

EVERY SCHOOLGIRL'S OWN PAPER

"GUESTS OF THE
SHAREEN"
JUST STARTED

THE SCHOOLGIRL

NO. 1001 Vol. 14
SIXTH YEAR
APRIL 1945

EVERY **2^d**
SATURDAY

Incorporating
SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN



**SOMEONE ELSE
WOULD GET THE
BLAME!**

An incident from this week's splendid
big comedy *Cliff Hanger School story*

BARBARA REDFERN & Co. in a Powerful Long Complete Story of Cliff House School



A Schoolgirl's SECRET FEUD

Her Chance to be a Schoolgirl



"Oh, jolly good, Jane!" Barbara Redfern, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, exclaimed. "I'll bet there aren't more than three girls in the Fourth who could have got the answer to that one right. What do you think, Mabel?"

"I think it's topping!" Mabel Lynn exclaimed. "Why, Jane, the scholarship's as good as yours already!"

At which Jane Mills, under-mentioned at Cliff House School, blushed with pretty embarrassment.

"And—and you think I'll get through?" she asked shyly.

"Think! I don't think about it at all!" Clara Trevlyn, the tomboy captain of games chorused. "As far as you're concerned, Jane, the scholarship's practically in the bag! What do you say, Margaret?"

Margaret Blackburn's sweetly grave face smiled into a smile.

"I agree!" she replied.

At which unqualified praise, Jane Mills blushed more rosy and looked more embarrassed than ever.

But it was praise well merited. Praise which, despite its exuberance, was well deserved. For Jane, through a housemaid, was ambitious. Jane, under the Cliff House Fording Request, was working terribly hard for the Four Girls' Scholarship—the examination for which would take place in a week's time.

Babe & Co., liking her—admiring her plucky spirit—had done their very utmost to help her, especially as this year she was the only Cliff House candidate entering for this particular scholarship. They had lent her books—

had set her tasks—had given her the questions from their last examinations to study and to answer.

More than that, Barbara, as captain of the Ferns, had obtained special permission from Miss Pinner—Cliff House's kindly headmistress—to coach Jane in her own spare time in Study No. 4.

It was one of those coaching lessons they were finishing now.

"Well, if I do win the scholarship, it will be all due to you!" Jane said, smiling gratefully across. "And, oh, I do thank you!" she added earnestly. "I can't—can't just say all I feel! For the books you've lent me—the ones you've given up to me—"

"Then," murmured Clara exclaimed, "you must thank Jane! We've only helped you because we like you and we want you to come into the school as one of us! Haven't you thought—if you do win the scholarship you'll be in the Fourth, and—well, you're in the next year's looking for it in the Fourth! Not cricket!" she asked interestedly.

"Well, a little," Jane admitted modestly.

"Good! We'll have to see what you can do! Heekey!"

"Yes."

"Good again! But here, I say, where are you going?"—as the servant-girl

hurriedly stepped towards the door, reaching up for her apron which hung behind it.

"Well, you'll want your tea too!" Jane said. "And, oh, it's been so kind of you! I couldn't think of wanting any more of your time—"

"Waste my time!" Clara scoffed. "You come back, Jersey. You're going to have tea with us!"

"But, oh, Miss Clara!"

"And for goodness' sake, don't call me 'Miss'!" Clara frowned. "I'm Clara to my friends. From now on, to-morrow morning you're off duty, and as far as we're concerned, you're one of us. And—oh, don't knock!" she added dramatically, as the door was pushed open, and glanced at the girl who peered her head into the room.

The girl was Freda Farvery—by no means the most popular member of the Fourth Ferns. Her small, pale blue eyes were set in a face that was rather unattractive in its hue—though at this moment there was a suspicious halo of colour high up on the cheekbones.

She belonged to Study No. 3, presided over by Lydia Cassendale—the reigning muck of the Fourth and the leader of a smart set which numbered Freda among its members.

Not a nice girl by any means, she was more generally known as the "Ferrer." She glanced haughtily now.

"I want Jane Mills!" she announced. "And what," Babe asked, "do you want Jane Mills for?"

"I want her to get tea in Study No. 1."

JANE MILLS was a servant at Cliff House—her greatest ambition to become a Cliff House school. Freda Farvery was a Fourth former—and yet she stole the servant's name! Why? Babe & Co. were determined to find out.

"Having a party?" Clara nodded good-humoredly.

"Yes, I'm having a party," Freda said, with strange new loftiness for her. "I've invited some outside friends to tea."

"You don't say?" Isabel Lyon commented. "Didn't know you'd got any friends outside!"

"Well, you know me!" Freda smiled. "Myself, friends, too!" she added impressively. "Well, Jane, don't stand staring at me like that! Come and do as I ask you!"

Jane flushed a little, biting her lip. "I'm sorry, Miss Ferriers, but it's my afternoon off."

Freda glared. "Well—think I don't know that!" she asked. "Oh, don't stare! I'm not asking you to do it for nothing. I don't expect—with a happy face—"

"even you will refuse an extra few shillings—and that's what I'm prepared to give you if you do the job to my satisfaction!"

The four Cliff House chairs blinked. They blinked in astonishment. Doubtless this was a vastly different Freda Ferriers from the meekling Ferret they knew—a lofty, overbearing Freda who, most obviously, was taking a leaf out of wealthy Lydia's book.

But Freda, with money—this little sponger who, as a rule, relied upon Lydia and her cronies for the major part of her expenditure.

"My hat, come into a fortune!" Clara asked.

"No, I haven't, but I've got plenty of money, and—" Freda, who could not resist the temptation of flaunting her mysteriously new found wealth, dipped her hand into her pocket and proudly waved four or five one-pound notes in the air. "That's mine!" she said, with pride. "And there's plenty more where that came from!"

"How! Been snubbing a bank?" Mabel gasped.

"Don't be silly. In any case," Freda said scornfully, "I didn't come here to argue with you. Jane, my guests will

be here soon. Get along and see to the study!"

Not again Jane flinched. She flushed rather angrily this time. Jane was one of the most, most obliging girls at Cliff House. She was used to taking requests and to executing them without complaint or question. She did not fully expect to do a girl an extra service even in her own time.

But Jane, if she was a servant, was also human, and Jane had no great dislike, as any other girl to being offensively patronized.

Besides, now that Clara had issued the invitation, she was looking forward with thrilled eagerness to tea with the chums.

"I'm sorry," she said. "It's my afternoon off!"

"Well, I've told you—"

"And," Jane informed her, "I've already accepted an invitation to tea with Miss Primrose!"

Clara chuckled. "Which means," she interrupted, "that you can look for a sweet note when she calls. Close the door as you go out!"

But Freda did not close the door. Instead, she came further into the room. She was glaring now—glaring in ferocious astonishment. Quite plainly possession of wealth had gone to Freda's head. Quite plainly the very last thing she had anticipated was refusal from a servant. Her lips curled.

"Forgoing your place, aren't you?"

"I'm sorry!" Jane replied, light-lipped.

"I suppose, because you've entered for this scholarship, that you consider yourself as good as a Cliff House girl already?"

"How, I say!" indignantly Barbara began. But Clara, with a quick flick, pushed her back, intimating that Jane was quite capable of taking care of herself.

Jane winced.

"I don't think anything of the sort."

"No!" Freda asserted. "Then jolly

well do as you're told. You're paid to wait on your betters. Whether you're off duty or not, an order's an order! Here—"

And she turned, impatiently snatching down the apron which hung behind the door. With a sweep of her arm, she flung it into the quivering housemaid's face. "Put that on, skivvy, and jolly well—"

And there, in mid-sentence, she stopped. She stopped with a gasp.

For behind her, a hand reached out. That hand, fastening upon her shoulder, caused her to spin round. And Freda's feet dropped then.

"Oh! my goodness, I didn't see you, Miss Primrose!"

"But I," Miss Primrose said sternly, "saw you, Freda! And fortunately," she added, her lips quivering, "I also heard what you said. That was a very childish, a very unkind thing to do. I intended you to apologise to Jane at once."

Freda bit her lip.

"But she was rebelling—"

"I heard," Miss Primrose said coldly. "She was not rebelling anything, Freda. She was merely reminding you, as she has every right, that it was her duty as a servant, like schoolgirl, Freda, have privileges, and these privileges must be respected. Now, no more! Apologise at once—"

Flashed, humiliated, Freda turned. She gazed at the waiting Jane.

"I—I'm sorry!" she mumbled.

"Thank you!" Miss Primrose said. Her gaze was still stern, however.

"Now, Freda, you will go to your study. You will prepare your own tea, and immediately afterwards you will write out one hundred lines; I must be considerate to my subordinates." I shall expect the lines," Miss Primrose added, "before you go to-night. Now go!"

And Freda, with a glance of bitter hate in the direction of Jane, sank off. Miss Primrose watched her down the corridor, and turned back into the study with a smile.



SNATCHING an apron from behind the door Freda flung it into Jane's face. "Put that on, skivvy!" she ordered. Before Bab & Co. could intervene on Jane's behalf the door opened—and there stood Miss Primrose.

"Very well, girls, you may get on with whatever you were doing. I see," she added, with a glance at the books and papers on the table, "that you have been having a busy afternoon, Jane. I hope you are getting on well!"

"Oh, she's getting on marvellously, Miss Primrose," Babs put in.

"I am very pleased to hear it," Miss Primrose said. "I wish you the very best of luck, Jane." She nodded kindly, smiled again, and withdrew, closing the door behind her, leaving a Jane flushed very red.

Marjorie smiled.

"Does old Primrose?" she said.

"What a sport she is!"

"Well, Freda got her deserts," Clara chuckled. "Babes her jolly well right, too! But, I say, who's left her the fortune? Where the dickens did she get all that cash? One of her relatives sent her a remittance lately?"

Babs shook her head.

"She hasn't got any relatives," she muttered. "As far as I can remember, her education comes out of the trust funds of some society her father used to belong to. Fancy?" she mused.

Fanny it was. But it was no business of theirs, and Babs & Co. dismissed it from their minds. Had they known the true circumstances, however, they might have thought it funny.

For, almost as astounding to Babs & Co. by the sudden turn in her fortune, was Freda herself—Freda, who until yesterday, had always shined under a burden of poverty—whose nature, it seemed, had become permanently scarred because she always had so much less to spend than other girls.

It all seemed rather like a dream to Freda now. Her friends, transformed into a girl of substance and wealth, who had discovered, to her amazement, that there was someone in the world apart from the impersonal administrators of the White Cross Society funds, who had her interests at heart.

To be sure there were aspects of the case which Freda did not understand—namely, many of them. But being Freda, concerned for wealth, unscrupulous by nature, she was not worrying about them.

The amazing fact was there—that yesterday, a Mr. and Mrs. Raffell, whom she had never in her life seen before, had sought her out and told her that some old friend of her dead father's had adopted her, and in proof of that assertion, had handed her five pounds.

It was Mr. and Mrs. Raffell whom Freda was expecting now. They had promised to-day to come to the school and to explain.

But Freda was not thinking of these as the buzzed off down the corridor. She was thinking of Jane Mills. Servant! Uppert! To be defied by a common servant! To have been forced to apologise to her! Freda seethed. Temporarily she flung open the door of Study No. 1. Furiously fumed in. And then she stopped.

"Oh!" she gasped.

Two people's heads and a woman—now to meet her, Mr. and Mrs. Raffell!

"Oh, dear, I—I'm sorry! I—I don't seem to have tea ready for you!"

"Oh, that's marvellous, my dear!" Mrs. Raffell said. Her face, partly concealed by a veil showed a chin that was decidedly square and plump. "We'll have tea out later, perhaps, Freda, are we likely to be disturbed here?"

"Why, of course not," Freda said. "In any case, I'll make sure of that!" And she turned the key in the lock.

"But what—"

"Ahem, my dear, sit down," Mrs.

Raffell said, with a smile, and motioned Freda to one of her own chairs. "The taxi got here rather earlier than we expected. I'm sorry if we disturbed any of your arrangements—but we have some news for you, Freda. About your father—"

"You mean the man who's adopted me?" Freda asked.

"About him—yes." The woman plucked at her gloves. "Mr. Meredith—that's his name! You remember, my dear? I told you, didn't I, that he had been in Mexico for many years, where he had made a huge fortune! I don't think I mentioned, however, that he is now on his way to England. He will stop here only for a few days, before going to Germany, where he has other interests. Naturally, one of the first things he will want to do is see you."

"Oh!" exclaimed Freda, in thrilled tones.

"But—!" The woman paused, looking at her husband, who nodded at her to go on. "There are certain complications," she said. "I cannot go into all the details now, Freda, but I will explain later." And—well, well, I wonder if I can make you understand!" the woman went on, after a pause.

"As I told you, Freda, we have been looking for you many, many years. One of the reasons we never found you was because we were looking for a girl with a different name from your own. A name which the man who adopted you bestowed upon you before he left this country for Mexico. Naturally he still thinks you are called by that name."

"Naturally," Freda reflexively agreed, not caring very much, anyway.

"And—well when he sees you it will not be Freda he will call you. He will know you as Jane—Jane Mills!"

In Another's Name!



JANE MILLS! The name of the very servant-girl with whom only five minutes ago she had been involved in that humiliating scene in Study No. 4.

Freda stared. Her face suddenly went white. Perhaps, for the first time a suspicion dawned that she was a pawn in some crooked game. For one instant she had a dreadful sensation as if an abyss yawning beneath her. Trembling, she rose.

