

"GOLDEN-HEARTED MARJORIE!" Fascinating LONG COMPLETE Cliff House story inside.

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Incorporating
'SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN'



"NURSE" BESSIE PRACTISES!

One of the many delightful incidents from this week's magnificent LONG COMPLETE story of Barbara Redfern & Co.



Golden-Hearted MARJORIE!

Marjorie in Her Element!



"ANYBODY know where Marjorie Hazeldene is?"

Clara Trevlyn, the tomboyish captain of Junior School games at Cliff House School, asked that question as she popped her rather untidy head into Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form corridor.

There were four girls in that study. One was Barbara Redfern, the blue-eyed captain of Junior School; the second was Mabel Lynn, Babs' golden-haired chum and study-mate. The third was Leila Carroll, the American Fourth Former, and the fourth Doris Redfern, Babs' younger sister from the Upper Third.

They all stared at the Tomboy.

"Marjorie?" Babs repeated. "No, Clara. Haven't seen her—not since dinner. Why?"

"Nothing; just looking for her," Clara said. She frowned a little, for Clara was very, very fond of the gentle-hearted girl who shared Study No. 7 with herself and Janet Jordan. "I'm just trying to get a pick-up side in hockey together, and I thought it would be a good idea to ask old Marj to play. She's been swotting pretty hard just lately, and hasn't seemed herself at all. Apart from that, I don't believe she's been out for over a week."

"Well, she's studying for the nursing certificate, isn't she?" Mabs asked.

"Yes; she's doing that all right. And then there's that Second Form first-aid class of hers, too. But it's not just that," Clara added; "there's something else. Old Marj seems different, somehow. Sometimes I catch her looking at me with such a queer, sad look—almost, you know, as if she were going to burst into tears."

"That's funny," Mabs interrupted. "Funny? I'm dashed if I see—"
 "No; I don't mean funny, in that way, chump!" Mabs said. "I mean, I've noticed it myself. She's off her food, too. She hardly touched her

for a minute looking at me in the queerest fashion, and then in a stiff sort of way walked towards the door. It didn't dawn on me until I heard the handle go what she was doing."

"And then?" young Doris asked, with breathless interest.

"Well, I went after her. I didn't awaken her, of course. It's frightfully bad. I've heard to startle sleep-walkers. I caught her half-way down the passage, and gently led her back. She came without a murmur. I can tell you," Mabs said, "it shook me up at the time, and it's a dead-sure sign

Just like kind, gentle Marjorie Hazeldene! Unable to resist a plea for help even though it means sacrificing her chances of remaining at Cliff House

Unsuspecting the selfish motives of another girl, Marjorie responds nobly to her plea, and thus unwittingly paves the way to the finest deed of her life

dinner to-day, and last night—here Mabs' brow wrinkled—"I'd almost forgotten until now. But I caught her sleep-walking."

"Oh, my hat!" Clara said apprehensively. "Mabs, you're sure?"

"Well, yes. I was awake, you know, thinking over this Christmas play we've just got into rehearsal—That reminds me, Doris, you'll have to snap up that dance in the second scene a bit. Suddenly I heard a movement from Marjorie's bed. The moon was shining full on it, so I saw everything that happened. Marjorie got up. She stood

that Marjorie's got something on her mind."

The three Fourth Formers gazed at each other in consternation at that. Doris Redfern shook her head.

Perhaps in that moment they all felt a little guilty of neglecting Marjorie Hazeldene; but what with the new riding-school activities, the question of the Christmas play and the hectic hockey programme of the Lower School, they had left gentle Marjorie to her own devices rather more than usual.

It was all so easy, somehow, to leave

Marjorie alone. Marjorie, always busy, never complaining, hating always to spoil her chums' fun, or to interfere in their activities, when she herself had no part in them, was so frightfully and sweetly retiring.

And, as Mabs said, Marjorie had been extraordinarily busy on her own account just lately.

For Marjorie, in the first place, had been given charge of the first-aid class in the Second Form. Quite a big job in itself. It was Miss Charmant's idea, announced, in the first of Cliff House's youngest Form would learn better from a girl much younger than a prefect or mistress, and it was Marjorie, who already looked after the first-aid section of the Cliff House Girl Guides, who had been made their teacher.

And hardly had Marjorie taken over the task of coaching the would-be nurses of the Second Form, than the Fullwood Nursing Certificate had entered her name for that. That naturally meant extra work and extra study.

For the Fullwood Nursing Certificate was an institution at Cliff House, even if it was not an institution frightfully well patronised.

It had been inaugurated many years ago by a Cliff House girl, who was now a celebrated specialist in London's famous Harley Street, and was designed, of course, to help girls who were anxious to sit for full nursing honours as soon as they left school.

The winner's reward was a cheque for fifty pounds, a reduction of school fees, and a six weeks' course in Dr. Fullwood's London nursing-home every summer.

Normally, however, there were never very many entries. Most girls at Cliff House had ambitions which soared above nursing. Only seven, indeed, had entered for the certificate this year, and four of those—Georgina Skeppington, Constance Grenier, Theresa Graves, and Celia Forbes, were Upper School girls, the remainder being Marjorie herself, Elsie Effingham, and, amusingly surprising, Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter, the fat duffer of the Fourth.

Not, of course, that anyone regarded Bessie's entry seriously, except Bessie herself. Bessie had a habit of entering for everything it was possible to enter for.

"Marjorie's working too jolly hard," Clara frowned. "She ought either to concentrate on the exam, or give up the first-aid class; but you know what Marjorie is once she's set her hand to a thing. Blessed if I know why she should go sticking her name down for that exam, after she'd taken the kids' first-aid class on—"

"Well, she's always been interested in nursing." Mabs pointed out.

"And," Babs added, more practically, "she's not well off, is she?"

Another pause. That was very, very true. Everybody in Cliff House knew Marjorie Hazeldene's circumstances, and everybody admired her for her uncomplaining, plucky fight, which for so long she had waged against adversity.

Most decidedly Marjorie was not well off. Her father, a struggling clergyman, with rather a poor parish in Suffolk, would never, indeed, have been able to pay his daughter's school fees if Marjorie had not been clever enough to make her own clothes and help things out in a hundred and one other small and clever ways.

The fifty pounds which went with the Certificate, therefore, and the reduced fees which it carried with it as its

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

reward, would have come as a godsend to the Hazeldene family.

"All the same," Clara added, "where is she? You haven't seen her, young Doris?"

"No, Clara," Doris Redfern said, then looked quickly towards the door as a step sounded outside. "Perhaps this is her."

But it was not Marjorie. A fat, beaming face, adorned by a pair of thick, round spectacles, behind which magnified eyes shone with suppressed excitement, was thrust into the study.

"Oh crumbs! I sus-say, you girls!" Bessie Bunter breathlessly said. "I sus-say, you know, I've gig-got a first-aid set." And Bessie entered the study and proudly dumped a black japanned tin box on the table. "Look!" she cried proudly.

They looked.

"What's that for?" Clara demanded.

"Oh, really, Clara, you know what a jolly clever first-aid I am," Bessie said offensively. "That's in case I have to do things of course! Now, for instance," she added hopefully, "supposing you walked out of this room and fell down the stairs—"

"You might break your leg, you know. Or your arm, or something," Bessie said cheerfully. "Then, of course, I should be able to rush to your aid and bandage you up in—in—"

"A bread-and-butter poultice," Mabs suggested.



MARJORIE'S eyes were upon the frail woman in the bed. She was hardly conscious of Elsie's departure. She certainly did not see the slightly sneering smile the girl she was helping gave.

Bessie loftily sniffed.

"Really, Mabs, don't show your ignorance," she said. "Who's ever heard of a bread-and-butter poultice? But look!" And she unfasted her first-aid box and beamed. "There!" Bessie added proudly. "Now, what do you think of that? My Aunt Annie sent it to me, you know."

The chums grinned. A first-aid box was a new toy for Bessie Bunter, but it was obvious—for the time being, at any rate—that Bessie was in earnest.

"Isn't it lovely?" she crowed. "I sus-say, Clara, are you going to play hockey?"

"Well, my mind was drifting in that direction," Clara grinned. "But why the sudden interest?"

"Oh, nothing! But I thought, you know, that I'd better be there—in case somebody breaks a leg, or someone is stunned," Bessie added hopefully. "Broken legs are my strong suit, you know—at least, Marjorie says so, and Marjorie's taught me an awful lot about first-aid, you know—though nobody in this silly school ever thinks of breaking a leg," she added wistfully. "I sus-say, Babs, you—you're sure you're feeling all right?"

"Eh? Of course I'm feeling all right, nunny!" Babs said.

"I thought you were looking rather pale, you know," Bessie said seriously. "Mind you, it takes an expert to see these things. You're sure you haven't eaten anything to disagree with you? You might," Bessie added seriously, "be suffering from poisoning, and not know it. You haven't got a pain in the tummy?"

"No."

"Nor a headache?"

"No!" Babs glared. "Nor a broken neck! Nor concussion of the brain!"

"Nor—but what the dickens is the matter with you, chump?"

"Oh, really? Babs, I was only anxious," Bessie said disappointedly. "Naturally, being such a jolly clever first-aid expert, I could cure you in no time. I've got some ripping stuff here I want to try out, you know. I say, Mabs, you don't think you're sickening for anything, do you?"

"No, I don't; but I know one fat chump who jolly soon will be," Mabs threatened. "If you want someone to practise on, go and see Connie Jackson or Sarah Harrigan—or Miss Bullivant."

"Oh, really, Mabs! If that's meant to be funny, you think it's silly," said Bessie offensively. "Wait until I've won the Nursing Diploma, and have got a row of medals for doing things to the sick and wounded—you'll all be sorry you grinned, then. As Marjorie was saying—"

"Have you seen Marjorie?" Clara questioned.

"Eh? Of course I've seen Marjorie!" Bessie said. "Now, only half an hour ago—"

"Where is she?" Clara asked quickly. "Oh, really, Clara, I wish you wouldn't talk when I'm speaking," Bessie said peevishly. "As I was saying— Oh crumbs, what was I saying, Babs?"

"Where Marjorie was."

"Eh? Marjorie's in the Second Form class-room, giving a lesson," Bessie said. "But never mind that. I say, Clara, don't run away when I'm talking! Here, Babs, wait a minute! Mabs, I say, Mabs— Oh crumbs!" And Bessie blinked. "I mean, say, you know, Doris, they've got-gone!"

"They have too!" Doris grinned. "And I'm going, too! So long!"

"But look here, I want to tell you that—"

"Wait till Christmas," Doris advised cheekily, waved her hand, and vanished.

While, Babs, Mabs, and Clara, hurrying through the corridor, approached the Second Form class-room.

That room was at the extremity of the west wing, the very young girls being kept as far away as possible from the more boisterous elements of the Junior School. They reached the room and peered in.

"Oh, look!" breathed Babs.

They looked. Marjorie was there. Marjorie, dressed in a nurse's uniform—that also was Miss Charmant's idea. Miss Charmant averring that dressing the part always made a profound impression upon the younger mind—was talking to her class.

The class, to be sure, was not a large one, and except for Mary Treherne of the lower Third, contained none of the kiddies of the Second Form, all of whom were staring with a serious sort of rapture at Marjorie, who was, at the moment, in the act of putting dummy bandages on the arm of little Dolores Essendon.

Very sweet, very trim, Marjorie looked, in her neat, clean white uniform, very serious and gentle her face as she talked.

Babs paused, feeling a queer little gulp in her throat. Here, in such surroundings, and with such an audience, doing such work, Marjorie Hazeldene seemed particularly in her element.

And now, you see, having got the bandage fixed, we have to the "it," she was telling her wide-eyed class. "This is the way. Get your scissors like this—snip the bandage at the end for a few inches, so that it makes two ties—"

"You see that, Christie?"

