

EVERY SCHOOLGIRL'S OWN PAPER

LONG COMPLETE  
CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL  
STORY INSIDE

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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EVERY **2<sup>D</sup>**  
SATURDAY

*Incorporating*  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



—BUT THE WINDOW  
WAS LOCKED!

One of many dramatic  
incidents in this week's  
brilliant long complete  
Cliff House School  
story

COMPLETE THIS WEEK: Although She Was a Cliff House Girl,  
The Drama In Which Elsie Effingham Was Involved Was—

# UNKNOWN TO THE FOURTH



## The Choice



"THE question is," Barbara Redfern announced, a nod to each of the thoughtfully along the table, at which the junior hockey committee of Cliff House School sat in another session—"the question is—what are we to do for an outside-left? Phyllis Harwood is our regular outside-left, but Phyllis at the moment is still in injury."

"And Phyllis, in consequence, is left outside—what?" Jeanina Carstairs lightly observed, and then coughed, as five glances were fastened upon her. "Alas! Pardon!" she murmured hastily. "You needn't laugh if you don't want to."

Headly Clara Trevlyn, captain of junior games and chairman of the meeting, breathed deeply.

"This is serious," she said sternly.

"Quite!" Jeanina beamed.

"And the question is," Clara frostily went on, "that Phyllis is wanted, the question is—what's going to make her place in the Peribonae match?"

"Ah!" Jeanina said, with a profound wag of her head.

"Well, there's Elsie Effingham," Mabel Lewis suggested hesitantly.

"And there's Frances Frost!" Ross Redworth spoke up.

"And what about June Mervont?" Marge Lathrop demanded.

THERE was only one vacancy in the Junior School hockey team—but there were two girls who, for vital reasons of their own, wanted to play. One was Elsie Effingham, the other Frances Frost. Read in this vividly told story of the dramatic events which led to the final choice

But Clara shook her head.

"Not for outside-left, June's too slow," she said. "In any case, she's got such a beastly cold that it's doubtful if she'll be fit enough. But, for goodness' sake, let's make up our minds one way or the other!" Clara added testily. "I will be done-time in half an hour!"

The six girls who comprised the committee exchanged bewildered glances.

For half an hour they had sat trying to determine the composition of the team which would next Saturday travel to Peribonae for the most important hockey match of the season so far—an event no less than the final of the Junior Schools Charity Shield, in which Cliff House were to meet Broadfield Victoria for the silver shield and the gold medals that would be the winners' portion.

By

HILDA RICHARDS

Very naturally that match was creating tremendous excitement in the junior school at Cliff House, and—very naturally, perhaps—there were more candidates for the solitary vacant position than could be considered.

A sorry, yes, Clara Trevlyn, as games captain, looked increased. The team, of course, must be the best, very strongest that Cliff House could put in the field.

But who should be outside-left?

There was Elsie Effingham and there was Frances Frost. But who could say which of those two girls was the better? As afterthoughts there were also Marcelle Biquet, Peggy Preston, Marjorie Haselden, Gwen Cook, Bridget O'Toole, and at least half a dozen others. All had figured in the junior team at some time or other; all were equally entitled to a place. Which of them to choose?

Clara struggled irritably.

"Well, my own party is for Elsie," she said. "She's been coming on well just lately. Still, let's put it to the vote. Hands up for Elsie."

She glanced at the result. Only Babe and Mabel hands accompanied her own.

"Well, hands up for Frances," she said.

The hands of Ross Redworth, Jeanina Carstairs, and Marge Lathrop rose.

Clara dropped on the table with her fingers.

"Any other suggestions?"

"Yes!" Barbara Redfern stood up.

"I've a suggestion. Supposing," she added, "we don't come to a decision at once. Let's put both Frances and Elsie on the list and leave it at that. You needn't make a final selection until the last moment, Clara. Plenty of time to choose between now and Friday."

It was a good suggestion; so simple, indeed, that they all wondered why they had not thought of it before. Clara nodded; she looked round.

"All agreed?"

"Yes, rather!"

"O.K., then! The meeting's closed." With relief they rose. Well, thank goodness that was over! Clara, taking up her hat, stretched, yawned, and with Babe, went into the passage outside.

Immediately they were surrounded by a crowd of chattering girls. Everyone was anxious to play. For did not the position carry with it a free pass to Pembroke?

"Clara, I say—"

"Oh goodness! Am I in the team?"

"Clara, what about me?"

"Pass! Pass!" Clara cried, holding up an arm. "The team," she announced, "will be on the board in five minutes."

The girls gazed back. Clara, with a "Come on" nod to Babe, allowed her way through them and made straight for Study No. 7.

She pushed open the door—and then noticed, as a girl who had been standing by the window glanced round to meet them.

The girl was Frances Frost.

"Oh, Clara. I—I wanted to ask you a question?"

"I know. Are you in the team?" Clara asked anxiously. "Hull the form is asking that question, too. Well, the answer is—you and me. You'll see the list later. How does it go?"

"Frances?" Clara said impatiently.

Out of her pale grey eyes Frances looked her a look. Babe smiled a little, shaking her head; then, with a shrug, she went out.

As she was going through the doorway another came in—a girl with a shock of sunbun hair, whose blue eyes were alight with excitement.

"Oh, Clara—" Elsie Ellingham began.

"I know," Clara said. "The answer to you, Elsie, will be on the board in five minutes."

Elsie grinned; she went out. The door closed, and Clara, just to guard against further interruptions, turned the key in the lock. She sat down, the team list in front of her.

"Well, here we are," she declared. "Brenda Fallows, goal; Amy Jones, Lolla Carroll, backs; Joan Charmant, myself, and Janet Jordan, half-backs; forwards, Rosa Redworth, you, Babe, Diana Royton-Clarke, and Margie Leighton—with the substitute to be selected from Elsie Ellingham and Frances Frost. How's that?"

"Good! It's better!" Babe approved. "Let's go and put it up."

They went out again; down the stairs they tripped, followed by a look of excited passion.

Clara, ignoring all questions, pushed her way to the notice-board in Big Hall and pinned up her list. It was surrounded at once.

And then, as it was read, there were shrieks of delight, groans of disappointment, sighs of discontent. Frances Frost, reading it with the rest, scowled and turned away.

"But what's the matter with the notice-board position?" she demanded. "Why should you pick two of us for that? We can't both play."

"True, sweetheart! But, you see," Clara patiently told her, "the committee can't make up its mind between you and Elsie. We're going into another huddle after we've seen how you both shape."

"And if Elsie gets the place?"

Frances demanded.

"Then I'm afraid you'll have to vent yourself first, sweet."

Frances paled a sickly face; for a moment her white teeth gleamed as they clanked over her lower lip. Proudly, laughily, arrogant Frances had not expected this. In and out of the hockey team all the season, she had confidently expected Myrtle's vacant place to be given to her.

So confidently had she expected it, indeed, that she had already written to her father, who was on business in Brighton, telling him that she was actually playing in the team, and would next year in Pembroke on Saturday.

And that morning her father had written back to her, glowingly pleased, and telling her that if she succeeded in winning one of the gold medals he would present her with a ten-pound note.

Frances meant to win that ten-pound note. There was going to be no reserve job for her, if she knew it!

"But I'm better than Elsie!" she protested.

"Are you?" Clara grinned. "Nothing like knowing your own team-up, is there?" she added pleasantly. "The committee apparently don't think so. If you see, you'll have plenty of opportunity of proving it. Anyway, both you and Elsie will receive with the first team—and first practice is this afternoon. Where is Elsie, by the way?"

"Oh, Clara, I'm here!" Elsie Ellingham's voice said at her elbow.

"Oh, good! For your name?"

Elsie flushed.

"You, rather; and—and thanks for the compliment!" she said. "I never thought that I should get into the team—or, rather, as nearly into it!" She laughed excitedly. "And you say there'll be a practice this afternoon? What time?"

"Half-past ten, Junior side! And don't be late!" Clara frowned.

Elsie drooped. Anxiously she nodded. Her eyes were shining; her cheeks glowing. What a chance for her! The possibility of winning a gold medal! A trip to Pembroke! Oh, great goodness!

Her eyes shone. It was not often Elsie Ellingham found herself in the limelight. Rather shy, rather retiring by nature, she never sought attention. A pleasant girl who had no enemies, a serious worker, an all-round sport—that was Elsie Ellingham.

She had not a great many accomplishments, but she was fond of all sports, and particularly of hockey, where she was a steady and reliable, rather than a spectacular, player. That, indeed, was what made Clara privately prefer her to Frances. Frances could play, yet a doubt of that; but Frances, like Diana Royton-Clarke, was rather inclined to be shrew, more than a little selfish, and worked more for her own glory than the team as a whole.

And Pembroke!

Elsie laughed again—a deliciously rippled laugh! Wouldn't it be just terrific if she got into the team now, her, apart from the honor of helping her school in the charity final, there was Dora Chubbill, her friend, at Pembroke!

Poor Dora, recovering from a very bad bout of pneumonia, was in Chubbill Convalescent Hospital there—had been now for three weeks. Wouldn't it be just marvellous to visit her! She'd



JUST as Elsie was releasing Roly from his chain a busy figure emerged from the kennels. "Stop!" came Mr. Bousler's angry voice. "Leave that dog alone!" But Elsie took no notice; Roly must be saved from this man's harsh treatment.

have to write and tell Dora. She'd do it now.

Happily she tripped off to her study. Only she flung open the lid of her bureau.

Hurrying a truss, she produced ink, pen, and paper. Dear old Dora, she thought affectionately, as she sat down to write. How pleasant the world be to me now again! How lovely to exchange with her all the gossip of the day! How eager Dora would be for news of her sister, little Marion, who, at the moment, was living with her fearfully strict old aunt in Chesham! How eager for news of Roly—her dog. Oh brother! And Elsie frowned. She had promised to look up Roly. Master! forgot the old chap!

Bitingly she started to scribble. In the middle of it a knock came at the door. She paused, looking up. In reply to her "Come in!" Frances Frost entered.

Elsie started a little. It was not often that anyone received a visit from the stand-offish Miss of the Fourth. But she smiled in her usual friendly way.

"Hallo, Frances! Anything I can do for you?"

Frances paused. She looked quickly round the study. Then she closed the door and squatted on the arm of a chair.

"It's about the match," she declared. "I want to make some arrangements with you about playing."

Elsie blinked. She sat down, her pen.

"I-I don't quite follow—"

Frances pointed impatiently.

"You know, of course, that Clara has not been at school for the second-left position? Why she wants to make a compromise of it, I don't know; but there it is: and you know—with those coldly calculating eyes of hers upon the business side—"that when it comes to a question of choosing the best player—well, I don't wish to belittle you, but you're simply not in it!"

Elsie stiffened.

"Thanks!"

"No offence?" Frances shrugged.

"You want to see the team win, don't you?"

"Naturally!"

"Then don't you think that if you've the interests of the school at heart at all, the obvious thing for you to do is to go to Clara and tell her that you don't want to play?"

Elsie started to wince, in amazement? The cool cheek of the girl! The serene! Contempt flashed across her features. She rose to her feet.

"You can get out of here, Frances!" she said stiffly, and pointed to the door. "I don't think," she added disdainfully, "we need discuss the subject any further. If Clara thought you were the better player, then Clara would have included you only! Good-morning!"

Frances stared.

"But how have—"

"I'm busy!" Elsie added pointedly, and sat down to her letter again.

Frances stood up. Her hands clenched and unclenched. Elsie, as though she were no longer in the room, calmly continued her writing again.

"Elsie," Frances said, in a suddenly changed voice. And that girl, looking up, saw her standing at the table biting her lip. "Elsie!"

"Well?" Elsie said coldly.

"I want to say," Frances hurried the words with an effort. "I-I don't really mean that, of course! I—I didn't realize I was hurting your feelings. I'll own, if you like, that you're as entitled to the place as I am. But—"

She paused, adopting new tactics. "Supposing I make it worth your while," she said earnestly. "Oh, dash it, Elsie,

be a sport. You don't want to play. I do. Look here," she added eagerly.

"Supposing I give you ten shillings?" Elsie's contempt was biting.

"No!"

"Well, a pound, then—two pounds?" Elsie's face turned red. "Now will you please get out of this room?" she snapped.

Frances showed her teeth.

"All right!" she said thickly. "All right, you contemptible pig!" the lowest out spitefully. "But wait! You haven't got the place yet!"

"And neither," Elsie said, "have you. Now turn out, and—"

She paused in a knock came at the door, rather relieved that this scene should be interrupted.

"Come in!" she called.

The door opened. It was Barbara Rodham who came in, carrying a letter.

"Hallo!" she said, and looked quickly at Frances. "If I'm interrupting—"

"Oh, not at all!" Frances beamed. "Not at all! Come in!" And she smiled gaily, cordially—an amazingly quick-change actress Frances could be when she liked! "Elsie and I were just talking over the match," she said, to that girl's consternation. "I was just congratulating Elsie on getting her chance—or, rather, half chance!" she laughed. "Of course—naturally!"