"You look startled, my dear," the woman crooned.

"I am—!" Convoluntarily Freda crumpled the gown round in her pocket. "The—she name took me by surprise," she blurted.

"But why?"

"Because?" Freda said stabbly, "there's a girl in this school of that name—a servant-girl. She is called Jane Mills."

Had she noticed she might have seen the start both these two gave then. She might have noticed that quick, almost pain-stricken glances that passed between them. It was gone almost in the same instant as it came, however—accompanied by a wailing look from the woman which said as plainly as anything—"Leave this to me!"

She rose. Very gently and soothingly she came over to Freda. She laid a hand on her wrist.

"I'm sorry, my dear," she said. "I had no idea, of course. But please don't look like that. I can assure you that everything is perfectly in order. And, after all," she added, with a smile,

"Jane Mills is a fairly common name. There must be hundreds of girls who are called by that name."

"Yes, I suppose so," Freda admitted.

"And—!" Mrs. Raffell smiled.

"After all, Freda, what are you alarmed about? I tell you everything is all right. When you converse to London, my dear, you shall see the letters and the papers—oh, the whole heap of documents I have got to prove it. And think," she added insistently, "of the money, Freda!"

Freda let her lip.

Money—yes! Money—hoops of it. New frocks, new dresses, new pleasures! No more borrowing, no more humiliations from the kindly Lydia, who, in spite of her sympathy, she secretly despised.

A good time! Theaters! Holidays on the Riviera!

And, later, a car of her own, perhaps! A big house, like Diana Boynton-Clarke's, instead of the stuffy White Cross office in which she spent most of her work-week hours.

Wasn't that worth fighting for? Was she going to abandon such a golden future as that?

She tossed.

"I'm sorry," she said, and flushed now to feel that she had made such a fool of herself. "But the name—it gave me a shock, you know. I—I didn't think—but, of course, it's silly," she added, with a constrained laugh. "But tell me, Mrs. Raffell, when will my—my father come here? Suppose that any of the girls here know all men by that name?"

"That," Mrs. Raffell replied, "is hardly likely, my dear. We shall arrange, Freda, for your father to meet you in Courtfield. And, in any case," she added lightly, "supposing any girl did overhear him call you Jane—or Janey, as he affectionately refers to you in his letters to us. Everybody has a nickname, my dear, and it would be assumed at once that this was some nickname outside your school circle."

"After all," she added, "it is hardly likely that he would call you Jane Mills."

"No," admitted Freda, lamely and pondered.

"Moreover," Mrs. Raffell said, "there is something I want you to do, Freda. You see, later, at the moment, to the young lady's board for Northampton. I want you to write to him, telling him how pleased you are that you are going to see him—thanking him for all he has done for you, and so on. But don't forget to sign it as Jane Mills! You will?"

Freda, after the smallest hesitation, said:

"Yes, I will!"

"Thank you!" The woman beamed a sigh of relief. "Well, I think that is all," she said. "We are both remaining in Courtfield, and we shall see you now and then, of course. Now, my dear, if you would like some tea, let us take you down to Priviate. We have a cup of coffee."

Freda smiled. Her last scruple was banished now. Greedily she pushed the two pounds into her pocket. Some inner whispering consciousness told her still that all was not as it should be. But she didn't care! She didn't care! Why should she care? What had she to fear?

Almost light-heartedly she grabbed her hat, put it on, and struggled, with Mr. Raffell's assistance, into her coat. With a laugh she turned the key and flung the door open.

"Well, let's go!" she cried loudly.

And the two, with another look, stepped towards the door. At the same

moment five girls came striding down the corridor. They were the classes of Study No. 4, with Jane Mills in their midst. Out of sheer curiosity Babs hung the three a passing glance as she went by.

And she wondered.

For she saw the woman pull at the man's arm behind Freda's back. She saw the man, his eyes upon Jane, turn a sickly white. And even as she strode on she saw the tea concert hurrying into the study. But Jane, entering along behind Babs, and between Clara Twelvyn and Marjorie Haseldene, did not even notice them.

"I wonder!" said Babs.

"Eh?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"State it mind," Clara announced cheerfully. "Babs wonders. Wonders what? Answer: Nothing!"

At which sally there was a laugh, in which Babs joined.

The scene was the tobacshop.

The Co. had not partaken of tea in Study No. 4, after all. That afternoon the fat and hungry Bessie Huxley, who shared the study with Babs and Babs had been called home to London to see her father, who had developed a sudden illness, and the consequent state of Study No. 4's cupboard had been one bleak barrenness. Bessie, also, held an unshakeable belief in fortifying the human frame by a railway journey.

"Penny for 'em!" Babs asked.

"Not worth it," Babs replied.

But she was still wondering about those strange visitors of Freda's. She was wondering why they had disappeared into Study No. 1 in such an agitated hurry. She was wondering, too, where they had taken Freda. These were the people, obviously, who were supplying Freda with her new found wealth.

But these thoughts, though intriguing, were idle. In her preoccupation she had unconsciously altered the burden of those thoughts alone. Now, finding the eyes of the company questionably upon her, she hastily resumed her meal again.

"Well, as you were saying, Marjorie," she said.

"But I wasn't saying anything," Marjorie replied, with a smile.

"Oh dear! Well, as Babs was saying—"

"Wrong again," Babs smilingly answered. "It was Clara who was doing the saying. Clara was asking Jane a question. What was it, Clara?"

"Well, I must say you all appear to be listening with interest," Clara grinned. "I was asking Jane if she could lend me a book on fabric cricket, and when Jane came into the Fourth I shall want to know that she can do. Now, look here," she said. "How would you like to join in at the next after tea?"

Jane blushed.

"Oh, no, Miss Twelvyn, they'd never allow it. You forget"—with a smile. "I'm only a servant."

"Oh, nonsense! I'll take the chance," Clara said. "If anyone objects I'll say I told you to 'Not,' she added, "that anyone can say anything. We've jolly well got permission to coach you, and I don't see why we shouldn't extend coaching to cricket."

Jane laughed merrily. That certainly was an ingenious way of getting out of her blue over the happy Babs in her clerks. Babs, glancing at her over the table, smiled in return to see the happy gaily of the other.



In three strides Clara was across the parlor. "What are you doing?" she demanded, and Freda flushed guiltily as the Tomboy's hand fell upon her shoulder.

"You really mean it?" she asked eagerly.

"Whisper!" Clara said. "Babs, when you've finished, rouse up some of the others. Jane, pass the watercress, will you? When, there, you stirry! That pocket of yours is in the jam."

It was a fine gold affair, with a heart-shaped locket, to which Clara referred, in reaching across the table, the locket, dangling at the end of its gold chain, had lodged in the raspberry jam.

Jane gave a laugh, then hastily snatched the locket out, wiping off the jam with the corner of her paper serviette. As she did so she must have touched a spring, for immediately the locket jumped into two heart-shaped halves, and Babs had a distinct view of a man's photograph.

"Oh, I say, what a handsome-looking man! Who is he, Jane?"

"My father. He—he's dead now!"

"Oh—"

And Babs, rather awed, said nothing then. Jane, looking a little embarrassed, snatched the locket shut and allowed it to drop into place around her neck.

The news came as a little shock to Babs. It had never occurred to her until that moment to question Jane on her parents. She had always taken it for granted that they were still alive. The sympathy she felt must have shown in her eyes as she looked towards the girl again. Jane, catching it, shook her head.

"He died" she volunteered a little sadly, "when I was only three months old. Both he and mother were killed while motoring."

"Oh, I say!" Marjorie cried. "Poor old you! So you—you've never known your mother and father?"

"No," Jane said.

They all gazed with sympathy then. Poor, poor kid!

"How terrible!" Babs murmured. "I've always kept the locket," Jane told them. "But, oh dear, don't let's all be so sad and sombre all at once."

And she laughed. For a moment she had felt a little sad, but the tragedy was no longer with her. She had never known parents. She had lived by life without them. All the same, her heart sometimes ached—especially on visiting days at Mrs. House, when she saw little girls surrounded by fond parents.

But Jane was not a girl to wear her heart on her sleeve, and now she was not going to allow her personal affairs to cast a shadow over this decidedly happy little party. Besides, there were reasons why she didn't want to talk about herself. Skillfully she steered the conversation into other channels.

And as the tea progressed a highly successful meal, served by Auntie Jane herself in the corner of the tobacshop. It was over at last, and while Babs paid the bill Clara tucked her arm charmingly within that of the maid.

"Now cricket," she said. "Jane you're coming over to the pav with me. I'll lend you some pads and things, and we'll see what you can do. Babs will join in later. In the meantime she'll rouse up some of the others. This way, Janey."

She led the way out of the tobacshop; at the same moment a tall man whisking through the gates to disappear up the drive. Clara whispered,

"That's Freda certainly in throwing her money about," she said. "See that! That was the Prince in the taxi."

Jane smiled. She was not interested in Freda. But Freda, as she flashed by, saw Jane, and, stepping out of the taxi on the edge of the yard, paid off the driver, and came thoughtfully towards the playing field, a rather cunning gleam in her eyes.

The table was empty at the moment. Clara and Jane obviously were in the

garçon. Frodo ran up the steps into the dressing-room just in time to see Jane take the gold locket from her neck and slip it into the pocket of her coat, which was hung upon the peg. For a moment a queer flash came into her eyes. Then, busy buckling on her pads, looked up; she jumped as she saw the Ferret of the Fourth.

"Oh, you!" she said. "I thought it was Bala. Come to get some cricket?"

"Is Jane playing?" Frodo asked.

"She is."

"Then," Frodo said distinctly, "I'll be accused. I don't play with certain girls."

Jane heard that. She turned round, her face turning a little flushed. Clara's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"You really little snob!"

"Clara, please!" Jane laid a hand upon her arm. "Take no notice," she cautioned.

"But—"

"It—it doesn't matter."

Frodo grinned.

"If they," she offered, "if Jane doesn't play. But—well, thank it, after all, we have to draw the line somewhere."

"And," Clara said, "I'm drawing it! I'm drawing it at you, Frodo Ferret! I wouldn't let you play now if Pixamy herself asked me. Come on, Jane, let's get out of this. Bring that bag with you."

Frodo glared. Jane, with a sweet smile, stooped to pick up the bag. Without another look at the Ferret of the Fourth, the two girls walked out on to the pitch, leaving Frodo standing by the door, glaring after them. Clara grinned.

"Well, here we are!" she said heartily, as she opened the bag. "Stumps all correct, too. Now, Jane, what about it? Like to head or bat first?"

"Oh, you've got the pack out; you bat!" Jane said. "I'll send you down a few."

"Good girl! Whoops! Here we are!" And Clara fitted the bat out of the bag. Then she frowned. "Oh, locket in! Now, what silly clump packed this bag last? We haven't got a ball!"

"Shall I go and get one?" Jane asked.

"No; wait here. I've got the key of the gear locker." And Clara, grinning, straightened up, heading back towards the position at once.

She reached the steps, lightly leapt up them; and then, about to turn into the store-room, stood still.

No sound had Clara's red-checked shoes made on the floor, which, just inside the garçon, was covered with matting. The girl in the dressing-room, the door of which was still open, never heard her as she passed.

But Clara's brow contracted. Rather grim and fierce the frown which crept over her face all at once. For the girl, her back turned towards her, one hand plunged into the pocket of Jane Mills' coat—

Was Frodo Ferret!

A little hea left Clara's eye. In two strides she was across the room. Two heavy hands fell upon the shoulders of the startled Frodo, who gave a convulsive start and writhed round, something dangling from a finger of one hand. It was Jane Mills' gold locket!

"So!" Clara said contemptuously. "You little mean-thief!" And while the palpitating Frodo stared dumbly into her features she made a snatch at the gold locket. "Stealing—oh!"

"I—I wasn't!" Frodo murmured.

"No! Then what were you doing with Jane Mills' locket?"

"I—I didn't know there—there was a locket!" Frodo gasped. "I—I didn't know that—that was Jane Mills' coat. I—I—"

And she stammered. "Oh scandal! Don't glare at me like that. I—I tell you that was a mistake. I—I thought that was my coat."

"When I saw you take your coat off in school?" Clara asked disbelievingly.

"I mean—"

"Oh, all right! Don't lie any more," Clara cried contemptuously. "Anyway, get out of this. It would serve you jolly well right," she added acidly.

"If I reported you for this! Get out!"

"But—"

"Get out!" Clara flamed.

And Frodo, looking as if he had been slapped, shook out.

Clara glared after her; then she went to the locker. There she found the ball, closed the locker and locked it, and went back across to the gate. To the wondering-eyed Jane she handed the locket.

"I shouldn't," she said, "leave this lying about if I were you." And, ignoring Jane's look of amazement, she dropped it into her hands.

WINE FEAR—

Frodo, not daring to turn round, lay on his side. She still looked white-lipped and shaken. There was something, too, of a hunted expression in her face as she turned the corner of the garçon, almost colliding with Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, Lolla Carroll, and Jeanette Constantine, who were just strolling towards the pitch. Jeanette glanced after her curiously.

"Our dear little Frodo seems sporty—what?" she murmured.

"Dear little Frodo," was. She was remembering that interview with Mr. and Mrs. Raffell over tea. She was remembering their words. Even Frodo could not hide himself now to the fact that she was playing some dangerously deceptive part which could not bear investigation.

These words of Mr. Raffell had confirmed her suspicions.

