

EVERY SCHOOLGIRL'S OWN PAPER

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AND
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THE SCHOOLGIRL

No. 1000, Vol. 24,
2000 Issues
Pub. 1916, 1927.

EVERY 2^D SATURDAY

Incorporating
'SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN'



"THEY'RE OFF!"

The start of the International race, in which Jean Carwright is representing Britain

A dramatic incident in this week's fine complete Cliff House School story

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE: A Fine Cliff House School Story
About a Third Former Who Brought Unhappiness Upon Jean
Cartwright Because—

SHE WANTED TO BE EXPELLED



By
HILDA RICHARDS

Schoolgirls' Olympiad



"JEAN! Jean! Come on, Jean!"
"Look! She's catching up!"
"Oh, my hat! She's passing them all—and now she's

leading!"

And Barbara Baxter, her pretty face flushed and animated, became frantic with excitement.

Behind her, Tommy Clara Twopen, Mabel Lynn, Bonnie Hunter, and a crowd of other girls from the Fourth Form at Cliff House were shouting and cheering, screaming loudest.

While down the long smooth running track of the Courtfield Sports Stadium half a dozen girlish figures, straining every muscle, every nerve, raced with breath-taking speed towards the finishing tape.

Nearer, nearer, with one girl, an intense running bloom on her flushed face, the Cliff House crew, tearing ahead of the others. Three yards, two yards, one; the tape next flying, and—
"Hurray! Jean's won!" shouted Barbara.

"Good old Jean!" yelled Tommy Clara. "Good old Fourth!"

Jean Cartwright, their cheer and hurrahs, had done it! She'd won the first—of the two-hundred yards race—she'd scored a marvellous victory for Cliff House!

And as all Cliff House seemed to be present at the Courtfield Stadium on this bright, sunny afternoon, all Cliff House thundered its applause.

So, too, did the rest of the spectators who thronged the stadium in their thousands.

"Let's rush across and give Jean a

RUTH WILTON, co-principal of the Junior School at Cliff House, jumped for joy. For one girl—Jean Cartwright—was rushing on two feet from each lolly. But in doing so, Jean brought herself near to a tumble, and near to leaving down her school and her country!

special cheer!" suggested Mabel Lynn.

"Oh, I suppose I was just going to say the same thing!" said plump Bonnie Hunter, strutting in her excitement, and bounding through her thick crowd spectators.

There was a rush across the track and on to the stretch of velvety grass which formed the centre of the arena.

Jean Cartwright, flushed and happy, smiled as her cheeks roared up. There were proud moments for the tall, athletic junior from Scotland.

"A wonderful race and a wonderful win, Jean!" congratulated Barbara, hugging the Scots girl delightedly.

Jean flushed even deeper; she laughed on a thrilled note, while her mass of flaxen red hair danced and sparkled in the sunlight. This was indeed a wonderful honor—coming for her—for she had but a fortnight ago returned from a trip to Hollywood.

"Thanks, Babe!" she smiled happily. "Glad I won, anyway!"

"And now for the Goal!" broke in Tommy Clara enthusiastically. "Thanks to you, Jean, the Fourth will be represented in the Goal on Saturday!"

"My hat, yes!" exclaimed Janet Jordan. "And not only will Jean represent Cliff House in the two-hundred yards, but England as well!"

No wonder there was such excitement. No wonder Babe & Co. and the Fourth were so jubilant!

Jean Cartwright, by her magnificent victory that afternoon, had made herself England's representative for the two-hundred yards race in the Schoolgirls' International Games which were now in progress at the Courtfield Sports Stadium!

Never before had anything quite like these games taken place. An Olympiad for schoolgirls; schools from countries all over the world competing in the Junior Olympic Games!

The Courtfield Stadium had been specially erected to accommodate the thousands of people who would want to witness this great sporting spectacle. For six whole days the games would be

in progress. This was the third day, and the enthusiasm had been tremendous.

Cliff House, with its fine sporting traditions, had naturally decided to enter a team in the games. They had competed against champions from home and abroad—from America, from Europe, from the British Dominions, and even from the Far East. And Cliff House could well be proud of its record in the games so far.

Only that morning Duke's Fair-tenation, popular sports captain of Cliff House, had given England a grand victory in the final of the half-mile hurdles. Now the school had provided another finalist—and thrilling as Duke's victory had been, for the Junior School, at least, Jean Cartwright's magnificent success was an even greater achievement.

"Now, girls, don't keep Jean standing here! She must get back to the dressing-rooms and change. We don't want her catching a chill!"

It was Miss Kathleen Keys who spoke as she came bustling up through the press of girls. Miss Keys, the games and gym mistress, was in charge of the Cliff House team.

Jean laughed gaily. "Better keep me wrapped up in cotton-wool!" she chuckled. "But don't you worry—I'm going to look after myself. My hat! I'm looking forward to Saturday. And won't it be wonderful if I win?"

"There's an 'if' about it!" said Tuesday Clara. "You're going to win, old thing, or the Fourth will want to know the reason why!"

They had reached the tunnel leading to the dressing-rooms now. The students were rapidly emptying, for Jean's race had been the last event of the afternoon.

A brief pause as Jean found herself faced by a battery of Press photographers. Laughing and blushing, she posed for them, and trust Miss Bester to make sure that she was in the photographs!

Half an hour later, Jean having changed into her school uniform, the chums caught a bus in the busy High Street and were riding back to Cliff House.

"How do we are!" cried golden-haired Mabel Lynn—Mabel to her friends—as they reached the gates.

In a merry party they trooped down the drive. The school grounds looked unusually deserted. It had been a half-holiday, and practically the whole of Cliff House had gone to the stadium that afternoon. Not yet had they returned, for the majority, unlike Babs & Co., had made the journey to Court-feld as bicyclists.

"I think," said Babs gaily, "that this afternoon's victory calls for a celebration too, with Jean as the guest of honour!"

"Stirring idea!" supported Babs enthusiastically.

"But she'll have to be on a strict diet!" put in Mabel, with a shudder. "No patties for Jean—only dry toast and weak tea!"

"Here, I say!" protested Jean. "If you starve me, I shall have to go round the track in a bath-tub!"

She suddenly stopped, the smile fading from her face. They all stiffened. For in their ears at that moment had come a shrill wailing sound—the sound as of an animal in pain.

"My giddy aunt!" Clara frowned. "Where—what—"

The chums looked quickly about them. And then they saw.

Over by the chapel ruins a girl was bending down and deliberately ill-

treating a large black cat. The poor animal howled and spat as it tried to struggle free of its tormentor.

"Oh, the poor thing!"

"It's Primrose's cat!"

"And that's Ruth Wilton of the Third?" exclaimed Jean.

"Just the sort of thing you'd expect from that wretched kid!" snarped Clara angrily. "Oh, come on, girls! To the rescue!"

Babs & Co. went racing towards the chapel ruins, Jean in the lead.

"Ruth, leave the creature alone!" shouted the Scots jander.

She reached the Third Formist, and, catching her by the shoulder, jerked her to her feet. The terrified old spang away, and disappeared like a flash.

"Ruth, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Jean said, shaking that girl in her anger.

Ruth Wilton scowled. A vicious look came into her small, pointed face. Suddenly she twisted out of Jean's grip: her hand swung round and pushed the Scots girl roughly away.

"Take your hands off me!" she cried violently. "Who asked you to interfere! Leave me alone, or I'll kick you!"

She stood there, her chest heaving with uncontrolled temper. Babs & Co. regarded her with disfavour which they could not conceal.

Not long had Ruth Wilton been at Cliff House; indeed, she had come to the school at the beginning of that term. But those few weeks had been long enough to show that she was the worst-tempered, worst-behaved girl who had ever entered Cliff House.

"Ruth, you couldn't talk like that!" Jean said quietly. "And surely, you know it's wrong to ill-treat animals!"

"Oh, shut up! Don't start preaching to me! I'll do as I like, and you mind your own beastly business!"

"Silence! Ruth, how dare you speak to Jean like that!"

And Babs & Co., emerging round, saw the majestic figure of Miss Frisgrove striding grimly to the scene. They stopped back as the headmistress ranted up.

Ruth, however, stood her ground. She fell silent, but that was all. Suddenly, defiantly, she stared up at the headmistress.

"Ruth, I saw you ill-treating my cat!" Miss Frisgrove said icily. "I will not tolerate any form of cruelty, and I am ashamed that a Cliff House girl should stoop to such disgraceful behaviour! Silence!" she commanded, as Ruth made to speak. "You will take two hundred lines for that incident, and an additional fifty for being rude to these girls!"

She turned, passed briefly to congratulate Jean upon her victory in the games that afternoon, then strode away.

"Bilky old fool!" came Ruth Wilton's sneering voice. "I'm not frightened of her! I don't care if I do get expelled! And if she thinks I'm going to do those beastly lines—well, she can go on thinking! And as for you, Jean Cartwright—with sudden ferocity, she swung round upon the Scots girl, hands clenching—hands here!" it was your sneering face, old Primrose lined me just now!"

Blindly unreasonable that outbreak. But the Spitzke hardly realised what she was saying in her savage temper.

"You'll remember this some day, Jean Cartwright!" she went on violently. "I'll teach you not to interfere!"

And, suddenly turning, the Spitzke rushed off, leaving Babs & Co. gazing after her almost dazedly.

"My hat!" gasped Mabel. "She's a spitzke, right enough!"

"The Third's welcome to that kid!"



LAUGHING and blushing, flushed with victory, Jean was rushed off the track by her chums, only to be delayed by press photographers who were anxious for a picture of the Cliff House girl who was to represent England in the schoolgirls' Olympiad!

granted Clara. "If you ask me, she wants a good spanking!"

"And now," broke in Bessie Baxter, "what about tactics? I'm awfully starving, you know!"

That remark brought the wretches back to their seats. It reminded them, too, that Bessie was not the only one to be hungry.

"Good idea, Bessie!" chuckled Babs. "Come on, girls! Tea it is!"

So Ruth Wilton became forgotten, and the others trooped up the steps into school and along to the Fourth Floor passage.

But as they reached Study No. 4, where Mabel, Babs, and Bessie had their own quarters, Elizabeth Stricker told Jean that there was a letter for her in the rack in Big Hall.

"Oh, thanks!" smiled Jean. "One from mother, I expect. I'll slip down and get it. Babs'll be long, Babs, old thing."

And down to Big Hall she made her way. But, reaching the letter-rack, she pulled up short. For there, standing right in front of the rack, was Ruth Wilton. Ruth saw Jean, scowled, and glanced up at the "C" division.

"This what you came for?" she asked militantly, taking out an envelope.

Jean nodded.

"Thanks, Ruth—you?" she answered quietly, and thought the Third Formers was going to hand her the letter.

But Ruth, with an unpleasant laugh, suddenly snatched back her hand, then flicked the envelope sharply into Jean's face. Deliberately and spitefully she did it.

The corner of the envelope caught Jean in the eye, bringing a gush of pain from her eye.

"Ruth—!" she cried.

The Spitfire laughed.

"Serve you right!" she taunted.

But Jean was really angry now. She pointed to the letter which lay by her feet.

"Ruth, you'll pick that up, and say you're sorry!" she said grimly.

"Oh, yeah? Well, let's see you try to do so! Make me pick it up!"

"Ruth Wilton," Jean said coldly, "you're the meanst of-meanest girl I've ever met!"

Again the Third Formers laughed.

"Well, perhaps you'll leave me alone in future!" she jeered.

Jean's expression was fright.

"I shall. The less I have to do with you, the better I shall like it!"

And, snatching the returned letter, while Ruth, with another insolent sneer, turned jauntily away.

Jean sighed. Her eye still stung where the envelope had struck it, but she forgot the pain as she ripped open the letter and saw that it was indeed from her mother.

She began reading. She came to the last sheet. Then suddenly her eyes opened wide. She read again those paragraph-sterling paragraphs—and a whole lot of dainty breaks from her lips.

"Oh, goodness! What was this her mother was asking her to do! Of all the remarkable coincidences! Of all the astounding coincidences!"

"But—but I couldn't do it! It's impossible! Not her!" Jean murmured, in blank dismay.

Mrs. Cartwright, from faraway Aberdeen, had written to tell Jean that she was interested in a girl who had come to Cliff House. She recently came to Cliff House. She appealed to Jean to become friendly with that girl, to help her.

The name of the girl was—

Ruth Wilton!

Jean Works a "Miracle"



JEAN CARTWRIGHT felt a growing sense of dismay.

Of all the girls at Cliff House, the one her mother was asking her to become friendly with most by the Spirit of the Third, the worst girl in the school, whose rank bad behavior and mean tricks had made her cordially disliked and shunned by everybody!

