst them at the bedside. "Claire Ferrard—you!"

But the run of the luck might last, after all, until the morning. There might be no statement from the infirmary to-night. She must be very weak, and those who were handling her case might think it as well to check her first utterance.

"No, don't say anything yet. Go to sleep again."

So, if only the luck held as well as that, it would be morning again here at Swanlake, and the postman at the door.

"Registered package for Miss Ferrard, please!"

The jewels!

Violence set down her empty cup, after drinking her tea standing. Betty and Pam had gone away. What were they doing now?

"Come upstairs, shouldn't wonder, to talk about me behind my back, in Pam's room. Dash that Betty, for waiting here again to-day!" Violence flung suddenly roared to herself. "I feel all right when there's only Pam to face. But—that Betty!"

She went out of the drawing-room and took her stand at the foot of the great picture-hung staircase, listening anxiously.

Violence to tell her what had become of Betty and Pam were what she hoped to find up. But she only heard the slow, measured tick-tock of a grandfather clock.

Tick—aloud—tick! Her eyes glared aside at the antique dial. Oh, but how was it possible that she could be going to achieve her longed-for coup? The jewels could never be here before first post in the morning. Hence to go out in the winter evening, and then the long night.

And upstairs was the real Claire Ferrard, no longer prevented by unconsciousness from giving an account of herself. Merely asleep.

Tick—and a slow swing of the pendulum like the other way. Tick! The minutes, the hours, would never go fast enough for her to succeed.

Tick with dread, once more, she suddenly hurried up to the first floor, to get after Betty and Pam.

And then she saw those two girls going into the very room where lay—the real Claire Ferrard.

### She Can't Remember!

GOOD Mrs. Goodson, the Swanlake housekeeper, had put a finger to her lips as she admitted Pam and Betty to the patient's room.

"Sh-sh!"

So, on tiptoes, they crossed to the bedside.

"For Betty, it was her first sight of the 'Mystery Girl' since that dramatic moment when the Unknown, that she still was, had been found in the east wing.

Found, at dead of night, lying unconscious at the bottom of that steep flight of steps—a complete stranger, and no means of guessing how or why she came to be there!

"Oh, how much better she looks!" Pam cheerfully remarked, in a low voice.

She's going to get on just splendid, grey-haired Mrs. Goodson softly rejoined. "That man of resting well and looking up, and being spared excitement. You know, my dear, I do think there is something about her that is attractive! Dear, dear, what a puzzle it is to know why she—"

Mrs. Goodson broke off, no less startled that were the two Misses by the patient's allowed breathing. It took on the sighing sound of one who was on the point of waking out of deep, refreshing sleep.

Then the Unknown's eyes opened.

"Oh! Oh!"

"Sh, sh!" Gently, now!" Mrs. Goodson homely smiled. "You just lie quiet, my dear, like the doctors advised you—"

"But—"

Her eyes were remaining very wide open in a puzzled, staring manner. Pam met their inquiring look, then Betty was looked at, bewilderedly.

"But who—who are you all?"

"Who are you?" Pam asked in return, so gently that Mrs. Goodson could not feel at all alarmed for the patient. "That's what we've been wondering."

"I? I'm—oh, I don't know," came the sighing response. "I—I sort of can't remember, for the moment."

"Never mind, then, my dear," cooed Mrs. Goodson. "You just turn over and go off to sleep again. I would!"

"Oh, but I don't want to sleep any more," the feeble voice protested. "This is rather funny, I mean, I feel ever so much better, and my head's quite clear now. Yet I—I can't understand where I am, or why I'm here!"

"But you remember Swanlake?" Pam asked.

"Swanlake?"

"The house you're in now. My parents' home, you know."

The bandaged head that was lying back upon a snowy pillow went from left to right, and from right to left, implying— "No, I don't know anything about Swanlake."

Mrs. Goodson stood again with amazement. Betty and Pam looked at each other uneasily.

Could it be, they were thinking, that this Unknown was pretending ignorance? If so, she was not such a desirable girl, after all, for Swanlake to have upon its hands!

"Would you rather not talk any more, for a bit?" Betty questioned.

"I shall we go away!"

"Oh, no—please, not! I feel all right again. I ought to be—ought to be able to understand what it all means. I can tell—putting up a hand to the forehead—I must have met with an accident. Did a car knock me down, then—or what?"

"Miss," said the housekeeper, impressed by the patient's strengthened state, "you were found in the east wing of this old house. Now, come, my dear, and don't be afraid—unless, of course, you were doing something really wrong. Just tell us your name, for a start."

"My name! My name! Do you know," the girl rather gasped, "I still can't remember it. I can't!" she insisted, and would have sat up excitedly, but that gently prevented her. "I can't remember anything."

She speaks up, distressfully.

"Don't look like that at me, as if you don't believe me. It's true, I tell you! I can't remember anything!"