For, leaning over the table, he had said:

"The fact, Frodo, that there is another girl at Cliff House named Jane Mills might be awkward—yes, very awkward indeed! Of course, it is only a coincidence, but it is a coincidence which I am sure you will see, my dear, might lead to complications. You don't like this girl?"

And Frodo, with unconscious hate, had replied:

"I hate her!"

"Ah!" Believed, that sigh-compassionately relieved! Then the matter is easy. Frodo, at whatever cost, you have got to get rid of that girl—you understand! Get her out of the way before Mr. Meredith returns. She may—with a carefully considered pause—prove a nuisance to you!"

That was all. The whole thing marked of coincidence. It was awkward—Frodo felt that now. But she had gone too far to draw back. She had tasted riches, and she meant to go on tasting them.

Honest or dishonest, Frodo was going to stick to what she had got. If Jane Mills constituted any sort of an obstacle to her glowing ambitions, then Jane Mills was to be swept aside!

And in an effort to sweep Jane Mills aside, she had tried that trick in the garçon—the trick—hokey her—which Younger Clara had spotted. Her tooth came together as she thought of that.

But curiously—that fair for herret-into other people's business—had proved her downfall.

For, in the act of dropping her wrist watch into Jane's coat pocket, she had felt that locket. Curiously had impelled her to draw it out, with the intention of examining it. If she had not succeeded to that curiosity—

She gritted her teeth.

"Hang Clara! Hang her!" she muttered furiously. "That cat! But never mind, never mind! I'll jolly well show her whether she can interfere in my game! If Jane Mills is at this school by this time to-morrow, my name's not Frodo Ferret!"

With Ball and Bat



"JOLLY good!" Clara exclaimed. "Jolly good! Now, Jane, see if you can do that again!"

Practice on Junior Side was in full swing.

And for practice, quite a crowd had collected. The more had gone forth that Jane Mills was playing, among the Cliff House juniors.

Most of Cliff House at this moment was interested in Jane Mills, for most of Cliff House had heard that she was going in for the Poor Girls' Scholarship, and by the reports of her progress in that scholarship, it seemed likely that she would be the next new girl the Fourth Form would be called upon to welcome.

Not all of them were playing, of course. A few, like Lydia Crossroads, Frances Frost, and Madeline Tattersall, had simply come along to watch—and to sniff.

But there was no scoffing at the moment. There was a deep and unspoken silence. A girl who could speakable the redoubtable Clara's wicket with two successive balls was certainly not to be scoffed at.

And that was exactly what Jane Mills had done, and done it, if you please, with an ease which seemed to suggest that she could do it just any time she liked. She smiled now as she held the ball, called merely to Clara to "Play!" and took a run towards the bowling-stump.

Clara gripped her bat. There was a jagged, deer-like expression on her face this time.

The ball left Jane's hand. She was a fast bowler—and the ball always broke slightly from the off. But it was her accuracy and length that made her so dangerous. This ball, like the others, broke on exactly the right spot—so that Clara, shaping up, played right across it, and—

Crack!

That was the stumps—spreadeagled, for the third time.

"My only giddy aunt!" Clara bawled. "What was that?"

"All right!" Jane laughed.

"All right!" Clara sneered at her as if spiteful. "All right!" she cried. "Look at my wicket! Jane, where did you get that delivery? It's a wonder! I never even saw the ball after it pitched!"

Jane smiled modestly.

"Oh, I just learned it!" she said.

"Who from—Lawford? But, Jean—"

I say, Jean—"

This to the leaky Scots junior, one of the best bats in the junior eleven. "Here, take this bat," Clara ordered. "See if you can stand up to that!"

Jean, with a smile, took it. She

positioned herself at the window, adopting that easy stance so characteristic of her. She called "Play!"

And whoosh! Down came the ball again. Jean pipped—the ball. Another smack! Jean blinked.

"Look! What a lull!" she cried. "How the dickens did you do that!"

"Oh, you!ka!" cried Diana Repton-Clarke. "There's a catch in it! Look at the ball, Jean."

Jean, with a wondering stare at the new larder, handed the ball over. Blanche Diana, than whom there was no better bat in the school when she chose to show her muscle, faced the servant-girl. Jane smiled.

"Ready?"

"Play on," Diana said calmly.

And from under her blonde tresses she watched—carefully, coolly, calculatingly. She watched the queer loop, skip and jump the girl gave, she saw her arm sweep over.

Vainly she tried to follow the flight of the ball. There was swerve in it—so tremendous swerve! It pitched—and fell!—and hit. But Diana was unshaken. She hadn't the faintest idea how she stopped it.

"Try again," she invited, throwing the ball back.

And Jane tried again. This time—Clark! Diana scowled as, tearing, she beheld not three upright stumps, but two. The middle one was still springing in mid-air.

"Howzat!" cheered gleeful Clara. "You know—Jane's a giddy marvel! Pick up the forward, Diana!"

Diana, with a grimace, shook her blonde head. Diana had no exalted opinion of herself as a bowler, but even she had to bow her knee to devastating Jane. She grimaced.

"Youka!" Jane jolly glad I don't have to play against you!" she laughed. "But," Clara beamed, "you'll jolly well be able to play with her, Diana, just as soon as over Jane's won her scholarship. Oh, my hat! Won't Whitechester be surprised! Won't Confield be surprised! Come on now, Jane, let's see what you can do with the bat!"

"My hat—Jane?" Leslie wailed. "We are leading ourselves in high-class company, aren't we! Who gave her permission to play in practice, Clara?"

"I did," Clara said gruffly, "and I'veer remarks from you, crosspatch! Jane, this way!"

And Jane smilingly took up her position at the wicket. Marcelle, who was looked upon as the best bowler on the side, went down on the first ball. Jane cut it away. With commensurate ease, she hit the second, third and fourth, playing each ball with style and strength, though earnest little Marcelle got into it all that she had.

Clara was breathlessly jubilant.

What a beauty! What a batsman! When the practice was finished—

"Oh, you've a giddy wonder!" she cried. "My hat, Jane, you've just got to win that scholarship! Stumps up, girl! Getting too dark for more practice. Besides which, it's nearly time for prep. Come on, Jane!"

And Jane, really embarrassed, was led off in triumph, leaving quite a loss of conversation behind her. With Clara's arm tucked chivalrously in hers, she was dragged back into the school, through Bill Hall, and up the stairs.

As they passed the door of Study No. 1 it opened, and Freda came out. Haze glanced in her little eyes as Clara swept past. Jane bowed.

"But, Miss Clara, I can't interrupt your prep."

"No!" Clara asked good-humouredly.

"Your mistake. You haven't got anywhere in work in the servants' quarters, have you? And you still want to eat. Well, as I said before, we're not risking letting you lose that school now, my girl. You're going to cram in every moment of time. You can work with me. James will go in Study No. 4."

And so it was arranged. While Margerie and Clara dug their prep in Study No. 7, Janet Jordan, the third member of that coterie, took her books to join Babe and Maie in Study No. 4. It was an ideal arrangement in view of Babe's absence, and they all got on swimmingly.

Jane, at least, was terrifically grateful for it, for, as Clara said, it was almost impossible to study in the servants' quarters, and heretofore all her scuffling had been done in her bedroom after she had gone to bed.

"And to-morrow," Clara said, when prep was finished, "you can see this study, Jane. What time are you finished work?"

"Well, I have those studies to do in the morning," Jane replied. "That takes me till eleven o'clock. After that I'm not on duty again until two. And then off again at six."

"Like to use this study during your free oil?"

"Oh, Miss Trevel, that's kind of you."

"Kind fiddlesticks!" Clara replied. "But I tell you what—I'd better make it all right all round, by having a word with Primrose. She won't refuse."

And Miss Primrose didn't refuse. Miss Primrose, indeed, was secretly glad. She liked to see her girls helping others, and she gave permission willingly enough.

And that, if anything was required, crowned Jane's happiest day. Excellent

though the progress she was making in her studies, she still knew she had a lot of hard work before her.

She went to bed happy that night, she might not have been so happy if she had realized, however, that Freda Fernon had been listening outside the door of Study No. 7, and had overheard every word of the arrangements made. Most certainly she would not have been happy had she guessed the thoughts that were passing through Freda's cunning mind.

For, as yet, Freda was determined to get rid of that girl, who might so vitally affect that golden future which now opened out before her.

Next morning, when disturbed sleep in the Fourth Form dormitory, Freda was the last up. She looked tired, listless, weary. Babe glanced at her.

"Hallo, Freda, what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing. I—I've got a headache," Freda mumbled. "Oh dear—!" And she pressed a hand to her temples. "Have—have you got any tablets, Babe?"

"Sorry. Don't say 'em," Babe said. "And, honestly, Freda, I shouldn't be too ready to fly to those sort of remedies, if I were you. Perhaps it will go off after breakfast."

But, after breakfast—even though, Clara noticed, Freda ate quite a worried meal—the headache persisted. It was, she discovered, worse than ever when the bell for lesson rang. Wearily, hopelessly, a look of intense misery on her face, she walked with the rest of the Form into class when assembly was finished in Big Hall, and, collapsing into her desk, put a hand to her forehead and sadly groaned.

Miss Cherrant, the pretty mistress of the Fourth, gazed at her in concern.



GRIMMING maliciously, Freda went swiftly about her task of upsetting Diana's study. "And if I don't get Jane Mills blamed for this, my name's not Freda!" she muttered.

"Freda, aren't you well?"
 "Freda smiled pathetically."
 "I've got a headache, Miss Charmant."
 "Would you like to go and lie down?"
 "Oh, no, thanks, I—I think I can manage." Freda said, and glanced at the clock. "I—I don't believe in giving way, Miss Charmant."
 Clara glanced at her grimly at that. That, for Freda, the student, was certainly a new sentiment. She whispered to Hahn:
 "She's spoofing!"
 "Oh, but Clara—" Hahn cried.
 "Silence!" Miss Charmant frowned.
 "Now no more interruptions, please! Get out your books!"

The class got out its books. Freda wearily pressed one hand to her brow. She really did look wretched and miserable, and, having noted that part over since she got up, she was really beginning to feel it now.

Once or twice Miss Charmant glanced towards her. Sympathetically she left her alone. At eleven o'clock, however, Freda, looking almost ill, put out her hand.

"Well, Freda?"
 "Oh, dear! Miss Charmant, may—I may I go and lie down?" Freda stammered. "It's nothing worse."
 "Certainly you may go, my dear," Miss Charmant said. "I was about to send you out of the classroom myself. If I were you, I should go to matron and ask her to give you something."

But Freda, trailing out of the classroom, did not go to matron. Most noticeable the change which came over her as soon as she found herself in the corridor outside. Gone in a flash was that expression of acute misery, the dull glass from her eyes. Off at once she rushed to the Fourth Form corridor. There, passing a moment outside the door of Study No. 1, she peered in at the propped-up Jane, sitting at Clara's table, a neat pile of books at her elbow, a neat pile of footstep paper in front of her. Freda's eyes gleamed.

"All right!" she muttered.

From there she went to Diana Rapson-Clarke's study. It looked neat, new, spark-snap-up. Freda looked softly. She sought the tablecloth, rumpled it. She sought the corner of the carpet and laid it aside. On the mat she swept all the ornaments together in a higgly-piggly, and, raking out the remains of the dead ash from underneath the box, stroved the hearth with them. Jumped on the cushions, threw a few papers and books about.

And she grinned.

"I wonder," she laughed softly, "what Diana will have to say about this?"

She went out. But she was not finished yet. From Study No. 1 she went to Study No. 2—the apartment shared by Miss Effingham, Amy Jones, and Maribel Bond. Three or four minutes' work there made all the careful painstaking laborer at Jane Mills. After that, she visited Studies No. 11 and 12, and, reading only Study No. 7, and Study No. 4, finally finished up in her own study—No. 1.

There her vandalism reached its height. For, apart from upsetting every possible thing in the study, she discovered a shelfful of fine old ink over the carpet.

Then she went to the kitchen quarters. She knocked at the door of the school housekeeper, Miss Carey. That good lady blushed in surprise as she entered.

"Why, Miss Ferris—"
 "I—I came to see you about the Fourth Form studies," Freda said. "I don't want to get the maid displeas-

ed, but I suppose you know they're not been touched this morning, Miss Carey?"

"What? But Jane—"
 "Jane Mills? Oh, I expect she's too busy studying in Study No. 1 to pay any attention to her work. All the same, Miss Carey, the studies are in a frightful state. I wish you'd get Study No. 1 cleared at all events. I'm just going to lie down."

Flustered, Miss Carey rose. Her face was a little red then. Miss Carey, very proud, was extremely conscientious about the work for which she was responsible.

Up the stairs they both tramped together, just as the bell for break rang out. Freda threw open the door of Study No. 1.

"Look!" she cried.
 Miss Carey gave one horrified look. Then, without speaking, she turned and threw open the door of Study No. 2, to glare into that apartment, too. Her face was like a thundercloud, then.

"Thank you!" she said bitterly to Freda. "Where did you say Jane was?"

"In Study No. 7," Freda replied, with a grin.

And Miss Carey, with a grimly angry nod, strode off in that direction.

Spitel



"HALLO, hallo!"
 "Clara Trevlyn measured."
 "What's going on here?"

She, Hahn, Mabe, and Jean Cartwright, sweeping out of the Fourth Form classroom into the Fourth Form passage, stopped and stared in surprise.