"If you possibly can, Jean dear, I want you to do something for me," Mrs. Cartwright had written. "Recently a Mr. and Mrs. Vincent took the house opposite ours. Miss Vincent is an invalid, and we have become very friendly. Imagine my surprise when she told me that she had a niece at Cliff House! I was immediately interested, in you can guess. Apparently, this girl was left an orphan, and Mr. and Mrs. Vincent have become her guardians.

"But I fear she is giving them cause for great anxiety. Her conduct at Cliff House has been dreadful, according to the reports received from Miss Primrose. Mr. Vincent is threatening to take her away, and poor Mrs. Vincent is worried about it all that I promised her I would ask you to try to do something.

"The girl's name is Ruth Wilton, and I think she is in the Third Form. But, of course, you must know her. Jean, will you please do this for me? Couldn't you make friends with Ruth—help her as much as you can? I feel sure that, with you as a guide, she will rapidly see the error of her ways and improve before it is too late. And Mrs. Vincent will be so grateful—"

Jean smiled faintly. Darling mamma—an invalid herself—so sweet and so sympathetic! So concerned because her friend—this Mrs. Vincent—was upset; with such faith in Jean!

"Oh, my hat!" Jean murmured worriedly. "What can I do! Mamma has asked me—"

Forgotten because her wonderful triumph of that afternoon in the sudden damaging rush of thoughts which swept over her.

There was nothing Jean would not have done for her invalid mother. There was nothing more she would have liked than to help any girl who needed help. But Ruth Wilton—

Jean's chin suddenly squared. Was it so impossible, after all! Wasn't she being a little uncharitable, a little prejudiced!

Surely there must be some spark of decency in this girl—some string of grace which could be brought to the surface!

Mamma had said Ruth was an orphan. Jean suddenly knew a pang of pity. She could imagine what it must be like to be without parents.

Perhaps she had something to do with the Third Formers' wisdom.

With characteristic resolution, Jean came to a decision. She would try to do it—try to make friends with Ruth Wilton, try to help her.

"And no time like the present," Jean murmured softly. "I'll go along and see Ruth now. Perhaps she'll be in the Commens-room."

So along to the Third Form Commens-room Jean briskly made her way. She reached the door, tapped lightly upon it. From inside the room came a loud hubbub of sprayed voices. Jean smiled slightly—then frowned, as, above all the others, she heard one shouting with passionate intensity, Ruth Wilton's voice.

Quickly Jean swung open the door and strode in, to pause in horror at the scene which met her eyes.

For there, standing defiantly with her back to the fireplace, was Ruth Wilton, her small, pointed face red with temper. In one hand was clutched a little silver handkerchief; the other held an inkpot poised as if ready to throw at the denouncing throng of angry Third Formers confronting her.

"Give Mary back her handkerchief!" came Boris Reddifer's indignant voice.

"I won't!"

"Ruth, don't be mean! Please give it back to me," broke in Mary Trevelyan's tearful voice. "Boris gave it to me for a Christmas present, and I wouldn't part with it for anything. Please, Ruth!" And Mary, hand outstretched pleadingly, made a step forward.

"Stand back!" shouted Ruth Wilton.

"Don't you dare to come a step nearer—say if you. The next man to move will get his ink over his!"

And her dark eyes roved passionately, a cold and defiantly challenging look, searching the group at Mary Trevelyan.

"As for you, good-baby," she sneered, "you can say good-bye to your silly handkerchief! A quick backward thrust of her hand, and the tiny square of silk fluttered into the fire which flamed so brightly behind her.

An agonized cry went up from Mary. An indignant howl from Boris Reddifer & Co. Angerily they surged forward.

"Keep back—keep back!" shrieked Ruth. "I meant what I said!" And up went that hand holding the inkpot.

"Ruth—stop!"

It was Jean Cartwright. For these few moments she had been a silent witness of the turbulent scene. But now, white of face, she rushed across the room. She knew that the Spitfire would carry out her threat. She wanted to prevent it. But Jean never expected what happened then.

Round swung Ruth, with a furious cry. She saw Jean rushing towards her, and her dark eyes glittered with wild recklessness.

"You keep out of this!" she cried screechily, and before anyone could stop her, the hand holding the pot of ink went backwards and then forwards again.

A stream of black ink shot through the air. Just in time, Jean jerked back, but though she managed to dodge the main stream, she did not escape entirely. Ink splattered on to her blazer, her tunic, her stockings. The remainder splashed down on to the carpet, leaving a big black stain.

For a moment there was an awed silence.

"Ruth—!" Jean found her voice. Cold anger swept through her. She held her mission. The next moment she would have sprung forward, would have grabbed the Spitfire, shaken her.

But the Third, recovering from their horror, acted first.

"Oh, you awful cat!" booted Midge Strayson. "Come on, girls! Grab her! Pay her out!"

With an angry roar the Third swept forward. Like a swarm of infuriated bees they fell upon the Spitfire, seizing her arms and dragging her into the centre of the room.

"We'll frog-march her!"

"Send her to Coventry!"

"Give her a Form trial!"

"Leave me alone—hands off!" shrieked Ruth.

She struggled, kicking out viciously. But the Third's temper was aroused. The Mums which fell upon them only added to their fury.

Tables and chairs went crashing over. Jean Cartwright gazed in dismay at

the weeping, yelling crowd. Pandemonium reigned in the Common-room.

Ruth Wilton's passionate shrieks mingled with the loud, angry shouts of the girls who held her. At any minute Jean dreaded the door to open and a mistress or prefect to appear.

Her own anger was waning now. Suddenly the forefront of her mind came that plea from her mother, her own determination to try to make Ruth

"I'll buy Mary another handkerchief," Jean replied lustily. She was anxious to get Ruth alone, so that she could talk to her. She wanted to get her out of the Common-room before another storm broke out. "As a matter of fact, I came here to see Ruth," she went on. "I wanted to have a little chat—"

"What for?" Traversely Ruth Wilton asked that question. "You

And the Spitfire of the Third smiled twitchingly across at her hostess in Study No. 3 in the Fourth Form passage.

Jean laughed gaily. Jean was feeling happy and agreeably surprised. Ruth Wilton had turned out to be a charming guest. You had been a great success, and the two or two hours Jean had already thrown out as in the foolishness of Ruth's past behaviour had



WITH a fierce cry of "Take that!" Ruth sent a stream of ink all over Jean, and although the Scots girl kept back her ireck was spannered. And this, she thought bitterly, was the girl she had pledged herself to help!

realize that she must control that wicked wagner of hers, must learn to behave in a way that would make her a credit to CHB House.

For a moment Jean stood undecided, gazing rather helplessly upon the milling crowd. Momentarily the ranks parted. She caught a glimpse of Ruth Wilton's face, still crimson with passion, as she struggled and fought. But as her eyes met Jean's, the Scots girl was startled to see a look of mere appeal, almost of fright, flash into those dark eyes.

Instinctively, without thinking, Jean answered it.

"Doris—Madge—all of you! Oh, give the kid a chance!" she cried, and forced her way among the struggling girls until she reached Ruth's side.

"Don't be silly, Jean!" protested Doris Hodder. "She deserves a lesson, and we're giving it her—"

"Please, Doris!" the Scots girl broke in, almost pleadingly. "Leave her alone! She—she didn't quite realize what she was doing. Anyway, I—I don't really mind about the ink."

Doris stared. Then she asserted. There was a look of hurt disappointment as she gazed up at the girl who was the Third's momentary heroine.

"If you ask me, you're potty!" she said, with the bluntness of youth. "You ought to know better than to waste sympathy on an—on her!" She looked scornfully at Ruth. "Anyway, even if you forgive her about the ink, what about Mary's handkerchief?"

"Yes; what about that, Jean?"

people's think I want anything to do with you—"

"Nevertheless, I will wait a talk with you," Jean repeated, with a friendly smile. A sudden idea came to her. "Ruth, look here, come along to have some tea with me."

Remarkably mingled with assent in the look Ruth threw at the Scots girl.

"What's the idea? I don't want tea with you—nor anyone else in this beauty school!" she said sulkily. "For goodness' sake leave me alone—!" But there she looks off. A queer light came into her eyes.

"Jean, you—you really mean that?"

"Yes, of course. Then you will come?"

Ruth nodded.

"I'd love to! And thank you for the invitation." She seemed to find difficulty in getting the words out. "Jean, I—I'm sorry I spoke like that."

Gently Jean linked her arm in that of the Third Formers, drew her towards the door; still Ruth smiled.

And the Third watched in wonder. To them it seemed that a miracle had happened.

Spitfire!



"HAVE another pastry, Ruth?" smiled Jean Courtwright. "I got these specially for you."

"Oh, Jean, I couldn't—really! But I've had a delicious tea!"

been accepted by that girl with amazing meekness.

How right her mother had been, after all, Jean was reflecting, in asking her to become friendly with Ruth Wilton! Probably this was all Ruth had been wanting since she had come to CHB House. Now that an offer of real friendship had been made to her, how eagerly she had snatched at it! And how rapidly she was waning under its influence!

But Jean wanted to have a real heart-to-heart talk with the Spitfire. Deliberately she had refrained from saying too much over tea, preferring to wait until Ruth had thawed out, so to speak. But now she felt that the moment had come.

"Well, if you've finished," she said gaily, "we'll just clear up the things and have a cozy chat in front of the fire. What do you say to that, Ruth?"

Slowly the Spitfire rose to her feet. The happy smile gradually faded from her face; back came the old mood. And then she laughed—not pleasantly, but an awful, haunting laugh that made Jean start and stare at her in sudden alarm.

"I say nothing," she said grudgingly, "but I'm doing this!"

Like a flash both her hands shot out, clutched at the pretty lace tablecloth, jerked it violently from off the table.

Crash, crash, crash!

Cups, saucers, plates, pretty glass cake dish, and cutlery cascaded to the floor with a shattering clatter. The cut-glass jam dish tumbled down and broke, sending a sticky mass of jam and glass over the carpet; pastry, bread-and-butter were mixed with flowing tea and,

milk amid a wreckage of broken crockery.

Jean stood aghast, unable to believe her eyes, too utterly horrified to speak. But Ruth Wilton had not finished yet.

New a piercing shriek broke from her lips.

"Oh! Jean Cartwright, you can't leave me alone! O-oh! Let me go! Let me— Oh, you're hurting me!"

Thrilling footsteps outside. Ruth heard them and rushed to the door. It opened violently, and into the study burst Connie Jackson, the unpopular Sixth Form prefect; behind her swarmed a crowd of wondering, startled Fourth Formers.

"Ruth," snapped Connie sharply, "what is the meaning of all this noise? My goodness!" Her eyes had travelled to the havoc on the floor. "What ever's been happening here?"

"Oh, Connie," sobbed Ruth, "I'm so glad you've come! It—it was Jean Cartwright—she invited me to tea, and then started bullying me; she insisted my aunt—"

"Ruth," Jean's eyes were wide with horror. "Ruth, how can you tell such lies—"

"There's not time; it's the truth!" she sobbed. "Oh, Connie, please let me get out of here before the girls see again!"

"Don't you worry, kid. Better go and bathe your face," said Connie, with unusual consideration. "As for you, Jean—her voice hardened—" what explanation have you to offer?"

But Jean shook her head dumbly. She fell violently asleep, yet even greater than her anger was a feeling of bitter disappointment.

So Ruth had not changed. She had been pretending all the time; had come deliberately to Study No. 3 to stroke the tea-table, and, by her lies, get Jean punished.

"Well," Connie Jackson's voice snapped into Jean's ear, "don't stand there like a wuffed owl! What have you to say for yourself?"

Jean looked up.

"Only that it's not true," she said quietly. "I did not hurt Ruth! I was not bullying her. As for this tea, well, her eyes went to the flame—well, we've had a bit of a— a— a— a— and the cloth got pulled off."

"H'm!" Connie frowned. "Then why was Ruth crying if you hadn't hurt her? You'll take a hundred lines, Jean, and I shall report you to your Form-mistress. Now get that room closed up!"

And Connie, well satisfied at having been able to punish someone, strode off with a grim smile.

44 BUT, JEAN, what really happened?"

Barbara Rodfern asked that question five minutes later, as she, Mabel Lyon, and Clara Trevin helped the Scots girl to clear away the wreckage in Study No. 3.

Jean hesitated, fushing a little. "Well," she said slowly, "I—I felt rather sorry for Ruth Wilton. I thought she might be lonely and unhappy, so I invited her here to tea."

Barbara gave a gasp.

"So that's why you said you couldn't come to Study No. 4 at the last moment," Clara looked a little huffy. "And the Spiffers showed her appreciation by doing this. Is that it?"

Jean didn't answer.

"Well, we're not having that kid spoiling you," went on Clara grimly. "Don't forget the games on Saturday. You're racing for Cliff House—and England as well. We want you to win.

You've got to be as fit as a fiddle. And look at you now!" The Tumbler suddenly announced. "You look about as fit as a sick headache! For goodness' sake, don't let her upset you, Jean!"