"Oh, yes, Marjorie!" Christie Wadhurst said.

"Then," Marjorie explained, "take this tie this way, and the other tie the opposite way. Carry it right round the bandage, like this, and tie in a neat little bow on the bone of the wrist. That's not too tight, is it, Dolores?"

"No, thank you, Marjorie!"

"And then—there you are!" Marjorie smiled. "When you are bigger girls I'll show you how to fix the bandage by pinning it. But we're not going to use pins now, because you might be dangerous, you see. Now, Ivy Finch, you come out and take the bandage off Dolores' wrist, and let me see you put it on again."

"Oh, Marjorie, let me!" Dolly Drew begged earnestly.

"Yes, Dolly, later," Marjorie smiled. "You shall all have a turn at it. This way, Ivy!"

Little Ivy Finch, crimson-faced with suppressed excitement, stepped out in front of the class. Babs smiled. At the same moment Clara pushed open the door.

"Hallo!" she said.

"Hallo!" Dolores Essendon greeted them, bright-eyed. "I say, you know, I'm supposed to have a burnt hand."

Marjorie flushed a little.

"We're doing first aid," she said quickly, "and getting on famously, aren't we, kiddies? Did you want me, Clara?"

"Well, yes. I—I thought perhaps you'd like to come and have a game of hockey," Clara said. "You're not look-

ing too up to the mark, old Marj. If you can chuck this for a while—"

Marjorie's pink became a red.

"Thank you, Clara! It's sweet of you!" she said. "All the same, I'm quite happy, thank you. No; I don't think I'll come to hockey, if you don't mind. In any case, I couldn't very well, because I've got to run into Courtfield later and get some bandages. You—you don't mind?" she added hesitatingly.

"Oh, I don't mind—no!" But Clara looked at her—"all the same, you do seem so fresh air, old thing, and I'm sure all this swotting isn't doing you any good. You're sure you wouldn't like to play—for a change?"

"Please, Clara, no!"

"And—and—" Clara stammered.

"Oh, all right, then! See you later."

"Yes, later," Marjorie smiled.

Babs, Mabs, and Clara, feeling that they hadn't got much out of the interview, went. But Clara was still worried. She did not, as she had arranged, get up a pick-up side for hockey. She went instead to Study No. 7.

"I'll wait for her," she told Babs and Mabs at the door.

"Right-ho!" Babs said.

They went off. Clara, with a frown on her face, entered the study. That study she shared with Marjorie and Janet Jordan, and Janet was there at the moment darnng a pair of stockings.

She looked up as her Tomboy chum came in.

"You look worried, old thing," she said. "Anything wrong?"

Clara shrugged.

"It's Marjorie," she said. She stared at Janet, who had bitten her lip. "Oh, I don't know!" she said worriedly.

"But, Janet, there must be something wrong. I've just seen her again. She looks sort of tired, I can't think it's altogether her swotting that's getting on her nerves. You know that sort of stuff never seems to do her much harm. But she's got something on her mind—something big."

"And, Janet, you asked slowly, 'she hasn't told you?'"

"No, No, yes, she has told you?"

"Well— And Janet shook her head. "Well, yes," she said. "She couldn't very well help telling me. This morning I picked up a letter of hers in mistake for my own. Before I realised what I was looking at, I'd read the important part. It came from her father—"

Clara glanced at her quickly.

"And—and—well, you're Marjorie's chum; I think you ought to know," Janet said. "I should have mentioned it, in any case. I don't think Marjorie is keen on the news being broadcast, but she didn't exactly ask me to keep it secret. And—and I think we ought to get together and try to do something for her. Clara, did you know?"—and Janet looked at her—"did you know," she repeated, "that at the end of the term Marjorie might have to leave Cliff House for ever?"

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She Couldn't Refuse!



MARJORIE HAZELDENE sighed.

Her gentle face was very worried as she peered through the falling dusk in the direction of Courtfield, there bound to collect the bandage supplies ordered from the chemist's by Miss Primrose, the head-mistress, yesterday.

For Marjorie, unsuspecting the subject of the conversation between Clara and Janet Jordan in Study No. 7 at that moment, was also thinking of the letter which Janet had inadvertently picked up and half-read that morning.

That letter was a week old now, and to the disastrous news it contained Marjorie had more or less mentally adjusted herself. Things had been going ill with her father. Poor, struggling curate, fighting a desperate struggle all along the border-line of poverty, the most crushing blow had befallen him.

Apart from the rather meagre living of his parish, he lived entirely on the interest from certain stocks and shares which he held in an oil company in China. These stocks had now been rendered worthless—which meant, of course, that he was no longer in a position to pay Marjorie's school fees.

Calm, uncomplaining, and resigned as always, Marjorie had said nothing to anyone of her secret sorrow until that morning, when she had told Janet Jordan.

Her heart ached for her father; he never had seemed to have a great deal of luck. If only—if only she could help him!

Perhaps she could. She was going to try, anyway. It was thinking of him, not herself, that had caused her rather hurriedly to enter her name in the list of the Fullwood Nursing Certificate.

If she won that—and Marjorie, though she was ever modest, believed with a terrific avow she could win it—it would ease the situation immensely.

On Saturday the examination took place, Dr. Fullwood herself travelling up from London to take it. Between now and then she had to work, so frantically, so terrifically hard that she could hardly visualise a spare minute in which she would not have to study. All the same, she'd get through it! She must get through it!

"Hallo!" a voice said.
Marjorie stared. Almost without knowing it, she had entered Courtfield, already lit up. A group of girls were standing on the corner of the street—a group in Cliff House uniform.

Marjorie recognised them at once. They were not girls with whom ordinarily she had a great deal to do—not girls whom she numbered among her own circle of friends by any means. But she smiled.

"Hallo, Lydia!" she said to the girl who had hailed her.

"Going far?" Lydia asked.

"Only to the chemist's."

"Oh!" Lydia Crossendale frowned. "Your first-aid stunt?" she asked, with a half-smile. "Wouldn't you like to come to the dance at the cafe?"

Marjorie shook her head, though she frowned a little, for the dancant at the Courtfield Cafe was not a form of amusement which was looked upon with a tolerant eye by the authorities of Cliff House.

Still, it was not her business what Lydia Crossendale, Freda Ferriers, and Frances Frost did, and, having no desire to interfere in anyone's pleasures, she rode on.

Well, here she was at the chemist's. Propping her cycle on the kerbstone she went in.

The chemist's was a small shop, and not very well lighted. Another girl was there as Marjorie came in, rather impatiently tapping on the counter. She stared as she heard the footsteps behind her.

"That old fool!" she began, and then jumped. "Why, Marjorie!" she cried. "It—it is Marjorie Hazeldene, isn't it?"

"Why, yes!" Marjorie cried, and then herself started. "Oh, great goodness! Elsie Washington! Elsie, what ever are you doing here?"

Elsie Washington laughed breathlessly.

"I've got a job," she said. "I"—and she paused as the chemist peered over the counter—"I want Mrs. Cope's prescription, please," she said. "The one I left here yesterday. Oh, Marjorie, it's good to see you again!" she breathed. "You know, it's funny, but I was just thinking of you."

Marjorie dimpled and smiled. She still felt intrigued, however. She had known Elsie Washington several years now, for Elsie was the daughter of one of her own father's parishioners, and had been a member of the church's mixed choir.

A nice girl, Marjorie had always thought—a very dear girl, with a most terrific fondness for her widowed mother.

Elsie went on now.

"Yes, I've got a job," she said, "nursing a sick old lady at Mill Cottage. You know it, don't you? In a turning off Church Lane. Mother's living in Courtfield now, and—and well, I hate to tell bad news, but she's ill—dreadfully ill." Elsie said, and turned her head away.

"Oh, Elsie, I am sorry to hear that!" Marjorie said, her gentle heart melting with compassion at once.

"It's dreadful!" Elsie said. "Oh, Marjorie, you wouldn't believe how she suffers! And the worst of it is," she added, "I'm simply tied to this old Mrs.

Cope. What with one thing and another, I'm almost run off my feet, you know. Mother is asking for me all the time. Mrs. Cope hates-me even to leave the house, because there's no one to look after her. I—I'm supposed to be seeing mother now," Elsie falteringly went on, "but how can I?"

Marjorie shook her head. It was characteristic of her that all her own troubles and worries should fade into insignificance when listening to another tale of woe. She said:

"Oh, Elsie, if I could do anything—"

"But you couldn't, could you?" Elsie asked, but rather eagerly and hopefully. "But, Marjorie, if you could—oh, if you could, for instance, just come along and stop with Mrs. Cope until I've rushed off and seen mother—it would be such a help! You wouldn't mind giving up a little of your time, would you?"

"But wouldn't Mrs. Cope mind?" Marjorie asked.

"Oh, I don't think so! It's not me she wants; it's company. In any case," Elsie said, "she wouldn't make any fuss. She can't. You see, she's had a stroke—a sort of paralysis. She can't even speak, never mind anything else. Oh, Marjorie, would you help me?" she added breathlessly.

"I—I'd love to," Marjorie breathed.



THE chums were on the trail of Marjorie. Absolute silence was necessary. And then, of course, that dear duffer, Bessie Bunter, had to choose that moment to stumble! Thud—thud, and clatter—clatter! as the first-aid box hurtled down the stairs.

And she meant that, even though she did think, with a fleeting pang of dismay, of the swotting she would have to neglect.

Still, Elsie's plight was worse than her own.

"Shall we go, then?" said Marjorie. "But, oh, dear me, wait a second! I almost forgot my bandages!"

The bandages were forthcoming. Elsie, with an eager light in her eyes, led the way out of the shop. As she mounted her own bicycle, which she had left propped against the wall, she smiled strangely—a smile which, fortunately for her, Marjorie never saw.

"I—I wonder if—if you'd do something else for me?" Elsie stammered. "I hate to ask you, seeing that you've already been so sweet. But—but it's about Mr. Cope. He—he made me promise, you know, that I'd never leave his sister, except to get medicine and so on. He wouldn't understand about mother, you know, and if he knew that I'd ever left his sister he'd be so angry he'd dismiss me as soon as look at me. Marjorie, would you mind very much not saying anything at all about it?"

Marjorie frowned a little. "But won't his sister tell him?" she asked.

"I've told you she can't," Elsie said. "She can't even speak. Marjorie, you won't say anything—not to anybody?"

"No," Marjorie said. Presently they reached Mill Cottage—a lonely looking, thatched little building with steep eaves and a Church Lane, a hundred yards away from its nearest neighbour.

Quietly Elsie led the way in, switching on the light. In the sitting-room she paused.

"There'll be nothing to do," she said. "Just watch. You can read to her if you like. She's frightfully fond of that Brett Young book there. He's very are," she added. "You'd better put this uniform on. She likes me to look professional, even if I haven't a nursing certificate. You don't mind?"

"No," Marjorie said. All the same, she had a most curious feeling that she was trespassing.

She donned the uniform, while rather impatiently Elsie stood by. That done, she showed her up the narrow stairs into the little chintz-curtained bed-room, its ceiling supported by broad oak beams. And at the first sight of that worn, pitiful figure on the bed, Marjorie forgot everything else.

The figure was that of a woman—a woman not old, but middle aged. Motionless she lay on the bed, her unaturally large and bright eyes fixed in a stare as the two came in. The rigidity of her posture showed that Elsie's description of her case was, alas, all too true!

Stricken, helpless, deprived of either power to speak or move, she was a pity-provoking figure indeed.

Marjorie's tender heart seemed to burst and overflow.

"Oh, the poor thing!" she whispered.

"Mrs. Cope, this is my friend, Marjorie," Elsie said, without replying. "I've brought her to look after you for a little while. You don't mind, do you?"