Certainly something very serious was going on in the Fourth Form passage. It was something that brought a quick, grim frown to Clara's brow, a shadow of anxiety to Barbara's face.

But, in the middle of the passage, in tears, stood Jane. In front of her, red-faced and absolutely in a rage, was Miss Carey. Near her, a furtive smile on her face, stood Freda Ferris.

"But, Miss Carey, I tell you I did clean all the rooms, I tell you I did clean all the rooms,"

"Then how is it," Miss Carey snapped, "that they are in their present disgraceful state? Jane, don't be so unpleased! Obviously you neglected your duties this morning to get on with your studies—hoping, no doubt, that it would not come to my knowledge."

"Here," Clara muttered, and the frown deepening on her face, pushed her way forward. "Aren't! Excuse me hitting in," she said, "but what is the matter?"

Miss Carey's lips set.
 "I do not see that it concerns you, Miss Clara. Jane has neglected her work."

"Who says so?"
 "The fact," Miss Carey said harshly, "speaks for itself. Look in the studies, which she is supposed to have cleaned."
 "And you did clean them, Jane?" Clara asked.

"Oh, Miss Clara, of course I did!"
 "And how?" Clara demanded, "did you hear that Jane hadn't cleaned them, Miss Carey?"

"Miss Freda told me so," Miss Carey said. "But I do not see, Clara, that this is any of your business. Jane, you will tidy those studies at once!"
 "Wait a minute," Clara said.

"And," Miss Carey said stiffly, "if you attempt to interfere, Miss Trevlyn, I am afraid that I shall have to report the matter to the headmistress."

Clara saw the pleading look Jane hung towards her. She looked at Freda, scoured now—Freda, whose guilt was written plainly upon her face—who was even now edging away, as if she wanted to leave the scene as soon as possible.

But before she had taken two steps, Clara's hand shot out, arresting her progress.

"No, you don't, you little mischief-maker!"

"Let me go!" cried Freda.

"In a minute—in a minute!" and Clara's eyes blazed into hers. "So what! she hit out, "is why you had a headache this morning? That was why you so obviously got out of class? So that you could come here and meet to Jane's work, and blame it on to Jane?"

"I—I didn't," gasped Freda, and then, seeing a figure at the end of the corridor, shrieked: "Oh, you bully! Let me go!"

"Why, I'm not touching you, you shrinking little snook!"

And there Clara broke off. There she looked up. For a figure hurrying down the passage loomed before her. A figure whose face was palpitating with anger, whose eyes behind her pince-nez gleamed.

"Clara," Miss Prinrose thundered, "release Freda at once!"

Clara released her. Freda, writhing, with her hand to her shoulder as if it hurt, half-sobbing, fell back against the wall.

"Clara," Miss Prinrose hit out again.

"But, Miss Prinrose—" Hahn began.

"Barbara, be silent! Do not interfere! I am not blind! I saw everything! Clara, you will take a hundred lines for assaulting Freda in that manner. Now go! Freda, my dear, you had better go into your study."

"Yes, Miss Prinrose," Freda whimpered.

And she strode off, while Clara, with a bitter look, swept off down the corridor, escorted by Hahn, Mabe, and Jean. Her face was bitter.

"That cut! That cutting little cut!" she bit out. "That was hardly touching her. But, my hat, let her wait, that's all!"

"Now, Clara," Hahn said anxiously.

But Clara shut her lips. Rather anxiously, Hahn glanced at Mabe. She sighed a little, knowing that mood of Clara's, and guessing very shrewdly that the Tumbly was not inclined to allow the matter to rest.

Together they strolled into the quad. Morning break only lasted ten minutes, and hardly had they reached there than the bell rang, summoning them back to lessons. Back to the Form-rooms they went, to find Freda, with all traces of headache apparently gone, already sitting in her place. Miss Bellivant, the mathematics mistress, was at the blackboard, engaged in drawing some intricate algebraic problem for the Fourth's benefit.

"And now," Miss Bellivant rapped, out as soon as the class was seated, "the problem this afternoon—" and she went on to explain, while Clara listened in sullen, glowering silence, one manufacturing eye upon Freda Ferris.

"You will all," Miss Bellivant said, "copy this diagram in your books and work out the correct angles. Get your books."

Desk lids opened. Freda, under cover of hers, turned. She made a sign to Clara, to come protesting.

"Why, you—" Clara blazed.

"Clara, how dare you! Take fifty lines!"

Clara looked fastidiously. Freda coughed.

Clara's eyes were glittering now. She got out her books. She drew a sheet of paper towards her. But it was not the diagram on the blackboard she copied.

Perhaps it was a silly thing to do, but Clara at that moment had to have some outlet for her indignation against Freda Ferrier. She hardly realized she was doing it, indeed, until she found the thing taking shape beneath her pencil.

A very long, thin-faced cat appeared on Clara's sheet. Though Clara was not a good artist, the creature bore a remarkable resemblance to Freda Ferrier, and even when Clara sketched in the windows, that resemblance did not disappear.

Underneath she wrote the word "Cat!" And then, watching when Miss Ballivan's back was turned, hung it between Freda and the paper she was working on.

Freda saw it and scowled. Then suddenly a grin overcame her face. Quickly she drew a pair of thin-rimmed spectacles—of the type which Miss Ballivan favoured, and which she was wearing at this moment. Then quietly reaching out, she slipped the caricature on Miss Ballivan's desk.

Miss Ballivan turned.

And, at the same moment, Miss Ballivan saw. For one incredulous second, Miss Ballivan stood perfectly still. Claring, she stared at the insulting caricature which made it evident at once from the address of the spectacles that it was meant for her. Quivering she snatched it up. Then bang! came her pointer on the desk, descending so sharply that half the girls jumped. Quivering Miss Ballivan left the paper set.

"Who did this?" she looked quickly at Freda.

"Who did this?" Miss Ballivan scowled.

No answer.

"Somebody," the mistress said grudgingly, "has had the effrontery to draw this—this insulting caricature and place it on my desk when my back was turned. I demand to know who did it was. And if," she added, her eyes coming all over the class, "the girl responsible doesn't own up at once, I shall detain the whole class!"

The Girl Who Would Not Speak



There was a concerted gasp—a muttering. Then very quietly Clara rose to her feet.

"I'm sorry, Miss Ballivan—"

"Did you do it?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then come out here—come out here!" Miss Ballivan raged. "How dare you, Clara! How dare you, I say! You—!" And so angry was she that she shook the caricature in the teacher's face. "I have never," declared Miss Ballivan passionately, "been so insulted in my life."

"But Miss Ballivan, let me explain—"

"Silence! Another word and I shall detain you."

Clara set her lips. Not easily was Clara going to give in. She faced the mistress defiantly.

"I wanted to tell you," Clara went on stubbornly, "that that was not intended for you!"

"What?"

"It was intended for a—a girl," Clara said.

"Then how does it come to be on my desk?"

"I didn't put it there!"

"No!" Miss Ballivan's face compressed. She glared at Clara, and then glared, defiantly, upright, glared back. "In my case," she snapped, "you had no right to scribble your name in drawing things like this. Clara, you will still take another fifty lines."

And Clara, with a glare at Freda, went back to her place, richer, thanks to the Ferrier, by two hundred lines that morning!

44 HILDA, JACK! How are you getting on?

Then Clara and Mabel at midday break.

The scene was Study No. 7. Jane, who had only finished re-tyding the studies half an hour ago, was desperately trying to make up time. She smiled faintly.

"Oh, I'm getting on nicely, I think, but I'm afraid I'm in disgrace with Miss Carey," she said. "Miss Carey thinks I deliberately neglected my work this morning to seat in this study."

At which Clara's brow darkened and Mabel's brows came together.

"That notion Freda," Clara burst out, "it was she who caused that upset. Still, sense mind? You carry on. You can see this study whenever you want it, and so long as you want it. What's your job?" Clara added, "you've just got to win that scholarship."

Jane smiled. Mabel, with a jerk of her head towards the door, beckoned Clara out. Together they stepped towards the door—without yet to intercept Jane further. Together they started down the corridor. Outside the door of Study No. 1 Clara passed.

"Clara, what are you going to do?" Mabel asked in alarm.

"I'm just," Clara said between her teeth, "going to tell that horrid little sneak what I think of her."

"But, Clara—no!" Mabel said, and laid a hand on her arm. "Clara, Jane," she cried desperately. "Oh, I know it's all wrong! I know she's got it in for Jane. But don't be a chump! Don't go and make matters worse by causing another upset! You can't prove anything."

"All the same," Clara said quietly, and pushed the door open. Lydia Crossendale, seated by the fire smoking a cigarette, jumped round with a start.

"Oh, you idlers! Why didn't you knock? I nearly burned myself."

"Screen you jolly well right!" Clara said. "Where's Freda?"

"How the dickens should I know? She went out five minutes ago. Is that all you want?" Lydia asked with a further sneer.

"Thanks!" Clara grinned, closed the door, and retreated back into the corridor. "She's out," she told Mabel.

Mabel was glad. Clara, in her present mood, was spoiling for trouble. In this mood was more likely to bring that trouble upon her own than Freda's head. She smiled.

"Clara, the next about a knock at the next!" she anxiously suggested.

"Oh, K!" Clara grinned.

And all they tripped together. Mabel striding with relief. That at least would keep Clara out of Freda's way for the time being, and perhaps would allow her wrath to cool. Down the stairs they tripped, left Big Hall, and out

into the sunny quad. Then Clara stopped with a jerk.

"Baba, there she is!" she cried.

"Oh, goodness, but—!" and then Mabel hurried started. There Freda was, indeed, but what a strangely agitated Freda. She was standing just inside the gates talking to a man and a woman, the same man and woman, Mabel instantly recognized, who had been her visitors yesterday. But even from where they stood they could see the twisting nervousness of Freda's face, could see her hands convulsively clenching and unclenching. She trembled.

"Freda seems to be somewhat hot up," she said, using a favourite expression of Leticia Carey's, the American janitor. "Clara, I wonder who those people are?"

Clara grinned.

"Friends of hers. But why?"

"Because—!" and Mabel glanced at her queerly. "I didn't tell you before did I? But yesterday, when they visited the school, I saw them as we passed Freda's study door with Jane. They took one look at Jane and then looked back into Study No. 1 as if they had seen a ghost."

Clara passed at her queerly.

"Well?"

"Well—nothing! But it makes me wonder, that's all. It's obvious," Mabel said, "that it's those people from whom Freda's getting her money. I wondered perhaps if there was any connection between that and Freda's sudden spite against Jane."

Clara grinned. But suddenly she was looking a little startled. She was remembering something herself there—how she had thought Freda with that look of Jane's in the pavilion last evening. She flung a look towards the girls again.

"Come on," she said quietly, so quietly indeed that Mabel started.

They went on. Freda did not see them, for Freda at that moment was too agitated to notice anything.

For Freda was hearing news which had inspired in her the deepest panic.

"My best docks tomorrow," Mrs. Ruffell was saying. "We are meeting him at Southampton. Freda, you've just got to get that other Jane Mills out of the way!"

"But I've tried—"

"Try again. Remember what depends on it—for you!"

Freda gulped. On it depended her future.

"But—! he won't come here!" she observed.

"He won't come here—no. But he will come to Cardiff," Mrs. Ruffell said. "There is no telling, Freda, that he might not meet the girl there—or perhaps in driving about the locality. She's just got to go, I tell you. If she doesn't—all may be lost to you!"

Freda dully nodded. It wasn't quite clear to her how the presence of Jane Mills would lose her everything. Perhaps, with that inner knowledge that she was playing a cracked game, she did not care to know. It was sufficient for Freda, anyway, that she was taking Jane Mills' name; that she was passing herself off as Jane Mills.

She trudged on, leaving her visitors to make their own way out of the school. Her face was pale, her mind agitated. What could she do—what to get Jane so utterly disgraced that she would be dismissed utterly—utterly!

And then, looking up as she was about to enter the school building, she saw Miss Wright retreating towards her. Miss Wright was the English mistress,

rather absent-minded, very much given to reading. Every minute and second of her time Miss Wright consumed in her reading, and this moment was no exception. With her eyes intent on a book, she was strolling thoughtfully beneath the windows of the Fourth Form studies, unconscious to everything about her. Freda had a sudden idea.

Most of the girls in the Fourth Form, she knew, were out of the moment, either on the playing fields or in the schoolyard. But Jane would still be busy in Study No. 7.

Up the stairs Freda flew. She passed the door of Study No. 1, meaning into the next—Study No. 2, occupied by Joan Cartwright and Gleen Cook. It was empty, she found, with a sigh of relief. What was more, the window was open. Quickly she caught up the book from the study table; cautiously she looked out.

Miss Wright's her nose glued to her book, was within a few inches of the window then. Freda passed the wall.

Then—
Miss Wright gave a sudden shocked squawk. In dismay, Miss Wright stared back. For out of the sky, it seemed, a sudden spout of red ink shot down. The page she was reading became at once obliterated under a thick red ink stain. Ink splashed up from the page on to her spectacles, on to her face. Anxious, angry, Miss Wright looked up. At the same moment Miss Frimrose, emerging from the school, gave a shocked and horrified exclamation.

"Oh, my goodness! Miss Wright, have you met with an accident?"

"An accident! An accident!" Miss Wright almost screamed. "It was no accident! It was red ink, and it was thrown—yes, definitely thrown at me from one of those windows there! Some wretched girl!"