She was gazing broadly at the Scots girl.

"Clara's right, you know," she said. "It's not our business, but I advise any one to steer clear of Ruth Wilton, kid, though she is. She'll have to mind her step. She's asking for expulsion, as you see as eggs! But come on, Jean! Cheer up! Let's go along to the Common-room for a game of table tennis."

Jean went with her cheeks. But she was still thinking of Ruth. In spite of what had happened, her resolution remained unshaken. More and more was she convinced that there was some streak of good in the Spiffers—and, if only for her mother's sake, she was determined to bring it to the fore.

But Jean would have received a shattering shock could she have seen Ruth at that moment, followed her, and overheard a conversation she had on the table-tennis.

Ruth had just entered the Sixth prefects' room. Bravely she strode into that most private of apartments, where juniors usually feared to tread.

Mary Butler of the Sixth was there, but she might not have noticed for all the noise Ruth took of her. Incredibly she crossed to the piano bench which stood in one corner of the room.

Mary Butler, face red with indignation, jumped to her feet.

"How?" she said fiercely. "What do you think you're doing?" Mary was always a girl of few words.

As if she had not heard, Ruth entered the booth, swung the door shut, and secured it with a small catch. Nudely she pulled a necktie loop at the wretched prefect, who glanced in impotent rage through the glass.

Calmly Ruth lifted off the receiver, asked for a number. There was a wash of several minutes, then a girl's voice answered:

"St. Margaret's College. Come please speaking."

Ruth Wilton's face lit up. A laugh was on her lips; those dark eyes of hers flashed.

"Oh, Clara! Hello, old thing! My hat's good to hear your voice! Yes, Ruth here. What? Yes, it's working! Don't you worry, it won't be long before we're all together again. They won't keep me on as this monthly old school week longer. I'm expecting to be expelled every day—and want to cheer when they do! You bet! I'll soon talk my aunt round, and then I'll be joining you at St. Margaret's. And what a merry time we'll all have there-oh! Well, mustn't stop now, Clara. There's a mad hall waiting for me outside the telephone-box. I'll be seeing you soon, Cheers!"

Ruth clapped back the receiver, unlocked the door of the booth, and stepped coolly out. The fuming Mary Butler awaited her.

"That insolence, Ruth Wilton, will cost you one hundred lines and a detention on the next half-holiday."

But Ruth just laughed. What did she care? The more punishments she received, the better pleased she would be.

For the Spiffers of the Third, as she had said on the telephone, was determinedly trying to earn expulsion from Cliff House!

In her unobtrusive, headstrong way, she was in expansion the solution of all her worries. She did not realize that expulsion was a disgrace—a stigma which would shadow her for the rest of her school-days.

The Girl Who Walked Out



"LUCKY old Jean!" "Good! Wish I'd been given first lesson off! It's

made with the Ball!"

Jean Cartwright, slipping rope in hand, laughed gaily as Barbara Rodfern and Clara Trevin made these remarks.

They, with a number of other Fourth Formers, stood in the quadrangle of Cliff House School just before lessons the following morning.

It was a perfect spring morning; gleaming sunshine, with ferny clouds drifting lazily across the blue sky, and just the slightest nip in the air that gave a feeling of exhilaration.

"Primmy's a dear!" Jean remarked lightly. "She said she wanted me to keep in perfect condition, and she's allowing me first lesson off to-day and to-morrow for training."

And her eyes danced as she gazed across the cinder track, where, in a few moments, she would be trying-out her paces, while her Form-fellows looked in the clear-room under the eagle eye of the near-tempered Miss Ballant.

"Sure you don't want a manager?" Clara asked sagely.

"Or a couple of stretcher-bearers?" put in Jean cheerily.

There was a laugh. One said all they would have given a leg to be able to stay out in the sunshine with Jean; but Primmy was hardly likely to be in agreement with their views.

"Hello! There goes lame-heel!" cried Ross Rodworth, in mock despair. "All prisoners back to the tortoise-chamber!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Recklessly the Fourth Formers turned into the school, and soon Jean was the only figure to be seen in the grounds. Five minutes skipping, then a practice run round the track, just to keep her legs from working cold.

It was during the second time round that Jean's eyes opened a figure—the figure of a girl making her way down the drive towards the gates.

"Primmy! Wonder who that is!" cried Jean, still running on at a gentle trot.

But as she rounded the edge of the track nearest the drive she suddenly stopped and stared. There was something familiar about that figure; something familiar in the swaggering stride of the girl, and then Jean stiffened.

"My hat! Ruth Wilton!" she gasped. An exclamation, but her lips.

As if hearing that remark—although she could not possibly have done so at the distance—the girl turned. Ruth Wilton it was.

She saw Jean staring at her, and a quick spread over her face. With quivering steps she paced on, disappearing into Pittardale Lane.

For a moment Jean stood still. Goodness, what did this mean? Had Ruth obtained permission to go out? No, no; that was extremely unlikely at this time of the morning.

Then an alarming thought came suddenly to Jean. Ruth must have changed lessons in order to go out! Just the sort of foolhardy thing she would do. But, goodness, that would mean terrible punishment for her—especially after Primmy's grim warning of yesterday.

Should she go after her; try to bring her back? Then Jean's face grew grim. Dash it, why should she? Why should she put herself out for Ruth Wilton—perhaps run her own head into trouble? But,

somewhere, the thought of that "good truck" in Ruth persisted. She remembered that letter from her mother—remembered the reply she had sent back only that morning, promising to help Ruth in every possible way, despite the childish way Ruth had treated her offers of friendship yesterday.

How grieved her mother would be if she knew that Jean was allowing the Third Farmer to run into trouble when perhaps she could prevent it!

"Oh bother!" said Jean. "I suppose I'd better go and see what the silly kid's up to!"

And Jean, poking up her blouse, turned and hurried across to the gate. She quickly spotted Ruth Wilton, strutting up the lane towards Friardale, and ran after her, soon catching her up.

"Ruth, where are you going? Have you permission to be out of school?" she asked quietly.

Ruth grinned in a mocking way.

"First answer—find out! Second answer—no!" she replied. "And, for goodness' sake, must you always be hanging around me? Can't you leave me alone? I've told you I don't want anything to do with you. You make me sick. Run off!"

And she straggled irritably, continuing her walk.

Jean's feeling of dislike grew way to one of deepest concern. The Spiffie was breaking bounds—was committing an almost unheard-of crime by deliberately walking out of the school in the middle of morning hours.

"Ruth!" she said desperately. "Don't you realize what you're doing? Don't be a goose! You'll be expelled for walking home!"

"Good! That's just what I want!" was the Spiffie's cool reply. "Oh, I've done something for some time now, think, Miss Milberry. I made myself such a nuisance to old Beatty that she sent me out of the classroom, told me to report to old Prim-and-Proper! But I couldn't be bothered to see either her, or I came out for a stroll."

Jean stood wide-eyed—appalled. Goodness, how could one do anything for a girl like this! By the look in Ruth's eyes she knew the Spiffie was speaking the truth.

And as the two girls stood there—Ruth angry and gloving, Jean pale and a little shaken—there came the sound of wheels along the road from the direction of Cliff House.

It was the Friardale bus. As she spotted it, Ruth's eyes glowed. With a quick bound she was across the road. Before Jean could realize her intentions she had sprung recklessly upon the top of the speeding vehicle and was being whirled away towards Friardale.

"Now take me back to school!"

The Spiffie's taunting yell floated to Jean's ears as she stood gazing helplessly after the fast disappearing bus. But curiously enough, the felt no anger towards the recklessly forward junior; only a deep and ever-growing anxiety. Suddenly she felt she must save Ruth from the consequences of her own folly; must appeal to her, for her friend's sake, not deliberately to save the terrible diagnosis of expulsion, for which she was so surely heading.

But how to plead with her? How to catch up with her soon? Impossible to chase the bus on foot.

And then she started, looking quickly toward her. Out of the gates of Cliff House School emerged a heavily van. It turned in the direction of Friardale. Jean's heart leaped. This was her chance. At her frantic signal, the driver slowed down, ceased in surprise as he recognized her blouse.

"I—I've got to go towards Friardale," Jean stammered. "I've just missed the bus. Could you give me a lift until we catch it up?"

The driver grinned good-naturedly.

"Why, certainly, miss," he said genially. "Hop in!"

Jean thanklessly climbed up beside him. The van went lurching down the lane at a snail pace. Jean, a prey to an intense anxiety, stared out eagerly through the windscreen for sight of the bus.

They turned a corner. Ah, there it was, at the end of Friardale Woods, and, most amazingly, it had stopped.

Jean saw why a second later.

For part of the vehicle Ruth Wilton stepped on to the footpath, and struck off into the woods.

"Thank you," Jean said hurriedly. "If you'd please stop I'll get out here."

The van drove to a standstill with a squeal of brakes, and Jean, hastily stamping her thanks, jumped down on to the road. In a flash she, too, was starting into the woods, but on the track of the Spiffie.

But the crackling sounds of the undergrowth made Ruth aware of her approach. A malevolent look crossed her face as she saw the Fourth Farmer. Unseen by Jean, she snatched behind a bush at the side of the path. Her features were working convulsively as she watched the Scots girl spring in her wake.

With both hands she grasped the slender trunk of a sapling handleless which grew beside her. As Jean drew level with her, she bore it downwards and outwards.

The sapling trunk bent with ease, stretched right across the path in front of the swiftly running Jean. Too late that girl saw it.

She tried to pull up, but the sapling caught her sharply across the knees. She tripped violently forward, thrusting out her hands to save herself. But as she fell, her right foot caught against a stump of a tree-root which protruded from the path.

A sharp, stabbing pain shot scorching through her ankle. A cry left her lips as she thudded heavily to the ground.

When she raised a smothering laugh beside her.

"That brought you a cropper, didn't it?"

Jean, gazing up, saw the sneering face of Ruth Wilton looking down at her. The Scots girl struggled to a sitting position. She made to rise to her feet, but as her weight rested on her right foot, she gave a sharp cry as an agonising pain shot through it right up her leg.

"My foot!" she gasped, biting her lip to keep back another cry. "Oh, Ruth, what have you done—?"

With agonised, terrified eyes she gazed up at the Third Farmer. Her feet—oh, goodness! they were injured! She couldn't get it to the ground! But she must—must! She had promised to look after herself—promised that nothing should stop her running in the race on Saturday!

And then—

Once again she ceased to rise. Then, unable to bear the agony of the injured limb any longer, she sank back in a white-faced, helpless heap.

The Return



"NOW" where the merry diabolism the girl here got to.

Then Barbara Haffers, her pretty face crossed with worry, as she and her chums of the

Fourth Form stood at the gates of Cliff House School during mid-morning break, gazing anxiously down Friardale Lane.

Her worry was reflected in the faces of most of the Fourth gathered there. "Ruth's sure done a pretty nice vanishing trick," drawled Lolla Carroll, the American junior. "Guess the Ball will be all set up if Jean doesn't bustle."

"That's just what I've been thinking," put in Clara moodily. "Guess: Hope nothing's happened to her," she added in sudden alarm.

The class exchanged uneasy glances as the fresh aspect of Jean Cartwright's unaccountable absence struck them.

In five minutes half would ring for recommencement of lessons, and if Jean hadn't put in an appearance by then, there was going to be trouble for her with a capital 'T'.

"Well, I don't know—" began Bala a little irritably, to break off as an eager voice hailed her, and her younger sister, Daisy, her face alight with excitement, dashed up.

"Bala! I say, Bala," she burst out. "Have you heard about Ruth Wilton?" she said breathlessly. "She got sent out of class this morning, was told to report to Primrose. But she didn't, and she hasn't been seen since. Primrose's furious. They're going to be a terrific row when she comes back." Daisy added.

But Bala & Co. were intently gazing at each other with a look of dawning comprehension in their eyes.

Jean Cartwright missing! Ruth Wilton missing! Was there—could there be any connection between the two?

Once again they remembered the scenes of yesterday; remembered Jean's strange reluctance to allow them to search Ruth for her despicable trick in Study No. 8; remembered her audacious and surprising interference in the Spiffie of the Third.

"My hat! Bala, do you think—" began Bala hesitantly.

Bala looked glibly.

"I don't know what to think. But it looks as if—"

What Bala was about to say was interrupted by an excited shout from Freda Ferris.

"Look, here she is—" A pause, then: "No, it isn't Jean. It—it's Ruth Wilton!"

All eyes immediately stared along Friardale Lane. Ruth Wilton it was, appearing along in her usual lay fashion.

"No sign of Jean," Janet Jordan said glacially.

Bala's face hardened as she waited for the Third Farmer to reach the gates. Ruth smiled coolly as she drew level with them.

"Looking for me?" she asked pleasantly.

"No, we're not," Clara said lightly. "We're looking for Jean Cartwright. Seen her?"