"I don't suppose I'll stand a look in now, although Clara has bracketed me with her! Well, no-look, Elsie; I'll be going now! And," she added mockingly, as she turned towards the door, "may the best hand win!"

"Well, yes! but!" Elsie gasped.

"By!" Roly said.

"Oh, nothing!" And Elsie shook her head, rather as if she had brushed out of a dream. "What is it, Roly? Is that letter for me?"

The letter was for her, Roly, collecting her own mail from the rack, had brought it up for her.

"But what's the matter?" Roly asked.

"You seem surprised about something."

"I am," Elsie said. "But nothing to worry about. Thanks for the letter, old thing!"

She slit it open. Roly, with a rather wondering glance, went out. For a moment longer Elsie paused, then wryly shaking her head, took out her letter, and immediately became lost to everything in its contents. How funny, she thought. Just when she was in the act of writing to her friend, Dora Chesham, she should receive a letter from Dora herself!

It was a long, intimate letter, every word of it breathing that friendship, which was so strong a bond between them.

Dora was up now, she learnt; Dora was able to take short strolls on the beach in the neighbourhood of the convalescent home.

"But, oh!" Dora had written, referring to her pet pedigree Bechtlingen, the dog who had been left in charge of Jerry Breader, the Friarville trainer—

"I do so miss old Roly, Elsie! It would be so lovely to have him here now that I am able to look after him! I'm always thinking of the old boy, and it would break my heart if anything happened to him! It's hopeless, of course, to ask you to bring him along. You know Aunt Phoebe's—this was the Chesham aunt who had assumed guardianship of Dora's tiny sister, Marion, while Dora was away—simply hate dogs, silly thing! I was wondering, Elsie, if it would be possible for you to get Saturday leave and bring him over. I should so love to see you both again!"

Tenderly Elsie smiled. If anything was required to strengthen her determination to get to Friarville on Saturday, then surely this letter was the incentive! With a laugh she folded it, sitting down, she dashed off her own post in an envelope, stamped and addressed it.

"Just in time," she reflected, "to catch the midday collection if I post it in the box outside the gate!"

Down the drive she hurried. She reached the gate, and was in the act of dropping her letter into the box, when the bus from the direction of Pegg rolled up, and from it one solitary passenger was alighting.

It was a girl—a small girl, who could not have been more than ten years of age, and whose face was white and anxious, as though she might, at any moment, burst into tears.

Elsie took one look at her and ran forward.

"Marion!" she cried.

For Marion Chesham, the younger sister of her great friend, it was Marion looked as Elsie lifted her off the bus.

"Oh, Elsie, I—I was coming to see you!" she stammered. "Elsie's about Roly?" she gulped.

"Yes! Dora's dog, you mean?"

"Yes! Elsie's—and—Marion's voice gave a queer little choke—"Oh, Elsie, Mr. Breader came to see Aunt Phoebe this morning, and—and—the word came from her in great gales. "Oh, Elsie, what will Dora say," she stammered, "because in-course Roly is going to be destroyed!"

## All to Rescue Roly



"D" The word broke from Elsie Effingham in horror.

Marion sobbed miserably. "You! Mr. Breader says he's ill! He says there's no hope for him!"

Elsie stared at the youngster in utter consternation. Roly to be destroyed—Roly, whom Dora was so yearning to see!

"Oh, my goodness! Marion, no!" she cried. "Here, don't cry, please!"—although the tears were very near her own eyes. "Look here, come into the kitchen and tell me all about it!"

Marion nodded furiously. Marion, too, was fond of Roly—was fond, indeed, as her sister.

In the kitchen—fortunately empty, as it was near dinner-time—Elsie found a table and two chairs. There she sat down, little Marion, still quietly sobbing, seated opposite her.

"Now," she soothed, "don't cry, kiddie! Tell me all about it!"

And Marion, her lips pitifully protruding and contracting as she spoke, told her all there was to know.

Every day she had visited the kennel owned by Mr. Jerry Breader, a great, fat body of a man, whose reputation was not of the most assured character. There was no doubt, she thought, that Roly was ill, but she didn't think he was as ill as Mr. Breader made him out to be.

That morning Mr. Breader had come to Aunt Phoebe, had declared that Roly was too ill to recover, and had asked for Aunt Phoebe's written permission to have him destroyed. Aunt Phoebe, who looked dog, anyway, had, in Dora's absence, given it.

"But Roly isn't as bad as all that!" Marion burst out. "Elsie, he's not! This morning, when I was in the kennel," she explained, "Mr. Breader was talking to another man. Mr.



**SUDDENLY** a figure came springing from the direction of the School-house. "Elsie Effingham!" Clara exclaimed. "So she's turned up at last!" None of them knew how near Elsie had been to missing the practice game altogether!

Breeder didn't see her, because I was behind Roly's kennel, trying to find his little ball. And I heard him say, Elsie—he pointed to Roly as he said it, you know—that Roly was a valuable dog, and that this other man could have him for twenty pounds. The—no other man said he'd buy the dog when it got better, and Mr. Breeder said that it would be all right by the end of the week."

Elsie stared at her.

"Marion, you're sure?"

"Oh, yes, Elsie!"

"Elsie Effingham sat very still, her eyes wide. Surely Marion must have made a mistake! Surely she wasn't true? Yet the younger seemed so certain."

"Oh, Elsie, what can I do?" Marion

whispered.

Elsie did not reply to that question. Her eyes were fixed then. This was no longer a matter for helpless little Marion. It was a matter for her to deal with. It was her duty, as Dora's friend, Dora had asked her to look after Roly, to take him to her.

"Elsie!" Marion muttered.

Elsie rose to her feet. Her face was pale and determined.

"Marion, wait here," she said. "I'll be with you in a few moments."

Almost in fear, Marion eyed her, so suddenly set and grim was the expression on Elsie's face. But Elsie had made her decision, and, having made it, was going to carry it out. Fortunately, it was a "halter" at Cliff House today—which meant that dinner was optional. She dashed hurriedly up the drive, plunged into the school.

She fled up to the Fourth Form dormitory, snatched down her coat from its peg, ransomed on her hat, and flew out.

Breathless, she rejoined the round-eyed little Marion in the backshop. Another ten came along just as they reached the gate. With a spring they caught it, gaspingly bounding inside. Marion stared.

"Oh, Elsie, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going," Elsie said firmly. "to see Roly. No, don't ask questions, Marion. Oh, one to Friarclike and one to Courtfield!" she said, as the conductor leaped in front of her, and, having paid the fares, handed the Courtfield ticket to the little one. "Now, Marion, you go on home," she instructed. "Leave me to see Mr. Breeder. I'll let you know what happens later!"

And, in spite of Marion's almost hysterical protest, she kept to that plan. Really, Elsie could be surprisingly cool—once she had made up her mind.

At Friarclike she left the bus. Trudging on through the village, she came at last to Breeder's Kennels. A ramshackle cottage stood in a half an acre of ground, fenced off from the footpath that was the one method of approach, by rusty, spiked railings, reinforced by barbed wire.

She advanced slowly along the footpath till she reached the end of the railings, where a row of half a dozen kennels backed against a wall that ran at right-angles.

Four lethargic-looking dogs, each attached to a chain, were lying outside the kennels, looking up the middle of the path. One of them—the nearest—was Roly!

Roly!

Elsie's heart gave the queerest of little jumps as she saw him. What a poor, tragic little chap he looked, with his woolly fur matted against his body, shivering even in the sunlight's warm rays.

He seemed to sense that she was near. Eagerly he lifted his head, and Elsie was shocked to see his eyes—glazed, dull, and hollow.

She would have started forward; but in that moment there came a sharp—ponderous step it was—followed by a growling voice, not unlike the grunt of a pig. The four dogs shifted. One—sprawling—leaped into his kennel at once; another—a wicked-looking mastiff—rose to his feet and growled with a

low, rattleing moan in his throat; Roly, cowering down, gave a little whimper.

Elsie glanced her hands.

And then, from round the wall of the cottage, a figure leaped into view—the figure of a man.

Elsie had often heard of Mr. Breeder, but until this moment she had never seen him, and she felt he no more needed for the experience than Fat, ponderous, with a three days' growth of stubble upon his several chins, Mr. Breeder was neither handsome nor hideous—a figure, indeed, to inspire fear and revulsion.

"Eve, you?" he throatily growled.

He snapped his fingers at Roly. Roly whined again, knowing and being dogs as she did, that pitiful stinking and cringing which possessed Roly as the brute stopped to rub down his collar told Elsie that the dog had been far from well treated.

The man grunted again as he bent, muttered angrily as Roly shook under his footling fingers, and with a scolding—"Old still, you post?" caught Roly

—a snarl that sent the poor little chap shivering across the gate.

Elsie gasped. "Eve" felt her blood boiling. "The brute! The great brute! If only she had something to throw at the man!"

But some instinct warned her. Something seemed to be telling her to be low. If Elsie had any doubt about what she was going to do that doubt was utterly gone now. She remonstrated once and for ever, any thought of pleading with, or even soothing, Mr. Breeder. Roly, she firmly told herself, was going to be delivered from this! When she left this cottage Roly was going with her!

She felt her lip as she watched. The brute had got the dog now, Roly, yelping in fright, was released from his chain; was, with a squeal of pain, lifted off the earth as if he had been a small sack and wedged under the man's arm.

"Now," Mr. Breeder snarled, "come and take yer med'cine!"

Boby had no choice. With his own teeth Mr. Broadner attacked the bottle. With one great hand he caught hold of the dog's head; by exerting a great pressure with finger and thumb on each side of the little animal's jaws, forced him to open his mouth. Then—swish!—the green, viscous-looking fluid was poured down the dog's throat as if it were all being filed into a motor tank. Boby gasped, gasped, wriggled, and spluttered frantically.

"Oh, right," the man said, and, with a snarl, flung the animal back on the floor of his run. Boby fell with a crash, wondering after this forcible treatment what he had been before.

If Elsie had been angry before, she was furious now. She lunged to rush forward—to denounce this bully. But again some inner voice seemed to whisper, warning her, pulling her back when every outraged instinct urged her to burst forward.

Boby lay motionless. The man, with a growl, slipped the rivet of his chain on to his collar again. He straightened up. The man's growl as he passed, and, seeing the man delivered a coward's kick which made the dog yelp, and made heavily off towards the cottage.

Hardly had the corner of the house hidden him from view when Elsie, startled and desperate, at the imminent risk of injuring herself on its spiked tops, had vaulted over the railings.

"Boby!" she shrieked.

She ran towards the dog. Almost stumbling she bent over him. Boby looked up. He recognized her as a friend! Wonderful! In that instant, the devotion that appeared in his glancing eyes! Surely his tail lifted to a wisp of pleasure, for a moment he drew tongue close out, licking his only friend.

"Don't—Boby—Elsie hid him off the chain. With no clear idea as to what she was going to do or where she was going, she ran back towards the railings, the dog in her arms. At the same moment—

"Hey!" Mr. Broadner's strangled voice roared.

Elsie did not stop. She did not even look round. She went at the railings then. Over she went. Her dress caught on one of the spikes. There was a rasping sound as desperately she twisted herself round, tearing herself away. Her head had caught the spike; she was badly torn. From the rear she heard Mr. Broadner's closely following footsteps.

"Hey, don't you! Stop!"

But Elsie did not stop. On the contrary, she ran like the wind. Once she was out of sight she knew that she was safe. She heard, as she ran, a sudden awful crash behind her, punctuated with an explosive exclamation. Heading towards the fields, she looked back.

And she shrieked greatly.

For Mr. Broadner, apparently, having attempted to seize his own railings, had met with disaster. Railings and Mr. Broadner had collapsed.

Elsie's last vision of him as she topped the rim was of a cleared, fat, bewhiskered, and very bloated man sitting up among the wreckage of his own fence, surrounded by loose railings and with a strand of his own barbed wire clinging affectionately round his neck.

Jeannet pondered thoughtfully. "Is 'she'?" These jolly old lads of America, you know—"

"Oh, for goodness' sake stop blathering!" Clara said. "Don't you know!"

"Search me!" Jeannet replied blandly.

Clara granted. She looked decidedly on edge. Impetuously she consulted the watch on her wrist.

"Well, I'm bothered if I'm going to hold up the game any longer," she declared. "Dash it all, Elsie might have let me know if she were going out! Frances, you take her place in the Probables. Jimmy, you'd better take Frances' place in the Possibles. I've kept the game waiting ten minutes already. Now, come on, everybody!"

And Clara, having come to that decision, led the two teams on to the field.

Frances Frost grinned covertly and sympathetically. Babs & Co., like Clara, looked a little cross. Really, it was too bad. Elsie Elfriggness, like everybody else, had been warned that the practice was for half-past two—but Elsie had apparently ignored the fact completely. What had happened to her? Why, after her manifest delight at being given the opportunity to play, had she failed to turn up for the very first practice?

But Frances thought she knew. Convinced as she was, she had no doubt that she had so completely intimidated Elsie that Elsie was just afraid to turn up!