Her eyes fixed upon her. From her they went to Marjorie. It seemed that Marjorie saw in their depths the hint of a smile.

"Well, then, that's all right," Elsie said briskly. "I'll leave you to carry on, now, shall I, Marjorie? I don't think I've anything to tell you—but please don't leave her until I come back, will you? So-long!" she added, rather hurriedly.

"So-long!" Marjorie muttered, her tear-brimmed eyes upon the figure on the bed, and was hardly conscious of her going as Elsie, with rather more noise than seemed advisable, clattered back on the wooden stairs. "Oh, Mrs. Cope—" she choked.

The brave eyes smiled. While Elsie had reached the sitting-room again. Her face was alight as she grabbed a powder-puff out of a drawer, quickly applied it to her face, brushed her hair, and made up her lips. Then hastily she took off the rather shabby blue coat she was wearing.

Underneath, had Marjorie only seen it, was an extremely smart and pretty frock. The girl smirked as she took down another coat from behind the door—abrown coat this, the collar trimmed with dyed ermine. She struggled into it.

"And now," she murmured, "I'm ready, Lydia Crossendale, for the dance. And I hope," with a glance at the landing above, "you enjoy yourself, Miss Tender-hearted Marjorie Hazeldene!" She stifled a giggle.

"My hat, I wonder what mother would say if she knew I'd put her down as almost dying? All the same, cheerio!"

And mockingly she waved a hand

towards the ceiling. Swiftly she let herself out. Ten minutes later she was meeting Lydia & Co. at the crossroads. "Sorry," she grinned breathlessly, "I'm late. But I told you I'd have to find someone to carry out the job, didn't I? Well, I found her all right, and quite by accident. Guess who?"

"Florence Nightingale?" Lydia asked, and there was a laugh.

"No; somebody you know quite well," Elsie chuckled. "But not a word. A girl in your Form at school. A girl you've mentioned to me since we met a week ago. I don't think you like her very much," and then, while Lydia & Co. stared, she chuckled again. "Marjorie Hazeldene!"

Marjorie Takes Charge!



MARJORIE HAZELDENNE, however, was not even thinking of the hypothesis of Elsie Washington.

Her every thought, her every care from the moment she stepped into that room of sickness at Mill Cottage for the sweet-faced patient in the bed.

She looked round the room. She was glad as she took in its detail, that she knew something about nursing. It was obvious at once that Mrs. Cope's bed had not been made up properly. She attended to that. Though it was cold outside it was stuffy inside. Marjorie opened the window a little and was surprised and touched at the gratefully glad glow that showed in the eyes of her patient.

She went to the washstand and, rather shocked to find the washing-basin unemptied, went down and emptied it. The carpet she found quite clean. She dusted dustpan and brush, and cleared that up.

So many things she found to do all at once. So many little things which had obviously been neglected by Elsie.

She discovered, to her joy, that Mrs. Cope, at least, could move her arms—the only part of her poor body, indeed, which seemed still to retain the power of animation.

All at once she beckoned to her. Marjorie went over to the bed. The woman extended her hand. She could not speak, poor thing, but her eyes spoke for her, and Marjorie, instinctively responding to anyone in pain or distress, seemed to know at once what she meant.

She took her hand over the cold, rather tragically emaciated one of the invalid, and pressed it.

And how happy suddenly that seemed to make Mrs. Cope. What wonderful joy and radiance for a moment danced in her eyes as she looked at her. What immense gratefulness, as though indeed she said: "My dear, you have cheered me. My dear, I am so very, very grateful for all that you are doing! My dear, how wonderful it is to have you here!"

From that moment Marjorie had taken her to that golden heart of hers.

Meantime, she was not noticing the time. She was looking round, acquainting herself with everything.

Presently, behind the washbasin, she found a card containing several lines of rather cramped handwriting, and signed with a name—Dr. Kelly—the invalid's own doctor. The card, which apparently had not been used for a long time, was a list of duties, obviously written for an inexperienced Elsie.

Marjorie frowned a little. Really, sorry as she was for Elsie, she could not

help feeling she had been rather slipshod over her work.

But she was grateful for the card, glad of the instructions and the times written there. She read it through, and saw that towards the end it said:

5 p.m.—Temperature.
5.30—Medicine.

6.0—Light fruit supper, with milk.

Marjorie laughed a little. That gave her something to do. A further hunt disclosed the thermometer and temperature chart.

She took the temperature, rapidly entered it up, and hung the chart at the top of the patient's bed. She found the medicine and administered it. Downstairs she found fruit. With her assistance, Mrs. Cope ate two oranges, waving the rest of the fruit aside.

"Why, I declare," Marjorie said cheerfully, "you're looking better already!"

Again there was a smile in the eyes. Marjorie felt strangely happy. It was so marvellous, after all, to be doing something like this.

Downstairs she tripped, put on the kettle, and made herself a cup of tea, bringing it up with "Brett Young's" book to Mrs. Cope's bedside. And then while she drank the tea she read.

Presently she looked r'down. Mrs. Cope, looking somewhat different, content, was asleep.

Quietly Marjorie closed the book. On tiptoe she went across the room and down the stairs, the teacup in her hand. In the tiny kitchen she put on hot water and washed up the soiled crocks, and then, for the first time, became aware of the time as the neighbouring church clock struck the hour. Seven!

Marjorie came to herself with a jerk. Oh, great goodness! She had never even noticed the time! She had promised herself to be back at Cliff House by half-past five!

Quite a flutter Marjorie was in then. Where was Elsie? Her face paled as she thought of the swotting she had meant to do.

An hour and a half of her valuable time gone—an hour and a half which might make all the difference to her winning the Fulwood certificate and the relieving of her father's financial burden and her own future happiness!

Where was Elsie? But of Elsie there was no sign. Elsie, had Marjorie only known it, was at that moment tripping round the dance floor in a fox-trot at the Courtfield Cafe!

The Price of Her Good Turn!



"AND Marjorie isn't here?" Miss Primrose asked.

Clara Trevlyn and Janet Jordan, busy doing preparation in Study No. 7, exchanged a worried glance. "Well, no, Miss Primrose," Clara confessed unhappily. "But—but I don't suppose she will be long, you know."

"You have no idea where she is?" Miss Primrose asked.

"N-no. But I don't suppose, she's far away."

The headmistress looked annoyed. "That, Clara, is beside the question. The hour is now seven o'clock, and it's obvious that Marjorie has not been in the school during the whole of preparation time. I am not used," Miss Primrose said rather angrily, "to having the favours I dispense abused in this way. Because Marjorie took charge of the Second Form first-aid class, and because she has entered the Fulwood Certificate Examination, I have excused

No. 16 of our Fascinating Series
for Your "Cliff House Album."

CLIFF HOUSE CELEBRITIES



Priscilla Terraine

TWO "celebrities" this week—and both in the space of the usual one. But you mustn't think I'm cheating. It would be just impossible to write about Ermyntrude Ophelia Terraine without linking her to her twin sister, Priscilla Agatha Terraine.

The Terraine twins look alike—so bewilderingly alike, indeed, that they have to wear different-coloured hair ribbons in class to distinguish one from the other. They act alike. They have the same hobbies. Except one, they have the same for the ninth position in class, both score exactly the same percentage of marks. They dress alike, they speak alike. In food, in habits, their tastes are exactly the same. Even though they wear distinguishing hair ribbons, those ribbons are both blue—Oxford blue for "Ermy," Cambridge for Priscilla.

And yet—
There are differences—yes! But you have to know the twins a long time to get fully acquainted with them. Ermyntrude, for instance, is slightly the



Ermyntrude Terraine

elder of the two—by half an hour. Ermyntrude, although you would never guess it, is the stronger of the two and the real leader when difficulties arise. Also (and this is quite unaccountable!) Ermyntrude has a flair for acting; Priscilla hasn't!

But that's all to be said for differences. Look at them and you see the reflection of one face in the other. They both possess very fine, light-coloured hair, which they wear in two plaits. Both are rather thin, pale complexioned, and have light-brown eyes. Both are serious and solemn. And each is so devoted to the other that they have no desire to make other friends.

Most of the Fourth regard them as oddities and leave them rather to themselves. Recently, as a result of their feud against Connie Jackson, it seemed at last as if they would "come out of their shells" (Clara's expressive term; you know what she means), but as soon as the excitement had subsided, back they went into them!

Very prim, they share little of the life of the Form, but at least they do not irritate, and if inclined to be so completely self-sufficient, have a fine sense of schoolgirl honour and would scorn to sneak or play any trick which might offend the usual code.

Games? No, they do not play them, though they love to watch—together! Hobbies? Reading. Film favourites? Yes, two—Zasu Pitts and Slim Sumnerville. Ambition? Ah, you have me there. I don't think they've ever thought about it!

They have favourite colours, however—Oxford and Cambridge blue. They

have a favourite flower—the crocus (blue for preference).

They both take size three in shoes and their home is in Northumberland. They are both fond of Mrs. Henry Wood's books—"East Lynne" in particular.

It is peculiar, though true, that even in their reading they seem to keep almost exact pace with each other. That applies, too, to writing, though it would take a handwriting expert to detect the difference—if any—in their styles.

An odd pair, yes, but very inoffensive. Their ages are fourteen years and six months, and their height four feet nine and a half inches. They have no particularly favourite mistress and no particular dislike among mistresses—they never get into bothers!

But I'm sure—and you'll agree—that if there is any streak of animosity in their make-up it is entirely directed at Connie Jackson!

her preparation, so that she could give her attention to her nursing examination studies. If, as seems evident, she is using this time for other purposes, I shall seriously have to reconsider my decision. Please, Clara, send her to me as soon as she comes in."

And Miss Primrose, with an angry pursing of her lips, rustled out of Study No. 7.

"And that," Clara said, pulling a face, "is that! But what on earth can have happened to the silly old chump?"

"She went to Courtfield," Janet said. "Well, who doesn't know that? But she only went to the chemist. Hardly likely it would have taken her three hours to go to Courtfield and back. Something must have happened to detain her. Oh, rats!" and with a worried gesture Clara fung her pen upon the table. "I'm going to see Babs. Perhaps she knows something."

She strode out, rather upset.

Babs and Mabs were at prep when she reached Study No. 4. Bessie was carefully replacing the various articles in her first-aid box. She blinked up.

"Hallo, Clara! I say, anything wrong with you?" she asked hopefully. "It you've got a sprained wrist or anything I'm the girl, you know."

"Thanks," Clara said quite gruffly. "But wait until I've got a sprained wrist before you start operations. I say, Babs, I suppose you haven't seen old Marjorie? Primmy's looking for her." Babs shook her head.

"Hasn't she come in?"

"Well, would I be asking you a fooling question like that if she had?" Clara demanded rather irritably. "I thought you might have heard something, that's all!"

But neither Babs nor Mabs could help. Clara rather disconsolately wandered off into the Big Hall, just in time to catch Lydia Crossendale, Freda Ferriers and Frances Frost coming in.

She eyed them quickly.

"I say—"

"Yes, and what does our dear little Tomboy say?" Lydia mocked.

"Oh, don't be funny!" snapped Clara, for the Tomboy's quick temper was swiftly roused in her present worried state. "I just wanted to ask you a question. Have you seen Marjorie Hazeldene?"

The three looked at each other and grinned.

"Well, yes," Lydia said.

"Oh, where?"

"In Courtfield. We saw her about four o'clock riding a bicycle." Lydia answered coolly.

"And not since?"

"No!"

Clara grunted. She walked on, missing the amused wink which Lydia threw at her two companions.

Clara released the precious trio to see the Tomboy upset—especially when they knew the cause of that upset.