Ruth shrugged.

"Oh, yes. She came out for a walk with me. But she wasn't any hurry to get back, so I left her resting in Friardale Woods!"

And with a nod toward she walked slowly on, just as the changing of second bell sounded.

Bala & Co. gazed at each other helplessly. No doubting that moment. But what of Jean? Had Ruth told them the truth, or had it been another of her unpleasant lies?

"Well, come on," said Clara moodily. "No good all getting into trouble. Perhaps," she added doubtfully. "Miss Wright won't notice Jean's absence." But that was a fearful hope, for the

lynx-eyed English mistress at once spotted the vacant desk, though she made no comment.

Second lesson had never before seemed so tedious, but at long last it drew to a close. And still Jean Cartwright had not appeared.

Miss Wright, gathering up her books, looked across at Babs just before quitting the room.

"Phone word Jean to me immediately she appears, Barbara," she said cryptically.

And Babs, with a sinking heart, nodded.

In a body the Fourth streamed out of the classroom and up to the Fourth Form passage to put away their books before once again taking up their vigil at the gates.

It was as they turned the angle in the corridor that they spotted Jean Cartwright just approaching from the other end.

She was pale, obviously shaken. She gave a violent start as Babs & Co. swept round the corner, and then continued to advance with a quavering stifled sob, strange spasms crossing her face as she walked.

Inwardly Jean groaned. Oh, goodness, she had hoped to be in her study before lessons finished. She had wanted to examine her feet, that feet which was torturing her with every step she took. The agony of that she told back to Cliff House from Frimdale Woods had almost brought her to collapsing point.

She shook a little at her shame, after one surprised stare, swept upon her.

"Jean," cried Babs, "where on earth have you been?"

The Sixth girl bit her lip.

"Oh, nowhere in particular," she answered confidentially.

"H'm! Tell that to the mistress," put in Lydia Cromwell's voice scoldingly. "Babs Wilton said that you'd been out for a walk with her."

"Oh, that's not true!" Jean's voice was quavering. "Babs shouldn't have said that—"

"Then perhaps," put in Babs loudly, "you went after Ruth? Was that it, Jean? Did you try to fetch her back when she cut lessons?"

"Oh, yes—no— Either it, what does it matter, anyway," said Jean irritably as her face gave another quavering twinge.

She saw Babs' look of heart surprise, felt angry with herself for having caused it. But her foot—oh, she must get to her study! Why must Babs & Co. ask her all these questions now? The pain! She felt as if she would faint. She clasped a little.

"Do you mind letting me pass?" she asked, pale making her voice quavering.

The girls looked at her in surprise.

"Oh, well, if you insist," said Babs.

"If you won't tell us, you won't. Come on."

And with a friendly but quavering smile, she grabbed hold of Jean's arm and pulled her forward.

"Come on! Let's have one of your champion sprits in the study door."

Jean made no bold heroic back against the Form leader's strong tug, retired forward. Her weight fell heavily upon her injured foot. From her lips came a thin, pining shriek.

"Oh, Babs, don't—don't!" she moaned, and took in a sudden leap against the wall, while the astonished Form captain gazed at her in consternation.

But suddenly suspicion of the truth blazed in Tomboy Clara Twyler's eyes. Her quavering gaze travelled from the pallid face of the half-fainting girl,

slowly down until it rested upon her feet. Then a great shout left her lips.

"Oh, great goodness! Jean, your feet! What have you done to it?"

Jean could make no reply. But heartlessly every eye fastened upon that foot which she was now unable even to put to the floor. There, under the thin black stocking, was a large round swelling.

The Fourth gazed in silent horror. But not for long. For Babs, in her usual capable manner, took command of the situation.

"Here, help her to her study," she said briskly. "Come on, Jean, put your weight on us."

She slipped a firm but tender arm under the Sixth girl's shoulder, and with Clara on the other side they proceeded towards Study No. 8. There they gently lowered her into the ambulance, deftly pooled off her stocking.

And at the sight of the exposed foot a sigh that was almost a groan arose from the crowd gathered in the doorway. The ankle was almost twice its size, with a deeply spreading purplish-bluish tinge covering its whiteness.

"Jean?" gasped Babs. "Oh, Jean!" She could say no more, only stare in horror.

But not so Clara Twyler.

"So that's what following Ruth Wilton did for you," she said a trifle bitterly.

Jean shook her head miserably. Two large tears gathered under her closed eyelids and trickled slowly down her face.

"Don't—don't blame Ruth," she said weakly, hardly realising what she was saying. "She—she didn't mean to do it!"

"Great Scott! So Ruth Wilton did it, eh?" broke in Rosa Redburn violently. "Just wait till I get hold of that little brat—"

"Rosa, no!" Jean started up, only to sink back with a groan. "You mean it! I didn't realize what I was saying. Remember, she's only a kid. She—she doesn't understand!"

Babs, seeing the look on Jean's face, hastily broke in:

"Leave Ruth alone for the moment, Rosa. Jean's the important one. Be a dear and get across to the nurse. The doctor may be there. It's about his time."

With a shrug Rosa turned and hurried off. Five minutes later she returned, accompanied by general doctor Fisher, Cliff House's visiting doctor from Courtfield, who luckily had been in the ambulance.

Quickly and deftly his fingers passed over the injured limb.

"Sit tight!" he said suddenly, and in that same moment pressed hand and firm on the ankle.

An agonized yell came from Jean Cartwright. She half rose in the chair, sank back with a groan.

Then the doctor settled up at her.

"All over," he said absently, "and you can think yourself lucky I was here. Just a small case out of position, but it would have been serious if you'd left it any longer. With care, it'll be as right as rain in a day or two."

Jean gazed up at him with eyes that were suddenly full of eager hope.

"But doctor," she said hoarsely, "what about Saturday. I'm entered for the games. Will—will it be all right by then?"

There was a breathless hush as the whole of the Form hung upon his answer. For a moment the doctor looked dubious. Then—

"H'm! Running in the games, eh?

Well," he said slowly, "that will depend entirely upon yourself, young lady. Give it as much rest as you possibly can. Get Mrs. Thwaites to massage it night and morning. And remember, no exertion. Don't use it any more than is absolutely necessary. Follow that advice and you'll be all right. I assure you—" He gave a shrug.

But everybody read that shrug aright. If Jean ignored that warning, then her ankle would give way again.

And if that happened, all chance of running for school and country would be hopelessly and finally lost.

Ruth Chuckles



"YOU'RE a mean little sneak!"

Madge Stevens' voice was nothing

as she stood in the Third Form Common-room just before tea, glancing, with angry eyes, at Ruth Wilton.

The Spitter's lip curled.

"That all? Nothing worse?" she sneered.

"It's hard to find words to describe you!" put in Doris Redburn hotly.

"I've known some sneaks in my time, but you just about take the cake. Why didn't you own up to throwing that ink potter at the Ball?"

"You know the Ball meant it when she said she'd detain the whole Form for an hour after lessons if the culprit didn't own up!" shrieked Pansy Carter indignantly.

"Oh, you pipe down!" said Ruth, with a sneer. "Who asked you to put your ear in? Why should I own up to save a pack of idiots like you from detention? You saw me do it. Why didn't one of you tell the Ball? It wouldn't have worried me."

"Possibly because we have a different code of honour from you," said Madge Stevens cuttingly.

But the threat had no effect on the Spitter of the Third. Ruth, in her warped way, was feeling satisfied with herself. She had certainly got the Third worked up into a fine old paddy—just ripe for one of those rows she loved. And all because, in lessons that afternoon, she had flicked an ink potter at Miss Halliwell and had refused to own up.

Silly little idiots, she thought disdainfully, with their stupid code of honour! Pah! What good had it done them?

But the Third were fustier. They were out for revenge.

"Let's give her another ragging!" suggested Ida Jackson vindictively. "And this time she won't have her Jean to protect her!"

"Yes, rather!"

"How, you keep off?" Ruth cried, backing away. "Keep back, co—"

The door of the Common-room swung open.

"Girls! How dare you make all this noise!"

The Third's threatening advance upon Ruth Wilton stopped miraculously as that acid voice fell upon their ears. There were gasps of dismay. For, standing in the doorway, her brow as black as a thunderbolt, her eyes glittering with anger, was Miss Halliwell.

The mistress strode grimly into the room.

"The conduct of this Form," she rapped, "is going from bad to worse. I could hear you shouting at the other end of the corridor. Apparently your punishment this afternoon has had no

lasting effect. Very well?" Her lips compressed. "Every girl here will take fifty lines."

She steady upon toward the room, causing to rest upon the Spitfire of the Third.

"Ruth Wilson?" she exclaimed acidly. "Where are the hundred lines I gave you yesterday? They should have been on my desk by now."

Ruth gave an incoherent shrug. "I haven't done them!" she said sadly.

For a moment the Hall seemed bereft of speech. Then her grey eyes flashed.

"Indeed? And why not?" Her voice made the other Third Formers shake in their shoes.

Ruth, however, was quite unperturbed. "Oh, I couldn't be bothered!" she said off-handedly.

"Don't expect me to spend all my time doing these lines, do you? If you want them, I'm afraid you'll have to wait. I've got about two thousand to do already. Or perhaps," she added daringly, "you'd like to do these yourself, as you're so fond of handing them out to other people?"

A great gasp came from the Third Formers. Never, never before had they heard a mistress addressed with such insolence.

The Hall looked as if she had been struck. A flush surged up into her salient cheeks. For a few seconds she seemed to fight for control. Her voice, when she spoke, was thin and shrilled.

"For—for this appalling rudeness," she choked, "you will most certainly be expelled!"

Ruth Wilson stepped forward audibly. At last! She'd worked hard for that to happen, and now it seemed that her audacity was to be punished. She would have this beastly school for ever.

From the first she'd hated the thought of coming to Cliff House, being separated from her friends. She had vowed to get herself expelled, and now she had succeeded.

She was chuckling as she jauntily followed the fuming mistress into Miss Princeson's room.

The headmistress' face was grave as she listened to Miss Ballivan's almost insolent tale.

"Miss Princeson, I demand that this girl receive the severest punishment!" the Hall spluttered. "She is not fit to remain at Cliff House, to mix with other girls. She—she should be expelled!"

Ruth grinned, but stood silent, waiting in eager anticipation for what she hoped was coming.

But the headmistress' words then came as a violent shock to the Spitfire of the Third. For Miss Princeson, her face suddenly old and careworn, looked up at her almost proudly.

"Ruth," she said slowly and heavily, "you have heard what Miss Ballivan says. By all the laws of this school your disgraceful conduct since coming to Cliff House has merited expulsion time and time again. But I cannot take such a step lightly, knowing how terribly it will affect your future life. I do not think you fully realize the folly of your behavior. For that reason, in spite of what I said this morning, I shall not make an immediate decision. I'm going to give you until to-morrow morning to think over your conduct. If, at the end of that time, you come to me with a sincere apology and a promise to behave in future, I will forgive all that has gone before, and you can start with a clean slate."

The headmistress paused, allowing her words to sink in.

"Think it over, Ruth," she said

quietly. "Now go—not a word!" she added sternly as Ruth made to speak.

And the Spitfire, under the gaze of those stern eyes, found herself turning and walked quietly from the room.

She did not hear Miss Princeson's remark to the Third Form mistress.

"Miss Ballivan, I'm convinced that there is something wrong with that girl. No normal child of her age would behave in such a way. That is the only reason for my leniency. I am hoping that by this kindness she can be cured of her queer complex. If that fails, then I'm afraid she must go. I shall communicate with her guardian to that effect immediately."

While, in the Third Form quarters, Ruth Wilson stood gazing out of the window into the quad, biting viciously at her nails.

Ruth was furious. Once again nothing had happened: she was still at Cliff House; still she had not been expelled! Twenty-four hours to think things over. Twenty-four hours, more likely, in which to perpetrate some crime so indelible that Miss Princeson would expel her on the spot!

But what to do? For half an hour the Spitfire stood there, her brow furrowed in thought. Then suddenly she began to shake audibly, then louder—and louder still, until she was laughing almost hysterically.

At "The Silver Web"



THE hour of eleven chimed out from the old clock tower at Cliff House School.

Jean Cartwright, in her bed in the Fourth Form dormitory, tossed restlessly.



WITH Clara and Babe supporting her with eager, tender hands, Jean limped along to her study. What hope was there now that she would be able to take her place in the big race on Saturday—the race she had vowed to win!

Oh, how she wished she could sleep! How she envied all those sleeping forms around her!

But chance was denied her. Her brain was too busy, chaotic with thoughts.

She thought of Ruth Wilson; of her promise to her mother; of the way she had nearly forfeited her chance on Saturday at the games.

Then suddenly she sat up in bed with a jerk.

What was that? A creak, the secondary door slowly opening. A swift pattern of footprints across the floor, halting by her bed.