"What?"

And there they stood, staring down at her, against, white as stared up at each of them again in turn, with the look of one trying, struggling, to remember.

"Oh, please, say something to help me," she suddenly entreated. "Tell me something about myself, and then perhaps it will all come back. Swallow! Eat wine! But it's absurd! I—I've no recollection—"

"You were found by us," Pam said, with slow imperiousness. "in a secret passage in the east wing, the night before last. We had heard a noise and we were taking a look round when we found you. The noise must have been your falling down a steep flight of steps in the dark. The fall left you with concussion. The best has been done for you, and now all that is wanted in return is to know—well, how you came to be there, that night."

"And I can't say!" the patient whispered, dismayed. "Don't remember the faintest thing!"

"Then you had better, my dear, go off to sleep again after all," coaxed Mrs. Goodson. "They've left some

staff for the nerves, in case you might become excited. You shall have a dose."

"And Betty and I will clear out," was Pam's resigned remark. "Oh, by the way, before we go. Does the name Ferrand mean anything to you?"

"Ferrand?"

"Claire Ferrand, a girl who is staying here—"

"No! No, I'm sorry—Claire Ferrand? I don't remember the name. But then, I don't remember anything!"

SURPRISE when had been listening outside the closed door of the patient's room, went creeping away on tiptoes. It was Vincenzo Murru.

And now, having overheard all that had been said, Vincenzo was fairly off her head with delight.

The real Claire Ferrand would not tell anyone that she was Claire Ferrand! She had remembered at last; she had all her senses about her; and yet it didn't matter a scrap. She had become a case of lost memory.

So now, how could any one could wait for the morning and for the postman's first delivery! She, Vincenzo, was as safe from exposure at present, as she would have been if the real Claire had vanished from the face of the earth.

"I could even go in to her, stand at her bedside and chat with her and it would make no difference!"

Fortunately the daring impostor, who had suffered such moments of panic in the last forty-eight hours, laughed these words to herself. No proper rest for her last night, but tonight how she would sleep!

And sleep she did, when bedtime had come. She had passed the old clock on the stairs as she mounted to her room, and her mood was such that she had felt like putting out her tongue at it.

Time mattered nothing now! If necessary, she could go on for days just at Swandake in no fear of being madly denounced. All the same, tomorrow morning would find her doing a crazy get-away, after the Jews had come.

She awoke very early, and was out of her room before Pam went slipping along to the bath-room.

Downstairs, when Claire Ferrand received the usual polite: "Morning, miss!" from one busy maid and another. So, obviously, Swandake still had not the faintest suspicion.

"And how's the patient, upstairs, Elaine," she vivaciously inquired of a portmaid who was busy about the hall. "Did she have a good night?"

"Oh, I think so, miss! Only, it hasn't helped her to be able to remember anything this morning. So Mrs. Goodson says."

"No, well," airily, as she stood in front of the hall fire, "I quite expect it will be a long while before—Oh, is that the postman?"

"Yes, miss," said comely Elaine, hurrying to the door.

"Anything for me, a registered letter?" the sham Claire Ferrand wanted to know, coming up behind the maid as the letters were taken in. "I'm expecting a—"

"Here's one for you, miss."

"Oh! Oh, thanks."

But it was not a registered letter. From the lawyer, and yet only an ordinary letter!

Vincenzo walked away, her heart beating rapidly as she tore open the envelope and took out the brief note that it contained.

"Dear Miss Ferrand," she read,—"I have not sent down any of the Jews

for which you asked, as I propose to come down to Swandake in the course of a week or so, just to see how you are going on."

"It will be better than sending the pearls and so on through the post, if I bring them with me. I will write you the day I am coming."

She read no farther. Her trembling hand suddenly crumpled and crumpled up the note, while her mind shrieked, inwardly, its baffled rage. "If ever he sees me—"

He, who would know instantly that she was not the real Claire Ferrand, was coming down to Swandake!

### Dress Rehearsal!

"H A, ha, ha!"

"Finest bit in the whole play!"

"Yes, wuther, bai Jewel!"

"Have, have, have!"

"Well, come on, all; now let's get on with the next scene."

A few days had passed without Betty and the rest being able to get over to Swandake.

But here they were, this Wednesday afternoon, holding another rehearsal of the play which was to be given during Harcourt's gala week.

Alas! it was a dress rehearsal, today, for the girls had put in a couple of hours over repairs and alterations to that great store of useful costumes which Swandake's old lumber-room, in the east wing, had yielded up.

So as not to litter up the place, the chests had held their spring-party in the dressed east wing. For the purpose of the rehearsal, however, a plane had been needed. Accordingly, half an hour ago they had all trooped down to Swandake's wonderful dressing-room, the lower end of which was now stage, with a handy door just there for an exit.