Lydia & Co. never had any love for Clara, and because she was the

Tomboy's chum, no love for Marjorie Hazeldene either. Maliciousness alone would have held them to the secret which Elsie Washington had impressed upon them to keep that afternoon, that Marjorie, while Elsie was enjoying herself, was doing her work for her! To Lydia & Co. that presented itself as a situation rather amusing.

Apart from which, Elsie Washington had been accepted wholeheartedly into the ranks of Lydia & Co.

For Elsie, though Marjorie did not know it, was a friend of Freda. Freda had met her last year whilst on holiday and when she had spied Freda in Courtfield a few days ago she had hastily sought to renew that acquaintance.

Not at first had Freda been keen, but when it became obvious that Elsie, from some mysterious source, had money to burn, then she had been made a very welcome member of the "Snobs' Co.!" And while her money lasted Elsie was likely to go on being welcomed by the snobs of the Fourth.

So they passed on, chuckling. While Clara, more worried and perplexed than ever, drifted towards the Hall doorway. There for a few minutes she stood looking into the darkness—a darkness unrelieved save by the lighted windows of the porter's lodge at the far end of the drive.

No sign, no sign of Marjorie! Still no sign when call-over bell rang.

More worried than ever, and in a

decidedly bad frame of mind—for Clara reacted irritably to worry—she took her place in the ranks of the Fourth Form.

Sarah Harrigan, deputising for Miss Charmant, spotted the absence of Marjorie even before she started to call the roll.

"Hallo, where's Marjorie Hazledene?" asked the unpopular prefect.

"Oh, my hat!" Clara muttered. "She—she went out," she called, "for some bandages!"

"Whatever she went out for, she knew the time to be in," Sarah snapped, and ticked a mark against her name. "Now listen, and stand still there, Bessie Bunter!"

The roll was called. Still no Marjorie. Call-over was dismissed, the girls drifted off in twos and threes.

And then suddenly there was a cry. A breathless figure, pale as death, burst among them. Clara stared.

"Marjorie, at last! You silly cuckoo! Where have you been?"

Marjorie paused.

"Oh, dear! I'm sorry—am I late?"

"Late?" Clara grieved. "Call-over's gone," she said. "Primmy is looking for you and Sarah Harrigan at this moment is reporting your absence. But what happened?"

"Oh, nun-nothing!" Marjorie said. "That is to say, I—I met someone."

"And stopped in Courtfield?" Clara asked incredulously.

"Y-yes!"

"But what about your studies? Primmy—"

"I—I'll go and see Miss Primrose now," Marjorie said. "Please, Clara!"

And while the Tomboy gave back in amazement she hurried past her. "I—I won't be long," she promised.

"But, look here—" Clara hooted. Marjorie, however, had gone.

With her heart beating fast, she was hurrying up the stairs. Her face was strained and pale now. For, of course, she couldn't possibly have allowed that dear Mrs. Cope to remain there all alone, and Elsie, pleading that she had had to wait at her mother's bedside and see the doctor, who had been late, had not come in until a quarter-past seven!

In the cloak-room she hastily divested herself of her outdoor things, and then hurried off to the headmistress' study.

"Miss Primrose was inclined to be extremely annoyed.

"Unless you have a very satisfactory explanation to offer, Marjorie, I am afraid I cannot be lenient with you," she said. "Why were you not in at preparation? And what made you late for call-over?"

Marjorie, thinking of that promise she had given to Elsie Washington, gulped.

"I—I met a friend, Miss Primrose," she said.

Miss Primrose frowned.

"I do not consider that a satisfactory explanation at all. If that is your only excuse—"

"Well, I—I went home with her—"

"I still regard the explanation as inadequate!"

"Oh dear! I—I'm sorry!" Marjorie stammered.

"I trust you are," Miss Primrose said angrily. "I, too, am sorry, Marjorie. I thought," she added, "that you were taking your nursing studies seriously, but as they are apparently of so little importance in your estimation, I must tell you here and now that the privilege of missing preparation is withdrawn. Apart from that," Miss Primrose went on tartly, "you will be detained to-morrow afternoon, which is

half-holiday, for missing call-over. That is all, Marjorie."

And Marjorie, her face very white, slowly left the room.

Bessie's Little Blunder!



THE Fourth Form at Cliff House School soundly slept.

Except one girl—and that girl Marjorie Hazledene.

In the darkness she lay awake—wide, startlingly awake—staring at the ceiling rendered gray by the darkness. For an hour Marjorie had been staring there, her mind twisting and turning with a million teeming thoughts.

Things were not going well for Marjorie Hazledene!

Not that she regretted her good turn of the evening. Believing implicitly in Elsie Washington, she was glad indeed that she had had the opportunity of helping her to visit her stricken mother. She was glad from the bottom-most depths of her heart to have met Mrs. Cope, to have brought a little happiness into her pain-racked life, if only for two short hours.

But she was regretting now that she had given that promise to Elsie. How much easier it would have made matters if she had been able to tell her chum's half-sister to see that puzzled expression on Clara's face! She hated to see the worry in Barbara Redfern's. And there was Miss Primrose, too.

She sighed.

Now she was thinking of her missed swotting. In three days the examination would be here—and she, so far, was unprepared for it!

In the next bed Bessie Bunter turned over and a grunt.

Marjorie bit her lip. She never, never would be able to catch up, she told herself. And yet—she must catch up! That fifty pounds would make such a difference to her father. What, she asked herself with a sudden burst of inward anger against herself, was she thinking of? Was she so tamely to submit without a fight?

She could—and would—catch up! She must make time to catch up! If she could not work during the day, there was no reason why she should not work at night—no reason why she should not start now—this very minute!

Her books were in Study No. 7. Nobody was likely to come into the dormitory now until rising-bed.

She lay still for a moment debating the question. From Bessie's bed came another grunt as the fat one, in the throes of a dream, turned over and muttered something in her sleep. Then suddenly Marjorie rose.

Hastily she slipped on slippers and dressing-gown, silently moved towards the door.

It was then that Bessie, jerked out of her sleep by her dreams, awoke.

Bessie's first instinct was to grab for her spectacles. Almost instinctively she put them on. Her next was to feel for her first-aid box, which, with some dim idea that some girl might faint in her bed or something, she had brought to bed with her. Her third reaction to her awakening was to glance towards the door which, at that moment, gave a creak as it came open. And then she jumped.

The light was poor, but only one girl in the Fourth Form wore a pink dressing-gown, and Bessie recognised it

at once as its wearer disappeared. And Bessie was seized with a most terrific excitement.

With startling agility she leapt out of bed.

"Babs!" she hissed agitatedly, shaking that girl, who slept in the bed next to hers. "Quick! M-Marjorie—"

In an instant Babs was awake. From Clara's bed next to her came a mutter.

"Oh goodness! Go to sleep, someone!"

But what's the matter with Marjorie? Babs asked sleepily.

"She's rig-gone out," Bessie said. "Babs, she's sleep-walking again. Babs, sus-supposing she falls downstairs?"

"My hat!" Babs said in alarm. "Clara—"

"Hallo!" Clara said. She was fully awake now.

"Marjorie's sleep-walking. Bessie says so. Do you think—"

But in a moment Clara was out of bed.

"I thought something like this would happen!" she exclaimed. "Oh dear! Come on, Babs, let's get after her—just in case anything happens. You're not coming, Bessie!"

"Oh, aren't I?" Bessie glowered. "I jolly well am! As the first-aid expert, naturally you'll want me. Supposing she falls downstairs or anything?"

Posing in a faint— "Here, you girls, don't let-leave me behind!"

Babs and Clara, anxious only for the safety of Marjorie, had already disappeared through the door.

But not Bessie to be deterred. With her first-aid box under her arm, she hurried after them. She reached the passage.

"Here, I say—"

"Less row, you jabberwork!" Clara hissed fiercely over her shoulder. "Babs, there she is—going down the stairs!"

Bessie breathed hard. She did not mean to be left behind. In a sudden burst of energy she shot past Babs and Clara and reached the stairs first.

But alas! for Bessie.

Bessie, being short-sighted, did not see the mop which had been left at the head of the stairs, and was now standing against it faintly.

One of the maids, called away in the middle of her duties, had dropped it there, and had subsequently forgotten it.

The first Bessie knew of it was when her hurrying foot caught against it. The next Bessie knew was that she was stumbling into space, and that her beautiful new first-aid box had left her arms.

There was a thud and a howl as Bessie rolled down the stairs. But there was a most terrific din and clatter as the first-aid box, hastily released from its anxious owner's grasp, went clattering, smashing, and jingling down before her, spilling its contents, filling the quiet atmosphere with a startling noise, and bringing an irate Miss Bulivant out of her study with such cataclysmic swiftness that she might have been fired from a gun.

"Good gracious—girls!" she exclaimed. "What is this?"

Marjorie, in the act of turning the corner, wheeled in dismay, and Clara and Babs paused, with a groan, on the staircase. Up from Bessie, sprawled at the bottom of the stairs, went a wail.

"Oh crumbs! I—I say, you know, I've broken my spine! Bring my first-aid box—"

"Bessie!" thundered Miss Bulivant.

Bessie blinked and proved herself perfectly all right by hastily scrambling to her feet.

"Oh crumbs! Are you sleep-walking, too, Miss Bullivant?"

"What?"

"Well, I thought—I thought—" And then, as Bessie's dishevelled thoughts arranged themselves into some sort of order, as it dawned upon her what a dreadful mess she had made of things, she blinked again. "Oh crumbs! I say, I'm sorry, you know. Is Marjorie all right, Bessie?"

Marjorie was all right, though pale. She bit her lip.

"Oh, Bessie, you silly thing!" she muttered.

"But what," rapped the bad-tempered mathematics mistress, "is the meaning of this?"

Babs gulped.

"Well, you see, Miss Bullivant, we thought Marjorie was walking in her sleep."

"And you weren't, Marjorie?"

"Oh, no, Miss Bullivant!"

"Where were you going?"

"I—I was going to my study," Marjorie faltered. "Oh dear, I—I'm sorry! I didn't know that Babs and Bessie and Clara were following me!"

"And what," Miss Bullivant demanded, "were you going to your study for?"

"To—to do some work," Marjorie said. "Miss Bullivant—"

"Thank you, that is enough! As you are so fond of work," Miss Bullivant said acidly, "you can do two hundred lines—but you will not do them, if you please, in the middle of the night! Clara, and you, Barbara—as you appear to have been under some misapprehension, I will excuse you. Bessie, for creating such a disturbance, you will take fifty lines!"

Bessie glared.

"But, look here, I was under a mis- mis—it wasn't my fault, you know. I was only going—"

"Bessie, take fifty lines!"

"But that's jolly well unfair—"

"Take," Miss Bullivant snapped, her anger growing, "a hundred lines!"

Bessie drew in a deep and heavy breath.

"Thank you!" she said bitterly. "I'm blessed if I'll ever try to be a heroine again! A hundred lines! You wouldn't have given Florence Livingstone a hundred lines for trying to save the life of a girl who might have been breaking every bone in her body—"

"Bessie, one more word, and I will detain you!" Miss Bullivant rapped.

"Now, please—I presume," she added, unable to resist the temptation even then of correcting a mistake—"you are referring to Florence Nightingale! Livingstone was an explorer—not a nurse! Now, off to bed—all of you, and let there be no more of these disturbances!"

And, rather soberly, the four ascended the stairs, Marjorie biting her lip, Bessie glowering in virtuous indignation as she protectively grasped her first-aid box to her chest.

"HALLO!" MUTTERED Clara Trevlyn.

"She's gone again!"

It was next morning—very early next morning.

The scene was still the Fourth Form dormitory. The time half an hour before rising-bell. Clara made that observation to Babs as she sat up, staring at the empty bed which had contained Marjorie Hazeldene.