Jean's eyes opened wide in surprise. For looking down upon her, her face outlined in the soft silvery light of the moon which streamed in through the mullioned windows, stood Ruth Wilson.

"Oh, so you're awake, are you?" came the Spitfire's low voice. "That's good, because I've got something to tell you."

Jean struggled upright.

"Ruth! What are you doing here?" she said in alarm. "And—my hat! Why are you dressed for going out—"

"Because I am going out," replied the Spitfire easily. "You know the Silver Web Racecourse?"

Jean started.

"Ruth! What—what do you mean to—"

"Well, I'm going there—age!"

Jean, her face wrung with anxiety, gripped the Spitfire's arm.

"But, Ruth, you can't—you mustn't! You know what Primmy said—that my Cliff House girl found there would be instantly expelled—"

"Of course I do. That's why I'm going!" Ruth grinned mockingly. "And what do you think? I'm going to make sure that Primmy herself finds me there! I came to tell you, Miss Somebody, so

that you'd have something to think about while I'm gone. Because you can't follow me this time, can you? Not with a foot like you've got. Not when Cliff House is depending upon you just for Saturday. Makes it awkward, doesn't it? Well, bye-bye—and pleasant dreams!"

"Ruth! Ruth! Oh, come back, you fool!"

But with a last few chuckle, the Spirit of the Third disappeared through the dormitory doorway.

FOR SOME seconds Jean Cartwright still sat bolt upright in bed, staring in agonized dismay at the doorway through which the Spirit of the Third had vanished.

Oh, this was terrible—terrible! Ruth Wilson—going to the Silver Web Roadhouse, the dance hall, and restaurant on the Courtland road which Miss Primrose had definitely barred to every girl, junior or senior, in the school, saying that if any Cliff House pupil were ever discovered there she would be expelled instantly.

In an agony of indecision, the Scots girl sat there, her eyes wide and staring. Should she go after Ruth? Should she again attempt to save her from herself? But if she did—what of her foot?

Dr. Fisher had told her to rest it, put no undue strain upon it, if she did—He had not said what would happen, but his meaning had been only too painfully obvious. And a walk to the Silver Web Roadhouse—a matter of some four miles—what effect would that have?

Jean shook her head.

It was a terrible choice that her foot would grind the strain. And if it did, she then dissolved into thin air were her hopes of racing in the International Coaches on Saturday.

But, behold! there suddenly rose before Jean's eyes a vision of Ruth Wilson after her expulsion—frivolous, disgraced, forbidden to enter any other decent school—her future chances in life jeopardized.

That was what expulsion meant. And Ruth, blind fool that she was, did not realize it.

Jean groaned. Oh, what was she to do! Should she awake Ruth; tell her? She dismissed the idea almost as soon as it came. This was her own personal battle.

Neither Ruth nor any other girl should be dragged into this. Only she could save Ruth Wilson. But save her only at the cost, perhaps, of the race on Saturday.

For perhaps another minute Jean sat there. And then, silently, furtively, she slipped out of bed. With trembling hands she dressed herself. Like a wraith, she crept from the dormitory.

Jean's mind was made up. Ruth Wilson must be saved!

A FEW SOON and a half later, Jean Cartwright slipped up to the entrance of the dimly lighted Silver Web Roadhouse.

She was tired, dazed. Her feet ached abominably. The strains of the long walk was telling upon her.

She had walked so quickly as she had cared, but even so Ruth must already be here in the dance hall. She only hoped she was not too late.

With a trembling hand Jean pushed open the ornate glass swinging door. A silver-uniformed pageboy came up to her.

"Clink room on the right, miss—" began politely, but the Scots girl shook her head quickly.

"No, I'm not staying. I'm looking for someone."

Jean broke off, a cry on her lips. For her gaze, travelling round the vestibule, had come to rest upon one of the glass-fronted telephone-booths which stood against the far wall.

And in one of them, receiver clapped to her ear, glared furiously at Jean through the glass, was Ruth Wilson.

Jean started forward. Ruth—what was she doing? Oh, goodness, whom could she be telephoning at this time of night! Like a flash, the horrifying truth came to her. The Spirit of the Third must be phoning Miss Primrose!

And Jean's guess was right. Quickly Ruth was speaking into the switchpiece again and Ruth, passionately furious with Jean for once again interfering, had determined to make the Scots girl pay for it—and pay dearly.

In that moment, perhaps, she did not realize what a contemptible trick she was playing upon the girl who had always tried to help her. But in Ruth's eyes it was not help that Jean had been offering. She looked upon the Scots girl as an interfering busybody—one who was always trying to thwart her efforts to get herself expelled. But Jean should not interfere this time—not when the successful achievement of her objective was within her grasp. This time she would be expelled—but not alone! For with her would go Jean Cartwright!

From the receiver of the telephone came Miss Primrose's voice:

"Yes, yes! Who is it?"

Ruth's eyes glittered.

"I am speaking from the Silver Web Roadhouse," she said, in a soft voice. "I think you should know that two of your pupils are here now. I advise you to come immediately and fetch these back."

Ruth Changes Her Mind



STEPPING out of the telephone-booth, Ruth Wilson's brain worked swiftly as Jean Cartwright broke down upon her.

Sometimes, she meant to keep the Scots girl here until Primrose's arrival. Primrose would be here in less than a quarter of an hour.

"Ruth! Ruth! What have you done?" Jean Cartwright's voice was heartbroken. "You must come away from here—at once—before it is too late." In her fervor, she shook the Spirit. "Ruth, who were you phoning?"

"Oh, a friend!" answered Ruth coolly. "What's all the fuss, anyway?"

"Oh, you fool!" Jean's eyes blazed. "Don't lie to me!" she cried. "It was Miss Primrose you were phoning, wasn't it? And now she'll be coming here. You'll be found here. You're coming back to Cliff House, if I have to drag you all the way!"

A red wave of anger surged into Ruth's cheeks.

"Here, what the diavolo do you mean?" she cried. "Clinging here and making a noise, shouting like that! You're not dragging me back to Cliff House! I'll go when I'm ready—not before!"

Ruth's eye swept to the clock. Good! Five minutes gone already since she had spoken to Miss Primrose. And suddenly, most amazingly, she changed her tone.

"I'm sorry I spoke to you like that, Jean," she went on, in a small voice. "I know you've only come to save me. Oh,

what a fool I've been! I—I shall be expelled if Primrose finds me here! Oh—oh!" And in pretended grief she put her hands in front of her eyes and began to sob.

Immediately Jean was all tender concern. She did not realize, even after her previous experience, that this was just a cunning trick. Ruth, she thought, had at last repented, had at last realized the enormity of what she was doing.

She put a tender arm about the shaking shoulders.

"Ruth dear, there's still time," she said softly. "We can still get back to Cliff House before anything is discovered if we hurry. Come quickly. Where's your hat and coat?"

"In—the cloak-room," sniffed Ruth.

"Well, hurry—hurry! I'll come with you to get it."

And pulling Ruth in her anxiety, Jean hurried off towards the cloak-room. But there again came delay. For Ruth, having cunningly concealed it, said she could not find her cloak-room ticket.

Minutes upon minutes passed, while the attendant went along row after row of coats, trying to find the one Ruth described to her. Nearly ten minutes that took, and Jean, by that time, was in a state of frantic anxiety.

At last the coat was found. Ruth, with a tremendous smile, donned it, and with her arm through that of Jean's, hurried out of the cloak-room.

Along the carpeted corridor they went, into the vestibule. They reached the swing-door, and then—

Adam-blown and trembling, Jean Cartwright fell back. For on the other side of those doors stood a majestic figure. A figure with a look of terrible anger on her sternly set face.

Miss Primrose, the headmistress.

THE early golden sunshine streamed in through the barred window of the punishment-room at Cliff House School; fell slanting upon two girls who sat there.

They were Jean Cartwright and Ruth Wilson.

All night they had been there, Jean sleepers, a prey to dreadful fears; Ruth sleeping soundly, a satisfied smile on her pained face.

Not yet did they know what the blow was to fall. But that it would fall Miss Primrose had intimated when she thrust them into the room last night.

Not a word had the headmistress spoken on that terrible journey from the Silver Web to Cliff House in her car. Not a syllable had she uttered as she accompanied them up to the punishment-room. But just before locking the door she had thoughtfully intimated them that she would see them in the morning.

Jean chided. She felt weak and sick. Her ankle throbbled. Yet, surprisingly enough, her conviction of the punishment night seemed to have had no really serious effect upon it.

The only ray of hope in the darkness that surrounded her was that Ruth, when hauled before Miss Primrose, would tell the true version of last night's affair. For only so bitterly now she realized how Ruth had tricked her once again by her pretended repentance; how she had deliberately dallied to insure Jean herself.

Ruth sat on the edge of the other bed, grivous as she looked at the Scots girl's white face.

Ruth was enjoying herself. At long last she had succeeded. She was to be expelled. Not a chance this time that the headmistress would overlook her offences.

"Well, why the tragedy queen stuff!" she jeered. "You give me the pop with that look on your face."
 The Scots girl raised laggard eyes. "Oh, Ruth," she said loudly, "what about your aunt? What is she going to say?"
 "Oh, she'll probably wail a little, but she'll soon get over it. And then laugh—oh! Off to St. Margaret's with my friends."
 Jean started.

So, at last, she knew the truth. That was the reason Ruth wanted to be expelled, so that she could join her friends at another school.

Before she could speak, however, there was a patter but first in the passage outside. A white envelope suddenly appeared in the crack between door and door. Then the sound of departing feet.

"Hallo!" said Ruth, starting up. "Letter for somebody. For me!" she cried as she picked up the envelope. "Oh, golly!" with a grimace. "From uncle. Another lecture, I suppose."

With careless fingers she slit open the envelope, began to read the letter. Then suddenly a change came over her face. The mutiny, the defiance, the glowing triumph fled, leaving it white and twisted.

For a moment she stared unseeingly at Jean. Then a wild shriek burst from her lips.

"No—no! He can't mean it. He can't read me there—he can't, I won't go. I—!" She stared at Jean. To her lips came a shrill cry which was terrible in its intensity. Suddenly she thrust the letter towards Jean. "Read it!" Her voice had become a whisper. Wonderingly Jean took the letter.

"Ruth," it began loudly. "Once again Miss Primrose sends me a bad report. I have just received a telegram telling me of your latest misdeemeanor. Miss Primrose says you are beyond her control but that she has given you one last chance. Now that you make the most of that chance. Another bad report from your headmistress and I shall take you away from Cliff House School. As you seem to be beyond control I shall send you to the Devonian Correction School. There, I have no doubt, you will be brought to your senses. This is an idle threat, Ruth. I mean every word of it.—DULCIS."

As Jean reached the end of the letter, she raised startled eyes to the quivering girl in front of her.

"Ruth!" she gasped. "That school—"

"—it's a reformatory!"
 "I know—I know!" sobbed Ruth. "Oh, he can't read me there—he can't, Linton!" she said, flinging herself upon Jean. "You've got to help me. Get to it, if you hear!" Her voice rose hysterically. "Oh, I know I've been a beast. But you promised your master to help me. Yes, I know that," she added, seeing Jean's look of surprise. "Aunt wrote and told me. Well, now you've got to keep your promise. You've got to think of some way to help me—to save me from being expelled."
 And in a fresh paroxysm of sobbing she flung herself upon the bed, her feet kicking, her clenched hands beating wildly into the pillow.

Jean rose. Her lips curved a little bitterly. She felt terribly, dreadfully sorry for Ruth. But how typical it was of the girl's selfish nature that she was still thinking only of herself, of the fate she had brought upon her own head.

A key grated in the lock. The door opened. Dulcis Fairbrother entered. The look she gave Jean met the Scots girl to the heart, as heart and reproachful was it. But all she said was:



THE door opened, revealing grave-faced Dulcis Fairbrother. "Come along, you two," she said. "Miss Primrose is waiting to see you." And Jean knew that the dread hour had come. Expectation awaited her!

"Come, you two. Miss Primrose is waiting."

Ruth rose from the bed. She clutched Jean's arm desperately.

"Remember, you've got to do something," she gasped.

Jean did not reply. Her head was whirling. She felt as if she were going to faint. But somehow, holding her chin high, she walked steadily along to the headmistress' study.

Miss Primrose sat there, grave-faced and stern. She coldly glanced at the two girls as they came in, noticed Jean's white face, the tears still coursing down Ruth's cheeks.

"Before I say anything," the headmistress began, "I am going to give you girls a chance to tell your own story. I have a shrewd suspicion that one of you is quite innocent. That one of you, indeed, went to the roadhouse for the sole purpose of bringing the other back. Am I right?"

Before Jean could speak, Ruth Wilton hurried herself forward.

"Yes—yes! That's right!" she cried hysterically. "Jean went to the roadhouse. I knew she'd get into trouble if she were found. I followed her there. I tried to save her!" The lie came glibly from her trembling lips.