"Well, here we are!" Clara announced, as she came to a halt in the middle of the field. "Take positions, everybody. This is a practice," she added meaningly, "but there's going to be no shooing, don't forget! And—look!" she said, as she threw a backward glance towards the pavilion—"look who's arriving!"

There was no need to look. Most of the girls had spotted the figure already.

Miss Frozone, escorted by Eudora Fairbrother, the games captain of the school, and Mary Butler and Frances Barrett, came strolling on to the field.

There was a new spirit of alertness in the team at once. Not often was it that Miss Frozone patronized their practice. But then, it was not often that they trained for the important final of an important charity shield in which gold medals and free trips to Scarborough were at stake.

"Right!" Clara said crisply. She threw a critical glance over the two teams. "A bit further out, Frances, please," she ordered. "Don't hang up on Babs like that. All across!" she cried. "Go!"

The sticks of the rival centres-forwards clashed.

Oh! they went, Barbara, receiving the ball, skimming it to Rosa. Rosa, in her turn, slipped it to Frances.

Frances ran on, flinging a quick glance towards Miss Frozone as one of the wags looked, and deliberately ignoring the wailing Babs as she was interrupted by Maria Bond. Just a fraction of a second too late Frances held the ball. Maria tackled, secured, cleared. The game passed onto the opposite half of the field.

Frances pulled a face, realising what a fool she had been; but the very next time it happened she just couldn't resist. Frances did as like to be in the line-up! That selfish streak of hers, so contrary to the team spirit, simply must be satisfied, and in an effort to show off her clearest she hung on to the ball when a pass to Diana Royston-Clarke would probably have resulted in a goal.

As it was, Frances was beaten by Amy Jones, who cleared with a shot that at once put Frances' own goal in danger. Clara breathed wrath.

"Look here," she said, "are you playing for us, or just for yourself?"

Frances looked willy-nilly. She went to her place again. Clara glowered. She had suggested once that she had not insisted making Elsie the final choice at the selection committee meeting. Elsie, although she had none of those flashes of brilliance which Frances was so capable of pulling out, was at least steady, reliable, and unselfish. Where was the girl?

And then, suddenly, there was a cry. A figure came sprinting on to the field from the direction of the School House. A figure in a gym tunic, waving a hockey-stick on high, Clara jumped.

It was Elsie Elfriggness herself.

"Who, everybody! Just a minute!" she cried. "And there she stood as Elsie came sprinting up. She had changed her torn frock, and, for the time being, had hidden Boby in one of the sofas."

"Oh dear, Clara, I'm sorry!" she said. "I—I had to go on an errand. I—I was detained—"

"All right!" Clara said briefly. "We'll talk about that afterwards. Jimmy," she added to Jeannet, "do you mind giving up your place?" And as Jeannet with alacrity signalled her willingness, she signalled to Frances. "Frances," she said, "move over to outside-left on the other side."

Frances' eyes glowered.

"Is this in the Probables' side?"

"Quite right!" Clara answered coolly. "This is the Probables' side. That's why I'm giving Elsie a place in it. Move!"

Frances snarled. Elsie hid her lip in a smile. With ill grace the girls moved over, however, flashing a dagger-like look at each other, as she passed her.

The significance of the reshuffle was very plain, and Frances was filled with inward fury as a result. Clara, very obviously preferred Elsie to her! Elsie, if Clara had her way, would get the vacant place!

The match re-started. But now there was a change. Breathless though Elsie was, she settled down with remarkable quickness. Steady, alert, watching for every opportunity, she was indeed the factor in the formidable force that the ladies' team immediately became. It was directly from her pass, five minutes afterwards, that Barbara Bedford scored.

"Good stuff!" Clara applauded.

"Keep it up!"

Elsie smiled a little nervously. She was not thoroughly into her stride. She was thinking not entirely of the practice, but of Boby—of Dora—of the thing she had done. Boby, for the moment, was safe and snug between warm blankets in the attic.

But—

Elsie hid her lip. Now that it was all over, she found herself conjuring possible consequences. She had no authority for what she had done. She had done it blindly, on impulse, actuated only by her great love for the dog and his convalescent mistress.

"Elsie, to me!" Babs called.

Just in time, Elsie snatched the ball.

And then for the next five minutes she forgot Boby—Dora—everything—in the sudden, breathless attack upon her own goal.

A brilliant bit of play by Frances had transferred the score of goals, and the Probables side proved half; forcing the Probables back upon defence.

In vain Elsie darted in time and again; in vain Babs darted in time and again, only to be rebuffed as soon as she found the ball at the end of her stick.

Enter—Mr. Broadner



"WELL," Clara Trevilyn demanded crossly, "where is she?"

"Elsie," Jeannet Cartwright brightly returned, where? Or should it."

There—swish, snick!—and the tension ended as Frances, suddenly darting forward, sent the ball into the net!

"Goal!"

"Well," Frances asserted, "who's the best player now, Clara Treville?"

Clara grinned.

"I'll tell you after the match," she said.

But she didn't. For the simple reason that the match was never finished. Even as they lined up for the restart, there came a new and startling interruption from the direction of the gates.

"Which, I tell you," the shrilly indignant voice of Piper, the woody porter, came protesting. "You can't come in here without permission. It's open the other way!"

Clara and all turned to stare. Miss Primrose twisted in her chair. And Miss Elsie ran, every drop of colour ebbed from her face. For at the gates Piper was in argument with—

Mr. Broadner!

Oh, great goodness, how had he traced her?

"Get out of my way!" roared the dog trainer.

"Which I tell you—" Piper said defiantly.

"Bah! That's for what you tell me!" came Mr. Broadner's bellowing roar, and suddenly a tremendously large hand spread itself over Piper's protesting face, and, propelled by a contemptuous thrust, propelled Piper flat on his back. "Now tell me something else," Mr. Broadner, invited helpfully.

"Where's the 'cavalier'?"

But Miss Primrose, quivering with indignation had seen. She had seen, was starting angrily towards the scene of crime.

"No," she announced grimly. "I am the headmistress!"

Mr. Broadner approached, blinking and looking by no means impressed.

"Where's my dog?" he demanded.

"I haven't," Miss Primrose told him, "the faintest idea of what you're talking about. But I mean tell you—"

"Never mind what you tell me! It's not what's telling you?" Mr. Broadner interrupted rudely. "An hour ago one of your girls jumped over my fence at Broadner's Kennel, and picked a valuable Bedlington Terrier. I know it was one of your girls, because I saw her Cliff Vase 'at. Well, I want my dog—"

He thrust out his jaw. He took a step forward. Clara's lips set.

"Come on!" she said. "Numpy mind the match for the time being. If that yoker is going to start any trouble—"

"They should be served, arriving just in time to hear Mr. Broadner's ultimatum."

"I want my dog back," he shouted, "and if I don't get it, I'm going to the 'lice'!"

Elsie felt the skin tighten on her face. Frances Frost, next to her, threw her a rather peculiar look.

There was silence for a moment. Miss Primrose moistened her lips. The Fourth Form rose now, firmly holding their hockey-sticks.

"I do not believe," Miss Primrose said, "that one of my girls could possibly have stolen your dog, Mr. Broadner. I cannot see any reason for such a foolish prank. If I hear of any strange Bedlington being placed in the kennel, however, I will get in communication with you."

Mr. Broadner glared.

"Oh, you will, will you?" he said. "Well, just a moment, please! If that's your way of getting out of it, I think up something else, but you ain't getting rid of Jerry Broadner just by turning your back on 'im. That gal who

plucked my dog is in this school, and I can prove it!" he added. And, plunging his hand into his pocket, he brought forth a piece of fabric. "That was off 'is dress," he said. "She left it on my railing when she scooted. Now what about it?"

### The Spy



There was something like a sensation then. Elsie gave a little gasp. Even Miss

Primrose started. For the piece of material, torn though it was, stamped Mr. Broadner's story with the hall-mark of truth. The fabric was a piece of torn rope, a familiar enough material at Cliff House, since it was the regulation "off-duty" frock worn by most girls when they were not in party frocks or gym tunics. "Does that belong to one of your girls?" he demanded.

Miss Primrose coughed.

"I cannot deny that it is a material very commonly worn at this school," she said. "However, I can do nothing about it at the moment. A great many of the girls are still absent so it is half-hanging."

Mr. Broadner growled.

"All right!" he snarled. "Then off I go to the 'lice! Either I get my dog or you get it in the neck! I came 'ere to find that gal, and I mean to find 'er! Supposing you lose up the gal what is 'er? If I can't recognize her, then it's up to you, I reckon, to find the gal who's got this piece cut of her frock."

It seemed the easiest way out. Obviously Mr. Broadner was not going unless he had obtained satisfaction of some sort. The cards were all in his hands. To save her school from being dragged into the glare of unending publicity, Miss Primrose had to consent to his wishes.

Mr. Broadner was invited in. Prefects were hastily summoned. A number of all girls took place in the gym, and were lined up in three rows the length of the building.

Elsie, her heart thumping like a sledge-hammer, found herself sandwiched between Babe and Frances Frost.

Frances glanced at her maskingly.

"Know anything about it?" she asked.

"What should I know about it?" Elsie forced indignantly.

"Well, you're looking pretty scared," Elsie reminded her lips. She pulled herself together. Now, in company with Miss Primrose, Mr. Broadner was passing down the lines. He reached Lolla Carroll, grinned at Bevie Benter, who blinked, and halted before Babe.

"Was you near my place an hour ago?" he demanded.

"I was not," Babe retorted indignantly. "I was in my study. And half a dozen girls can prove it."

He grunted. Then his eyes rested on Elsie. Elsie felt her heart leap. For a moment he stared at her as though he would read the innermost secrets of her mind. Then he passed on.

"Lucky!" Frances sneered.

"Eh?"

"He didn't recognize you."

"Who should he recognize me?"

"Well, you were the girl, weren't you? What were you doing, just before you came running on to the hockey field? And why," Frances asserted, "aren't you wearing the frock you were out in just before dinner?"

Elsie hung her a sharp look. What did Frances guess? For a moment her face paled, and Frances, noticing that pallor, grinned quietly. She must be careful, she told herself. Frances did not know. But Frances suspected. Thank goodness she had had the sense to hide that torn frock!

The inspection came to an end. The girls were released, leaving the education Mr. Broadner in Miss Primrose's company. Everywhere there was a buzz—a stir.

Who had stolen Mr. Broadner's Bedlington? For what reason?

That it was a Cliff House girl, there seemed little doubt. Mr. Broadner could he had recognized the Cliff House hat. The piece of torn fabric he had brought with him confirmed the fact that the unknown thief was a Cliff House girl. But why on earth should a Cliff House girl steal Mr. Broadner's dog? Presently, watching, they saw Miss Primrose and her anatomy companion emerge from the gym and stroll over to the kennels, there obviously to inspect the dogs. If Mr. Broadner hoped to receive any satisfaction from that source, however, he was doomed to disappointment.

"Well, it's obviously not one of us," Clara said, "so let's get back to the practice."

But, alas! there was to be no more practice that afternoon. For just as they were stepping on to the field there came a fresh order. All girls were to stand by their lockers. A locker inspection had been authorized. So off the girls went, fuming and impatient. In the Fourth Form dormitory, watched by eagle-eyed prefects, the contents of each locker were laid out for Miss Primrose's veiled inspection as she came round.

Nothing remained, however, except the unsmelling of the hockey practice, for it was quite dark outside by now.

Clara, rather fed-up—her Clara, at home, was anxious that her team should cross in every possible course of practice—called the match off, arranging another practice for to-morrow.

Mr. Broadner, by that time, had been handed off the premises with assurances that every possible avenue of investigation would be explored.

Elsie, taking advantage of the general discussion, slipped away.

Now that the excitement of the afternoon had abated, now that she felt a little more secure, her thoughts returned to Hedy herself.

Up in the attic the shivering dog, so desperately ill, so uncomplacingly dark, would be wondering where she was. Supposing Hedy was hungry? Supposing he suddenly started to welp? She must get him something to eat and drink.

She went to her study. Amy Jones and Marial Boyd, the two girls who shared it with her, were still in the dormitory. In the cupboard she found a bottle of milk, which she at once warmed.

There was no meat in the cupboard, but she cut a couple of slices of dry bread, and, with up crusty maces, stepped towards the door. Carelessly she opened it, cautiously peered along the corridor. Then, with swiftly beating heart, Elsie stepped into the passage.

She rased up the corridor, turned the angle of the wall which led up to the attic via the Fifth Form dormitory. There suddenly she paused.

What was that?

A step behind her.

Elsie set her lips. Someone was following—Frances Frost! Elsie did not

pass. She went on up the stairs. She reached the top, and glanced swiftly behind her—just in time to see Frances dart back into the passage. Her eyes locked then. That's all!

She looked about her. The door of the Lower Fifth dormitory was three feet away. She stopped towards it. Taking care to make a noise, she opened the handle as she turned it, went in holding the door open as the lid behind it. Perhaps a minute passed as she stood, the door handle in her hand. Then from outside came a stealthy footstep.

Elsie told her breath. A shadow fell into the room. The steps halted. An impatient head was pushed forward. Elsie shuffled back, moving just a little so that the door should hide her more completely. Frances Frost, apparently unconscious, advanced.