Babs shook her head. She looked significantly at her chum.

"Working?" she hazarded.

Clara nodded, and worriedly ruffled her tousled hair. That was the only

possible solution. Marjorie, thwarted in her efforts to resume her studies last night, had risen extra early this morning.

"The silly chump!" growled the Tom-boy. "She'll knock herself up at this rate. All the same, it's funny, you know. It shows that Marjorie was detained for a pretty good reason in Court-field yesterday. What shall we do, Babs? Get down and see her? I'd like to drag the old chump out for a sprint round the cinder-track."

But Babs shook her head.

"No," she counselled, "leave her. After all, as she has got up so specially early, it's hardly playing the game to go and interrupt her."

Marjorie, as Babs had guessed, was at that moment busy in Study No. 7. There was a pile of books before her, a sheaf of impot paper on her blotting

Marjorie smiled. With no little wonderment she went out. In the prefects' room she picked up the receiver, and then started as she heard Elsie Washington's voice.

"Oh, Marjorie, I hope you don't mind me ringing you!" Elsie said agitatedly. "But you're my only friend—the only girl I can possibly call upon. I just received awful news about mother. She's got to have an operation."

Marjorie felt her heart jump.

"Oh, Elsie, I'm so frightfully sorry!"

"They're taking her away this afternoon to the Courtfield Hospital," Elsie went on, "and—and as there's no one to look after her, I've just got to go. But you know, Marjorie, I daren't leave Mrs. Cope. Oh, Marjorie, I—I feel as if I'm going off my head! Can you—can you help? Only for an hour!"



"THIS wig is a pretty good match for your hair, isn't it?" said Mabs. "Now scoot!" And Marjorie, with a grateful smile, "scooted."

pad, and Marjorie, looking very worried and very pale indeed, was working for dear life.

She had been working like that for over an hour now!

She plodded on, noting, copying, sketching. Oh, great goodness, what a lot of terms and technicalities there were about nursing! When she had done this her lines must be tackled, and this afternoon given over to detention.

Rising-bell rang. A quarter of an hour went by. Then suddenly Lady Patricia Northanson, duty prefect for the day, looked in. She smiled cheerily at Marjorie.

"Morning, Marjorie!" she said. "Up with the lark—eh? But, I say, there's somebody on the phone for you—a girl, I think, by the sound of her voice. Better cut off."

Marjorie stiffened. The thought flashed through her mind—that detention! And even as the thought came, Marjorie despised herself for having thought of it. As if she could turn a deaf ear to such an appeal; as if, even if it meant expulsion, she could for one moment withhold her consent to a good turn like this!

"Of course I'll help, Elsie!" she said then.

"Oh, Marjorie, that—that's lovely of you," the girl gasped. "I—I don't know how I'll ever thank you. But look here, will you meet me at the Market Cross at half-past two? I'll let you have the key of the cottage then."

"I'll be there," Marjorie said.

She rang off and shook her head. Poor, worried Elsie. And how—how was she to get out of the detention?

She paused at the corner of the

passage as she came face to face with Mabel Lynn. Mabs stared a little.

"Hallo, Marjorie, you're looking upset. Anything I can do?"

Marjorie looked at her swiftly as a sudden thought leapt to her mind.

"Oh Mabs, would you—"

"Why, of course!"

"Would you—" and Marjorie bit her lip. Quick as she was to respond to others' requests for help, she had a diffidence about asking favours for herself. "But no, it's not that," she said. "It would mean my giving up your afternoon. I—I'll think of something else."

Mabs glanced at her curiously, but she caught her arm as she would have turned away.

"Wait a minute," she said quietly. "Marjorie, what is it? You know, old silly, that if there's anything I can do, the afternoon's at your disposal. And anything else you like to ask! The only thing I've got on is a rehearsal, but I can get Sylvia Sirett to run that for me. Now out with it."

"Well," Marjorie said, and her cheeks went red. "It seems a frightful check to ask it. But—Mabs, you know I'm detained."

"Yes!" Mabs' eyes were upon her seriously.

"Well, I—I've got to go somewhere—somewhere most frightfully urgent," Marjorie said. "I—I'll tell you about it some time, Mabs, but I can't just now. But I can't get out of detention unless somebody takes my place, you see, and—and does the work for me."

"And you want me to do it?" Mabs asked. She felt a little startled, but she did not show it. "All right then, Marjorie, rely on me."

"Oh, Mabs, it—it's so frightfully nice of you—"

"Stuff!" Mabs laughed.

And so that was arranged. Naturally Mabs said nothing to anyone about the arrangement. Not even to Babs.

And at two o'clock that afternoon Marjorie presented herself in the classroom, where Lady Patricia Northanson, as duty prefect,

Lady Pat set her the detention task—a mild and easy one and went out, locking the door behind her. That, as Marjorie knew, would be the last seen of Lady Pat until five o'clock.

At half-past two the key turned in the lock of the door and Mabs came in.

"O.K.," she whispered. "Get going now, Marjorie. The coast is clear. I'll sit here so that if anybody peers through the door they'll think I'm gone."

She laughed a little as she withdrew a dark wig from behind her back and clipped it neatly, expertly over her own golden locks. For Mabs was the shining light of the Lower School's Dramatic Society, and it had been easy to borrow the wig.

"Had to do this," Mabs said, "in case of this wig's a pretty good match for your hair, isn't it? Now scoot!"

And Marjorie, with a grateful and rather admiring smile, hastily scooted. She made her way to the cycle-sheds. There she got out her machine, leaving

not by the main gates, but by the servants' entrance, and, in order to avoid the main road which might be peopled with stray prefects or mistresses, took the path through the woods.

She did not guess that only ten minutes before Babs and Clara had also taken that path.

Hurriedly she pedalled, anxious only to keep her appointment on time. Not, indeed, until she raced round the corner of South Copse did she see Babs and Clara, who had just turned off into

the narrow lane that led to Pegg. She bit her lip.

Oh, goodness, would they see her? She eyed on, trying to pretend she had not seen them. If she stopped there would only be awkward questions she could not answer.

Clara heard the whirring of wheels and looked round. Then she almost fell off her machine.

Marjorie—

Marjorie pedalled hard.

"My hat, it's Marjorie," Clara said to Babs. "But what the dickens is she licking along like that for? And how the dickens has she dodged detention?" She glanced in a startled fashion at her friend. "Oh, the chump!" she breathed. "She's just asking for trouble. She's taking the Courtfield path. I say, come on, get after her."

Babs panted.

"But mightn't she object?"

"She might," Clara said grimly.

"At the same time I object, as her chum, to letting the silly minny run her head into more trouble. Turry round."

They turned, Babs not quite easy on the point, but Clara, thinking only of Marjorie's good, determined. But Marjorie had a good start then—

and Marjorie perhaps fearing the Tom-boy would follow, was fairly racing away.

No sign of her they saw indeed, until they reached Courtfield. There, riding rather perpinguily into the Market Square, Clara gave a cry.

"Babs, look, there she is!"

There Marjorie was indeed—just in the act of mounting her bicycle and waving her hand to another girl who stood by the Cross.

"Marjorie," Clara cried.

Marjorie, however, did not hear. She had hastily pedalled off. Clara's eyes flashed.

Grimly she put on a spurt, only to jerk on her brakes as the traffic light changed from amber to red. By the time the green showed again Marjorie had got well away.

And of the girl she had been trailing there was no sign.

"Well!" gasped Clara. "Oh, my hat! A fine chaso that was—for nothing! Pipped on the post! But who was the girl she was talking to?"

Babs shook her head.

"Ask me!" was her not very intelligent rejoinder. "Well, what now? Are we going back to Pegg, or hang about here?"

Clara snorted. "Clara was put out. Not, to be sure, because her own efforts had been so unavailing, but because she was anxious for her chum."

"Well, what about a spot of tea?" she suggested. "There's a new cafe next to the cinema."

Babs agreed at once. After the chase through Friardale Woods a cup of tea would be welcomingly refreshing, indeed.

So off they went, trundling their machines with them. The cafe was not far away, and to reach it they had to pass the cinema. Clara, for no other reason than that of idle curiosity, flung a glance towards the cinema as they passed. And then she stopped.

"Babs, look—that girl! The one with Lydia Crossendale & Co."

Babs stopped. She looked, and then her eyes contracted a little. For, entering the cinema, were four girls. Three of them were recognisable at once as Lydia Crossendale, Frances Frost, and Freda Ferriers; but the fourth—the girl who at that moment was laughingly opening her bag—

Clara glanced queerly at Babs.

"The girl Marjorie was talking to," she said. "Babs, who the dickens is she?"



Rough on Mabs!

"COMIFY Mrs. Coppe!" And Marjorie Hazeldene smiled brightly. "Now,

would you like me to read for a little while? I expect Elsie will be back in half an hour."

The paralysed muscles of the face of the wan, white woman on the bed in Mill Cottage did not move, but there was a world of expression in her eyes. An expression showing her feeling of tranquil happiness, somehow, of fervent gratitude. It was as though most desperately she were trying to tell Marjorie something.

Marjorie smiled again. Dear little woman! Poor little woman! What pleasure it was to look after her, what pleasure to nurse her!

With unconscious pride she glanced round the room—neat, clean, spick and span. So different from the rather dreary apartment she had entered half an hour ago.

Everything gleamed, and glistened, and sparkled. Above the bed the temperature chart hung, with the latest reading written upon it. Next to it, just in case Elsie forgot, was the doctor's chart of instructions.

On the chair next to the bed she sat down, opening Mrs. Coppe's favourite book, her sweet face smilingly thoughtful. She glanced fondly down at her patient.

"Now we start at a new chapter," she said. "You'll remember that— Oh, goodness!" She broke off with a laugh, and closed the book. "That's a knock, Mrs. Coppe! Do excuse me while I run and open the door!"

Downstairs she flew, the book in her hand. A middle-aged man, keen-eyed and intelligent-looking, stood on the doorstep. He scrutinised her in some surprise.

"Oh!" he said. "So we have a nurse, have we? I am Mrs. Coppe's doctor—Kelly," he added. "I thought, as I was round this way I'd just give her a look in." He smiled at her, and her a look in.

For some reason feeling ridiculous in her nurse's garb all at once, blushed rosy. "I rather thought," he added keenly, "that a change had happened. Were you here last night?"

"Oh, yes," Marjorie said.

"I guessed so." He smiled at her. "I wondered what had happened to the room—and my patient," he said. "She seemed so much happier and brighter in herself, somehow. And you're the cause of it!" He smiled again and patted her head. "Good work!" he said. "Very good work! Now come along, while I run the rule over my patient. I'd like to have you with me, in case there's anything I want."

Marjorie's blushes became hot. Dr. Kelly nodded again as he entered the room, turning to bestow a look of approval upon her.

"Now, stand there, please, by the foot of the bed."

Marjorie stood. She thrilled as she watched, faintly reminded, for the first time, that she was being a real helper in a real case.

This was experience—real, practical experience. The sort of thing fully qualified nurses had to do.

Quickly she dashed off for the hot water the doctor asked for, willingly cleared up afterwards, and even listened, at his instructions, to the beating

of the patient's heart through the stethoscope. He smiled.

"Good work!" he said. "Considerable improvement. Go on at this rate, and we shall be hearing Mrs. Cope talk. But you," he added, "I want to know about you. You seem remarkably smart and intelligent for a young girl. What are you doing here? And how, may I ask, did you come to get here?"

So Marjorie, blushing, told him. He frowned.

"And Elsie's mother is ill, is she?" he asked thoughtfully. "If so! What time are you supposed to be back at school?" he jerked out suddenly.

"Oh!" Marjorie blinked surprise at the question, but it brought her up with a shock. "W-well," she stammered, "I—I should be back there now."