But Jean Cartwright fell back. Her head was aching. A wave of blackness seemed to be swooping over her. She fought valiantly against it. Oh, the treachery of this girl—the awful treachery!

Dimly she heard Miss Primrose's voice, an incredulous, unbelieving note in it.

"Jean, is this true?"

But Jean Cartwright was unable to answer. The words would not come—surely would not come. She saw the

unbelieving look on Miss Primrose's face; knew that with one short sentence she would clear her name of this awful crime.

But that sentence—she could not utter it. For the life of her she could not speak.

And Miss Primrose, shaking her head heavily, could place the only possible construction upon that silence.

"Very well, Jean," she said slowly. "Then—then I shall have to keep my word. I have no alternative but to expel you. You, Ruth"—she gave the English a look, searching glance—"as you apparently went to the roadhouse with only the best of motives, I shall not punish you. Dulcis, take Jean back to the punishment-room. She will remain there until I have communicated with Mrs. Cartwright."

Still Jean did not speak. As one in a dream she followed Dulcis into the room.

At the doorway she turned, trying once again to speak. But still words would not come.

Boundingly she went with Dulcis up to the punishment-room.

The Silence of Jean Cartwright



CLIFF HOUSE heard with the occasional news.

These junior champions in the International Games was to be expelled!

But worst of all was the check left in the Fourth Form. Barbara Batters and her chums at first refused to believe it. It couldn't be true. Not Jean—not their loyal Scottish chum.

"Jean's not guilty!" Babs said confidently. "We know that she's been trying to save Ruth Wilson from her wicked escapades. We know that Jean wouldn't have gone out last night with her feet as it is without some very good reason. Jean doesn't go to roadhouses. She wouldn't go in one even if it wasn't out of bounds. She went there to save Ruth Wilson. I'm sure of it."

"Of course she did!" shouted Rosa Redworts. "Ruth Wilson's lying. She always said she wanted to be expelled. Why doesn't she take her punishment now, instead of putting the blame on to Jean?"

"Hear, hear!" came a roar.

It was a sentiment shared by the Fourth as a whole. They knew that Ruth had bravely declared she cared nothing for expulsion. Why, then, this sudden change of front? And at the expense of their own school?

Babs' shoulders sagged.

"I wish," she said firmly, "that we make up a deputation to go and see Principal. We'll tell her what we want. Surely she can't really take Ruth's word against Jean's?"

"That's it!" said Clara eagerly. "A deputation!"

The whole Form wanted to go. But finally it was decided that Babs herself, Clara Trevlin, and Rosa Redworts should form the deputation.

Amid a storm of good wishes the three girls made their way to Miss Prinrose's study. The headmistress raised her eyebrows as they entered.

"Well, Barbara?" she said quietly.

"Miss Prinrose," Babs began nervously, "we—we've come to see you about Jean. You see," she went on, gaining courage, "we're sure there's been some awful mistake. Jean wouldn't go to that roadhouse after you'd put it out of bounds, especially after the doctor had told her not to use her feet more than she could help. Jean was terribly keen to run in the games. She—she wouldn't have done anything like that to jeopardize her chance."

Miss Prinrose heard the Fourth Form explain out. Then, kindly, she surveyed the three girls.

"I, also, Barbara," she said quietly, "have my own views on this matter. I know Jean Carterright's record, and I know the record of Ruth Wilson. But I discovered these two girls at the Silver Web. One of them, I know, went to save the other. Ruth said she was that girl. Jean did not deny it. What, then, can I do? Unless Jean chooses to speak to deny Ruth's story, I must carry on my duty. And that duty," she knew, painful as it is, is expulsion."

Babs winced. Clara and Rosa glanced at each other grimly.

"Miss Prinrose," pleaded Babs desperately, "may—we go up and see Jean? Perhaps she will tell us the truth."

"For a moment the headmistress was silent. Then—

"Very well, Barbara," she said quietly. "But if you should not succeed, there is one thing I should like you to tell Jean. With this decision in my mind, I intend to allow Jean to enter on as she normally would do until her mother comes for her on Monday. That means she may resume her study, and may mix with you girls in the ordinary way. It also means, Barbara," she added slowly, "that she will be able to run in the games on Saturday."

Babs gasped.

"You—you really mean that, Miss Prinrose?"

The headmistress smiled.

"I have said so, Barbara. You may let Jean out of the punishment-room when you go up. If she should make any statement to you, you will, of course, communicate it to me immediately. Otherwise"—she sighed—"you must make it clear to Jean that she is still under sentence of expulsion."

With a kindly nod, she waved away their stammered thanks. But outside, in the passage, the three Fourth

.....

PLEASE TELL ALL YOUR CHUMS ABOUT —THE— SCHOOLGIRL

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Formers looked at each other in amazement. Never before had the kindly headmistress been known to do such a thing.

"Which only goes to prove," said Rosa Redworts combatively, as they raced up to the punishment-room, "that Primary herself is not too sure about Jean's guilt."

"That's it!" gasped Babs. "And it also means that if we can only get Jean to talk, it'll be easy sailing for her!"

"Primary's a spoof!" said Clara fervently. "Absolutely gilt-edged!"

But their jubilation received a setback when they burst into the punishment-room. Eagerly they told Jean the news. Formerly brought her to save herself from what they were convinced was a miscarriage of justice.

But Jean sat mute and silent under their desperate pleading. A thrill of joy had run through her at the news that, after all, in spite of everything, she would be able to run on Saturday. But of Ruth Wilson and the escapade of last night she maintained a tight-lipped silence.

For during that long sojourn in the punishment-room Jean had come to a decision. She was going to say nothing—nothing at all, until Monday.

On Monday Mrs. Carterright would be coming to fetch her. To her mother she would tell everything. It was mother who had asked her to look after Ruth. And it was mother who must decide which course she should take.

To maintain her silence and receive the punishment herself, so— To tell the truth and condemn Ruth Wilson to years of misery and heartache!

"On Your Marks! Get Set—"



SATURDAY. The day of the Schoolgirl's International Games at the Courtfield Sports Stadium.

Heavy curtains and torrid packed crowds. Enthusiasm and torrid excitement. Flaps and hooting. Shriek voices in many tongues. Loudspeakers installed round the track. A brass-band in the centre, playing a lively march tune. Refreshment tents galore—except even for Bonnie Hunter!

Cliff House School was at the stadium in full force—mistresses, including Miss Prinrose herself, seniors, juniors, and even the staff.

Several events had already taken place. But now—Cliff House waited with bated breath, as through the loud-speakers boomed the voice of the announcer:

"The final of the two-twenty yards race is due to start in five minutes. Competitors for this race: Miss Carterright, Britain; Miss House, America; Miss Debris, France; Miss Yagoff, Japan; and Miss Wood, Canada. Will these young ladies please make their way to the centre of the track?"

There was a stir at the foot of the Cliff House ranks. A hazy-haired figure slowly commenced to walk forward.

"Best of luck, Jean!" shouted Barbara Redworts.

"Good old Jean!"

"Hurrah for Cliff House!"

Jean Carterright waved a hand, though her heart was heavy with anxiety.

She'd got to win this race—she must! It might be the very last thing she ever did for Cliff House School! The last deed which would keep her name alive in the school annals for ever!

But her feet—it was worrying her. She had not told Babs & Co.—had not told anybody that it still troubled her. She was just determined that it wasn't to let her down until the race was over. What happened then did not matter.

Starting, she stepped out on to the track; was walking forward when a small voice called her name. She swung round. Despite herself, her face hardened a little. For Ruth was running towards her.

In Ruth's eyes was a look of mute solicitation, on her lips a tremulous smile.

"Jean," she whispered again, as she caught up with the Scots girl, "I—I want to wish you good luck! I—I want to thank you for not telling the truth about me! I know I'm a coward, but—on, Jean, I'm so frightened of what my uncle will do!"

For a moment Jean gazed kindly down at the Third Former, at the little, pleading face, so altered now. All its hardness, its sly defence had gone. In its place a soft, childlike pleading was reflected, and a lump rose into Jean's throat.

"Thank you, Ruth!" she said. "And— and don't worry!"

"Please wear this for—for luck, you know," said Ruth, as she turned and ran off.

And Jean, looking in her hand, found a tiny ring of white feathers. A warm feeling stole round her heart. Could it be possible that Ruth had really helped at last?

It wasn't play-acting this time—that she felt sure. Slowly, thoughtfully, she made her way to where the other competitors were standing. Last-minute preliminaries, and then—

She heard the signal for them to line up. As one in a dream, she crouched in her place. Came the starter's voice:

"On your marks! Get set—"

Cliff! went the pistol.

A roar.

"They're off!"

In a flash, five figures leaped forward. Jean Carterright's long legs flew. Her red hair tossed out like a gay banner in the sunshine. A figure streaked past her—the scintillating, black-haired representative from France.

But Jean did not worry herself. She kept her place, long third, behind the Canadian and the French girl. A two-twenty yards race was a difficult distance—pretty nearly all on the whole, way—but something must be kept in reserve for the last fifty yards.

The last fifty yards began where the

high-jumping pole stood by the side of the cinders. That was where the supreme effort must be made.

Meanwhile, the five Agneses—fairly closely bunched—sped across the stadium on the diagonal track. A dead silence had fallen on the crowd. It was anybody's race.

But not for long. Excited shouts began to rise as it was seen that the pace was already too fast for two entrants. The Canadian had dropped back—had been passed by second, third, and fourth runners—and the English girl, too—who was already losing ground.

The Cliff House watchers looked furtive. The race was almost as good as lost as far as Jean was concerned. She was beaten. She was lying fourth now, with only the Canadian girl behind her. She could never make a winning sprint from there.

"Good-bye, Cliff House!" Rosa Redworth was heard to cry. "Oh, my only man! Poor old Jean!"

But even as she spoke, Jean herself was feeling nothing but relief. The last few days without training had made their mark—taken the freshness out of her, that was all. Her unsteady left leg felt tight and useless at the start. Now suddenly she was gaining again. In the middle of the wide bend she passed the American girl, caught up the Japanese girl.

A hysterical burst of joy came from the Cliff House contingent.

"She'll do it yet!"
"Jean! Come on, Jean!"
"Keep-a-a-and!"

The French girl cast a frowning glance to one side; saw the danger that threatened. Down went her head; legs reared like pistons as she went all out to gain the lead.

For Miss Japan she flew. That girl, face expressionless, but obviously running all out, tried to increase her pace still more. But she had lost her look. Miss France was in the lead.

Next moment Jean, too, had passed the Japanese girl. They were round the bend now. The finishing tape was in sight.

The stadium rocked with the cheers, yells, and shouts that arose. But the runners were dead to them as they ran on.

Slowly, slowly Jean crept up on the French girl, with the Cliff House girls geyring almost hysterical.

The fifty yards mark! Now! And Jean, making a supreme effort, caught up with the French girl; passed her; was in front!

"Oh, I can't look—I can't look!" said Mabel Lynn hoarsely, clatching Babe's hand with a grip that hurt.

But Babe said nothing. She could only stand staring, her eyes riveted on those two building Agneses down there on the running track. It was surprising; forming the words: "Jean! Jean!" but no sound coming from them.

Clara Trevlin, her face flushed, was waving her arms wildly, her voice a mere croak.

"Keep it up, Jean! Keep it up! You've got the race, Jean! You've got it! Come on—Babe! Oh, my hat! What's the matter with her? Something's happened!"

Something obviously had. For a second Jean wavered in her stride. She seemed to swing. A look of most intense agony swept over her face.

The Cliff House girls held their breath.

"Her—her foot!" Babe stammered. "It's given up!"

In the grip of utter despair, they passed at each other. What chance now of winning the race? Miss France was forging up, steadily as fresh as ever.

But they were reckoning without the terrible courage, the dogged fighting spirit of their Scottish cousin.

Jean was still running, despite that awful lurch. Her lips were set in a grin, straight line, hands clenched until the nails bit into her palms.

But the pain in her foot—it was agonizing. Every time her right foot touched the ground, stabs of pain like red-hot needles shot up her leg.

Waves of blackness were sweeping over her. There was a buzzing in her ears. She shook her head dizzily. Everything was becoming a blur now.

But through that blur, something like hammer-blows in her ears, suddenly came her name!

"Jean! Jean! Stick it, Jean!"

Her Jean was lost in a mass of pain now; did not even know that she was still running; was making the greatest effort of her life. That will-to-win spirit drove her on; was forcing her forward the tape, which stretched not ten yards in front of her.

Of course, her whole body aching and aching pain. She added as she ran.

And then she fell, her arms flung forward.

But she had broken the tape first!

"Jean! Jean! Wake up!"

It was a sobbing, frightened voice that uttered those words—the voice of Ruth Wilton.