"My goodness!" Miss Frimrose cried. "Surely it is not possible! Those are the windows of Study No. 1 and Study No. 3, are they not?"

"They are!"

"Let us go and investigate!"

And the two mistresses disappeared into the school.

Freda, sitting listening in Study No. 8, waited only a few minutes. Then swiftly she unlocked the door. She opened it, shooting out into the corridor. At the same moment, the door of Study No. 7 opened.

"Miss Freda!" cried Jane Mills, in astonishment.

But Freda, with one desperate glance, went hurrying on. Jane, who had merely come to the door to try to find somebody who would tell her the name of the clock in Study No. 7 had stopped—blinded bewilderedly as she disappeared round the angle of the corridor.

She was still in the doorway when from the opposite end of the corridor she heard footsteps. And then she almost jumped out of her skin.

What was this—this apparition with the white apron? Her—her company with a strange Miss Frimrose!

At the same moment—
"Jane, stop!" Miss Frimrose said. "Miss Wright, look into Study No. 8! Is there anyone there? No? Jane, who is there with you in Study No. 7?"

"No one, Miss Frimrose!" Jane answered promptly.

"Then who," Miss Frimrose said, "threw ink from one of those study windows? It must have come from one of those studies. You, Jane, are the only girl who was here?"

Jane stared. She thought she knew the reason for Freda's precipitate flight now.

It was on the tip of her tongue to

tell Miss Frimrose of Freda's suspicious behavior, but she checked herself. Jane was not just a Cliff House girl, but she had all a schoolgirl's sensitiveness about such things as sneaking. Even if she had to take the blame herself, she would not betray another.

"I didn't do it, Miss Frimrose," she said calmly.

"I hate to disbelieve you, Jane," Miss Frimrose replied, in grim tones, "but I am forced to regard this matter from the point of view of obvious facts. The ink was undoubtedly thrown from this window. You are indisputably the only girl who could have thrown it. I don't say you necessarily did it deliberately. It may have been—probably was—accidental!"

Jane, tight-lipped, did not reply. She waited for the headmistress to proceed.

Miss Frimrose raised her eyebrows. "Well—" she went on. "I'm sorry, Jane. But as you have displayed an unfortunately poor disposition to use the Fourth Form studies, I have no alternative but to take from you the privilege you no longer deserve. You will take your books away to your own quarters and henceforth continue your studies there!"

And Jane, tears which she could not control springing to her eyes, turned to obey.

Once again Freda's spite had triumphed. But Freda, when she heard the result, was far from satisfied. Jane was still in the school. She had to go. That task still remained.

"Jane! My goodness, what's the matter?"

Barbara Redfern and Clara Torryln, having finished practice at the table, stopped in consternation.

For under the eaves near the servants' entrance a forlorn, lonely figure, surrounded by books, was seated. And that figure was quietly crying.

Jane Mills it was—Jane who had come out here to resume her studies. She started as the shadow of the two clouds fell across the paper which she was somewhat awkwardly supporting on her knees, quickly dashed the tears from her eyes, and looked up.

"Oh, Miss Torryln!"

"But why aren't you in the study?" Clara asked.

"I—I've been turned out!"

"What?"

And then Jane, in halting accents, told them. Clara's face grew grim.

"Freda again!" she muttered. "She wanted you turned out—that was her way of doing it! All right," she said, "I'll see Miss Freda!"

"Oh, Clara, please—"

But Clara was striding off. Firmly she brushed Jane's hand from her sleeve as she would have detained her. With a grim expression on her face, she sped into the school and up to Study No. 1. She did not knock. She simply gripped the handle of the door and flung it open, glaring at the emptiness of the study as if it had offended her a personal affront.

"Not here," she muttered. "All right, Miss Freda! I'll jolly well wait! But you're not going to get away with it this time!"

She strode in. Savagely she plumped herself down in the chair at Freda's desk. Absently she picked up a pencil there. Hardly realising what she was doing, she began to trace a diagram on the blotting-pad in front of her. And she passed, leaning forward.

What was this?
For the blotting-sheet in front of her

was nearly torn. One corner of it was covered in recent writing, and at the bottom of that writing a signature stood out clear and bold—Jane Mills.

"What—"
Clara peered forward, her eyes glancing now. She made certain words out:

"How glad I shall be to see you tomorrow . . . After all you have done for me . . . I am surely wait until you come."
"And finally:
"Yours very affectionately,
"JANE MILLS."

Clara stared. There was a strange look on her face now, a new expression in her eyes—a look, unusual in Clara, of sudden bewilderment. To whom had Freda Barriers been writing—in Jane Mills' name? Quickly she tore the sheet of blotting-paper from the pad and stuffed it into her pocket.

At the same moment the door opened, and Freda herself came in. She stopped with a start as she saw the Tomboy.

"Oh, I—yes!" she stammered nervously. "What do you want?"

"I wanted," Clara replied, "you! I just wanted to tell you what I thought of your scheming trickery. But"—she passed thoughtfully something in her face made the Forest of the Fourth look at her in quick apprehension—"I don't think," Clara muttered softly, "that it matters now. Good-bye!"

And, roughly brushing past the scowling Freda, she plunged into the passage.

The End of a Dream



RATHER wildly Freda gazed after the Tomboy, wondering perhaps, at her sudden strange attitude.

And then she shrugged. Well, bother Clara! There was nothing to fear from Clara—Clara, at the best of times, was just a blunderer. Her main concern—her only concern now—was with Jane Mills.

She'd got to get rid of Jane Mills! She'd got to get rid of her within the next twenty-four hours!

Grudgingly Freda set herself down at her desk. She did not notice in her preoccupation that the sheet she had already spoiled was gone, leaving a clean expanse of new blotting-paper in its place. From her pocket she produced a sheet of paper.

The paper was covered with writing. In was, in fact, one of Jane Mills' spoiled papers. Freda had fished it out of the wastepaper-basket outside the servants' quarters, and now she unfolded it out.

She drew a sheet of paper towards her, dipped her pen in the ink. After carefully studying the characters of the crophed sheet beside her, she began to write.

Freda at least possessed one gift—a very, very dangerous gift in a girl of her nature. She was able to copy, with deceptive exactitude, other people's handwriting!

It was a gift, incidentally, which in her previous days had earned many a bright shilling from Lydia Crossendale, Diana Royton-Clarke, and other girls who were too lazy to do their own lines.

Tongue in cheek, Freda laboured. Her eyes glanced when at last her effort was finished. Carefully she looked it, carefully folded it, and then, with the thing in her hand, tripped off to Miss Frimrose's study.

The voice of the headmistress, somewhat testy, bade her "Come in!"

"Oh, Miss Primrose," Freda said, "I—"

"Well, Freda, what is it? What is that you have in your hand?"

"It's a message, Miss Primrose. I—I thought I ought to show it to you. I found it under the door of my study."

Miss Primrose glanced at her. Then she picked up the sheet. She jumped as she read:

"If you think you've got the laugh on me simply because I'm only a servant, you wait!"

"J. M."

"J. M.?" Miss Primrose turned her lips. She studied the handwriting. "You found this in your study, Freda?"

"Yes, I—I didn't want to bring it along; but—but—well, I thought you ought to know, Miss Primrose. If Jane is plotting anything against me—"

"Thank you. You may leave this with me," Miss Primrose said, and touched the bell. "Boker," she said when the pageboy appeared. "Send Jane Mills to me."

"Yes, Miss Primrose."

And, as Boker went off, Freda, with a shy grin, slipped off down the corridor. At the end-in-board in the hall, which contained the orders for the day, she passed. One item among these orders caused a costly smile to appear on her face:

"3 o'clock—Fourth Form. Locker inspection under Miss Charmant."

Freda chuckled. She did not go back to her study. She sped off in the direction of the Fourth Form dormitory.

NO TALKING, girls, please! Miss Charmant said. "Clara, hold your head up there! Now, quick march! Each of you will file into the dormitory and stand before your locker."

The Fourth Form marched out of the class-room up the stairs, Barbara Redfern, their captain, at their head.

To be sure, locker inspection was not very thrilling; but it was better than the boredom of the class-room, and any sort of a departure from the usual routine of school life was welcome.

In orderly file they tramped along the passage, halting outside the door of the Fourth Form dormitory, which Barbara pushed open. Quietly they marched in, each girl taking up her position by the side of her bed.

"Right!" Miss Charmant said. "I do hope, girls, that I shall not have to report any of you this time. Marbles stand to attention. Now please open your lockers."

"Certainly!" Marcelle beamed. She opened her locker. Miss Charmant glanced at it. She passed on to Lydia Crossendale, then Fernina, then Jean Cartwright, and Green Cook. The lockers were inspected, proved to be all that was required, and looked again. She passed before Freda.

"Freda, open your locker."

"Certainly, Miss Charmant!" Freda beamed.

And, tugging, she flung open the lid. The next moment—

"Oh!" she gasped.

"Look!" Freda almost screamed. And she flung a pointing finger at the interior of her locker. Miss Charmant paused, blinking in horrified bewilderment.

Clara in a neatly possible, adenoidal bits of coal and chalk and charcoal, glacially flaked from the dustbins outside!

Freda, quivering, held up a garment. It was a petticoat, torn from top to end.

There was a gasp of astonishment.

"Freda!" gasped Miss Charmant.

"What have you—?"

"I— Freda raved. "I— Oh my hat! If you think I'd go and mess up my own things like this! Look at this blouse! Look at these stockings! Look at the awful mess! My clothes ruined—ruined!" she screamed, and spun furiously round. "Somebody else has done this—has done it out of spite!"

added. "Miss Charmant! Miss Charmant!" she screamed.

"Clara!" Miss Charmant cried. But Clara was there—Clara, her cheeks burning with fury, her eyes gleaming. One hand was above the snarl's mouth, the other was fiercely gripping her shoulder. In a moment there was uproar.

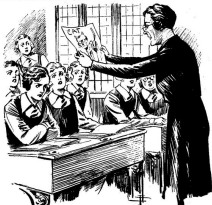
"Clara!" Miss Charmant cried.

"Clara, you idiot," Mabel pointed, "let her go!"

"Clara, you idiot," Mabel pointed, "let her go!"

"I'll let her go," Clara said between her teeth, "when the snarling little cat has taken all this back! You awful thing! You put that lockst there!"

"I didn't!"



In a towering rage Miss Charmant snatched up the catastrophe. "Who did this?" she snapped. But there was no answer.

"Freda!"

"Well, look at it!" Freda blazed. "You don't think I'd do it myself, do you? Look at it—like a dustbin itself!"

"And then she stopped, staring. "Miss Charmant," she said, "what is that?"

Miss Charmant blinked.

"What is what?"

"That gold lockst there—among the clothes. That doesn't belong to me."

Miss Charmant glanced at her. She stepped forward, fishing out the heart-shaped gold lockst which was suspended at the end of a chain. She looked startled.

"You are implying, Freda, that this was dropped by accident by the girl who did this damage?"

"Well, what else?" Freda scowled.

"And— Oh, my hat! I know who that lockst belongs to. It belongs to Jane Mills!"

"Jane! You mean—?"

"I mean," Freda blazed out, "that it was she—yes, it was she—what has been! She wears that thing round her neck. It must have slipped off so she was heading over this locker. That explains the note," she cried. "She jolly well told me that she would get her own back! She— Here," she

"Clara!" And Miss Charmant angrily strode forward. She caught the Tuesday, opening her record. "Clara, how dare—"

And there Miss Charmant herself broke off. Over the dormitory fell a tense, electrified silence. For at that moment the door opened, and who should appear but—Miss Primrose!

"Miss Charmant, what is it?" she began. And then, seeing the state of Freda's locker, jumped. "Miss my soul, who did that?"

"Jane Mills did it," Freda got out desperately. "She said she'd have her own back on me, and this is how she'd done it. It couldn't have been anyone else, Miss Primrose. She was the servant who cleaned out the dormitories this morning, wasn't she? It was her locker Miss Charmant found in the locker."

"I tell you—!" Clara shouted. "Clara, take fifty lines! Barbara, go and fetch Jane Mills at once!"

And Baba, her brows pink with dismay, went off. She found Jane, surrounded by a pile of lockers, in her bed-room. The girl's white, troubled face broke into a smile as she saw the captain of the Fourth.

"Oh, Miss Barbara—"

"Oh, Jane?" Babe cried. "Janet something—something terrible has happened! You haven't answered with Freda's locker, have you?"

"Jane looked.
"No, Miss Barbara?"
"But, Jane, your locker was found in it, and—and the locker itself is in a terrible state!"

Jane stared.
"My locker!" she whispered, and instinctively shrieked at her neck. "You say—? And her eyes widened as she began to understand. "I wondered what had become of my locker," she said. "I've been looking for it everywhere. I thought, perhaps, I'd left it in Study No. 7 this morning. But what do you say has happened?"

Babe, gasping, told her. Jane turned deathly white.
"But, Miss Barbara, they don't suspect me!"

"Babe let her lip.
"I'm afraid they do, Jane," she said.
"You say—?"

"But I never touched Freda's locker! I didn't!" And then her eyes flashed. "I see," she said, "this is another plot of Freda's! Miss Barbara, why does that girl hate me so? This afternoon she took some paper in Miss Primrose's, saying that I had pushed it under her door. It was a threat, supposed to have come from me. I—? Shabbily she ran, lips quivering." "Miss Barbara, you don't believe—"

"Of course I don't!" Babe said.
"But— Oh, my hat! Come on— you'll have to go through with it!"