Then—  
Three paces Frances took into the room—and then Elsie acted swiftly. In a flash she had slipped from her place of concealment. Frances, tripping round, had just the briefest glimpse of her as she slipped through the door, closing it after her. She started forward.

Elsie—  
That was the sound of a key turning in the lock. It was followed at once by the quick footsteps of the girl outside. Frances halted, glaring at the locked door. Elsie, in the end, had been too clever for her. Elsie had tricked her!

### Disturbance at Cliff House



**B**ANG! Thud! Crash!  
Thump!  
"My giddy aunt!"  
"Where's that row coming from?"

In the Fourth Form dormitory, Babs, Mabs, Clara, and Janet Jordan looked at each other in amazement.

They were the only girls still remaining in the dormitory, having stopped on to hold an unofficial council of war after the inspection. Clara was definitely fed up because the afternoon practice had been such a wash out, and Babs & Co., as usual, were doing their best to rally the Turkey out of her ill-humour. Then suddenly—

Crash!  
"Let us out!" came a wailed voice.  
"It's Frances," cried Babs, staring at the ceiling, "in the Fifth Form dormitory!"

"Come on!" Mabs said.  
Crash!  
They rushed out. But more than Babs & Co. had heard that row. It would have been astonishing indeed if they had not heard it, for the imprisoned Frances Frost was creating a din that echoed through the whole school.

From studies and Common-rooms, from Henry and music-rooms, girls were all streaming, wondering what on earth had gone wrong. As Babs & Co. joined the crowd in the corridor another voice spoke.

"Barbara, what is all that noise!"  
And Miss Ballivan, the acid mathematician mistress of Cliff House, here down upon them.  
"I don't know," Barbara said.  
"Where is it coming from?"  
"Well, it sounds as if it's coming from the Fifth Form dormitory."  
"Then," Miss Ballivan said acidly, "I will go to the Fifth Form dormitory. Barbara, you had better come with me.

You other girls, disperse. Barbara, come this way."

With an imperious wave of the hand, Miss Ballivan gestured them all back, and in grim determination strode off, with the wondering Barbara at her heels.

She halted outside the Fifth Form dormitory, tried the handle, and then turned the key. Frances Frost, her face red and furious, confronted her.

"Frances, what do you mean by making this noise!"

"I was locked in!" Frances protested.  
"That," said Miss Ballivan, "was obvious from the fact that the key was in the lock on the outside. At the same time, there was no need for you to alarm the whole school. Who looked you in?"

"Please," Miss Ballivan, Elsie Effingham."

"Where is Elsie Effingham?"

"I—I don't know."  
"Barbara, please go and find Elsie and bring her to me in my study. Frances, I am not pleased. Locked in or not, you should have known better than to make such a noise as that. You will talk twenty lines."

Frances Frost bit her lip. Babs, with rather a curious glare at her, went off. Naturally enough, she went first of all to Study No. 3. But of Elsie there was no sign.

She went up and down the corridor, making inquiries: she went to the library, the Common-rooms; she went to the music-rooms, and even to the Third Form Common-rooms. Elsie apparently had disappeared.

Just as she had returned she went to the cloak-room. One girl there was—a girl who trembled with a giddy jump as she came upon a girl who was standing in front of Elsie Effingham's coat. It was Frances Frost.

"Oh!" Babs said. "You haven't met Elsie, Frances?"

"No, haven't you found her?"

"No."  
She went out, not without a curious look towards the lodge again. She stopped back into the Fourth Form corridor just as a footstep sounded in the corridor, and a girl came tripping along from the direction of the stairs that led up to the Fifth Form dormitory.

"Elsie!" Babs cried.

Elsie Effingham, her face white and a little strained, halted.

"Elsie, I've been looking for you everywhere!" Babs said her consciousness.

"What's the matter?"

"But where have you been? And why?" Babs demanded, and started as the door opened and Clara came into the passage to see what everything was about.

"Oh, so there you are!" Clara cried.  
"What the dickens have you been up to? And why did you lock Frances in the Fifth Form dormitory?"

Again Elsie shook her head.

"Just for fun—oh!" Clara asked grudgingly. "But, here, come in!" she added, and led the way into Study No. 4, where Mabs was busy laying the cloth, Bessie Baxter having gone down to the workshop to get supplies.

"Elsie," she said seriously, "I don't want to lecture. I don't care a rap what silly tricks you play at any other time; but I do want to remind you that you're practically in the team for Pen-house, and we can't afford to take risks. The Ball wants you now—and the Ball, judging from the look of her, is going to lay it on thick. By the way, you know what it will mean if you get a detention."

"I—I won't be able to play."

"Just that!" Clara said grudgingly. "And I want you to play. As far as I'm concerned—though this isn't a promise, mind—your present choice for outside is on Saturday. Now trot off and see the Ball!"

Elsie tried to make her grateful thanks. Normally, her face would have been radiant at this news, but now—had now—! For the life of her she could not conjure up a smile; for the life of her she could not get the vision of pathetic Babs out of her mind.

Babs was ill—deplorably ill. There was no doubt about that. He had hardly touched the warm bread-and-milk she had given him.

One thing was plain—Babs must have better and more nourishing food than bread-and-milk. Babs, too, must have warmth. It was chilly and draughty in the attic, and, despite the snug blanket in which she had tucked him, the poor little animal had been shivering when she had visited him. If anything should happen to him! If he died—that then!

Distraughtly she dashed to see Miss Ballivan. That good lady was in her study. She eyed Elsie with distinct disapproval as she came in, made a few biting remarks about playing practical jokes; and Elsie, set, ribbon by fifty lines, and with an ominous threat of detention if she was caught playing similar tricks again.

She hardly looked it. Thinking only of Babs, she hurried along to the music-rooms.

Mrs. Thwaites, the mistress, looked surprised when she heard what she had come for.

"You want what, Elsie? A bottle of beef extract? But that is the stuff we keep for invalids—"

"I—I know," Elsie stammered. "Oh, mistress, please let me have a bottle! I'd buy it at the workshop, but Bessie Jones doesn't sell it. I'll pay for it," she said, "or—er get you another one in its place as soon as I go to Court-field."

Mrs. Thwaites smiled.  
"Well, you may take this bottle, Elsie—though your request seems rather mysterious."

"Oh, thank you—thank you!" Elsie hurried.

She took the bottle of extract. Well, that would do Babs good, she reflected. The next problem for her to solve was the question of warmth. The attic had no fireplace, and the only way of introducing heat into Babs's room was by installing an electric stove. The only girl she knew who had an electric stove in Cliff House was Diana Hagston-Clarke.

Could she contrive to get hold of that? She felt she dared not ask for it openly. That would be inviting questions. In any case, Diana never used it. She had acquired it in the days when the roof had been under repair and coal fires in certain studies had been forbidden.

Now, Elsie thought, was the best time to get hold of it, for she knew that Diana and Margaret, who shared Study No. 12, had been invited to tea by Rosa Redworth in Study No. 1, and that they would be there now.

Stealthily she padded into the Fourth Form corridor again. She was almost abreast of Study No. 12 when the door opened and Frances Frost appeared.

"Well, well!" she said mockingly. "If that isn't the very girl I'm looking for! Come in, Elsie!"

Elsie stopped.

"What for?"  
Frances, for reply, led the way into the study.



As soon as Elsie came in Frances closed the door.

"So," she began at once, "you've hidden him in the school?"

Elsie stared. "I don't know what you mean," she stammered.

"No!" Frances sneered. "You didn't," she said, "steal the Bollington from the Brecker man this afternoon? You didn't sneak in with the dog while Clara was waiting for you to play hockey?"

Elsie's lips came together. "And in that all you have to say?"

"Not exactly," Frances sneered. "But it's enough to show you that I know your little game from A to Z, isn't it? Now, for the last time, what about it? Are you going to throw up your place in the hockey team or let me go to Miss Primrose?"

Elsie breathed a deep breath. But she did not flinch. There was a certain amount of mystery in her own voice as she said:

"And if you go to Primrose, you can, of course, keep all you say?"

"I can."

"Indeed! And how?"

"By this!" And Frances, trippingly opening a drawer, drew forth an envelope. "This afternoon, while you were away," she answered, "I took the liberty of examining the coat worn over your missing trunk. I don't think—spitefully—that even you can deny you've been caddling a Bollington to me, in face of this?"

And, shaking the envelope above the table, she shook on to the cloth a handful of loose, grey, fluffy hair—the hair, unquestionably, of a Bollington dog!

my time! If Clara decides that I shall play on Saturday, then I'm going to play, and you can do what you jolly well like!"

And with that she walked out. But once she was in the corridor again she rested against the wall for a moment, passing a hand across her brow.

In the study Frances stared at the collected hair, and then, with a sudden furious gesture, swept them to the floor.

Her clever plot had failed! Had she

"Body!" she whispered. She closed the door, first of all removing the key. The room was almost dark, but there was sufficient light for her to see the grey, flecked, tail-wagging shape upon the floor.

She did not turn on the light, but positioning the fire, covered a case, stood on it, and, after removing the bulb from the electric light, pressed in the connection and switched it on.

Body shined on a note of feeble pleasure.

"Dear old chap, then?" Elsie said.



CROUCHED behind the door, Elsie heard Frances approach. Tensed, she waited for the moment when she could dart out and slam the door upon her follower!

### A Perilous Climb



IF for a moment a flash of fear came to Elsie Ellingham's eyes as she gazed at that betraying evidence, it was gone as soon as it came.

In a moment she had collected herself. She looked at Frances. Then she broke into a scoffing laugh.

"And you picked those off my coat?"

"I did!" Frances snapped.

"And because dog's hair happens to be on my coat you conclude I'd stolen a dog?" Elsie laughed again. "Well, go on, if that's your evidence! Put it before Primrose! Put it before the Board of Governors! Then go and look at the coat of any girl who's been in the Pet's House to-day and see how many hairs on their coats you'd find! There," Elsie finished contemptuously, "just try nothing!"

Frances stared at her. Uncertainty, for the first time, showed in her face. But Elsie was right. She saw that at once, and even in that moment secretly verified herself for being an impatient fool. There was more than one Bollington in the Pet's House. There were more than half a dozen girls in the school town whose clothes, at this very moment, are even richer harvest of hairs could have been reaped.

Clara Twifles, for instance, was always in the Pet's House. And Bessie Reeder! Puffy Williams of the Upper Fifth secretly possessed a Bollington. Janet Jordain—Oh, within the list of names that leap to the mind at once. Frances glared late.

"But I notice you don't deny it?"

"I wouldn't," Elsie calmly told her.

"I'm unable to confirm or deny anything you like to suggest, Frances." And she added: "Please don't waste any more of

carried it out, she might have found herself the laughing-stock of the school! But she was still convinced, for all that! More than ever now she believed that Elsie Ellingham was hiding that stolen Bollington in the school.

She would bow her out!

Meantime, Elsie had walked on to Diana Royston-Clarke's study. She knocked, entered. It was empty, as she expected. She found the electric fire behind the screen at the far end of the room and dragged it from its hiding-place. Then she stepped towards the door.

Slightly she opened it. Again she peered along the corridor. No one about. Good!

Swiftly, the stone in her arm, she slipped along the passage. Breathing quickly, she mounted the stairs, her heart in her mouth, as she approached the landing. She was so new.

Finally, she reached the attic at the very top of the school buildings. She had the key of Attic No. 5 in her pocket. She opened the door and went in. A plaintively welcoming whine from the bundle of cushions and blankets in the corner greeted her.

She patted the dog's head. The fire was glowing now. In its rays Body put out a hot, unobtrusively-looking tongue and blinked up devotedly.

Elsie bit her lip. Oh, dear! How dreadfully ill the poor old chap looked. She made him more comfortable, and then, taking a little of the hot tea out of Mrs. Jan's tin, mixed it with a little warm water and gave it to him. Body drank, licked his lips, and looked up.

"Here!" Elsie said.

She gave the dog more—just a tiny spot. But Body looked at it, made a rattling little noise, and, tiring helplessly away, dropped his head between his paws and closed his eyes.

"Body!" Elsie whispered again.

But Body did not look up, did not even wag his tail. Only the spasmodic heaving of his flanks showed that he was still alive, indeed.

Again great and terrible fear came to Elsie. Again she heard herself, against her will, asking that question. Would the little chap die?

And again, looking nervously at him, she clenched and unclenched her hands, feeling—oh, so desperately helpless at

her own inability to cope with the situation. If only she knew what was the matter! If only she had some sort of veterinary knowledge, or someone to whom she could turn for advice!

But she had no one. She just darned it let it be known that the dog was even in the school.

And then, as she stood, a sound caught her ears. A soft, shuffling sound from outside. Quietly she padded to the door. Putting her eye to the key-hole, she looked out. The view, restricted as it was, gave her a clear outlook on to the stairs, and from those stairs the head and shoulders of Frances Frost appeared.

Frances had followed her! Had traced her!

Now what? For a moment panic filled Elsie. She flung a look towards Roly, sleeping so soundly now that he seemed to be unconscious. There was no danger from the dog. Roly was too weak, too ill, even to whimper.