"I see!" He smiled. "Then, Marjorie, would you like to go? I don't think I would wait for Elsie, if I were you—and, in any case, I have some time to spare. I'll stop here and talk to Mrs. Cope."

Marjorie rose, glowing a little. But she was grateful—thinking of poor Mabs taking her place in the detention-room. Just a hasty kiss for Mrs. Cope—and how wonderfully those tired eyes lit up as the fresh young lips touched her faded cheeks. A hearty handclasp from the doctor, and she had flown downstairs. There, rapidly divesting herself of her uniform and donning her own hat and coat, she raced back to Cliff House.

It was lark then, of course. But Marjorie believed in taking no risks. As she had escaped, so she went back—through the servants' entrance, intending to sneak along up the back stairs, let Mabs out of detention, and take her place again.

And all, it seemed, was prospering her plan. Not a soul she met on her journey to the school. Not a soul, as she stepped through the servants' quarters into the Second Form quarters. For a moment, in West Lobby, she paused.

And then—too late—she retreated. For a figure was coming towards her—a figure who stared as she saw her, whose voice broke into a cry. "Marjorie! Why, bless my soul, I thought you were in detention!"

And Marjorie halted, petrified. For the figure was that of Miss Primrose!

"Marjorie, you—you have been out?" Miss Primrose's eyes were startled and wide. "You have broken detention?" Useless for Marjorie to deny that. Miss Primrose pursed her lips.

"And how," she demanded, "did you get out of the class-room?"

"Oh dear! Oh, Miss Primrose, I—I'm sorry!" Marjorie blurted. "But—but—oh dear—I—I had to go out! I—I had to!" she blurted. "I—I had to see someone!"

"Your mysterious friend, no doubt!" Miss Primrose said, with a ring of contempt in her voice. "Thank you, Marjorie! You need not repeat that story! You will come back with me to your Form-room at once!"

"Miss Primrose, please—" she begged.

"Marjorie, this way!" Sick with dismay, Marjorie had perforce to follow. Nothing, it seemed, could save Mabs now.

And nothing could—or did!

Bessie Tries Her Skill!



A DISASTROUS afternoon, that, in all truth, A bad afternoon which put poor

Marjorie farther back than ever. For, in addition to getting an extra hour's detention, she was also rewarded with another hundred lines. In the Form room she groaned inwardly as she worked at her detention task. It seemed hopeless—hopeless that she could ever catch up now with her studies. Apart from that, she was reviling herself about Mabs—Mabs, who had earned a detention of her own for having taken her place.

Marjorie did so hate to involve others in her woes. But still she wouldn't give up. There was a chance. Look! Here was the end of the detention task finished. Half an hour to write her lines, and so work of her impositions. And after that tea, prep—precious little time for swotting, though. Undeterred, she bent to her task. Five o'clock came, and with it Miss

Charmant, the mistress of the Fourth. She nodded kindly.

"Marjorie, you may go now."

"Thank you!" Marjorie said. She rose; she went. Outside she was pounced upon by Clara.

"Come on!" Clara said. "You're going to have tea in Study No. 4! And you're jolly well going," she added, when they were in that apartment, "to do a bit of explaining, Marjorie! We're your pals. You know that the one thing in the world we want to do most is to help you. But how?" Clara demanded, "can we help you if you won't tell us a thing? Where did you go this afternoon?"

Marjorie shook her head. "I'm sorry, but I—I can't tell you!"

"But, Marjorie, why can't you tell us?" Mabs asked.

Marjorie worriedly bit her lip. "Well, I—I promised someone—I've kept it a secret," she said.

There, the truth was out now! Mabs, Clara, and Babs, who were in the study—Bessie at the moment having been invited to tea by her little admirer, Mary Treherne, of the Lower Third Form—looked at each other.

Clara became rather grim. "And the someone," she asked, "is the girl we saw you with in the Court-field market-place this afternoon?"

"Yes!" Marjorie faltered.

"Who is she?" Clara asked.

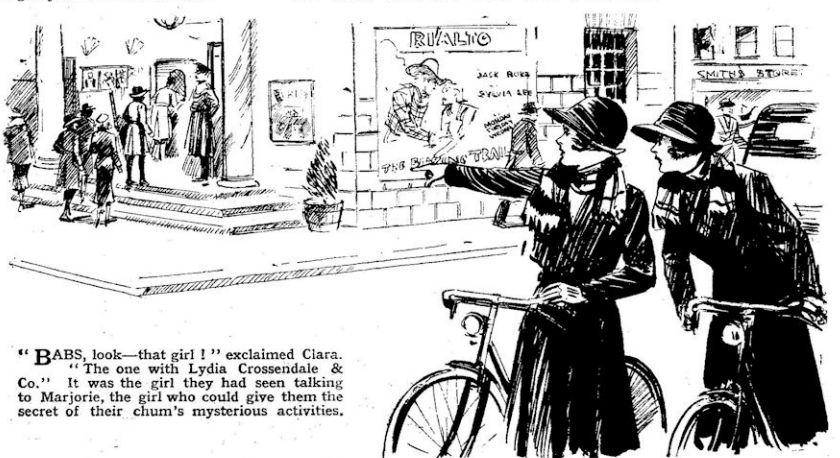
"Oh, please, Clara, don't ask me any more questions!" Marjorie pleaded. "She—she's just a girl I'm helping, that's all. Now, I really must do my prep! Please excuse me!"

Clara shrugged helplessly. Obviously, Marjorie did not intend to say further.

Marjorie hurried along to Study No. 7, and, with a sigh, set to work. Well, thank goodness, her lines and her detention were worked off! Thank goodness, to-night, that prep was rather easier than usual! When she had finished she immediately got out her nursing books.

Now, she thought, to catch up with her studies!

"TWO BROKEN legs!" Bessie Bunter murmured ecstatically. "That's what you've got, you know, Mary! Two broken legs!"



"BABS, look—that girl!" exclaimed Clara. "The one with Lydia Crossendale & Co." It was the girl they had seen talking to Marjorie, the girl who could give them the secret of their chum's mysterious activities.

"But I—I haven't, really, have I?" little Mary Treherne asked anxiously.

"Oh? Oh, no; not really!" Bessie beamed. "This is just pretending, you know. One leg has got just a simple fracture, you know. The other is comminuted—I mean, comminuted!"

"A simple fracture," Bessie explained, with all the prestige of a superior knowledge, "is when the bone is broken only in one place, you know. A comminuted—I mean, comminuted, comminuted fracture is when the bone is broken in more than one place. Now, Mary, you see the operating-table!"

And Bessie happily beamed again. Bessie, notebook in hand, was in her element. Mary Treherne, who would not have hurt Bessie's feelings for worlds, was not so greatly in her element, and looked rather nervous and apprehensive.

But Bessie had persuaded her to act as a subject for treatment, and loyal Mary, having given her promise, would not have let the old duffer down for worlds. Rather reluctantly she climbed on the table in Study No. 4.

Bessie glowed. Dressed in the nurse's uniform Marjorie used, she was in her element. Out of her first-aid box she got her bandages and scissors and iodine.

From her school bag she took the padded splints she had raided from the sanatorium.

Mary blinked as Bessie grasped her ankles.

"I say, it won't hurt?" she asked apprehensively.

"Hurt? Of course not! When I've finished, you'll never even know you've had two broken legs, you know," Bessie said. "Now!"

Text-book in one side of her, paraphernalia on the other, she got to work. Very carefully and very slowly she worked, getting in rather a mess with the splints and bandages, but persevering. Bessie was so engrossed that she did not even notice the two Third Formers who poked their heads into the study in search of Mary. They stared, grinned, and retired giggling.

Mary shifted uneasily.

"I say, have you finished yet?" she asked.

"Very nearly," Bessie beamed. "I say, this is a jolly good job. I've just got to finish bandaging your legs together, and then I'll go and get Marjorie to come and have a look at it, you know. Of course, Marjorie doesn't know as much about first-aid as I do, but she can give a useful hint now and then. There—and there!" and, triumphant and red-faced, Bessie tied the last knots.

"Can you move your legs?"

"Nun-no!" stuttered Mary.

"Then that's the stuff, you know. That's ripping! Just wait here."

Mary had no alternative. With both her legs firmly secured, anything else would indeed have been an impossibility.

With doubtful eyes she watched Bessie as she beamingly rolled off through the door.

But Bessie was not destined to reach the study where Marjorie Hazel-dene at that moment was most feverishly swotting.

For hardly had Bessie taken half a dozen steps along the passage than Sarah Harrigan loomed into view—and Sarah was scowling.

"Bessie Bunter," she rapped, "where are those lines which Miss Bullivant gave you to do last night?"

Bessie stammered.

"Oh, really, Sarah, I haven't done them! How can Miss Bullivant expect me to do lines when my mind is so occupied with loftier matters?"

"So!" Sarah smiled grimly. "Then you'd better cut off and explain that to her," she said. "I fancy she'll be interested. No, this way," she added grimly, as Bessie made to push past her. "That's the way to Miss Bullivant's passage—down the corridor. Go on!"

"But look here—"

"Go on!" snapped Sarah.

Bessie blinked wrathfully, but obviously she had no choice in the matter.

Under Sarah's hardly vigilant eye she rolled off. Grimly had she and her escort disappeared, however, than the door of Study No. 7 opened and Clara and Janet, having finished their prep, and anxious to leave Marjorie alone to do her swotting, came out. Clara yawned.

"Come on, we'll go and see old Babs!" she said.

Janet nodded. Clara went off up the corridor. In her usual boisterous fashion she crashed into Study No. 4. The door with a slam went back on its hinges, charging against the wall.

And at the crash there came a gasp from a queerly trussed figure on the table. It was a gasp followed by a squeal, as Mary Treherne, right on the edge of the table, violently started and wobbled straight overhead.

There came a bump, a howl, and Clara, springing round, gave a cry.

"Oh, my hat, Mary!" she cried.

"Mary!" And her face went white.

"Oh crumbs! She's bleeding!" she cried in horror.

"Janet—quick! Fetch Marjorie!"

Clara Takes a Hand!



MARY was bleeding—and howling at the same time. To sure, she was not

at all badly hurt—she had rather severely bit her nose on the carpet, but being very young the sight of the blood terrified her.

Marjorie, once more jerked away from her studies just as she was beginning to settle down, rushed along at once.

In that swift, decisively practical manner of hers, she took charge of the situation.

Babs and Mabs came on the scene and gave a hand.

Under Marjorie's instructions they got Mary to hold her arms above her head, while Marjorie applied cold compresses to nose and nape of neck.

All the same, what with Mary's shivering fright, it was a long time before they had restored her confidence and put right her injury. So long, indeed, that further swotting for that evening was unmistakably at an end.

Rather tired, Marjorie went to bed, feeling, not for the first time, thwarted—so tired, indeed, that, although she had determined to get up early next morning, she slept soundly until rising-bell.

During the morning it was obvious that her thoughts were far away from her work, and in the second period of lessons she earned a hundred lines from Miss Bullivant.

After dinner there was another phone call for Marjorie. And after afternoon lessons Clara found her once again desisting ready for going out. She blinked.

"Marjorie, you're never going out?"

"I—I must!" Marjorie faltered.

"But your swotting—the exam takes place the day after to-morrow!"

"I know," Marjorie bit her lip.

"But, oh, Clara, I—I just couldn't refuse to go," she said. "When you know, you'll understand!"

"That girl again!" Clara asked grimly.

"Well—yes!"

And off Marjorie went. But Clara was not satisfied. She had an uncanny suspicion that Marjorie was being made a fool of.

When, half an hour later, she saw Lydia Crossendale & Co. going out, she had an idea. Clara was perfectly satisfied in her own mind that there was a definite connection between Marjorie's mystery friend and the snobs of the Fourth, and obviously through them a clue to Marjorie's secret activities might be found.