And of they went to the Fourth Form dormitory, where the Fourth, in a state of excitement, awaited them. Miss Primrose looked stern.

"You deny Jane, that you have touched Freda's things?"

"I do!" Jane said strongly.
"Then how do you account for the things being in that state, and for your locker being found here?"

"I do not know," Jane said. "I can only suggest, Miss Primrose, that Freda, who has been doing her utmost to disgrace me, has done it herself."

"But that," Miss Primrose said, "is absurd! And I think, Jane, that it is very unkind of you to suggest it. Freda has not tried to get you disgraced. You do not suggest that even Freda would damage her own things like this— not to vent a petty spite against you? Jane, you will go to my room."

"But—"
"Please!"
And Jane, had bent, lips quivering, went. Her recitation later—

The school knew the worst!
Jane Mills had been dismissed! Jane Mills was leaving Cliff House by the first train after tea!

Clara Trevlyn's Secret



"JANE!"
"Jane, old thing!"
"Let us carry your bag."

Clara, Babe, and Mabel were waiting at the woman's entrance when Jane Mills, carrying her bag, came out.

"Thank you!" Jane said, with a dash in her voice.

"Jane, cheer up!" Babe said. "Cheer up, old thing! Don't look so down in the mouth. We know it wasn't you. We believe in you, and I swear, Jane, we'll never rest until we've cleared your name!"

Jane smiled.
"Thank you!" she said. "But, oh, what can you do, Miss Barbara?" Miss Ferris has been too dumb. She's had

it in for her from the moment I refused to lay her head— table, and— and— this being of it. But thank you!" she said gratefully. "Thank you for helping me!"

"Oh, my hat! Jane, don't cry—"
"I'm trying not to," Jane said, as they strolled down the drive. "But—"

"But— Oh, Miss Barbara, I had such hopes—of the examination—of everything! I was so looking forward to— to coming into the Fourth Form, but now—!" She trailed off.

In rather painful silence the chums walked on. Clara said nothing. Clara had said nothing from the moment of meeting Jane, but her face was fierce.

They reached the gates. Very bitterly Jane shook her head all round.
"Good-bye!" she whispered. "And— and thank you again!"

"Let us walk a little way with you," Clara said.
"Oh, Miss Clara, I can manage!"

"All the same, I'm coming!" Clara said. "Babe, go back. If anybody wants to know where I am, try to cover me, will you?" For, strictly speaking, no girl was allowed out of school bounds. "I want to have a word with Jane. She's not to long."

She nodded to the chums. Babe and Mabel, shaking their heads, holding, somehow, that, with the dismissal of Jane, something had gone out of their own lives, trailed back towards the school.

From the window of Study No. 1 a heavily face watched them. It was a face slight with jet, with roset. She saw the four standing at the gates. She saw them part, the new Clara stroll off with the girl, and grinned quietly to herself.

Freda's scheme, it seemed, was complete. She had won. No longer need she fear the arrival of John Meredith from America. Desperately, murmuring she had schemed for her future, and she had won!

AS TO ME—
The unarticulation of Freda Ferris outlined a disturbing series of events that evening.

For, in the first place, why was it that Clara turned up late for school? Why was it that, after call-over, she found Clara smuggling blankets out of the Fourth Form dormitory.

And why was it, in the dead of night, when everybody else was fast asleep, that Clara suddenly came, went out in her dressing-gown, and not until half an hour had passed, came back again?

What was the reason for the Tomboy's mysterious actions, and why, instead of going for her, as Freda had fully expected her to that night, did Clara content herself with a grumpy satisfied look?

Freda suddenly grew afraid. Supposing—supposing Jane Mills had not left the school! Supposing Clara, so heavily chastising her, came, had struggled her back! Supposing Clara had a suspicion—had found out something?

The mere thought set Freda quivering with apprehension.

She did not trust Clara. She feared Clara.

Her guilty conscience, working in her fear, reduced her nerves almost to shreds.

In the morning Clara was up early. Clara left the dormitory before rising-hell. Freda, smoking after her, decided at all costs to stand out what the Tomboy was doing. Followed down the stairs, only to come face to face with Clara, who was waiting round the corner at the bottom.

"Say!"
That was the one word the Tomboy knew. Then she caught her, by the shoulders. Before Freda could even get out a squeak of alarm she had bundled her into Study No. 3 and shut and locked the door upon her, leaving the Fourth of the Fourth to be released by Lydia half an hour later, when she came down from the dormitory.

And after that there was no time to shadow or follow Clara further; for after breakfast she received a telephone message.

"Come to Courtfield at once," Mrs. Raffell told her. "Mr. Meredith is here to see you."

Freda shook. She was afraid there— afraid of meeting this man, before whom she was to pose as Jane Mills, friend of Clara, of what she suspected of Clara. How she wished in that moment she had never embarked upon this deception! How she wished Clara—

But there was no help for it. Almost fastening, she dressed. Feeling guilty, fearful, and afraid she went off to Courtfield. At the Royal Hotel, Mr. and Mrs. Raffell met her. Mrs. Raffell glanced at her critically.

"My goodness! You look as if you'd seen a ghost!" she said. "Pull yourself together!"

"But—"
"Thank! Here he is!"
Here he— he being Mr. Meredith— was. Big, twinkling-eyed, tall, and bronzed, he came striding down the corridor at that moment.

Freda pulled herself together, remembering all that hung upon this meeting—concealing herself with the thought that—well, after all, Jane was one of the way. And even if Clara was looking for a Cliff House—what harm could she do her here! She took comfort from that thought, and smiled her most dazzling smile as she found the good-looking John Meredith beaming at her.

"So this is my little Jane—hey? Good! You're grown. Not like your mother, though; not your father. Diggered if I know who! And so you belong to Cliff House—hey? Like it there?"

"Oh, I love it!" Freda said.
"Plenty of chums, of course?"

"Oh, heaps!" Freda laughed.

"Good! Then, Mr. Meredith announced—and Freda's heart seemed to stop beating—"we'll pop over to see Jane. No, don't look so alarmed, Jane. It's no trouble. I want to see your friends; I want to meet them all. I promised your father that I'd look after you and—well, I feel sort of guilty that I've been out of the Cliff Country so long, and haven't been able to keep that promise. But you've been happy with Mr. and Mrs. Raffell. I appointed them as your guardians, you know; before I went away."

"Oh, yes, very!" Freda gasped. "But, Mr. Meredith—"

"Well!"
"I—I wish you wouldn't go to Cliff House. You—you see," Freda said desperately. "they—they don't know about you—"

"He laughed.
"All the better!" he said. "I'll make 'em know my No. 3, no, no objections. This is my day. I've parted Freda kindly. 'Babe, get a car!'—to Mr. Raffell."

"No, I don't think I shall want you to come with us. I want to meet Jane's friends alone. Come on, Jane, Good! You're not fit, are you?"

"No," Freda blushed, feeling as if she were going to collapse.

Oh, what now—what now!

But John Meredith, suspecting nothing, refused to listen to her protests. For sure, Freda's manner toward her. Helplessly she found herself bundled in the car. While the big man chatted and laughed she sat in misery, as they were whirled by the slightest.

"This was, Jane, my girl!" he said. "I want you to bring your friends here. Nothing like a feed—eh?" he added, his eyes twinkling. "I was a schoolboy myself once, and don't expect girls mind new things to eat any more than we used to. Here we are," he added. "And, oh, cheeks, what a lot of girls here! These your friends, Jane?"

Barbara Redfern, at the counter with Mabel Lynn and Clara Trevlin, stared at the board that name.

"Jane?" she murmured. "Did you hear what he called Freda?"

Freda, hearing that remark, half-wished, coward as she was, that she could turn and run.

"This—is this my foster-father," she stammered.

"What!"
"He—he adopted me—"
"Eh?"

"Quite right—quite right!" the man from America boomed. "I understand Jane hasn't told you the whole story. Jane is my adopted daughter. I would look after her, you see; and I'm afraid I haven't done the job too well, having been abroad most of the time, and having to leave Jane in the care of guardians, in consequence. My name's John Meredith, but, say," he added, "cut and drink, girl! Fetch your friends! Jane, introduce me." "But Jane—her name's—" Mabel began.

"That's the name he knows me by," Freda interrupted hastily. "A—a sort of pet name I had when I was a kid."
"Oh!"

A burst of chatter at once. Freda breathed a little more easily. But she was still scared, still apprehensive. Her eyes went round the backshop in search of Clara. But Clara, apparently, had disappeared. Well, thank goodness for that! She relaxed a little, though she was still nervous, still on the jump.

If only she could get John Meredith out of this! If only—

But John Meredith seemed to be enjoying himself. Girls clustered round him. More and more were coming forward to be introduced, shaken by the hand. Nobody perfectly uninterested, of course, where Freda had suddenly dug up this charming and adable adoption of hers, and nobody particularly cruel.

"Ahem! Mr. Meredith—a nice said."

"Hey! What? Bless my soul! Yes, my girl!" said John Meredith, and beamed into the face of Clara Trevlin. "I've seen you before, haven't I?"

"Yes," Clara said, "but I don't think you've met my friend, Jane, this is Mr. Meredith! Mr. Meredith, this is Jane Mills!"

And then there was something like panic, for Freda, landing herself across the shop, put a clapping hand on Jane Mills' shoulders and screamed:

"No, no, no! Mr. Meredith, don't believe it! It isn't! It isn't!"
"Hey, what?"

Mr. Meredith looked thunderstruck. He was staring at Jane Mills, staring incredulously, remembering that side of his long-dormant friend, realizing her startlingly like her this girl was. He blinced.

"But I don't understand," he said. "How can this girl be Jane Mills?"

"Father!" Freda sobbed. "That girl, Clara said contemptuously, 'Oh, name! Freda Ferrera. Everybody here will tell you so.'"

Mr. Meredith looked thunderstruck. As if she had been a ghost, he was still staring at Jane.

"My dear, this is—extraordinary," he said. "But—" And then his eyes fastened upon the looker which burst around Jane's neck. He started a little.

"May I see that?" he asked.
Jane, nodding her head, removed it. He gazed at it open.

Very gently he regarded her then. "My dear, where did you get this?"

"I—I don't remember," Jane faltered.

"I—I seem to have had it for as long as I can remember."
"I remember this," The man panted.

"Jane, I gave this to your mother—a long, long time ago, when she married your father. It was my wedding present to her. Tell me, my dear, what date is your birthday?"

"March the ninth," Jane said.



HAPPY day for the Cliff House chums!

A reunion for Marjorie Handlins with her long absent brother; a magnificent birthday party aboard a luxurious yacht. And then, across the scene falls the shadow of mystery—a mystery in which the one and only Jessica Carstairs takes a hand. Read all about it next week in the brilliant, long complete Cliff House story entitled:

"JUST LIKE JEMIMA!"

By HILDA RICHARDS

"That is true."
"But Freda's," Clara declared, "is August the fourth."

"And by whom, then," Mr. Meredith continued, "were you brought up?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Raffell."
"And Mr. and Mrs. Raffell sent you to this school?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Raffell," Jane retorted, "did not! As soon as I was of age they got me set in domestic service. I didn't like it. I ran away from them, and came here and found this job for myself. I've been here for nearly a year now."

The man's eyes widened.
"But—but—" he said. "Wait a minute." Rapture gripe his brows because now, for the first time he looked at the perplexing Freda. "Jane," he said quietly, "is this true? Because, if it is true, it seems I have stumbled upon a pretty problem. When I left the country I deposited with the Raffells a rather large sum of money, which was to be spent on your comfort and education."

"And that," cut in Clara, "have used it! Oh, my hat, don't you see? Jane ran away, as she says. They had written and told you they had sent her to Cliff House, not knowing that she was already a servant there. When they heard you were coming back, they had to find a girl in Cliff House to pass off as Jane Mills. They found Freda. They bribed Freda with money. Freda, is that true?"

Freda gasped. Every eye was upon her when she face now.

"I swear I never knew they were crooked!" she said. "Oh, I swear it!"

"Then Jane," Bala cried, "is your adopted daughter, Mr. Meredith?"

But that was considerably poorer news. A few more questions from Miss Meredith, and the whole matter was cleared up.

Freda, white, shaking, staggered out of the backshop, sick at heart, disillusioned, more frightened than ever she had been in her life.

Thanks to Clara Trevlin, the real Jane Mills had come into her rights at last. Thanks to them, Freda was bribed out, and the precious Raffell accountants with her. It seemed the end of the world to Freda. She almost crawled back to her study and waited there in dread for the fatal summons which would call her to the head's study for expulsion.

But Emma was not expelled. Jane, in this hour of her life's triumph, showed herself for the generous, noble-minded girl she was.

She pleaded with Mr. Meredith and with Miss Ferrera. She did not, she said, want her new happiness marred by bringing disaster to another girl, and so Freda escaped with a week of solitary confinement in the punishment room.

But that afternoon there were rejoicings and celebrations. The whole school buzzed with the news when it heard it. Jane Mills, former servant-girl, was the adopted daughter of rich Mr. Meredith. Jane Mills would no longer enter for the scholarship. Jane would remain at Cliff House, no longer as a servant, but as a scholar, and would be sent into the Fourth Form at once.

Exciting, that, but by far the most exciting was Clara Trevlin herself, who, thinking of Jane's prowess on the cricket field, could only exclaim:

"Roll on the cricket season!"
"But how," Bala demanded, "did you tumble on the plot against Jane? That's what I want to know."