But how could she get away without Frances seeing her!

The glass travelled towards the window. A sudden inspiration struck her. If she could get out! If she could come back up those stairs, confronting Frances, and thereby confounding all her suspicions! It would be easy enough, she thought, to climb down the try into the Fifth Form dormitory here.

No sooner thought of than done. Towards the window Elsie padded. She dipped back the catch, stealthily threw it open, stepping into the locked gutter outside. Carefully, then, she closed the window. Roly did not even twitch round. She groped her way along the gutter until she saw the Fifth Form dormitory window glimmering below her, and, letting her teeth, swung herself over the ledge.

The key was odd. It was strong. But Elsie knew moments of dizziness as she climbed down, cautiously groping and testing each branch.

She was gasping and trembling when, at last, she found a foothold on the window-sill that she snatched from the dormitory window.

For a moment she hesitated, breathing rapidly. Then, crooking an arm and getting her hands to the corners of the window, she tried to force it open. The window did not budge.

The late, Elsie remembered. She stared in dismay. For she had forgotten, when making her plan, to account for the most obvious possibility of the window being closed and fastened! Well, here was a pretty bottle of fish, she told herself. Short of breaking the window, there was, apparently, no way into the school!

She looked up with a shudder. No! Even she wasn't equal to the strain of climbing back. There was but one thing for it—to climb down to the wide ledge which ran along the windows of the Fourth Form studies beneath. If she could reach No. 3, her own study!

She knew that the window of that was open. She knew, too, that the study would be unoccupied.

Night in the Museum



"PASS the letter, Bess! Thanked! Well, you know, ———— And Clara Travels in Study No. 4."

thoughtfully spreading her letter on her knee, shook her head. "I'm bothered if I know what to do," she frankly confessed. "For my own part, I'd rather have Elsie in the team than Frances Frost, but—"

"That," Bessie Hunter said, and looked up. "Ahem! There's one other thing you've forgotten, Clara."

"And that?"

"Well," Bessie asked modestly, "why have Elsie, or—or Frances? What you want is a girl who can play such—such sparkling hockey, you know, that it wouldn't matter if the rest of the team wasn't there! Of course," Bessie added, "I'm too modest to mention names. I don't blow my own trumpet!"

Bessie replied, Mabel Lyon uttered, Majorie Hazledine shook her head a little, and Janet Jordan winked. But Clara gazed.

"This," she said, "is a hockey match, not a comic dress! No, don't start again, Bessie, there's a good girl! We all know about the wonderful prowess of the famous Hunters, but for once just gag yourself with this cream loaf!" And Clara looked perplexedly up and down the table. "But Elsie," she resumed, "seems to be going down off the rails just lately. You just can't rely on a girl who might be galled for the match!"

For a moment there was silence. That truth re-echoed itself. Bessie frowned a little. Liking Elsie Ellingham as she did that problem had been cutting her own mind. Consciously her thoughts went back to that morning when she had stepped into Study No. 3 to find Elsie and Frances Frost. It had struck her then that Elsie's attitude had been peculiar, to say the least. And then, later, when Elsie had not turned up in time for the practice! And later still, when she had sat Frances up in the Fifth Form dormitory for no apparent cause whatever.

What had come over Elsie? It was not like her, certainly, to indulge in those sort of tricks!

She shook her head. The whole thing was a puzzle. And then from Bessie Hunter, her mouth full of cream loaf, came a sudden spluttering gasp. Her eyes were suddenly wide with horror, staring at the window. Bessie jumped.

"Bessie! Are you ill?"

"I—I—look!" stammered Bessie.

Bessie turned, and almost fell off her seat as she saw the thing which had caused the first girl's agitation. For we second she stopped staring.

And then a consciousness yell went up.

"My hat! What is it?"

Caution enough for the question! For a moment they all caught sight of a wildly waving pair of legs outside the window. The light of the study increased down with a ghastly gleam. Then suddenly they dropped. The whole body of the girl in whom they belonged appeared to stare, staring in fastened dismay into the study.

"Elsie Ellingham?" Marjorie cried.

It was Janet who ran to the window; Janet who flung it open. The whole crowd stared at Elsie, breathing heavily, stambling into the room.

"What the gholly dickens!" Clara cried.

"I—I'm sorry!" Elsie stammered. "I—I made a mistake! That it— And she broke off, flushing crimson. "Oh dear, I'm sorry!"

"But what does it mean?" Clara demanded. "Why the merry dickens are you strutting about the window-ledge at this time of night?"

"Well, you see—" Elsie stammered.

"No, I'm bothered if I do!"

"I— I was just—just practicing a—"

They stared. They blinked. Frances frowned. Climbing about on the window-sills in the darkness twenty feet above the ground! But it was obvious that Elsie meant to give no other ex-

planation for her amazing behaviour. She stood still.

Clara looked at her.

"And that's your explanation?"

Elsie bit her lip.

"I'm sorry—you! Do you mind if I go?"

"Oh, Elsie, won't you stay and have some tea?" Bessie begged.

"No—thanks all the same."

And Elsie without another glance went out, leaving the chums looking rather blankly at each other. Straight up to the attic she hurried, just in time to meet Frances Frost face to face on the stairs as she was coming down. Frances stopped with a jump. She looked dumb.

"You? Where have you come from?"

"Oh, downstairs," Elsie carelessly said. "Why?"

"But I thought—"

Elsie smiled indifferently.

"You think rather a lot, don't you, Frances?" she asked contemptuously.

"Be careful, old thing, you don't land yourself in a mess. What did you think?"

But Frances, crossing her, suddenly closed her lips. Elsie could read her thoughts.

Frances was still suspicious!

ELsie remembered, vividly alive to the bitter quality of Frances Frost's hatred and enmity, was taking no chances.

Frances had a suspicion now that Roly was in one of the attics. And it was obvious that Frances did not intend to let her out of her sight. From that moment until dormitory bell Frances followed her about and shadowed her, interrupted her and seemed, like a shadow, always to be at hand. She dared not just dare not—steal away to see Roly again.

But she was worrying about him. And when she went to bed that night she had already made up her mind. To-night, while Frances and the rest were asleep, she would steal up and get him, changing his hiding-place to some other unoccupied place. Already she had marked down the room she would use for that purpose.

It was the room adjacent to the museum; a small room, heated by warm pipes, which was never used from one term's end to the other. For the want of a better name, it was called the museum spare-room, and it was here that the museum's overstock of specimens was housed.

It was nearly midnight that night when Elsie arose, gazing intently in the moonlight that flooded in through the window along the two rows of Fourth Form beds.

All was silent. Every girl seemed to be asleep, and quietly she slipped out of bed. Towards the door she made her way, opened it, and silently padded up to the attic. She reached No. 3 without mishap, wrapped the little dog in his warm blankets, and, picking him up, crept softly downstairs. She had reached the foot of them when she heard a sound. What was it?

It seemed so come from the darkness of the Fourth Form passage which was on her left. It was not repeated, however. After a pause Elsie went on.

With many a backward look she found herself at the door of the museum at last. To get to the spare room she had to negotiate the whole length of the huge room with its ghastly glow, glimmering with mysterious radiance in the evening light which poured through the skylights. She arrived at the spare room, opened the door, and went in. Then, closing the door, switched on the

light. Holy lay like a dead thing in her arms.

"Oh, Holy!" she choked. She put him down, made him a bed. How hot he was! How still! How thin! How feeble his breath! Oh goodness, if only she knew what to do for him! If only she dared see a vet! She gasped as she bent over him.

"Holy!"

"Holy's reply was a feeble wag of his tail.

Elsie shook her head. She felt a queer lump in her throat as she opened the door, taking the key with her. Again, as she crossed the museum she thought she heard a sound. For a moment she stood with heated breath, but she could neither see nor hear anything, and she went on to the Fourth Form dormitory again. As she slinked into bed, a voice spoke.

"Gleam!" it asserted.

It was the voice of Frances Frost! Elsie's least secreted to freeze. That "gleam!" It had a note of malicious satisfaction in it. It seemed to suggest that Frances knew exactly what she had been doing! Had Frances followed again? Did Frances know the secret of her new hiding-place? She did not reply but apprehensively lay low awake, thinking it all out. Supposing in the morning Frances gave her away—

And meanwhile, what of Holy? Desperately Elsie ratched her brain. She must have advice, must, must! The thought of Dr. Morrell, the official Cliff House veterinary surgeon, dare she take the dog to him? But no! Officially he was bound to report the case.

Then she thought of Grandpa Crankle of Marble Cottage in Friarhills. An old but very grandpa, but he had been a prominent surgeon during his Army career. A favourite of all Cliff House girls, he would gladly give his advice and his assistance. Supposing she took Holy to him?

When?

Why not now?

Grandpa would never mind being awakened for such a purpose as this! And she could rely upon him to keep her secret.

No further than that did Elsie wait to think. Impulsively she threw back the sheets. And then, even as she was in the act of putting one leg out of bed, she drew hurriedly back, starting in the direction of Frances Frost's bed. From that direction there came a distinct and audible movement.

Elsie stared. She caught her breath. Tenderly she waited. Out of the darkness a moving figure reflected itself, reaching towards the door. Frances it was! Frances, who, passing Elsie's bed, threw one grim look towards it and with a soft chuckle went on. She reached the door, disappeared.

In a moment Elsie, her heart thumping, was out of bed.

She snatched at her dressing gown, fastened her feet into her slippers. Again she stole towards the door just as Barbara Redburn woke up with a start. She called her name.

"Bar Elsie did not hear. She was out of the room by that time. Clara Trevellin did, however. With a sleepy grunt she said—

"Oh, awfully, what's the matter now?"

"It's Elsie!" Babs breathed. "She's breaking bounds."

"Eh?" Clara sat up with a jerk. "Oh the lass!" she cried. "What the mischief's in the matter with her? I've told her I want her for the team, but she seems to be simply asking for detention. Come on, Babs."

"Why? Where?"

"We're jolly well going to stop her playing the giddy goat and fetch her back!" Clara asserted gravely.

Babs nodded. Elsie certainly seemed to be asking for trouble. Out of bed she and Clara stepped. They reached the door, pausing, as their eyes swept through the darkness along the corridor, just in time to see the head and shoulders of their quarry silhouetted against the window panes at the far end. Clara breathed deeply.

"Come on!"

They padded on. They reached the end of the corridor. The shuffle of footsteps led them on towards the museum. Babs frowned. Why was Elsie going to the museum at this time of night?

But Elsie, unaware that she was being followed, was on Frances' track. Frances, leading the way, reached the museum first.

Until then Frances had no idea that she was being shadowed, for the carpets in the corridor were thick and soft and deadened sound. There was no carpet on the floor of the museum, however, and as soon as Elsie's feet made contact with the parquet blocks, Frances became aware of her presence.

She lunged one with look round. She saw her! Then, without thinking, dashed behind a glass case and waited.

Frances sought her breath, her eyes gleamed. Elsie was playing into her hands.

For Elsie had not been mistaken in those seconds she thought she had heard on her first visit to the museum. Frances it was who had made those.

Frances had followed her, but Frances, unfortunately, had not found out where Elsie had deposited the bundle she had

noticed her carrying in her arms. She had seen her disappear into the museum and that was all. It was with the intention of conducting a further investigation on her own account that she had embarked upon this second pursuit.

Elsie coming on, passed, blinking a little, wondering where her quarry had disappeared. She hurried on, "so near Frances, that by stretching out her hands, the latter could have touched her. Naturally, curiously, her eyes followed Elsie, as she moved towards the door which stood in the corner.

Then—

Another sound. Frances wheeled swiftly.

Just in time to see, coming through the doorway, the drowsing-postured figure of Babs and Clara.

And in a flash the truth flashed upon Frances. Babs and Clara were following Elsie. A rather grim smile came to the lively lass.

In a moment she had abandoned her plans. All at once her eyes narrowed, her slim figure tensed. She thought she saw now how the night might achieve her purpose. She waited until Babs and Clara were twenty yards away. Then she moved.

"Elsie!" Clara and Babs called at once.

Frances chuckled softly. They really thought she was Elsie! What a chance for her! She half turned, then, as if afraid, they on. Babs and Clara broke into a trot. At the glass case which contained the skeleton of a golden ape, she paused, looking back once more. Babs called again.

"Elsie! Oh, my hat! Elsie!"

Her voice rose almost to a shriek as she saw what was happening. She and



ERE they had moved two steps towards the door, the light flashed on and Babs and Clara found themselves face to face with Miss Dullman. "And what are you doing here at this time of night?" demanded sternly.

Clara saw the girl they had mistaken for Elsie stop. They saw her wheel hurriedly around. They saw her jump back, crash, colliding in full force with the glass case. The case rocked on its base; it heaved over. With a thundering crash it upset the floor, smashing up a thousand fragments of glass and bone!

For one moment Babe and Clara stood petrified.

"Then—  
"Elsie!" Babe and Clara cried.  
"Elsie, stop, stop!"