For once Clara sought no assistance in the carrying out of her idea. When Lydia & Co. left Cliff House she simply followed.

It was not a hard matter to keep track of them in the growing darkness, and she was not surprised, reaching Courtfield, to find Marjorie's mystery friend waiting for them again.

Her lips compressed a little as she saw them turn into the Courtfield Cafe and disappear. Then, with another brain-wave, she approached the cashier at the desk.

"I say," she said, "you saw the three Cliff House girls who came in here just now?"

"Oh, yes," the cashier smiled. "Miss Crossendale and her friends. They very often come here."

"With that other girl?" Clara questioned.

"Who, Miss Washington? Oh, yes! She's a nurse, you know," the cashier went on chattily. "She's nursing a Mrs. Cope who lives somewhere about here. I don't exactly know where. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, thanks!" Clara said.

But her eyes gleamed. She had a clue then. She thought she saw the scheme now.

Elsie Washington, eh? Elsie Washington having a rattling good time while she got golden-hearted Marjorie to do her work!

Just the sort of thing Marjorie would do, of course!

Very well, Clara vowed, this was going to stop here and now!

She went back to Cliff House. There she found Babs, Mabs, and Janet Jordan. She told them what she had found out, and when Marjorie came in just before call-over, she tackled her.

"Marjorie, I don't want to upset you," she said; "but I think you ought to know that friend of yours, Elsie Washington—"

Marjorie gave a jerk of surprise.

"You know her name?"

"I do! And I know, too," Clara said grimly, "that she's telling you some yarn, so that you can go and nurse Mrs. Cope, while she goes off with Lydia & Co., having a good time. I've got the trouble to make a few inquiries, you see," she added, "and I've found out quite a lot. She's just making a fool of you, Marjorie. If you take my advice, you'll have nothing more to do with her!"

Marjorie bit her lip. A look of real distress came into her eyes. Not for a moment did Marjorie doubt Clara, but strangely enough she was not thinking at that moment of the duplicity of the girl whose place she had taken.

She was thinking of Mrs. Cope—Mrs. Cope who yesterday had seemed so much better, who the doctor had

said seemed as if she had started along the road to recovery at last.

She had arrived that afternoon, however, to discover that Mrs. Cope had had a rather startling relapse. The situation at the moment was one of utmost gravity.

"Marjorie, you hear?" Clara said. "Yes, I hear," Marjorie nodded. "I can hardly believe it of Elsie," she said, but the very tone in which she uttered the words showed that her mind was not pre-occupied with Elsie. "Oh, dear, I—I do wish she'd take a turn for the better," she murmured distractedly, and Clara, hardly knowing to what she referred, stared.

And with that Marjorie hurried off. When she sat down to her swotting, and realised how much time she had given up to the care of Mrs. Cope, she was frighteningly reminded that the examination took place to-morrow afternoon.

She must work—and work now as she had never worked in her life. And work she did, right until the last minute. At five o'clock next morning she was up again, and again she got down to it.

By dint of terrific concentration and will to work she caught up. She felt, indeed, by the time breakfast arrived, that despite all the terrific handicaps of the last few days she had made good progress.

This afternoon the examination would take place.

Clara came in. Clara's face was rather grim. She looked at her.

"Finished, Marjorie?"

"Yes," Marjorie said.

"You—you feel all right? Fit for the exam?"

"Oh, yes!" Marjorie laughed.

"Good, I'm glad to hear it!" Clara's face cleared. "Because, Marjorie, we all do so want you to win," she said anxiously. "If you don't win—how simply awful it's going to be! You may have to leave the school, wouldn't you?"

Marjorie nodded calmly.

"Yes."

"And—and—" Clara took a turn up and down the study. "Then, Marjorie, win!" she implored. "For goodness' sake win! Cliff House won't seem the same sort of place without you. It would be just too awfully rotten having someone else in this study in your place! The trouble with you, Marjorie, is that you're too easily imposed upon. If it hadn't been for that Washington girl, you'd never jolly well have had to work as you've been working. You're not going to have anything more to do with her, are you?"

"No," Marjorie said, "but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, Clara, you don't understand. It's not Elsie—I don't care about her. It's Mrs. Cope. Clara, she's such a dear—such a sweet, helpless thing. But why are you looking at me like that?" she added quickly.

"Oh, nothing!" Clara blurted.

But she changed her mind then about telling Marjorie what she had intended to tell her—that she had just intercepted an urgent message on the phone from Elsie Washington, who had said that Mrs. Cope wanted Marjorie. Clara rather bluntly had told Elsie to "go and eat coke!"

For Clara, of course, did not believe, especially when she had heard Lydia & Co. making arrangements to go out for the day.

Everybody could work upon Marjorie's gentle feelings, and Clara, as her chum, did not intend to see Marjorie fooled any longer.

And yet, had Clara only known it,

that message was genuine. The relapse which Mrs. Cope had undergone was a very real one. Something like a crisis was approaching.

No, Clara did not know that, and Marjorie was not thinking of the perfidy of Elsie Washington. She was thinking of dear Mrs. Cope, and of the examination which was to take place this afternoon when Dr. Fullwood arrived from London.

So much depended upon that. So frantically much, it would mean to her father, herself, her whole future!

And then when Clara, Babs and the rest had gone off to hockey practice on Little Side, came the second telephone message that day.

This time it was not from Elsie. It was from Dr. Kelly himself.

"Marjorie, I had to ring you," he said. "I'm sorry, but I must have your assistance if we are to pull Mrs. Cope

one way; pity, compassion for Mrs. Cope the other.

Pity and compassion won. Swiftly she hurried to her study. There she scrawled a swift note to Clara and raced off.

And in the meantime Dr. Fullwood had arrived. When Clara & Co. came off the hockey field everybody was looking for Marjorie. Not only Clara found the note in the study did she guess the truth. That note said:

"Dear Clara,—If I am not back in time for the examination, will you please excuse me to Dr. Fullwood? I have had a frightfully urgent call—a matter of life and death!"

Clara's hand shook.

"Life or death!" she raged. "Oh, my hat, the fool! The silly, soft-headed chump! Babs, Mabs, come here!" she



HILDA RICHARDS' SURPRISE PRESENT

THE "SCHOOLGIRL" OFFICE,
FLEETWAY HOUSE,
FARRINGTON STREET,
LONDON, E.C.A.

MY DEAR GIRLS,—Another little letter to you all—and again I must open by saying "Thank you. Thank you all for your letters, and for your friendship.

You do know, don't you, how much I love your letters? But I feel I

cannot repeat this appreciation too much.

As you know, I have been giving a little present each week to one reader—just picking a letter that has appealed to me and sending that reader a little gift. I do not choose a letter chiefly because it praises my stories, you know that, don't you? (Though I must admit, very happily, that most of them do!) It's just my way of expressing how much I do value your friendship, and as I can't send a present to each of you—as I'd love to—I send just one each week.

ESTHER DANSER, whose address is 75, Lansdowne Road, Tottenham, London, N.17, receives my present this week—a Chromium Clock for her bed-room, or for any other room for that matter.

Esther's letter was a delight. She told me she was going to have a little pup soon and would like me to suggest some names for it. So here you are, Esther.

You'll see I am dividing the names into two groups—for a big, stately dog, or for a frisky little one. Big dogs: Jupiter, Rex, Prince, King, Duke, Ben, Rajah. Little dogs: Tango, Trix, Bimbo, Max, Jumbo, Bouncer, Pancho, Buster.

There, I hope you find a name to suit your pup-to-be among those, Esther.

My love and best wishes to you all, my dears!

Hilda Richards

through. I believe if she doesn't see you soon she will go completely under. This morning she rallied a little, and for the first time for weeks she spoke; just one word—Marjorie!"

Marjorie felt a quick thrill shake her from head to foot.

"And, Marjorie, can you—will you please come?" the doctor asked. "It's a matter of life and death. I feel, with you by her side, that she will pull through."

"I'll come!" Marjorie said. But her face paled as she said it, realising what it was going to mean to her. If she was not at the examination—

For one swift second Marjorie fought a battle with herself. Duty to her father, herself, her chums tugging her

called frantically. "Read this! It's that Elsie girl. She's just kidded Marjorie again, and—and the examination starts at two."

Babs blinked. "It's one now," she said. "Clara, I say, what are you going to do?"

But it was plain what Clara was going to do. Almost savagely she was throwing on her coat.

"Coming?" she asked. "Yes, of course. But I don't see—"

"Never mind what you see," Clara answered bluntly. "The position is this. If Marjorie's not present when the examination starts, she'll lose her chance. Well, Marjorie's not going to lose her chance. Marjorie's being made a fool of, and we're just going to

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rescue her from herself for once. We're going to fetch her."

"But how do you know where she is?"

"I don't," Clara said, "but I know where Elsie Washington is. I heard Lydia & Co. talking over their plans this morning. I heard them say that they would be lunching at the Royal Restaurant. Elsie Washington will be with them, and Elsie's the one who's jolly well going to lead us to Marjorie. Come on; we've just time to catch the bus!"

And in a body she and Babs and Mabs ran down to the gates, just in time to catch the Courtfield bus as it came along.

The Crisis—and After



"HOLD her hand, Marjorie. I do believe it." Dr. Kelly whispered.

"She's coming round. I only wish to goodness that she only were here. She'd be useful, if it was only to wash up these other things. Keep your eye upon her, Marjorie."

Marjorie sat perfectly still. From Mrs. Cope the doctor came a long-drawn sigh. It seemed for a moment as if a spot of colour appeared in her wax-like features. Marjorie, looking at her, felt the tears rushing to her eyes, felt her heart throbbing and pulsing, a choking lump in her throat.

Poor, poor woman! But the fight for her life was at its height now. For Mrs. Cope for an hour had lain in that death-like coma, while Marjorie and the doctor had worked like two Trojans to bring back the ebbing life to her body. The struggle—the greater part of it—was over. They could only wait now, and hope.

Would she come through? The tender heart of Marjorie Hazel-dene was aching. She had a feeling if this battle was not won that she would be haunted by the sight of this pinched, paper-white face for the rest of her days.

Another sigh. The eyelids fluttered. Doctor and schoolgirl nurse stared with almost bated breath into the wax-like features.

"Oh, doctor!" Marjorie choked. "Shush!"

Downstairs there came a knock. Neither heeded it. They were watching—watching. The doctor had his watch in his hand now.

Another sigh, and then— "Look; her eyes fluttered!" the doctor breathed. "Let me see." And he took her pulse. "Faster." He muttered. "The blood's pumping up again. And there's colour in her cheeks. Now—" And suddenly, tensely, he held his breath.

They both bent forward as the white lips moved ever so feebly, and a name faintly breathed, almost a zephyr whisper, came from them.

"Marjorie!"

Downstairs the knock sounded again—more impatiently this time.

"Hold her," the doctor whispered. "I'll go and see who that is. I expect it's her brother. I found a letter from him this morning, and sent a wire to him asking him to come right away."

Marjorie nodded. She hardly heard. She was looking, looking, as though the concentrated force of her gaze would instil new life into the frail woman on the bed.

The eyelids fluttered, closed, fluttered again, and Marjorie, feeling her heart pounding, bent forward. Then suddenly, widely, they opened. And the joy—the incredulous joy and gladness in them as they fastened upon her!

"Marjorie!" the woman said again. Marjorie fought back an hysterical desire to burst into tears.

"Mrs. Cope! Mrs. Cope!" she choked.

"Marjorie," the woman said, "Marjorie, my dear! My sweet girl! Marjorie, I can talk!" she whispered, in surprise at hearing her own voice. "Marjorie, my speech has come back to me. You—"

The door opened. The doctor stood there. He motioned back someone behind him. He strode forward.