Tears streaming down her face, she gazed imploringly at the unconscious figure of Jean Cartwright as that girl lay in the ambulance tent in the centre of the Courtyard Stadium.

Ruth had been the first to rush forward when Jean had collapsed. Close behind her had followed Babe & Co., and, finally Miss Princesse herself. And now, gathered in the tent, they watched as a specially summoned doctor dabbly tended Jean's injured ankle, with a nerve-wand smelling salts in front of her nostrils.

"Oh, it's all my fault—my fault!"

Ruth sobbed. "I did that to Jean's ankle! And she's so brave—so wonderful!"

She suddenly straightened up, swung round upon the Fourth Formers and the headmistress.

Her face was paper white, her body shaking. But her voice was steady as she spoke. In her eyes was a leave, resolute gleam.

"Miss Princesse, I want you to know the truth! It was I who injured Jean! It was I who broke her ankle! It was I who trapped Jean—I who placed you from the Silver Web—!" Ruth paused, gulped. "Please don't punish Jean, Miss Princesse! I'm the one to be punished! I don't care what you do to me now!"

Jean was already sitting up, a smile of joy on her wan face.

"Thank you, Ruth!" she said bravely. "Has the race—that happened?"

Babe gave her a tender smile.

"You won it, Jean—by inches! It was marvelous! Congratulations!"

"Hooray, hooray! Wonderful old Jean!" Jean dimpled and blushed. But suddenly she glanced across at Miss Princesse.

"Miss Princesse," she began hesitantly, "may—may I ask you something?"

The headmistress smiled.

"Certainly, Jean, my dear!"

"Will—will you please give Ruth another chance?" asked Jean pleadingly, as she clutched that girl's hand.

"She didn't understand before, but I'm sure she's learned her lesson now."

Tendly they hung upon the headmistress's answer.

For a moment she looked doubtful, and then a kindly smile came to her face.

"Well, we'll see," was all she said.

But by the way she said it, Jean knew the truth—that it was all right, that she had kept her promise to her mother.

THE END OF THIS WORK'S STORY.

Bessie Manages To Get

A Word in Edgeways!

"YOU know, I think it's a shame, the way these kids—Babe and Mabel, steal all the limelight! Blessed if I can get a word in edgeways! It's jolly, that's what it is; they're all jealous of my figure, you know, and the Buster courage!"

"But I've got my own back on them now! I've got a story all to myself—and it's a jolly good-story, too! You wait till you read it. It's just full of my adventures, and if I hadn't got to go down to the tacklebox I'd tell you all about it. Oh, really, Clara, I'm not being vain. I swear, can you advance me a shilling on my postal order?"

Look out for this long complete Cliff House School story, starring Bessie Buster, and written by Hilda Richards, under the title of:

"BESSIE'S BIGGEST PROBLEM"

Read this fine story next Saturday in THE SCHOOLGIRL.

DRAMATIC CONCLUDING CHAPTERS of This Powerful Morcove Mystery Serial

HER SECRET AT SWANLAKE

By MARJORIE
STANTON



Unmasked!

BETTY RAHTON jumped up from the chair into which she had been so glad to sink just now.

"You remember!" she jerked. "Something about this girl—"

"Yes! She is not Claire Ferrand!"

"Then?" Betty cried. "Just what I said to her in the empty house! It's why she came for me. She is not Claire Ferrand, and that accounts for everything!"

"But," Polly Listen gasped, "who is Claire Ferrand, then?"

"I am," said the mystery girl, whom they had come to know as "Miss Blank," because her memory was gone. She was standing straight and steady again, after having looked ready to drop. "I'm Claire Ferrand! I should have been here at Swanlake all this while—I mean; she has been here instead of me!"

"In your name," Pam said quietly, "posing as Claire Ferrand! Enjoying your position as the girl who had come into a fortune!"

"Dash the lot of you!" the unmasked impostor yelled out again, and struggled once more. "You shan't keep me here! Am you going to get out of my way?"

"Oh, no!"

"Hokus, what an diggings—"

"Her right name is Vivienne Murro," struck in the real Claire Ferrand. "I first met her—or, rather, she met me—the day I was coming to Swanlake, to make my home here. She said things to me that ended in my— Oh, but it's too long a story to be gone into now. I'll only say that, on her advice, which seemed to be good at the time, I went into hiding; that I soon realized that I had been tricked."

"In fact, remembered!" shrieked Nancee.

"Decided, yes. It was when I decided to come out of hiding that this girl went a step farther and made me an absolute prisoner. She shut me up,

just as she shut you away, Betty, this afternoon. It was your talking of having been made a prisoner that suddenly brought everything to my mind again, in a dash!"

"There would have been a pause now, but Pam, quicker than others to get over the astounding effect of such disclosures, said at once to Vivienne Murro:

"You looked in for a letter. Kindly hand it over."

"I won't! I—"

"Hand that letter to its rightful owner!" Pam insisted. "To Claire Ferrand—"

"I won't!"

"Then," said Polly joyously, "we must take it from you, that's all!"

In a moment this was done. The letter came into the hands of the real Claire Ferrand, and she and the others had only to find out that it held a hundred-pound cheque, to understand quite well why the daring impostor had been so eager to look in at Swanlake today.

And now, since it was out of the question to let Vivienne Murro go free, good Mrs. Croden was summoned from her housekeeper's parlour, to say what had better be done.

Being of placid disposition, gratified Mrs. Croden heard the facts stated without becoming unduly agitated. Her usually comfortable looks only expressed shocked surprise that, as she put it, "folks could be so wicked. Did the real Claire Ferrand wish the police to be called in? Did 'Miss Pam' or her chums?"

Very definitely they did not! All that the ladies had done, up till now, they had been fully entitled to do. It was thanks to Betty's clever work this afternoon, that the impostor had been stopped, as it were, in mid-career. But, although they were in delight at having brought villainy to book, that did not mean they were going to glory in seeing the culprit sent to prison.

It must be for others to decide whether or not Vivienne Murro must end up in prison.

"We shall ring up Morcove, of course," Betty said, "and get Miss

Somersfield to come as soon as possible. But she can't possibly be here for an hour, at least."

"I know!" Polly exploded, and shot up a hand as if to answer a classroom pander. "Grazeponer School!"

"Grazeponer!" cried others, in chorus. "But, of course! Only a mile or so away!"

Pam turned away instantly to go to the phone.

"I'll ring up Challenger's House—ask for Mr. Challenger or Mrs. Challenger to come at once!"

"To be sure!" was the housekeeper's fervent approval. "And, meanwhile, I think it will be best for you"—this was to the sullen-looking Vivienne—"if you come away to my room. Come along, now, and no nonsense!"

The real Claire, as the constabulary inspector showed that stern inspection, hastily whispered to a few of the juniors that she would go as well to the housekeeper's room. So, by the time Pam had got Grazeponer School on the phone, only her Morcove chums were with her in the hall.

They conversed about her, smiled, jollied, jabbered amongst themselves. Then, just as Pam was being put through to Challenger's House, there was another inspired "I know!" from Polly.

"Pam," cried the Maidens, "get the boys to come along as well! Ask for my brother Jack!"

"And my brother Tom!" joined in Bunny Trevor warmly. "Ask for—"

"Dave!" Judy Cardew named her brother eagerly.

"Hi!" yelled Nancee. "And don't forget, Pam! Ask for Tobby, too! Beware!"

"Order, order!" Betty chucked. "Give Pam a chance!"

So, after some laughter, there was silence in the crowd, enabling Pam to carry on the telephone talk. Polly, however, had to burst out again when she realized:

"There's one of the boys we haven't

mentioned; Jimmy Charrol: Don't let Pam forget Jimmy!"

"Don't Pam," smiled Betty, "over forget Jimmy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And when, half a minute later, they heard Pam naming Jimmy first of all over the phone, there was still leader laughter.

The married had died away, and Pam had hung up, when—ring, ring! It was the parish bell again.

Being out in the hall still, Pam hurried across to answer the ring. Behind her scanned the other girls, and so they shared that big surprise which was Pam's, when she opened the door and saw who was in the parish.

A police inspector, and with him was a constable!

"Evening, miss!" the officer said, touching his peaked cap. "I am Inspector Tower, of the Harrogate Police. Is there a young person living here of the name of Vivienne Munro?"

The cheeks exchanged looks of increased embarrassment.

What was coming now?

The Long Arm of the Law!

YES, there is someone here of that name," Pam calmly answered the police inspector. "Will you come in? She is with me." Mrs. Greddon, the housekeeper. The fact is, we've had a bit of a complication over Vivienne Munro."

"Ah, have you?" smiled the inspector. "I'm not surprised at that. Perhaps you'll take me to her."

Pam, as she set out in contact both with the housekeeper's parlour, signed to Betty to come as well.

"We're only just found out that the girl's real name is Vivienne Munro,"

was Pam's quiet remark to the inspector, on the way to Mrs. Greddon's snug retreat.

"And we've only just succeeded in tracing the girl to Swanlake," the officer imparted. "We've been following a rather queer line of inquiry. She got nearly run over in Kester the other afternoon, and gave the name of Vivienne Munro—by a slip of the tongue, we fancy."

"With an address at Brighton, wasn't it?" Betty laughed.

"Ay—a false address, as we soon found out. There was, you see, information lying in our office for the detection of this Miss Munro. So when we heard by chance that just such a name had been put on an accident book—why, never of us got busy!"

It was like Pam only to murmur a serene. "Yes, well," as they were now at Mrs. Greddon's parlour door. A tap-tap first checked some talk that was going on in the room; then there was the housekeeper's.

"Come in!"

Pam and Betty, entering in front of the inspector and his constable, were vaguely aware of Mrs. Greddon's starting up in renewed agitation, and of the real Claire emitting a distressed "Oh." But it was the crystalline impostor who claimed their close attention.

At sight of the law's representatives, Vivienne Munro turned deadly pale. Her dilating eyes gave Betty a side-glance that seemed to say, "In front of you—this!" Then the wretched girl, visibly trembling, looked again at the inspector. He asked sternly:

"Is your rightful name Vivienne Munro?"

Her lips moved, but her voice was falling low, and so she had to nod.

"Then, Vivienne Munro, it is my

duty to take you back with me. You will be charged with the theft of a valuable pearl necklace, the property of a titled lady, from a cloak-room at the Hotel Monopole, in London, on the night of—"

"Pearl necklace?" here in the real Claire Ferrard. "Stolen at the Hotel Monopole! Oh, but that was the very best of which this girl said I was in danger of being accused!" She told me—"

"Ay, I dare say she did—"

"She made out that she was a private detective—"

"I can well believe you, miss," the real Claire was answered by the inspector. "She'd tell you anything! But it's not for me to say, now, what sort of a record she has been making for herself this last twelve months, living by her wits. Come along!"—he again addressed Vivienne Munro—"and let me warn you that anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence against you."

"Oh, I don't want to say anything!" the arrested schooler suddenly laughed wildly. "Yes, I do, though!"

And she faced Betty. It was one of her last attempts to be as insolent and victorious as ever.

"You've missed half your triumph, anyhow," Betty harrowed! "I'm say being arrested on information supplied by you—after all!"

"I never wanted to see you arrested!"

"Oh, didn't you! The whole pack of you," Vivienne raged out, "branding other me all along! I knew! I could tell! And I know this, too, now. If you, Betty Barton, hadn't turned up when you did, just now—I wouldn't have been here when these men came along. I don't forget it, and some day—"

"There, that's enough of that!" the inspector interposed sharply. "Now, just you come along with me to Harrogate Police Station. The car's outside."

"Right-ho!" the restless adventures impatiently retorted. "Good-bye, then, Swanlake," she murmured at Pam. "And thank so much for having me!"

Her laugh became hysterical. It continued shrilly, as they conducted her along passages, and through the front hall, to the porch.

"The Play's the Thing"

SO Morcové's headmistress was saved the trouble of coming over in her car to Swanlake. Betty it was who rang up the school, a few minutes after Vivienne Munro had been taken away to custody, to say why there was now no need for Miss Stonerfield to put herself about.

But the class saw no reason why they should notify Gussageover to the same effect. Both Mr. and Mrs. Chalence had said they would be along in their car presently, bringing "the boys." And was it likely that Betty & Co. were going to upset such a happy arrangement as that? Not they!

"Bekas, any old how, you can be an expense for our school!" Nessner jeeringly voiced the opinion of all.

"Only," she was quick to add, "my had better be given some refreshments first, I suppose? Bekas, you know what boys are?"

"We know what Tobby is, for one," Polly mock-wonderfully responded. "Always looking round for what there is to eat."

As that instant there was a sound,

● BIG TREAT NEXT WEEK

NEW MORCOVE SERIAL

A MORCOVE girl expelled! And that girl—Tess Tralawney, popular and talented artist of the *Society* No. 13 "Ca."