But Frances was not stopping. Like the wind she was flying for the exit at the opposite end of the museum. She reached it, rushed through it, slamming the door. Two seconds too late Babe and Clara sprang up. Babe desperately caught at the handle. She pulled. She tugged. Then with a blank started face she confronted her claim.

"Oh, great goodness! She's locked the door!"

"The cat," Clara furiously burst out.  
"But come on, quick! Back the other way! If we're caught here—"

They turned. Back they darted, but also for their hopes! Five yards before they reached the door by which they had entered the lights went up. A grim figure in a white dressing gown stood in front of them.

"And what," Miss Ballouist rasped wildly, "does this mean?"

Word of Honour



**H**OPLESS, hopeless! How could they explain without involving Elsie?

They both believed Elsie had played them the double-barrel trick it was possible for one individual to play upon another. But that was no excuse for sneaking about her.

Miss Ballouist was in her bitterest, her most bad-tempered mood.

"The whole affair," she stormed, "will be reported to Miss Freston in the morning!"

Babe and Clara, writhing under the lash of her tongue, regarding as the thought of Elsie's treachery, went back to the Fourth Floor dormitory.

"Where is she?" Clara asked.

"Where's she?" Frances asked innocently from her own bed—Frances, who had made good her escape, and had been between the sheets those last ten minutes.

"Elsie Kilmeghan?"

"Why isn't she in her bed?" Frances asked in surprise.

Clara groped her way to it. Her fingers came in contact with cold sheets. Elsie had not returned, then! Elsie, after her treacherous trick, was still in hiding somewhere. Clara's eyes closed.

"All right," she said. "We'll jolly well wait for her. And when she comes—"

She and Babe settled themselves to wait. But Elsie did not come in. An hour passed. Clara began to doze. Two hours passed, and both Clara and Babe were fast asleep. It must have been nearly five in the morning when Elsie, tired out, almost collapsing with weariness, returned to find the chamber doorway fast asleep. But, thank goodness, she had achieved something—she had postponed the worry of Body was never mind!

She had seen Grandpa Crawley, and Grandpa Crawley had said that the dog will suffering from a rather severe ailment, and had given her a patent

preparation, which, he declared, would see him fit enough to go to Pendocaine on Saturday morning. Body was now back in the stable.

Thankfully Elsie climbed into bed.

But in the morning—  
A rough hand tugged at her shoulder. Elsie, feeling that she had just dropped off to sleep, found the furious features of Clara Trevlyn confronting her. She woke up with a start.

"Why, Clara—  
"Two minutes past bell!" Clara said gruffly. "And Babe and I want to see you, Elsie Kilmeghan. We've a few words to say to you!"

"But why—  
"See you in Study No. 4 in ten minutes," Clara said.

Elsie, wondering, rose and dressed. Still sleepy, she went to Study No. 4. Babe and Clara, rather grim, were waiting for her. Clara's eyes flashed.

"Well, that was a shabby trick you played last night," she began.

Elsie's eyes opened.

"But I don't understand! What trick?"

"In the museum."

Elsie stared.

"But what happened?"

"You know what happened. But, in case you don't, let me refresh your memory." And thereupon Clara explained while Elsie listened in incredulous horror. "Perhaps the accident to the case couldn't be avoided," she said; "but deliberately locking us in to reap the benefit of your sin would!"

"But I didn't!" Elsie cried wildly.

"Clara, I didn't—it wasn't me!"

But Clara set her lips. She knew. Babe shook her head, the first evidence of doubt assailing her. Elsie looked at it she were speaking the truth, but the evidence against her seemed indispensible.

"Clara, believe me!" she cried.

"I'm sorry," Clara answered, "but I can't! You've been altogether too mysterious just lately. Elsie, and I'm fed-up. I told you I wanted you to join the Pendocaine team. Well, this just settles it! I can't rely on you to keep out of scrapes tonight, and to keep others out of 'em. Frances Frost will play!"

And later that day, when Babe and Clara had had an extremely unpleasant interview with Miss Freston, who decided to postpone punishment until after the match, Frances Frost was warned.

It was Frances, not Elsie, who played in the practice match at break—Frances who triumphantly wrote to her father, confiding the glad news that she would be playing on Saturday.

Afternoon came. With it Mr. Broadner. He went to see Miss Freston. Miss Freston saw him, and as call-over that night she begged any girl who could throw light upon the whereabouts of the missing dog to come forward.

Elsie stood motionless.

The next day came, with Frances still awaiting Babe, in Elsie's stead, had taken a decided turn for the better. Grandpa's medicine seemed to be working miracles upon him.

Frances, surprised upon her own victory, was at last leaving her alone, though she could not resist a covert peep or a card of the by when she met her in the class-room or the passage. Next day, and Body was most marvelously recovered. Came the next night—and the breakfast!

For the final team notice was posted up. Elsie, hoping against hope, found that her name was erased altogether. She was—erased a reversal! Peggy

Prenton would travel to Pendocaine with the team in that capacity.

Elsie stood in Big Hall, staring strictly at that team list. The day of the match was to-morrow—the day she had promised to return! Body to her owner. But to return! Body to her owner meant that she must be able to travel, and Elsie, who was not a rich girl by any means, simply had not got the fare. Her only hope of getting to Pendocaine, all along, had been to travel with the team.

What could she do?

There was only one thing to do. That was to make a last appeal to Clara. Clara was in her study. Clara, too, was following over the team list. She wasn't satisfied. Her great fear was of Frances Frost—Frances, who was so likely to let down the team to snatch a bit of limelight for herself!

A knock came at the door. It opened. Elsie, her face white and strained, came in. Clara frowned.

"I—I am in the team," she said.

Clara granted.

"Well, what did you expect?"

"Oh, Clara, I'm sorry," Elsie gulped.

"Oh, dear!" She looked at her.

"Clara, if—I tell you something, will you keep it a secret?"

Clara stared.

"Why, what's it got to do with—"

Elsie burst out: "Everything, Clara! You've heard of dogs. Perhaps—perhaps," she added, "you will understand. But this dog there's all the fun about—the dog which Mr. Broadner keeps coming to the headmistress about—Clara, I'm not it. Frances Frost has suspected it all along, but she hasn't been able to prove it!"

And then, into a dumbfounded Clara's ears she poured the whole story.

And Clara's face changed at that. A new look came into her eyes. Clara, first and foremost, was a dog-lover. Clara could never lose of another dog's name without wondering her own beloved Elsie in that dog's position. She knew Elsie. She had always liked Elsie. Common sense told her now that Elsie would not have gone off the scale for no reason at all. Her face took on a fiery look.

"Clara, you believe me!" Elsie pleaded. "If—if you don't, come and see the little chap for yourself. Clara, I must get to Pendocaine. And the only way I can get there is to travel with the team. Give me my place back, please!"

"Oh?" A voice came at the door.

"What's that?" And both girls, wheeling round with a start, found the haughty, overbearing face of Frances Frost confronting them. "Still trying to nudge a place, Elsie?"

Clara's eyes gleamed.

"Come in, Frances," she said.

"Certainly! Just come," Frances said loftily, "for my ticket, and my berth. What train do we catch, Clara?"

"I'm not sure," Clara said, "but you are going to catch a train, Frances. I might as well say," Clara added bluntly, "that I'm not too happy at having you in the team at all! Frances, the other night there was a certain rumour in the museum."

Frances frowned.

"Well, you know who was responsible for that?"

"Yes! I think I do," Clara said.

"Yes?"

Frances started, hesitated.

"Oh, but, look here," she whispered.

"Yes?"

"I've had certain evidence since then," Clara said, trying a bluff. "I don't think, Frances, that you need

trouble to deny it. Why did you lock Babe and me in the storeroom?"

"Well, dash it, you were following me!" Frances spluttered indignantly; then, realising she had given herself away, she gave up and withdrew. "I mean, I didn't lock you in. I—I wasn't there!"

"Thanks!" Clara said. "That's enough!"

"You mean?"

"I mean," Clara said, "that Elsie gets her place back. You go to Penboorne, as we decided in the first place, as soon as—"

"But, look here!"

"But, look!"

But was enough said! Frances was determined to get her place. The only possible substitute for Elsie was herself. If she made it impossible for Elsie to play, then Clara would just have to play her. Savagely she went to bed that night; broadly speaking she slept. In the morning—the morning of the match—she was up before any of the others, and rushed off to Miss Priorrose. And just when Elsie, feeling happier than she had felt for a whole week, was coming out of the dormitory, Mary Butler, the pedant, reached Elsie on the arm.

"Miss Priorrose wants you," she said. Elsie started at her. Her face paled a little. What had happened now?

With a dread, she went to Miss Priorrose's study. She found that good lady looking grim indeed.

"Elsie," she said, "I have received information from a source I cannot divulge that you have possession of this Beddington dog which Mr. Broadbridge was stolen from his house last Tuesday!"

Elsie started back.

"But, how?"

"Miss, how can you?"

Elsie did not reply.

"Mr. Broadbridge," Miss Priorrose went on, "will be here in an hour's time. I want that dog, Elsie! You will have it ready to return to him. I will listen to whatever explanations you have to make them. Go and get it!"

Elsie left, with a white face. Her head was whirling. What should she do? What could she do? She couldn't give Baby up—no, not now.

There—

She had an idea. Favorably she flew to the Common-room. She looked up the train to Penboorne. There was one to half an hour. Could she get that? She had her ticket; and once she had obtained the dog safely to his mistress—well, she didn't care what happened. Beg Clara! Where was Clara?

Clara was at breakfast.

Elsie got her lip. Then she had another idea. Hastily she rushed into Clara's study. Favorably she pencilled a note:

"Have gone to Penboorne. Will meet the train at ground. Elsie."

She left it on the table in a prominent position, and then, stopping only to steal up to the attic to put the basket containing Baby, she left the school.

Five minutes later Frances Frost came along. She entered Study No. 1, which was still vacant. She saw the note on the table. She read it, and her eyes flashed with spite. Quickly she picked it up, quickly crushed it in her hand.

And she compares later, while the whole school was being searched high and low for Elsie—no Elsie was secured to have vanished off the face of the earth—

"What?" she asked.

"Well, what?" Clara asked.

"You see, she's let you down. She's just buzzed off without a word. Do I take her place?"

"Yes!" Clara said savagely.

"On your word of honour this time? I'm to play?"

Just for a second Clara paused. Then—

"Yes!"

And Frances, with a triumphant laugh, rushed off to get her things.

● JEAN GARTWRIGHT,

popular Scots member of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, is the "star" of next Saturday's grand long complete story, which is entitled—

"SHE WANTED TO BE EXPELLED"

By HALMA RICHARDS

Do not miss this fine story of a sensational episode at Cliff House.

Pride Goes Before—



MEANTIME, Elsie had arrived at Penboorne.

But she arrived, to her dismay, to find no Dora Churchill waiting to meet her. In her stead was a uniformed nurse from the convalescent home.

"Here," the nurse told her, "has had a slight relapse. She's not ill, but the doctors say it's unwise for her to come out. Will you, therefore, go to her?"

So Elsie went off, escorted by the nurse. She was driven to the convalescent home, and there she saw Dora. There, with tears of joy in her eyes, witnessed that happy reunion between mistress and dog that she had risked so much to secure.

Dora was almost delirious with joy. Baby, snuggling and frisking like the puppy he was at heart, with no trace at all of show of his recent illness, was a different dog. But, later, when the story was told, Dora's face darkened.

"I love Mr. Broadbridge," she said grimly. "He has tried to get hold of Baby before. Don't worry, Elsie; I can say that right. He may threaten the police, but that counsel has no more intention of bringing the police into this than you have. The police know too much about him. I'm expecting my solicitor this afternoon! I'll have a word with him."

And so it was that, Elsie, happily, more light-hearted than she had been for a while, tripped off to the hockey ground. It was getting late then, and, being unfamiliar with the town, she first of all wasted precious minutes by catching the wrong bus, then lost her way in a maze of streets, trying to find her way. It wanted only ten minutes to half of when finally she reached the ground and rushed to the girl in Cliff House uniform staring steadily out at the pitch from the foot of the pavilion steps.

"Clara!" she burst out.

Clara turned with a start.

"You?" she cried.

"Yes," Elsie gasped. "Clara, you got my note?"

"I got nothing," Clara said. "You just ran out and left us."

"But—that—!" and Elsie blushed. "Clara, I left a note," she said. "I left it on your study table. Shall—shall I go in and show you?"

"No need," Clara said gruffly. "I'm sorry, Elsie, but I've given your place away. And this time," she added grimly, "I can't take it back, because I gave it on my word of honour."

She turned on the dressing-room door opened and there beheld, with no great pleasure, the figure of Frances Frost, looking with arrogance, with triumph.

"Whoops! If it isn't Lost-Out-In-the-Cold Elsie! Come to see me play, dear?"

Elsie's lips quivered. Clara smiled.

"Oh, cheer it!" she said indignantly.