Madge Minton was at the piano, playing her own compositions for those songs and dances which had been introduced into the play.

But, although talented Madge was important enough to be going to have her name in the programme in display letters, she was yet abashed at by playwright Fully just as much as the chorus during the present rehearsal.

Anybody who had not had much to do with the Morocco scenes might easily have imagined that things were not going too well.

Folly, taking charge, was constantly yelling: "Whoo, stop!" There were her missings about, every other minute, as if she despised of ever getting the play to go with a bang.

But what appeared to be angry disappointment in playwright Fully was really only enthusiasm.

Somebody there was, this afternoon, looking on at the rehearsal, who really had not known Betty & Co. for long.

The girls playfully called her Miss Blank, for the simple reason that she did not know her own real name.

Miss Blank was, in fact, Swandake's girl with a lost memory!

Swandake liked having her. Pam, indeed, had a pretty shrewd notion of how much better Mrs. Goodson and the rest of the staff preferred Miss Blank to that other youthful guest who had no sense of her own. Miss Blank, from the moment she got her discharge from the sick-room, had been winning her way into the hearts of all.

Miss Blank was showing such genuine, heartfelt gratitude for all that Swandake had done for her and was still doing.

She did not forget, for a moment even, that she was a compassionate case. She could not remember who she was, or to whom she belonged. No one with a winning relative of her age had come forward to claim her. So, if it



"Do you know anybody named Claire Ferrand?" Pam asked gently. Slowly the mystery girl shook her head. "No, I'm sorry, I can't remember the name. I can't remember—anything!"

had not been for Swanlake's traditional humanity, she might have had to go into the workhouse—temporarily, at any rate.

But this other girl, of similar age, was taking the hospitality of Swanlake as if it were her due.

She ordered the servants about, and yet, whilst being waited upon hand and foot, she was always hinting at an inclination to "clear out."

Yet it did not appear to Pam and her chums of Moscow that the girl they knew as Claire Ferrand was likely to peep a bag and leave. She was going on with her part in the play; and was attending this afternoon's rehearsal. And that, surely, did not square with any idea of a sudden going off!

Or was she, whilst working secretly with them all at present, secretly intending to place them in an awkward fix by suddenly dropping out of the play?

That was a possibility with which Betty & Co. had to reckon. For, to them, the girl was still Miss Tricky. Luckily, however, they knew of a way by which any evilful action at the last moment could be countered. They had—Miss Blank.

She, poor, stranded girl, was certain to be at Swanlake right up to the week fixed for the Barrowby's Grand Gala. The same age as Claire Ferrand, she would be able to take that girl's part at an hour's notice.

Meanwhile, the chums were feeling that, in any case Miss Blank should be given a part in the play.

Just now she had worked so cleverly, and so enthusiastically, at the sewing-party. Here was that astounding good-will which makes a girl so valuable where teamwork is demanded. It seemed a shame to have her only looking on at this rehearsal, when it was certain that the very smallest part in the play would give her pride and joy.

Suddenly Polly, after yelling another "Whoa!" to the company on the supposed stage, stood staring thoughtfully at the ceiling.

Paula, Nazora, and the others, who had been a special trio in Polly during rehearsal, might have fancied that she was trying to think of something particularly withering to say. They she lowered her eyes, and, with a sudden, inverted smile, turned to Miss Blank.

"Yes, I know," said Polly. "A part for you?"

"For me?"

"Yes."

"Hear, hear!" yelled half a dozen of them. "After the play a bit! Polly, you can easily—"

"Oh, yeah!" said Polly, grinning about the imagined "accents" of her job. "But I don't mind what I do. I'll find the time, somehow, at school."

"It's too good of you!" cried Miss Blank. "Oh, you girls are so—so kind!"

"Not so bit of not!" yelled Nazora. "Believe you see a sport; and as for Polly, she can say—"

"You pipe down!" Polly rounded upon the dainty one. "One word more from you, kid—one word!—and I'll give your part to Miss Blank!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That I'm afraid," laughed Miss Blank, "is a part I could never, never hope to fill! But, oh, if I could be just—just anybody or anything in the play!"

"Patsy, you'd like to take over my part?" drawled the girl they knew as Claire Ferrand, with that false-sweet smile of hers. "I mean to say, you get on so well with these girls. As for me—I'm a bit unsettled, you know."

Viridiana Mauro, posing as Claire Ferrand, was being careful to throw out constant hints, these days, about her being likely to leave Swanlake suddenly.

She had recovered some of her daring, and was staying on, relying upon receiving timely notice of the lawyer's coming down from London.

Every extra day and night spent by the impostor under Swanlake's roof was no small gain to her. She was enjoying such a life as was never likely to be hers again. But she had a bag ready packed—in case!

The girl who had lost her necessary now looked rather distressed at what had been said.