Clara chuckled.
"Easy, old thing, easy!" she said. "A few phrases I found on Freda's blotting-paper started me off. I gathered from that that Freda was using Jane's name. I gathered from what I saw there that Mr. Meredith was coming to-day. Well, I'll own I haven't got much of a brain, but what I have got does work sometimes, you know, and when Freda blazed that raised looker business in the dorm I saw her little game. She wanted to get Jane sacked. Jane was waked, as you know. I brought her back and hid her in the school."

"And that's all?" Bala asked.
"That's all, except," Clara chuckled, "we've got the best cricketer, outside the senior class, in the Fourth Form! Oh, my goodness, everybody, what a merry season we're going to have!"

At which Jane laughed, and the chums grinned. It was difficult, in that moment, to decide who was the most happy—Jane, or the Tambo!

**ON THE TRAIL OF TESS TRELAWNEY Morcove and Grangemoor
Join Forces In The Search For The Kidnapped Schoolgirl**

WHEN MORCOVE EXPULSED HER



By
**MARJORIE
STANTON**

TESS TRELAWNEY has been expelled from Morrish School owing to the admission of **MARJORIE** and **RALPH FENDLER**, who are living near Morrish at Cliffedge Mansions. On making investigations, Tess discovers that they are exceedingly good. The Fenders, utilizing Tess' knowledge, kidnap her and make her a prisoner.

METTY HARRISON, one of Tess' school friends and
DAVE CARROSE of Grangemoor School, investigate Tess' disappearance. They walk on the footpaths and morning and are amazed to see a strange boat creeping in to land.

(You read on.)

Strange Awakening

IN silence Betty and Dave watched the boat slowly take shape in the mist—was it come slowly nearer and nearer to the shore. It had no sails—had even no mast for a sail. Nor was it being rowed in. Betty inferred that it was a motor boat; yet not the faintest pair of engines sounded. They were now stopped.

But the dissolving mists of morning were still about the boat, making it impossible to see her in detail. The one thing certain was that this strange landing meant—mystery at all costs!

Betty drew back her head and writhed around behind the screening rocks to give Dave a thrilled, conspiring look.

He made a sign to her not to speak, even to a whisper. Then he ventured another cautious peep.

He was still watching when she heard him, the lad who so seldom because excited, gave a gasp.

"But she's been suddenly warned!" he whispered. "She's off out to sea again!"

Betty took another look. The boat had sharply gone about. Engines in her had divided to life.

Even as had and girl gone, they saw how soon she would be gone, phantom-like, as mysteriously as she had come.

Betty turned to Dave.

"Has it something to do with the mystery of Tess? That's what I'm

wondering! Only think; we have begun to suspect the Cliffedge people—and it was not this part of the shore, just under the bangalore on the cliffs, that the boat was coming in?"

"And they would have come to land," Dave said, with a hard-thinking frown, "only they were suddenly warned to sheer off. It must have been some signal—"

"From Cliffedge?" Betty hazarded, greatly excited.

"Yes." That answer was raised by Dave in a tone of calm certainty. "I know what it means. Up close at the bangalore the Fenders have had a scare about me. You know I continued to get them to sleep so for the night because I couldn't get back to Grangemoor School—"

"But you told me, Dave, that they didn't mean to mind a bit."

"Neither did they—overnight. But, you see, to come down to the shore as early as I did this morning meant—well, my getting out of my bed-room window—"

Betty, for a moment, was robbed of breath by the turn it had given her, to understand what was in Dave's mind.

"You mean," she parried, "someone may have tapped at your door just now to make sure that you were still there? And then, getting no answer—"

"Just as the boat had been sighted, too," he added. "That's about it, Betty. Whoever feared out that I had got up and gone out must have rushed to signal to the boat 'keep away.'"

"Then—then there really are mysterious goings on at the bangalore?" was Betty's shrilled comment. "Whether it all has come bearing upon Tess' disappearance, we don't know. But we can be sure now, the bangalore was not rented, as the Fenders made out it was, simply that Missie Fendler might have the benefit of the sea air. There is something going on!"

She added instantly:

"Pass on these suspicions to the police, Dave?"

He shrugged.

"They're only suspicions, Betty. And who are we that the police would take these seriously?"

"We're chums of Tess, who's missing—that's who we are!" Betty said passionately.

It was like Dave to receive this with only a calm nod. Betty, however, felt very worked up.

"The police, then, must follow their own line, Dave, and we must follow ours! If they don't find Tess—we must!"

He looked at his wrist-watch.

"Betty, you had better get back to school now, and I'll get back to the bangalore, just to see good-morning to anyone who is about. Keep everything under your hat—that's my advice. The last thing we must have, I'm positive, is the police making the Fenders' questions about 'stupid' suggestions that have been made against them."

He seemed ready to part with Betty, here and now; but she shook her head and smiled wistfully.

"I can go back to Morrish, Dave—just the bangalore—and I'll do just that. No objection to my being seen together?"

"Oh, no!"—sincerely. "In fact, it may serve as a spot of what they're so fond of using—speaking. Come on, then?"

He and she had been gazing about whilst they were in talk, and they were quite sure that no one else was down here on the shore as they were continuing to talk freely as they wandered about, making for the next-by cliff-path, known as the Cliffedge Zigzag.

But, to reach the foot of that craggy path, they had to go by the private boat-cave, which was reserved for the use of Cliffedge tenants. And it was just as Betty and Dave were stepping past the closed and padlocked lattice-gates of the cave that the same alarming thought seized both minds.

Who, if this very cave had played a part in the sudden disappearance of Tess Trelawney—this locked cave, the key of which was in the possession of Cliffedge?

Perhaps Dave's heart was not beating as fast as Betty's was, next moment, he and she were standing close to the strong lattice-gates, peering eagerly between the slats of wood into the glooms beyond. But Betty could be quite sure that he was strongly inclined to send a halting cry into the cave:

"Fendlers—open there, Fend!"

He fingered the padlock and chain which secured the gate.

"Dave," she urged in a tense whisper, "either tenants of Cliffedge

have often left the gates unlocked. After all, who on earth is likely to steal anything that's kept in the case? But the Fendons—they're taking good care to keep people out!"

"They're a perfect right," he fairly-mindedly stressed. "Still, look here, Betty, I'll go along to the foot of the Zigzag whilst you stay here. You can see me from here. If I give an O.K. sign, then you might call out."

"Right-oh!"

To her eagerness was added reserved admiration of Dave's unfolding wisdom. She felt as if she were partnering a trained detective.

For a minute she was kept in acute suspense; then, from the base of the cliff path that led up to the luggages, he waved to her, instantly her face was again pressing close to a couple of the latter slats.

"You dear—Tom!" she called—softly this first time. Then, as an answer came, a little louder: "Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes, are you in there? This is Betty calling! Yes!"

The appealing voice, rising until it had drawn mournful echoes from the dark recesses of the cavern, was answered. An echo, and only an echo!

Again Betty would have called into the cave; but now, intending a touch louder, she looked away to Dave, who—
"Oh, maddening!" He was making a sign: "Someone coming?"

She ran then to put herself with him, and so go up the steep path to the cliff-top. There was no one to see her yet; indeed, from their had gone only a little way up the zigzag when they saw a girl peering her way down in a very fussy manner.

"Minnie Fender!" Betty said.
"Now," Dave whispered his warning, "be careful!"

AT THAT very moment, Tom Trolanney the missing girl on whose account there was such intense anxiety at Morcove School—awoke from a spell of dream-tormented sleep.

There was black darkness even so, Tom knew where she was—only too well she knew!

Had it been possible for her to strike a match or switch on a pocket-lamp, it would have caused her no terrible surprise to see rock walls on all sides.

The cavernous nature of her prison had been fully revealed to her since that once since that calamitous hour when she, half awoken after a useless struggle, had been placed here by Miss Fender.

Twice had that heartless, double-faced girl visited her in this inner cave whose only outlet was into the Cliff-edge boat cave. Minnie had come to make sure that she, Tom, was "all right." As if it could be all right with a poor girl shut away like this, as being one who had found out—too much!

Food, bedding, blankets—everything except a light had been provided for Missed Tom. Oh, the Fenders were anxious enough that she should not come to any harm! But, so for any assurance of her being set free after an many hours or days—was a word!

From her make-believe bed, spread upon the sandy floor of the cavern, Tom rose up, unstepping a hand across her forehead.

"Strange! It was as if she had been awakened just then by a faint, appealing cry."

In that first waking moment it had seemed to her that one of her own chains of Morcove was close at hand, crying out for her:

"Tom dear! Tom, are you in there?"
But now, although she went blindly in

the darkness to where she knew the way in-and-out of this inner cave to be, not the faintest sound came to her.

The way out—yes; but it was stopped to her. There were lumps of rock piled and jammed together in the narrow passage, and she might try again to get at them, but she would fail, as she had failed—how many times before? They were only for Miss Fender to deal with from the outer end of the passage.

Tom remembered how loudly the tide neverly always surged along the shore when wind and waves alike came in from the wide Atlantic. And yet she could not hear any sound of the sea.

"I must have dreamed that I heard—a voice," she sighed resignedly to herself. "I know I was dreaming about Morcove. It must have been just the way the dream ended."

For all that, she suddenly rapped her hands to her mouth and shouted at the top of her voice for help to come. Rejoiced to the belief that she must have dreamed the cry of a wretched creature who was not assigned to her place as a prisoner at the mercy of the Fenders.

Nothing to be gained by shouting! So Miss Fender had cunningly warned her. And until this moment she, Tom, had regarded it as a waste of breath to start any outcry. But now—

"Hi, help! Is there anybody about?" her frantic voice went on, "I can't get out! Help—help!"

"When Night Comes—"

MAIRIE FENDER, meeting Betty and Dave as they came up the Cliff-edge Zigzag, was at her jauntiest.

"Well, you're a nice one, Dave Cardew!" she burst out, laughing at him. "There would have been a morning cap for you if you'd been in your room when the servant tapped. What on earth hour were you up?"

"I'm the one to have been surprised," Betty smiled, for she meant to meet Miss-Fenderson with all the bluntness she could assume. "Didn't even know that Dave had been kept the night at your luncheon?"

It seemed to her that Mairie's pretty eyes held a sudden cunning look.
"You must have been breaking the school rules, Betty, to be out of bounds so early as this!"

"No! I don't know of any rule against girls getting up early—perhaps because they're seldom want to!"

"How's your foot, Dave?" Mairie asked him covertly.

"Oh, fine this morning—quite all right, thanks!"

"It seems to be" she twitted him, "for you to be tackling this tiresome path! The maid told me that you must have got up and gone out, so I came to look for you. Does any good?"

"Er—, as if I don't know!" she laughed again. "You've been seeing if you can't put the local police wise over this strange affair of Tom Trolanney! And now I doubt if you really did come a cunner of your hike last evening! I doubt if there was a crooked foot, or whatever you said it was, to get well in the night! That was just a dodge to be able to spend a night away from Gungahness School, wasn't it?"

"You're telling me!" he gravely noted. "Anyhow, quite by chance this morning I've found—this!"

And he displayed the bicycle lamp, that sensational Sud, which had rewarded his early morning peep along the shore.

Betty and Mairie gave it an eager

look without becoming at all agitated. There was no sudden loss of colour from her cheeks.

"But fancy!" was the girl's admiring comment. "So you really are an ace on the police already! That'll be something to let them know about before you go back to school. By the way, Dave, another and I have decided. Your best chance will be if you let my brother Ralph to come over from Gungahness in a car. He has in both some things from the luggages that he will be needing at Gungahness. You can go back with him—about half-past nine it'll be."

"Oh, thanks! That's fine!" Dave said. "You're all being awfully kind."

"To someone who is only being very tiresome, I think. But you shall have breakfast, Mairie forgive me" him very prettily. "Sorry, Betty—in a week drive time—!" but I can't ask you to join in. You'd better hurry back now, or you'll get into a row with your Form-mistress."

They were all three emerging upon the lower cliff-top, Mairie having turned back to keep the others company. Betty felt quite ready to be off back to the school, as she and Dave could do no more now. But she was noting how Mairie had inquired as to her to go. That hardly squared with the girl's great chumminess towards Sud! No. 12 on previous occasions.

Did the change imply a nervous, "settled" state, due to grief? Betty wondered.

But there came suddenly something of far greater importance than that to wonder about. It was when Betty was half-way back to Morcove School, keeping at a steady pace, that a sensational idea rushed into her mind.

Supposing the mystery boat had been going to take Tom Trolanney, at present in the hands of the Fenders, right away from this district?

Such an intention would account for the boat's creeping in, to make a landing on the shore below Cliff-edge, at an hour when no one is likely to be about, Mairie and her mother, getting up early to do their part in such a secret undertaking, had found that Dave's presence meant great danger. So there had been a sudden signal from the top of the cliffs to the boat:

"Keep away!"
That was how Betty was seeing it all say. Was it actually the case?

"I wonder!"

Back Tom, for some mysterious reason—discovered by the Fenders! Kept out of the way, sensitive by her captors, who had planned to get their hapless victim transferred to some far-distant place, but the police should start pursuing a dangerous line of inquiry.

Such thoughts as these gave Betty a mind so disturbed and agitated, by the time she got indoors her finalization was all for making known the sensational theory to the police, through Miss Somerfield.

And then came a calmer mood, with cold reason warning her not to be in such a hurry to bring charges, either, after all, were not borne out by any tangible evidence.