"Yes!" Frances laughed. "What to you, Clara? I'm going to have my fun. Well, Elsie, what about it now? Who's cock of the walk, eh? I've got the place, you see, and this time, I'm sticking to it. Even Clara can't back out now. Clara," she added, and put one foot upon the topmost step, "Clara has given her word of honour, Haven't you, Clara? And I," she cried, "am in the team, thank! I've—"

"Frances, look out!" Clara screamed.

The late! With a gasp and a scream, Frances came crashing down the flight of steps, falling in a heap at the bottom, her face white with pain.

"My ankle—"

"Oh, good gracious, what's the matter?"

Babe & Co. came rushing out of the pavilion. Clara's lips compressed grimly.

"Elsie," she said, "I think you'd better go and dress—just in case. It looks to me as if her ankle is sprained. Babe, fetch a doctor, will you?"

And while Frances closed her eyes, swooning with pain, Babe ran off, and Elsie, her heart in her mouth, dashed into the dressing-room.

And Elsie, in the injured Frances' absence, did play. And, thanks largely to her, Cliff House won by three goals to two, two of their goals being scored by Elsie herself.

It was a jural Cliff House team that went back to school that night. It was a Cliff House team who looked Elsie as its heroine. But the team received a chilling shock when an angry Miss Priorrose appeared upon their heels and immediately put her in the detention-room.

Later, however, there was further excitement. That was when Mr. Broadbridge, the post of the school, was arrested, at the instigation of Dora Churchill's solicitor, on a charge of trying to smuggle Dora Churchill out of her pet Beddington.

And when it all came out—how Elsie, at every risk to herself, had rescued that dog, and had restored him to his rightful owner, what jubilation then!

Elsie, of course, was immediately released from detention, and Miss Priorrose, full of profuse apologies, was the first to greet her.

"For it occurs, Elsie," she said, "I made a mistake. I am sorry! For once, I admit your judgment was wiser than mine. The man was a rogue and a scoundrel. I cannot condone your conduct, but I am very glad, as things have turned out, that you acted as you did. The school is proud of you!"

END OF THE WEEK'S STORY.

**THE NET CLOSES UPON SWANLAKE'S IMPOSTOR: Dramatic Chapters of a Brilliant Serial Featuring the Chums of Morcove**



**HER SECRET AT SWANLAKE**



**End of the Trail**

**Y**OUNG followed up "I say, you little wretch! Nasty, nasty beastly!"

"And what are you?" was Betty's color red, to the girl who stood glaring at her. "That, exactly, is just what nobody seems to have!"

"And so you're making it your business to find out?" sneered Sturdy No. 12's "suspense." "I hope you're having some luck!"

"Oh, I don't reckon I'm doing so badly!" Betty smiled.

"Get out of here!" came the raucous cry from the girl whom Morcove and Swanlake had known as Claire Ferrand. "Out of my sight, Betty Barton! And mind! Your headmistress is going to hear about this! I'll ring up Morcove and just let her know what you do with your half-days off from class!"

"There's no telephone in this tumble-down old house, is there?" Betty smiled on.

"Not that I'd mind your ringing up the school. Do so, by all means—when you look in at Swanlake presently. I shall know what to say to Miss Stonefield, if you complain about me."

"Is that so?" sneered the girl when Betty had trailed across the moonlight water to this lonely, rickety mansion. "As, for instance?"—dryly.

"Well, one thing. That I now know who was in the Morcove attic last night—hiding there! Just as you were coming to take her tonight," Betty spoke on steadily, "only I've caught you taking a too forward to see if it would be safe for you."

She kept still, her eyes upon the other's angry face, although those wanted words had brought the girl a little nearer.

"You'll not deny," Betty insisted, "that's been your idea in coming here this afternoon—to find somewhere else to hide?"

The girl they had dubbed "Miss

**FOR NEW READERS**

**PAN WILLCOCKERY** of Morcove School has become a thorn in the order that she may have time to act as lookout.

**CLAIRE FERRAND**—a girl who, after being all her life on a sheep station in Australia, has come into a fortune. Until she is able to settle down in Montreal she is to stay with the Willcockerys at their country house—Swanlake.

**VIVIANE MURRO**, having heard of Claire's fortune, wishes to take her place. She meets Claire and tells a plausible story to the effect that the fortune is wanted by her father. Her arguments result in an amateur detective and others to hide Claire in the Black Wing as Swanlake would the case clear her name. Claire escapes, and Vivianne arrives at Swanlake, to be welcomed on the roof Claire Ferrand, but

**BETTY BARTON**, one of Pan's Morcove friends, is at an important moment of Vivianne. The real Claire Ferrand is discovered, but as she is suffering from concussion, she can tell nothing. Vivianne, however, having exposure, never ceases to go into hiding. Betty following her to a lonely, deserted house, comes face to face with her.

(Your read on.)

Tricks," was, for a few moments, reduced to silence. She passed in her advance into the gloomy hall of the deserted house, from a doorway at the top of some collar steps. A lip, caught between her teeth, helped to give her face a convulsive look of rage.

Suddenly she laughed. It was a forced, shrill laugh, sounding unacceptably about the empty building.

"Oh, clever! Ha, ha, ha! Caught looking for a hiding-place! Ha, ha, ha! You little idiot!"—she changed back to a hissing whisper. "Why should I want to hide? Didn't I tell you, back there in Barcossobe, I've been at Sandton Bay ever the week-end?"

"But that, Claire Ferrand, was not the truth. Why you have had to be in hiding this last night or two, I don't know, except that it's all part of the game you're playing."

"What game?"  
"Something more than hide-and-seek."

The long-suspected girl laughed again. "You see, Betty Barton, there's as little you can say that means anything definite! There's no truth you don't know. There's not a single thing you can say for certain—"

"Except that my chance and I, from the very first, have suspected you of trickery. When we first heard about you, we expected you to be a girl we could all like. It was supposed that Claire Ferrand, just over from Australia, because she had come into a great fortune, would be glad to find friends. Her parents offered to have you at Swanlake, and we Morcove girls have been often at Swanlake ever since, with an idea of saving you from distress."

"But"—Betty spoke on—"you have been treating us all trickily. This cheer's been that strange business about the girl we call 'Miss Blank,' because she is a case of lost memory—"

"Oh, Miss Blank! Yes, of course!"

"You may laugh, but you haven't been a bit like the Claire Ferrand we expected you to be. Not like the Claire Ferrand with whom Pan's parents must have been so taken, or they would never have asked you to make your home at Swanlake. Alas, it's as if you were now—not—"

And there Betty looks off, struck to silence by a fancy which had dimmed her mind, suddenly, as a lightning flash illumines the way for someone who has been groping in the dark.

"Not what?" she asked derisively.

"Say it, then!"  
"Not Claire Ferrand, after all! Betty was dazed into amazement. "And besides are you?" she cried out loudly, as if conviction had come. "You'd not understand—at last! You're not Claire Ferrand, and that's why you give a different name to Foster! Your rightful name's clipped out—"

**By MARJORIE STANTON**

She had no chance to say the word.

All in an instant she had to gather herself, to avoid the attack which "Claire Ferrand" made upon her.

Like a tiger, the much-older girl had suddenly sprung at Betty, to claw hold of her.

Desperately Betty fought to hold her off. Together they struggled and scuffled in the dismal hall of the deserted house, where the floor was strewn with fallen plaster, and the wintry wind whirled in at broken windows.

Betty was strong, and very fit; but the other's greater age and superior height made them an unbalanced pair. The answer was that the struggle went on so long as it did.

For nearly a minute the desperate conflict continued, the pair of them battling with each other, Betty trying to break free, and "Claire Ferrand" hanging on to her fanatically, unrelentingly.

Then Betty went down. One foot was hooked from under her, and she fell backwards, after the other foot had slipped on a bit of boarding rendered slippery by fallen plaster.

Heavily she crashed, with her assistant naturally kneeling to hold her down. She—Betty—had a sight of the girl's face, and it was merciless. Terror, too, had lost an added strength to the impostor. Betty realized this, only too despairingly, when "Claire Ferrand" looked her arms about her, and actually lifted her to her feet.

In vain Betty struggled aloft. Her opponent could carry her away as easily as a powerful man carries a rebellious child.

Across to the cellar doorway "Claire Ferrand" staggered with her tightly gripped hands. A moment more, and she was clattering down some back steps into discoloured darkness.

The old house was of such a size as to have had spacious cellars. And "Claire Ferrand" had, but a moment ago, been familiarizing herself with those underground tortures.

She was not at a loss where to consign Betty in the darkness. Not was she, who had once served the real Claire Ferrand just as ruthlessly as this, going in latter no!

For a minute or two there were scuffings and rattlings down there in the cellars. Then "Claire Ferrand" came rattling up to the ground floor again—alone!

She slammed that the door that was at the top of the cellar steps. Quickly she found a mass of wedging it fast. To make doubly certain, whilst she was passing to get her breath back, she tore out a piece of electric bell wire and used that to lock the door fast by its outer knob.

Then, putting her dishevelled self to rights as she made off, "Claire Ferrand" left the house.

She was limping very badly now. Recent exertions had taxed that wrong ankle of hers severely. As a wounded tiger might drag itself away into the jungle, so she limped her way back, across the heathery wastes, to where her bicycle had been left.

She got to it, and wheeled it out on to the lonely road.

"How," she panted to herself, scowling to ride away, "I can do it! Get to Swanlake—got hold of that letter with the handkerchief—got it in it, when Betty had time to smash her way out! There's time—I'm certain there is. I'm not to be beaten by her after all!"

And it was after another fierce laugh that she said, whilst pedalling along as best she could:

"That Betty! And still I've got her untracked!"

Down to the darkness to which she, in a half-conscious state, had been carried, Betty struggled up from the damp brick floor.

It was the second time she had tried to stare up and shake off the embarrassing, dizzying effects of her terrible struggle with such a fresh bigger and stronger girl.

Previously Betty had been forced to sink down again, still breathless and tottery. But now she was able to remain standing.

Panting to get her breath back, she staggered in the darkness to that side of the cellar where, as she already knew, to her dismay, a door had been made fast against her.

Her sudden movements caused her to brush past a range of shelves, which her eyes, after a few moments, made out to be whitewashed. She knew then that it was to an inner wine-cellar of the deserted house that Miss Tracy had consigned her, and so the door was likely to be all the stronger for having, at one time, guarded valuable contents.

Sure enough, it was a solid door which Betty's groping hands encountered; secretly locked against her, too. She bang herself against it several times, then desisted. She realized that she would do no good for herself that way, but would only incur fresh exhaustion.

"But I'm not going to stay here," she panted to herself desperately. "Not even though it's certain that she means to let me out later. To give time for herself—that's why she's moved me like this! A few hours, perhaps—just time enough for her to call at Swanlake and then she another get-away! But if only I can get out—"

The rest, in Betty's mind, was all contained in a single, fiercely-uttered phrase.

"There's to be no 'if' about it! I must—I must get out!"

Again she fumbled her hands over the door, this time to try to feel out the wood's condition. She hoped that here or there decay might have set in. But the door was of oak, all of it still sound.

She turned away, wondering if there was something lying about in the cellar which could be used as a makeshift implement with which to hammer and smash her way out. Nothing did she lay the look to come upon, however, during the hasty groping about.

So there, presently, stood Virginia Morrow's latest victim, at a helpless standstill in the darkness. A prisoner, shut away—and doubly so.

For it was Betty's tormenting belief that even if she could have escaped from the cellar, she would still have found herself imprisoned.

The last sounds made by the other girl, just now, had been when she was fastening some other door at the top of the cellar stairs.

"And then being," Betty looked to herself. "Oh, is there nothing I can do!"

### Waiting for Betty!

"Hullo, Miss Black!"  
"Hullo, girls! Here again! Loosely!"

"Here we are, here we are—how we are again!" was Polly Linton's very responsive to the delighted cry voiced by Swanlake's capstern girl.

Once more the car had dumped its

load of Morocco girls at the porch of stately Swanlake.

Madeup Polly had been, as usual, the first to bundle out. And last of all, as was ever the case, came off-traced Paula Crowl, walking about the ruffled state she was in.

"A week, hal Juss, an uthah wain!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Watcha to laugh," Paula said to Naamoo and others who had rallied her so during the after-school run in the car from Morocco. "It isn't funny! It's perfectly disgraceful, the way I am treated!"

"Never mind," chuckled their adored Miss Black, who had come out on to the porch when the car was arriving. "There's a real treat indoors for you, Paula. Tea?"

"Ooo, yoo, and quack, quack!" yelled Naamoo, all her head at the mere mention of tea. "Bekeas—"

"But has Betty turned up?" Polly wanted to know, at the same time putting very official restraint upon the ever-hungry imp. "Not? Then we shall wait for her, of course!"

"Successful! Bekeas, why wait for Betty! Bekeas, we know very well," Naamoo yelled. "She'll have had tea already, at Barmcombe Castle!"  
"We don't start without the cap," was Polly's loyal proposal. "There is favour!"

Lead cheers, implying that Naamoo was in a majority of one!

"So that's that!" Polly sweetly commented. "And, of course, not to waste previous times, we shall do a bit of rehearsing whilst waiting for Betty!"

But now there were moanings. The Morocco players, although as keen about their play for Barmcombe's coming Gains week, were not so keen as all that.