That in itself is a big sensation at the famous school, but the reason why Tess leaves Morcové—the dramatic events which lead up to her expulsion—provides one of the biggest mysteries which Betty & Co. have ever had to face.

In next Saturday's extra-long opening instalment of this brilliant new serial you will know why Tess is expelled. And you will want to follow her adventures in the exciting ensuing chapters.

Do not miss, next Saturday, the first chapters of



By MARJORIE STANTON



TIME and time again the chums had to take a "call," and loud and long were the cheers for their clever sketch. This was Morocco's big moment of triumph!

not so much like the arrival of a car as the arrival of a whole fire brigade. It really was the Grandmother cat, but the boys, having been given to understand that they were being run to Swazilak on account of "some trouble," thought it to announce their arrival with much "Hi, hi'ing!"

It was in this spirited mood they stumped into Swazilak, along with their Honorary and his charming lady—a former Morocco mistress. A hasty bringing forward of refreshments saved Grandmother's spirits from going "plum" on learning that the "trouble" was all over.

After all, returned Tabby Root was not the only Grandmotherian to feel that it was a long time since tea.

Whilst the story of Virgine's Muzro's daring imposture was being recited off, Polly's own brother Jack was seen to be doing himself pretty well; so was Benny's brother Tom. The same could not be said of shy Jimmy Cheerful, perhaps. To him, Swazilak always meant a kind of awed state, and his plate might have remained unaccomplished more than once if Pam herself had not looked after him, with her serene:

"Do have some more, Jimmy."

As for Judy Cardew's brother Davie—his was a hunger for every detail of the strange story which the girls were telling, and which Mr. and Mrs. Challenger were hearing from the real Claire Ferrand, away in the home-keeper's parlour.

"Quiet, clever Dave Cardew—the 'strong, silent one' of the Grandmother mystery! Meanwhile drink was it to him to hear how Betty & Co. had worked, and it was, at the mystery of "Miss Tricks."

The hours of being awake of nights that it had cost Betty, in particular, to work that had made the problem a baffling one—all this, Dave, more than any of the other lads, could appreciate.

For the detective instinct was very strong in Dave himself.

A follow of few words, there was his grave smile now and then, his under-

standing nod, to tell the girls how well he realised what they had been up against.

And an hour later, during a break in the rehearsal of the forthcoming play, between one scene and another, there sat Dave, lost in thought, so that his own sister playfully accused him of not having paid attention.

"You've been thinking about the Virgine Muzro affair all the while, Dave?"

"It's not going to be an easy thing to forget, is it?"

But Dave, in saying that, was to be proved wrong, far more.

Not for long were the chums of Study No. 12 to go on without fresh excitement. Soon enough were the girls to have their fresh fill of mystery. And then would there be something of more vital interest for them to talk about, than Virgine Muzro and her daring imposture.

Meanwhile, there was always the play!

With only a week or so to go before the first public performance in aid of Harcourt's Great Gala Week, Betty & Co. were going to take as their slogan a very apt line from Shakespeare. "The play's the thing."

Clams had to be got through somehow, Prep., of an evening, had to be tackled—more or less. Nor could the girls drop out of games. Not even for such a good cause as the one that, in looking the Gala Week effort, could Betty & Co. miss games!

But any schoolmate who imagined that Study No. 12 would have time for talking about Virgine Muzro—also days' wonder that she had become—were going to be disappointed. Girls who might go along to Study No. 12, if they did not find it quite deserted, would perhaps find only one of the players ready to absent:

"All down at rehearsal! And I'm just off to join them!"

Five times was it to be such rehearsing at Morocco itself, after all, with the real Claire Ferrand coming over in the Swazilak car to take her part.

Almost every afternoon, Betty & Co. would come out of class to find that Claire Ferrand had turned up. An admired and valuable member of the "cast." And as such, one to be gaily escorted up to Study No. 12, there to have tea with them all!

Altogether, the sort of week that goes like a flash; and so indeed it seemed to have gone, when at last the players were faced with the fact that tomorrow—to-morrow they were due to appear in public!

Inevitably, at this last moment, there was a wishing there could have been time for altering this or that. Inevitably, Polly, as the authoress of the play, was seized with a dreadful premonition that the whole thing would be a ghastly flop. There was the usual discovery that Paula and one or two more, on the very eve of production, hadn't really got their lines by heart.

Also, as had happened in connection with other Study No. 12 productions, artistic Tess Trevelyan was troubled with a sudden yawning for the scenery she had painted. There would, she said, be points in the audience with expert knowledge, checking at her wretched backwash representing "Rugby, Harcourt's."

The scenery had all gone along to the Harcourt Assembly Rooms by now, so there was nothing more to be done. Otherwise, judging from temperamental Tess' present mood, she would have felt like suddenly using her palette-knife to slash all her work to shreds.

Yet next morning there was young Lady Evelyn ringing up from Baccarcombe, to ask if the girls would mind their scenery being used throughout the Assembly Rooms' varied programme? The organizing committee would be so very grateful, as they considered Tess had achieved something really great.

This should have set Tess' mind at ease, but it didn't. She now had appalling fears of bearing herself specially mentioned in the speech that Lady Evelyn was likely to make, at the end of the variety show.

As for the rest of the drama, Polly had one prediction a bigger flop than ever, now that the play was to be done in a stage setting which would have become "made" in the audience by the time they, Study No. 12, "did their state."

"Year mystery, Tess, was the only thing we had to rely upon to save us," groaned Polly.

And Nancy—who regarded it as a "sweepstake" that girls in other Forms who came down for times in the program should be going to benefit by the scenery.

By some strange working of the mind, not restricted to Nancy only, it was possible to wish the story every scene, with tremendous takings in aid of the Winter Relief fund, while apparently hoping that other Marcoro performers would be howled off the stage!

But this make-believe "jealousy" did not prevent Betty & Co. from mixing most gaily with other Marcoro artists, when the exciting moment had come for setting off for the town.

Even the traditional rivalry between the Fourth Form and the Fifth was then forgotten. The special programme chartered for the "Irgone Baracozze" party had some room to spare, so it picked up a couple of Fifth Form individualists, with the happy result that preliminary singing, on route, was being "obliged" on by an obligate on the other side.

Bring Up the Curtain!

As so at last one high-spirited church got into town, to lead the quaint old High Street flying all its flags in the winter sunshine, for this the Grand Opening Day.

Thousands of people were about, for spectators had been sent from places as far distant as Exeter itself.

The famous Crumey was doing a roaring business, as it decreed to do when it was giving a public dance every night during the week in aid of the fund. Two dances had already been in on terms that, again, would help to swell the fund, and then there was Marcoro's Casino to be sought, up the hill, with all its great attractions.

But it was the great variety show, at the old Assembly Rooms, for which there seemed to be the greatest rush at present.

Before Betty & Co. could be dropped at the "daddy" stage, door round the corner, their bus had to crawl past a pavement along which people were queuing in hundreds.

"Standing room only!" was being shouted above all the noise of cars rattling to get down reserved seats.

Nothing was to be seen of the legs, and Marcoro feared that Jack & Co. by turning up late, would never get inside.

So some of the girls, taking a peep from behind the stage curtain, when the show was due to start, at once picked out Messrs. Jack Linton & Co. occupying a fine position in the packed auditorium.

The crowd five had climbed up to a window ledge, along which they stood, tightly squeezed together. It looked as if an any accident for Tiddy, for once, might crack, but the precautionousness of his perch was not preventing him from enjoying a half-peeled box of chocolates.

As yet in their dressing-room skipped the girls who had taken that peep from

the stage. "Irgone Baracozze" was in the first part of the programme, and so it was high time to get ready. Their little musical play was to occupy the last half-hour before the interval.

Suddenly, during all the feverish activity in that crowded dressing-room, Betty found herself thinking how wonderful it was, really, that they were doing to give the play.

Her mind flew back to the hour when the idea was first suggested, and she remembered how in that very hour there had commenced the mystery of "Claire Ferrand."

Vividly she remembered how, time after time, rehearsals had been hindered, frustrated, by the girl who had so daringly posed as Claire Ferrand.

All the preparation and the detective work there had been in connection with Study No. 12's "suspect," had synchronised with preparations for this great occasion. Yet after all, Study No. 12, to-day, was here to do its bit in aid of the Winter Relief Fund.

Presently the first rounds of applause could be heard. The overture was ended; the curtain was up.

For a few minutes the drama ought nothing more from outside their dressing-room. They themselves were making so much commotion. But they were to know when the first time from the stage had been given. The applause, then, was terrific.

"Good," Polly gasped, "somebody's made a big bit at the very start! Just back to the clapping! We'll get nothing like that! How can we hope to!"

But they were to find themselves even being greeted with applause as great as that, when at last the curtain rose, with all of them upon the stage.

The very dramatic start of the opening chorus would not have mattered a scrap, for the first verse was sung to an audience that was encouragingly demonstrative. And from that moment the whole thing "went with a bang."

Lines that Polly had feared would not get a laugh, after all, though she had thought them rather good when she wrote them, excited rouse of movement. Then there were little effects and "bygone" reminiscences which Study No. 12 had rehearsed—oh, so painstakingly! These proved to have been well worth while.

They drew more interesting clapping, which in the last appearance of all. At one of Pam's graceful exits, which the action of the play demanded should be made in silence, the whole audience "rose."

As for a dainty trip like Nancy's being on hand in "Irgone Baracozze," and being suddenly disposed to give a kind of Eastern dance in the ancient marketplace—what did it matter if such a thing could ever really have been? All that the audience knew or cared was that it added greatly to the fun.

So some one ended, amidst thunderous applause, and Betty & Co., with Claire Ferrand, could rush back to the dressing-room, those to find that the legs had not cost much surprise bouquets and chocolates.

Accompanying notes hinted that this had been done for a job; but, like all Grangerson's jokes, it was one in good taste.

Lady Evelyn whisked in, with news about the takings.

"Something wonderful, girls! Over seventy-five pounds for this first

matinee! The place has never been so packed out!"

"Then we shall get our salaries, after all!" Nancy jested.

"And, had Jess," was Paula's beaming rejoinder, "won't you have just about earned them?"

Taking Their Coll!

FIFTEEN minutes later: "Hurry! Hurry!" and clap, clap, clap! "Bravo, Study No. 12! Bravo!"

The play was over, and now there was this prolonged applause—an insistent call for certain girls to come before the curtain.

There had that curtain been raised, while Betty and the rest were still grouped upon the stage, that they might bow again and again from there. But the audience was thinking of those who deserved special thanks:

"Author! Author!"

And so Polly took her coll, laughing to see her own brother Jack waving from the window-box.

"Tom! Tom Trollopian!" was the next demand. "Come on, Tom!" shouts of hers were directed from Marcoro's own seats of reserved seats.

"Tom!"

Then the "mistress of the wardrobe" was remembered.

"Claire Ferrand! Claire Ferrand!" In the wings, she who had joined the company so late in the day, at Swanlake, started to protest.

"But it's too absurd! Any little thing I did—"

"Go on with you," Betty blithely insisted, "or there'll be a-tying!"

"Yes, speak!" shrieked Nancy.

"Behave—be quiet!"

"You!" roared Betty.

Yet no sooner was Claire Ferrand back from the front of the curtain than a solitary boyish voice started a general clamour for the dandy boy's appearance.

Tiddy it was who had danced for Nancy; but when she was set before the audience, being in all parts of the house, and showing kisses, there was no Tiddy left to be seen adorning that window-box. At the very height of his excitement, Tiddy—who had fallen down, pulling Jack and Tom with him.

Madge next, having to stand up and bow, at the piano.

A few moments later:

"The cap! The cap!"

"No," said Betty fully, in the wings.

"Yes," said her chums, "you must!"

"The cap! The cap!" All the shouting continued, "Betty Barton!"

"Then here it is!" she suddenly decided. "If the captain is to go—"

she must have with her—the team! Girls, are you all coming on with me just once again? If not—"

"Go on, then!" laughed Polly.

And so it was, with cheers to right and left of her, that Betty took her coll.

The captain, by her smiles and gestures, treating these last rounds of applause, and who last evening, as being meant for the hour!

Success! As the old saying declares—nothing succeeds like it!

And Betty & Co. had succeeded in the end, in spite of Virrinea Marcoro and her secret at Swanlake!

Printed in England and published every Saturday by the Proprietors, The Associated Press, Ltd., The Theatre House, Fitzmaurice Street, London, W. 1. Addressed to the Proprietors, 25, Abchurch Lane, London, E. C. 4. Registered for transmission by post as a newspaper. Post Office Order No. 115, 1914. Single Copies 6d. Advertisements by agreement with the Proprietors. Printed and Published by the Associated Press, Ltd., 25, Abchurch Lane, London, E. C. 4. Telephone: 25, Abchurch Lane. Telegrams: Associated Press, Ltd. Cable: Associated Press, Ltd. Copyright, 1914, by the Associated Press, Ltd.