"I'm just thinking, girls," she said earnestly to the chums, "if Claire fears she may not be here, when the time comes for the play—"

"Oh, quite likely I shall be!" the sham Claire put in lightly. "If there's no more rehearsal to me."

"Anyway," said the girl who had been called Miss Blank, "shall I understand by Claire's part, so that there will be no risk of your all being left in a fix?"

"That's terribly good of you, to offer to be just an understudy!" Polly cried. "But, no; you can be that, and something else as well! I'll write in a part for you—yes, I will!"

"Why not let Miss Blank be in the play what she is in all of us here?" Bessy suggested. "The girl without a necessary!"

"I supposed they did have last-necessary cases in those days!" Polly grinned. "O.K., then. Good, and won't that mean a lovely chance for a song?"

Polly was clapping a hand over her hair now, as she always did when feeling a rush of ideas.

"But it's great—helps my plot! The Girl with the Lost Necessary, in the play, will really be some other girl by rights who is also in the play. Only, don't you see, she doesn't know it!"

"Lovely!" gurgled Bessy and others.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And so—" Polly was rushing on excitedly—when the whole company, because aware that the door had opened, to let in a performance!

"A telegram, please—for Miss Claire."

"Oh! Oh—I-I can guess what that is," said the sham Claire Ferrand, darting to take the telegram from the direct deliver. "My lawyer, of course! To say he's on the way!"

She forced a laugh, then walked towards the door whilst tearing open the envelope. So now, the moment had come. Now to get upstairs, and then do a lightning get-away. Her luxury life at Swanlake was ended.

Suddenly her eyes looked at the perilled message on the unfolded telegram form. Then—they flashed with relief and crazy joy. But, how wonderful! She need not fly from Swanlake, even now.

And the jewels—the jewels would fall into her hands, after all.

"Must go North," ran the telegram. "Clark is on the way with pearls."

**MOMENT of triumph, of elation, for Swanlake's daring impostor! And yet, there is more a slip—**Read of the dramatic developments which follow in next Saturday's absorbing chapters of this brilliant mystery and adventure serial. Order your **SCHOOLGIRL** at once—and read your chums to do the same.

## HILDA RICHARDS REPLIES..

**Frances (Salop).—**Thank you very much for your jolly little postcard. So glad to hear that you enjoy my stories in *The Schoolgirl* and *The Schoolgirls' Own Library* so much. I hope, too, your sister enjoyed her birthday present. She's lucky, isn't she, to have a birthday at the time of year when the *School Friend*'s Annual is on sale!

**Margaret (Southampton).—**Back members of *The Schoolgirl* and *Schoolgirls' Own Library* can be obtained from the Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Back Wash, Dear Alley, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. I will answer your other questions through the post, my dear.

**Bessy (Middleborough).—**Thank you so much for your cheery letter. I do hope the school party was a great success and that you had a very jolly time there. I hope the school report was not as bad as you feared!

**Joan (Luton, Beds).—**Are all my wilderness projects? Certainly all the projects at Cliff House are not wildernesses. Don't you remember the series I wrote about Stella Stone? Isabel Drake is another good sort in the *Smiths*, too. And there's Daisy Parbrother, Lady Pat, Gladys Warner—just to name a few who are favourites with everybody at Cliff House School.

**Mary Schreff (Kale, Japan).—**So pleased to get another of your letters; they're always so interesting. Thank you very much for the stamps, which I will show out among my stamp-collecting readers. Your letter was most kind to say you could have written to me. Please let me know how you get on, my dear.

**Pearl (Glasgow).—**Your book of records of the characters that have appeared in the volumes of *Cliff House* stories must be very interesting. I will send you the cast of the film "Small Town Girl" through the post. Best wishes, Pearl.

**"Violin Eyes" (East Dulwich).—**I'm sure your pen must be very charming, my dear. Give them all appropriate greetings from me, won't you? As names put for Tony and Victor, a shiner for the lovely birds, and a special wish for the girlfish. A tailing all round from Jane!

**Gwen Gibson (Dumfries).—**Thank you, Gwen, for your tiny letter. Did you have a lovely party? I'm sure you did. You would just agree into the *Upper Third* if you were a pupil at Cliff House School.

**Joan Ashley (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada).—**What a very enthusiastic and beautifully written letter! Your compliments were delightful, too—though, I'm sure, I really don't deserve them all! No, the girls were blue girls—not gold!

**Patricia Colley (Greenock).—**So glad you decided to write to me after reading *The Schoolgirl* for so long. The answer to your big question is "No." Jane would like to know whether you have any pets? Be sure to write.

**Maude Watson (Dunedin, New Zealand).—**The idea of being shy of writing to me, Maude! But I'm very pleased you did so at last—and your letter did not sound in the least as if you were nervous of me! Lydia has an older sister—not at Cliff House, however. How are you getting on with your story-writing?