"Very well," Polly mock-seriously grinned, "talk out!" As "Claire Ferrand" walked out, last Friday:

"Talking of Claire," came Pam's more serious remark. "Some news of her, Miss Black, during the day?"

"She sang up after lunch," was the answer, during a general whooping indoors. "To ask if there were any letters for her. I told her there was none. She said she'd be looking in for it."

"Oh! So we may be seeing something of her!"

"Hardly a glancing prospect, what!" Paula admitted. "However, to-day, let us twist—no more news with the goal!"

"But how," Pam wondered aloud, "does Claire Ferrand come to be able to look in for letters? When she went off in a huff, on Saturday morning, she sort of talked of going to London?"

"She changed her mind, so she told me over the phone," was Miss Black's enlightening remark. "She stayed the weekend at Sandton Bar instead."

Pam nodded, cutting down discarded outdoor things.

"Yes, well, I knew Claire had a fancy for Sandton Bay. She was there before, and liked the place. Girls, the battered tent can't wait for Betty, I'm afraid."

Then did Morocco's "hild lady of Swanlake" invite her chums to examine into the drawing-room and make an immediate start upon tea, after all.

Polly and Bunny were first at the glowing hearth, and Naamoo was first on the cake-stand—just to inspect it.

"Girls! The dusky one said in context. 'And when you've worked as hard as I have, all as afternoon in class—'"

"Done what?" demanded Polly.  
"Worked!"

"Oh, yeah! With a bag of sweets under the desk! Who didn't hear the paper bag rattling?"

"The waitress didn't, any old how," Nance could (unimpairedly) boast; and she left Miss Blank laughing.

"So jolly," said that young lady, "for all of you to be over here again. Not that I've been feeling dull. You busy? I've had another go at the frocks for the play. So, after tea—"

"Yes," sparkled Betty, in a by-all-means tone, "after tea!"

But although there was a general consensus to have tea first, Miss Blank was not allowed to doubt that the girls greatly appreciated her industry over the stage costumes.

Whilst the tea was being served, and all the varied outdies were sampled, the chaperon thanked her in advance for all the wonderful things that they were sure she had accomplished.

Days ago Betty, No. 12 had come to comfort Miss Blank as a friend worth having. She had the team spirit, and although she had only joined them as a company of amateur players, through most strange happenings to herself, she was "doing her bit" with all her might.

The wintry afternoon cooled white she and the girls were still in a half-circle at the drawing-room fireplace, balancing cups of tea upon their knees.

The light waned, but no one troubled to get up to go and draw rich hangings across the high windows. In the half-light, the jolly blaze upon the hearth was all the more delightful.

"How've you been feeling to-day, Miss Blank?" It was like someone Judy Chubb to ask this presently, sitting near that young lady. "I mean—"

"You mean, have I had any sort of hint that my necessity is coming back. And I haven't—no!" was the reassuringly smiling answer. "Oh, but it's annoying—such a helpless, stupid position to be in! What Pao's parents will say when they get home I never thought about my having stood on at Bramble—"

"You don't want to talk like that," Pao solemnly put in. Always a small eater, she had brushed her tea now, and sat laying aside her cup and saucer.

"Betty's late! I wonder if she is coming now?"

"She must be on her way, surely," Polly exclaimed, jumping up to go with Pao to look out of the window. "Oh there would have been a ring-through from Barncombe. Getting dark, too. Hello, though!"

"Yes!" said Pao. They had reached one window together, to make out, instead a recognizable figure in the gloom.

"Here's Claire!" Polly informed those who were still at the bedside. "On a bike."

With a rush they all took their stand at one window or another. The girl they knew as Claire Ferrard was emerging from the nearest avenue, pedalling awkwardly towards the porch, peering anxiously towards the porch.

"Able man be still trespassing here," Miss Mink said. "So I wonder at her going a bike!"

"What's that?" "Keweenaw!" "Believe you all at money she has come into, she could have a jolly car!"

Pao went out to the hall. Her quarters demanded that she herself should let in Miss Tricky at the hall door. There had been unpleasantness; there had even been angry scenes. Still, Pao felt she must be more than civil.

So, as soon as she heard a footstep at the porch, she opened the hall door. "Oh, that you, Pao!"

Evidently Miss Tricky meant to be civilly civil.

"You shouldn't have troubled," she



BETTY flung herself against the unyielding cedar door. "Let me out!" she screamed. "Let me out!" But only echo answered.

admitted boldly, advancing across the threshold after stuffing her bicycle.

"You've got the girls, haven't you?" "Yes. And there's still a cup of tea in the—"

"Oh, not for me, thanks all the same! I'm not staying. Just looked in to pick up that letter."

"Surely you'll have some tea, Claire?" was Pao's persuasive remark, as she closed the outer door. "You must have some milk and nibble on the bike. And that ankle of yours."

"I know; perhaps it was silly of me," the much older girl there cut abruptly, while going across to a hall table on which she knew the wanted letter would be lying. "See I felt all right when I set started, and— Oh, anyhow, you needn't worry about me!"

She reached the table, and there on a saucer was the letter. Yes, the very one which she had yearned to possess—down which she had written to London. Oh, at least, it was from her office.

Trying hard to conceal her emotion, she took it up and set a finger to rip open the envelope. But came a

"Pay Claire Ferrard," she read, "one hundred pounds."

So, at last, and after all, she had brought off the coup!

The cheque was in her hands for her to get away with it. Within an hour from now she could get it cashed in Barncombe. The manager at the local

branch of the bank knew her as Claire Ferrard. She had cashed a cheque for her before.

And she had the one hour needed for the ride back to Barncombe—of course she had! "That Betty," if she turned up at all, here at Bramble, would not turn up for hours yet. One had taken good care about that!

As soon as the daring impostor, as she put back letter and cheque into the envelope, was aware of Miss Blank and Pao's chaperon leaving some eye into the hall. She nodded, and smiled at Miss Blank, but ignored the girls.

"Hello, dear!" said "Claire Ferrard," if only for the sake of appearing quite at ease. "I say, hope I didn't bother you, when I rang up after lunch?"

"Just as if!" was Miss Blank's staid response. "But why did you ring off in such a hurry? I wanted to say that I could post on the letter to you, if you'd let me have your address."

"Oh, thanks, but I—I knew I'd be over this way. Now I must be off again."

And still ignoring Polly and the school, she turned away to the hall door, she tripped slightly, but it was no extra-painful twinge at the ankle which suddenly lashed her.

The stopped dead because at that instant there had come the metallic crash of a bicycle falling flat on the gravel outside, and then the running



step of someone who had alighted from the machine in great haste.

"Blank?" cried Polly. "Oh, that's Betty—at last!"

Tr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!  
Although half a dozen of them were darting across to the outer door, they were not quick enough for Betty. She kept on ringing. Tr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

"She want's her tea," joked Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"But let me get by, will you?" requested "Claire Ferrand," knocking the little knob about the door as the latch was being tugged back. "Out of my way!" she suddenly raged. "I want to be left!"

Then occasionally there was Betty's own answer to that frantic cry. For the porch door had opened whilst "Claire Ferrand" was still speaking.

"I drive you do want to be off, but you can't! Girls, don't let her go!"

The Betty who pushed those words was, to her chameo's utter amazement, undisturbed and almost exultant.

She came toppling past the doorway like a girl at her last gasp.

And then, before any one of them could dart forward to her assistance, she fell forward across the doorway into the hall in a dead faint.

"**BETTY!** Betty darling! What's the matter? Are you all right?"

Polly and others were on their knees at once beside the prostrate Fern captain. While Harry Trevor pillored the captain's head in her lap, and Polly took her hand in her own, Pam darted off to fetch a glass of water.

"Claire Ferrand," suddenly forgotten, passed irresolute. Now was her chance to get away—to slip out unnoticed while the others were so absorbed in their ministrations to the stricken captain.

She would have taken a quiet, quiet step towards the door, only she suddenly found Madge Minto—quiet, serene Madge—between her and the door.

"I think you'd better wait a moment," Madge said quietly.

The impostor looked livid.

"There's nothing I can do. Let me pass, please!"

"No," Madge said, as quietly as ever. "Please wait, Claire Ferrand."

She whom they knew as Violante Munro stood irresolute. To dash out would arouse suspicions; but, as the other lady, here was a chance in a thousand. To step away before Betty came to—before the captain was able to determine her as the chambermaid she was.

But that instant's delay was fatal. Pam had come back with a glass of water, and the boy signal, forced between Betty's lips, suddenly revived her.

Weakly she sat up, and then her gaze went to Claire Ferrand. She raised a shaking arm and pointed to that girl.

"Girls!"—her voice was weak but insistent. "Don't let her get away!"

### "I Remember—"

"**H**OLD her, hold Claire Ferrand," she panted on.

"Get her away, all of you!"

But Betty and one or two others acted as the captain's bondswomen. They seized this big girl who had been their suspect for so long, and they hung on to her.

Pam calmly shut the door and became

one of several Microscopians standing in front of it.

"Must get my breath," was Betty's gasped excuse for sinking into a tall chair. "I—I'm just about all in. Had to come along at a great lick. And before that I had to break my way out—"

"What?" her chameo gasped. "Betty!"

"You see, I finished for this afternoon, saw her go into that empty old house on the corner, and I went in after her. We came face to face," Betty rushed on with her breathless explanation. "The things came to a head between us. She—she came for me—"

"The girl who was being held fast gave a sudden shriek, and flared out:

"But she had struggled in vain. They were too many for her, and her furious cry was ignored.

"Go on, Betty," several of them clamoured.

"There was a pretty awful set in. She got the better of it, and then—then she carried me down to one of the cellars. She shut me in down there. It was the old wine cellar, and there was a heavy oak door to it. For a time I just didn't know how to tackle it. In the end I wrenched away an oak post forming part of the wine shelves, and used it to smash at the door. Then a huge groan, and I was able to lever the door open, just wide enough."

Not one of Betty's chameo, aware at her as they were, had noticed Miss Blank when she, listening as keenly as any of them, suddenly put up a hand to her forehead. Even now, when Betty was pausing, none saw Miss Blank keeping that hand to her head, as if her mind were in acute distress.

● **EXCITING NEW**  
**MORCOVE**  
**SCHOOL**  
**SERIAL**  
**COMING SOON**

"But I was not free, even then," Betty murmured. She had fastened another door, one at the top of the cellar stairs. I had to break that door away, too. She had shut me in like that, made a prisoner of me—"

There was a sudden dramatic interruption; a loud cry from Miss Blank drawing all eyes upon her.

"Shut in! A prisoner!" the echoed words of Betty's breathless words. "Oh! Oh, I remember now, I remember!"

Then, in the crowded hall of stately Swanlake, there was that silence which might be expected to follow the bursting of a bomb.

She, Miss Blank, could remember everything—at last!

IT seems that Violante Munro's hour of exposure has come: Read how Betty and Co. finally bowled out the impostor, in next Saturday's concluding chapters of this vivid serial. A grand new Morcove School serial, featuring Tess Trethewey, is coming shortly.

# HILDA RICHARDS REPLIES



**Gwyneth (Penmanshaw).**—You'd probably be in the Fourth with Bobo & Co. if you went to Cliff House, Gwyneth. Sorry I can't grant your request for a pen-friend, but I am not allowed to put readers into touch with one another.

**Tina!**—No address, dear reader—as I hope you'll spot this reply to your very nice letter. Many thanks for all the pleasant things you say about my stories. I'm so glad you like them. I'll remember when you next visit Bala. Best wishes.

**Beatrice Villard (Garrow).**—Thanks so much for your letter, and for your good wishes. So glad you liked my Christmas story. Very best wishes.

**Jean Kain (West Derby, Liverpool).**—Delighted to hear from you, Jean. How are the brothers? I was had a marvellous Christmas—with far too many tin-tins, I'm afraid. But, after all, Christmas only comes once a year! No, Clara hasn't any sisters.

**Betty Moon (Caversham).**—I could tell you everything about Clara in such a short reply, but here are some facts in brief. She's thin, grey-eyed, always smiling. Best friend, Mary Jane Handker. Likes all Dorothy Towers, Harry. Has an older brother. No particular hobbies. Write again soon, Betty.

**Miss March (Mansbury, London).**—Thanks so much for all the nice things you say about my stories, Rita. I'll remember what you said about Lella, and will try to introduce her into a future story. I could promise to grant your other request about the boys. All good wishes.

**Patricia Kingham (Highgate).**—You'd probably be in the cheery company of Doris Redfern & Co., of the Upper Third, if you were at Cliff House. Another nice letter soon, please.

**Beverice (Garrow).**—The Cliff House cake are now longer than they used to be. However, as I hope you'll have no further cause for complaint! So glad you like all the stories.

Many thanks to the following readers for their very welcome letters—and my regrets for not being able to publish individual replies to them all!—"Edith," Diana Clark (Perth), Gerrie Hill (Middletown), Gladys (Middletown), Doris Good (Kendal), Frances Maule (Windsong), Margaret Wilson (Edinburgh), Margaret Pyford (Mistey).