A maddening situation; but there it was! At present there was no evidence implicating Cliff-edge. Dave's discovery of the bicycle lamp—even that had done nothing to fasten suspicion upon the Fenders.

So, after all, it was only to Polly and other good chums of Sud, No. 12 that Betty unburdened her mind.

She had got back just in time to avoid being an absentee from the first routine duties of another day, at Morcove.

Accordingly, it was as a girl under-

going to punishment that Betty, just before morning school, could enjoy the opportunity for a talk. A most serious debate it became, behind Study No. 12's closed door.

The whole school had learned at breakfast-time that there was still no news of missing Tom. But how was Betty now, telling Polly and those others all that she had been up to before breakfast, and what her theory was?

"Just a crazy idea of mine—that's what you are thinking, perhaps!" she waved up.

"No!" came male explosively from Polly. "For the whole thing fits together—like a jig-saw puzzle. Cliffedge means what's because of Tom right enough."

"Then should I, after all, go to Miss Sowerfield, for her to tell the police?" Betty enquired, in roused perplexity.

"If it sounds so—so plausible to you girls—"

"But when it's only a theory I don't see how you can pass it on," Barry rudely pronounced. "I imagine there's nothing irritates the police so much as being offered theories."

"And by girls, too; that's what Dave was hearing in jail," sighed troubled Betty. "Very well! For the present we simply must hang it under our hats."

Polly, who had been sitting upon the table-edge, plump legs a-straddle, came off that favorite perch.

"Here's how I see it now, girls. We need to find—we simply must find—some bit of evidence that will enable us to speak about the Fenders. Anything—the least little bit will do—"

"Provided it really is evidence that the police can't laugh at," was Mudge Minder's eager rejoinder. "Polly's right."

"And the way to go about it?" As she spoke Barry unrolled the table.

"Watch the Cliffedge boat cave! If they've got Tom on their hands—then it's there they've got her!"

"Oh, I say!" Judy murmured, with a good deal of her brother Dave's level-headedness. "When Betty has told us she called into the cave this morning and got no answer—"

Barry shrugged.

"Poor Tom may easily be not in a position to call out. Do be sensible, Judy!"

Collapsing of Judy.

"But we've been in that boat cave often," Betty pointed out. "It certainly goes a good way in under the cliffs."

"Ugh! There goes that bell again!" Polly suddenly stamped. "Oh duck! Must we all go into what this morning?" Must it? the Madcap specified desperately. "When, if only we could—"

"Yes, I know," Betty nodded. "But, after all, girls, is it during the day that anything is likely to be done by Cliffedge? Can you imagine that boat returning in again during broad daylight?"

"Can't I lend you a hand there?"

"No; you can away to your own House."

"Oh, but I must report to the Head that—"

"Oh!" said the senior, not at all anxiously. "You don't want to bother about reporting. I've made it quite O.K. for you. There's no use or—I told you!"

Dave, receiving this in silence as he jumped out of the car, found the driver coming to offer to porter Ralph's bag looking for him.

"Oh, I can manage it myself, thank!"

Oh, Dave thought. Must queer! His own offer to carry the bag out to the car, when he and Ralph were making their departure from Cliffedge Bungalow had been hastily declined. Yet this was a very heavy bag which Ralph was choosing to handle all unaided.

Dave, as he walked away in the direction of Challenger's House, glanced back. An old cricket-bag, it was; but as to what it held at present—a dead weight, and that was all one could tell!

A second time Dave glanced back to the porch of Head's House, to have a last sight of the well-built senior struggling miserably with his burden. It so taxed even his energies that he staggered as he lugged it along. And that old cricket-bag had received its weighty contents at Cliffedge Bungalow an hour ago.

All Grangeview School was in class, and Dave's thoughtful dawdling towards his own House took him slowly past the other School House, direct the closeness of which came the ringing voice of master imparting instruction.

He must be keen, expect at least a grumpy. "Back at last, are you?" on lifting himself into the class-room, where he was considerably overdone. All the same—

And he stopped suddenly, they wheeled round, to hurry back to Head's House. Dave's face, at this moment, was charged with the expression which means: "No—not good enough!" It was what he was thinking. His right to qualify to do any more for a bit, from the Moorcock angle. But—this bag!

Another minute, and he was tiptoeing along a first-floor passage in Head's House, passing one study door after another. He knew Ralph Fender's study; it was at the far end, where you could go round into another passage.

A few paces short of Ralph's door Dave's alert eyes assumed him that the grocer was there in his room. As he—Ralph—was also due in class, it looked as if according to die with the careful disposal of that bag were detaining him. Unpacking!

Dave got to the closed door and stood there, listening eagerly. He could hear the creaks still peering loudly, after recent exertions. Suddenly, it was a rattling sound which came to Dave—a label, metallic disk, as of two iron bars being hooked together. No wonder the bag had been such a weight to carry. Ralph Fender must have brought away some metal objects from Cliffedge.

"Took!" Dave wondered. "If so, what does he want with them here! Or is it simply a case of getting them away from Cliffedge?"

But now Dave heard sounds that warned him to stay not another moment outside this door. Heard into that other passage he flashed, and even as he went tiptoeing along it he heard Ralph Fender come away from the study.

The door was drawn shut with a mild thud, and then there was the fellow's brick dying-away step in the main passage.



THUS raised her voice in wild appeal: "Help—help! Let me out!" But the only answer to her piteous cry was the dull, macking echo.

What's In The Bag?

A HIRSD car whisked to a standstill outside the main entrance to Head's House at Grangeview School.

"Now, Carnes, you've come in a hurry than I am," was Ralph Fender's affable hint that Dave might be the first to alight. "Besides, I've this bag to be off-loaded."

As soon as it was safe to do so, Dave turned back. He opened the door of Ralph Fender's study and walked in. The cricket bag was looking collapsed in a corner. Dave took hold of it by the leather handles, and lifted it.

"Empty!"

Then he had to ask himself, where in this study had the minor levers been hidden to get what he had brought away from Cliffidge?

There was a small cupboard. That indeed, seemed a most likely place, and if it proved to be locked, then one would feel certain.

But the cupboard door, when Dave tried it, came open, and the cupboard itself was as bare as Mother Hubbard's.

Hasty second-place thought it was, Ralph had just not used it. Why? Was his strange burden too precious for such a starting-place—too secret?

DAVE WALKED out of Ralph Fender's study, frowning hard. He was left with a sense of deepened mystery. And now he began to feel twice as keenly when he could get into things with his bare fingers.

On the way to Challenger's he had a mental picture of how it would be in their own study. Jack Latton and Tom Terton, as usual, would be all terrible interruptions—unless Jimmy Cleaver, who always made such a good listener.

Then there would be Talbot Black, eating chocolate, or an apple—bound to be eating something! But a splendid fellow, all the same; reliable as any, if there should be any need, later on, to rely upon anyone.

Dave felt instinctively that there would be. He did not know it; but this was a moment when his mind held precisely the same idea which had occurred to Betty, at Mercove School.

After school, today; or this evening; after dark, come to that—something must be done, in one more desperate attempt to solve the great mystery!

Maisie Is—Afraid!

MOTHER, there are the police again!"

The nervous comment, voiced by Maisie Fender, caused Mrs. Fender to come quickly to the door, wondering from which the daughter was waiting.

"Only going by on the road, Maisie! You needn't start being jumpsy."

"It's all very well," the daughter rather snapped back, "but I've had enough to make me feel jumpsy. I've had to do a good deal single-handed. If it hadn't been for me, mother—"

"Oh, I know—and so don't begin! And you, Maisie—you know very well that what we stand to gain—"

"If we don't all get caught and sent to prison," was the pronounced interruption. "Angh, the sooner it's all over now, the better, I say!"

"It will soon be—all over," promised Mrs. Fender, her hard eyes still watching two policemen, who were coming by on the coast road running between Mercove School and the town.

"To-night, Maisie! The best will be able to come in then. I see no reason why that girl who is in our hands should not be a hundred miles away, this time to-morrow."

"Look!" Maisie almost gasped. "Now those policemen are disappearing—to leave their bikes and walk out over the grass."

"Ah, pull yourself together!" Mrs.

Fender fiercely enjoined. "We must expect the police to be around for a bit. But if you imagine that they are suspecting as to having something to do with it all, then you're getting frightened about nothing. They called once, and we satisfied them. Besides"—said Mrs. Fender—gave a laugh of contempt—"my mistake now, the police will be starting to follow a false trail."

"You mean—that unless which Betty Barton is to have?"

"Yes, Maisie! And—better than standing about, getting panicky, put on your things now, and go across to Mercove School. That letter should have been delivered by this time. The second delivery will be in at the school. You and Ralph—you've both done splendidly, so far. Don't, Maisie, spoil it all at the finish!"

"If only it would finish!" Maisie rather shrilly responded. "All right, I'll go across to the school."

Guiltily ill-at-ease then, she became a far different-looking girl by the time she got to the school gates.

Desperately she was forcing herself to appear as calm, as serene as ever, snatching at the wide carriage-way which ran between one playing-field and another.

The midday dinner had set free all the Formers, but scarcely a game was being played. Maisie could tell; some fresh arrivals had occurred, but so many girls were grouped in talk.

She looked about as if to see if one of the gossiping groups comprised the class of Study No. 42; but she had not yet singled out those girls when some others came running towards her.

"Maisie!" they joyfully hailed her. "Have you heard the latest? About Tom—"

"No—what?" she chorused.

"It's amazing!" she was stared at. "Betty's had a letter—from Tom herself!"

"A letter—from Tom?"

"Footed at Drexler's—that's a village miles away from here. Tom posted it secretly on her way through."

"And she says she can away of her own accord!" put in another excited Mertonian. "She wrote to Betty, it seems, because she had Betty's bike, and—"

"Oh, it's a long cigarette—the letter is," cried yet another of those girls.

"Miss Sowerfield has it now, and is letting the police know—"

"For it means that they just needn't bother to search any more round this object. Tom is miles away—"

"Safe and well, too—that's the great thing!"

"Indeed, it is," Maisie fervently agreed. "What a relief! I'm so glad! We were beginning to fear—"

"And now—here is Betty!" came the interrupting shout. "She'll tell you everything!"

Maisie looked over the heads of some of the girls, and she saw Betty & Co. behaving this way, as if beside themselves with joy.

And she thought to herself, contentedly:

"Tricked again, you clever little-tricked again!"

TUCKERD, you—but for how long?

With Betty & Co. and abroad Dave working hard to solve the mystery Maisie Fender is not so safe as she believes! Look out for another powerful instalment of this magnificent Mercove serial in next week's **SCHOOLGIRL**. Order your copy at once.

HILDA RICHARDS REPLIES TO YOU

Address to Gates (South Norwood Hill).—Do hope I've spelt your name correctly, Address—your surname, I mean. It was just a wee bit difficult to decipher. Yes, I can certainly promise another Diana story in the near future. So that's a treat in store for you. Best wishes.

Olga Polson (Walsmeer, N.S.W.)—What a nice long letter, Olga! I think you'd certainly enjoy the Fourth—with Babe & Co. as your theme—if you were at Cliff House. Sorry I can't make any promises about more illustrations; that's for your Editor to decide. Write again soon.

Olga Bonaria (Yorkshire).—Delighted to hear from you again, Olga. And many, many thanks for the nice things you say about my stories. Congrats on your success in the exam; despite your comment, I trust that you must be happy! All good wishes.

Constance Hoare (Shirley, Birmingham). So glad you've started to take in The Schoolgirl again, Constance. I'm delighted to know that you like all the stories. Give Paddy a good bump too, won't you—send a "smile" from Jane (though I don't quite know how you'll pass that one).

Jessie Bradshaw (Barnet).—The answer to your big question is no, Jessie. So sorry if you're disappointed—but I'm afraid it can't be helped! So glad you like all my stories. You'd probably be in the Third if you went to a school like Cliff House.

Joan Simons (Toronto).—I was glad to hear from you, Joan, and to know what you think of The Schoolgirl. I'm afraid I can't comment on your suggestions and criticisms; but I've passed on your letter to the Editor, who I'm sure will make a note of them. Diana is between fourteen and fifteen.

Dorcas (Highbury, N.S.W.)—Many thanks for such a nice letter, Dorcas. All the characters you mention are between fourteen and fifteen. You'll be glad to know that your favourite C. H. characters will all be featuring in future stories. My best wishes to you, Dorcas.

Ella (Kham, near Newbury).—Such a nice letter, Ella. If I were you I'd certainly join the Guides; I think it is a splendid movement, and I'm sure you'd make heaps of new friends. Is your dream going to become a regular Mertonian reader? Best wishes.

Iris Llewellyn (Monkton, Co. Cork).—What a lovely long "first" letter, Iris! I was so pleased to hear from you and to know that you enjoy all my stories. What lots of pots you have! I don't think I've ever heard of the chign you mention; they must be very nice—most very funny without any tails! Another long letter soon, please.

Theresa Stewart (Lurgan, Ireland).—You'd be with Joy Freck and her friends in the Second Form, if you went to Cliff House. Babe has one brother, Bungle. He has not yet started school. Just as if your letter could have lasted me, my dear! I wish it had been much longer! But perhaps you will remedy that when you write again!

Lanley (Bunley (Newfoundland)).—Hope you enjoy your new, my dear. You would not manage to get into the Upper Third, with lively Doris Radford & Co. if you went to Cliff House. I'm sure you'd love that.