"She's come to—"

"Yes, she—she's come to," Marjorie said tremulously. "She spoke. And, doctor, the muscles of her face twitched. She's got the use of them back."

The doctor almost laughed. "She'll pull through," he said.

"She'll pull through, thanks to you, my girl! Now, Mrs. Cope, you can come in," he said, turning. "I want to tell you your sister is out of danger, and that you've this girl to thank for it. Bring Mrs. Washington in with you."

Mr. Cope entered. He looked wonderingly at Marjorie, who, reacting to the enormous strain of the last hour and the collapse, before he crossed with quick, agitated footsteps to his sister's bedside. But Marjorie stared at the woman who had entered the room with Mrs. Cope's brother.

"Mrs.—Mrs. Washington!" she said. "Marjorie, my dear." Mrs. Washington smiled. "I did not expect to find you here," she said. "I hardly understand what it's all about, even now. Mr. Cope fetched me from my home—I am living in Courtfield since I left your father's parish, you know."

"And—and you aren't ill?" Marjorie stammered.

"Good gracious, my dear, no! I have never been better in my life. But my daughter Elsie—where is she?"

"She," came a voice from the door, "is here—if you're talking about this worm!" And into the room came red-faced Clara Trevlyn, accompanied by Babs and Mabs—Clara grasping a quivering Elsie by the arm. "We

thought," Clara added grimly, "it was about time she did her own job and left our Marjorie to get through her examination, which she's jolly well nearly robbed her of already! We yanked her out of the Royal Restaurant."

"Clara!" cried Marjorie. "Oh, my goodness! But—wait, you can't come in here! And in fluttering agitation she rushed outside. Mrs. Washington, looking amazed, following. A moment later out came Mr. Cope himself.

His eyes fastened upon the white-faced Elsie.

"So," he said harshly, "this is how you have looked after my sister, is it? Don't lie! I know! I had a talk over the phone with the doctor this morning. He has told me all. I left my sister in your charge. You, to gratify your desire for a good time, handed her over to somebody else, at the same time telling that somebody else your mother was ill and sick. And what," he added, "has become of the money I sent to my sister every week for her comfort?"

Elsie's cheeks quivered.

"I—I—"

"I know—or I can guess! You've spent that—on your good time! Oh, you little wretch!" he broke out. "If I did my duty I should prosecute you for that! But I won't. Mrs. Washington, please take her away, and, if you can, teach her a sense of responsibility. But you, my dear"—he turned towards Marjorie—"will you come into the bedroom, please, and bring your friends with you?"

Clara gasped. "But Marjorie has to attend an examination. Oh, my hat, you don't understand! If she doesn't get her nursing certificate she will lose fifty pounds!"

He smiled. "Oh, no, she won't! My sister," he added softly, "wants to tell her that she will pay everything she may lose as the result of missing the examination. You need never worry any more, Marjorie. As long as she or I are alive, you will never have to bother about money any more!"

And, while the chums blinked, and while the tears at last unrestrainedly flowed from Marjorie's eyes, he led her forward to the happy little woman whose life she had saved.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Great excitement at Cliff House. End of term approaching, and Babs & Co. rehearsing Mabel Lynn's own play. But—disaster overtakes them. The scenery is smashed. Impossible, it seems, to mend it in time.

And then comes—



Page-Boy BOKER to the Rescue!

Eagerly enough, cheery young Boker sets to work to save the day. But, in so doing, he leaves himself open to the attacks of a vindictive girl who is determined to get him the sack. It seems that in striving to bring triumph to the chums of the Fourth, Boker must bring misfortune to himself.

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Early chapters of our wonderful Morcove serial—



FOR NEW READERS.

BETTY BARTON and her Morcove chums, POLLY LINTON, NAOMER NAKARA, PAM WILLOUGHBY, JUDY CARDEW, to mention only a few, join forces with JACK LINTON & CO., of Grangemoor, to form a concert party which, visiting wealthy Society homes during the Christmas holidays, is raising a fund on behalf of a children's home. They have as chaperone, MISS LESTER, a charming lady they adore. At Morcove, during preparations, a valuable concert frock ruined. Betty & Co. sack the miscreant in vain—never suspecting that it is actually Miss Lester! (Now read on.)

What Daylight Revealed!

“THAT was an awful row in the night, girls!”
 “Terrible!”
 “Something to do with you, Betty, wasn't it?”
 “Something—yes!”
 And, more than that, Form captain Betty was not disposed to say.

It so happened that her reticence did not trouble the Form, whilst getting itself washed and dressed in readiness for another day in school—and that day, the last but one before breaking up.

Indeed, any row that had disturbed Morcove's rest in the night, must have been as nothing compared with the row going on at present in all dormitories.

There was an inclination to go “whoopee,” all on account of the approaching holidays. And next week—Christmas, Hurrah!

There were pillows all over the floor at this moment. There were wet marks on the walls left by skittishly aimed sponges that had missed intended targets; there were tongues going at their strongest pitch. Above all, there was the shrill voice of dusky Naomer, standing upon one bed to get a chorus started.

“Bekas,” the imp started to sing, at the same time beating time with a curtain-rod:

“Only anuzzer day of school-work!
 Only anuzzer day in—”

“Class!” sang the Form, as with one voice. And it continued:

“Then we go away—
 Hip, bip, hip, burrah!
 Off once again for
 A jolly good holiday!”

“Hurrah!” and “Ha, ha, ha!”
 “Girls, girls!” pleaded Miss Merrick, showing her smiling self in the doorway. “Can't you be a little less boisterous?”

No, they couldn't. Or, at any rate, they didn't see why they should. When Betty scooted away from the dorm, it was as riotous as ever.

“Hi, Betty!” She was hailed by a pursuing chum, just as she turned into that first floor passage which led to the sewing-room. “Wait for me.”

And there was Polly, coming along at a gallop.

“You think daylight may show us something, Betty?”

“May do, Polly. All I know is”—Betty grimaced—“I had no proper chance in the night to see if any harm had been done to our theatrical stuff.”

“Wonder who it was, Betty?” frowned Polly, as they went in. “You say you didn't get a chance even to glimpse the wretch?”

“Worse luck—no. But never mind, so long as I arrived in time to prevent any harm being done. Now let's take a good look and see.”

Then the lid of a wicker dress-basket—one of several strongly made baskets such as theatrical companies use when on tour—creaked as Betty raised it.

Her eyes and Polly's fell at once upon dress fabrics that had been folded away at the close of yesterday afternoon's sewing party.

“Well, that's all right,” was Betty's relieved exclamation. She was gently lifting out some of the topmost layers. “Nothing wrong here. Hallo, though!” she next moment gasped, whilst Polly shouted an alarmed:

“Oh, mind, Betty—mind!”
 A fair-sized bottle, unstoppered, and yet primed with a brownish liquid, had fallen out of the dainty fabrics Betty was handling. Plop! to the floor the bottle went, spilling its contents upon the carpet.

“My hat!” Betty said fiercely.
 “Golly!” Polly raged. “That is the giddy limit! What is the stuff in the bottle? An acid to burn?” No, she was instantly convinced, having knelt down to inspect the spilt fluid closely.

“Cough mixture.”

“What!”

“Cough mixture,” repeated Polly grimly.

“This is pretty rotten,” the captain muttered. “Breaking-up week. There

oughtn't to be such a rotten ‘jape’ as this being played. Japs! And we stood to lose half the material that we've been saving up to buy, not to mention all the work we put in yesterday afternoon. If we complained, it would just about phut out everyone's spirits.”

“Better not breathe a word, that's all,” Polly nodded. “It is pretty rough on us, though. Dash!” she suddenly raged. “Isn't there a single blessed clue to be found that will help us to nail the girl? Didn't she leave behind any trace of herself last night?”

With a thoroughness due to raging anger against the unknown miscreant, they began to search around. And chums of theirs, coming in at this moment, were no sooner told the latest than they also joined in the hunt for a clue—anything that might be an indicator, however feeble.

All for nothing, however, did the victimised girls strive so desperately to obtain evidence. There was none. Whoever it was had been ‘getting at them’ so cruelly, looked like having the laugh of them.

But Betty & Co. were of one mind about not letting the unpleasant affair become known in the school.

It might threaten the efforts of the concert party.

Presently the chums locked up the sewing-room, Betty retaining the key. In a spirited mood of “Carry on, Morcove!” they all trooped downstairs to breakfast, and then—pleasant surprise! Letters, this morning, were being given out early.

A big mail it was—swollen by Christmas cards, posted in good time to catch lots of girls whilst still at school. Parents, too, “Carry on, Morcove!” they all notified the latest thrilling arrangements for Christmas. The front hall, where letters were always given out, was one great riot of girls, shelling open envelopes, the very sight of which meant huge delight.

And for Form captain Betty there was one letter, on crested paper, the address a certain famous town house in the West End of London.

“Girls, here—quick!” Betty called out to Polly and others, as she started to read. “From Lady Aberforth!”

“Ooo!”
 And over Betty's shoulders peered her chums, their eyes acquiring a still brighter sparkle as they read:

“Dear Betty Barton,—I have heard through Mrs. Willoughby all about the show you girls are getting up during the Christmas holidays, in

By

MARJORIE STANTON

aid of the fund to acquire Rock Hill House as a seaside home for poor children.

"I am giving a party here on New Year's Eve, and if you and your chums are not already booked for that evening, I do hope you will come along and 'do your stuff'."

"I think I can guarantee a nice collection when you go round with the plate."

"Please let me know, and if not convenient, I will arrange some other date."

"Sincerely,

"MURIEL ABERFORTH."

"P.S.—You will, of course, stay on after the show for the rest of the evening's fun."

"Lady Aberforth!" cried several.

"Who's she?"

Pam could tell them. And what Pam told them meant wilder delight than ever. New Year's Eve, too. It was a date they had been keeping open, on the advice of Pam's mother, in case a very special invitation should turn up.

"Gorjus!" yelled Naomer, who had clung on Pam Willoughby's back, so as to be able to get a look at the letter.

"Really, we are in for a round of parties," gurgled Bunny. "If only one of our prizes to-morrow could be a nice book on etiquette!"

"Must telegraph," Betty blithely decided, putting the letter away. "O.K. and best thanks!"

And then, directly the school was out for "break," Betty & Co. went to the sewing-room again. Other girls might be going away to snatched a half-hour at games on the field, but Study No. 12 was all for pushing on with its dressmaking.

The following midday, all Forms were marched into Big Hall for the prize giving. Dressed their smartest, and very keyed up, they formed line behind line, whilst on the dais were already congregated many distinguished visitors.

Like the other girls, the chums were eager to see who was here. In a moment they picked out Lady Lundy, who was to give the prizes away, and it was their delight to see her ladyship chatting with—Miss Lester.

As attractive-looking as anyone in the fashionable throng, there was the lady who, yesterday, had so charmed the chums—their chaperone-to-be.

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THERE WERE prizes for Study No. 12, and one of them was a certain "Encouragement Prize" for Naomer. Which prize, as had been known to happen before, the dusky junior regarded as a "sweendle."

It took Naomer only about ten minutes before tea, that afternoon, to run through the gift-book.

Then, during an argument, she hurled the prize at Folly's head.

It would not have been the madcap to fail to dodge in time. A smashed ornament was the result, but Study No. 12 decided that this didn't matter, term being as good as ended.

Similarly the rattling out of tea-things meant a final end to various bits of crockery that had long been due for the dustbin. There was, by now, that particularly joyous sense of doing everything for the last time this term, coupled with a happy idea of making a fresh and grand start next term.

But all unruliness, so far as the chums were concerned, was to end very soon after tea. They had barely got back to the sewing-room when Miss Merrick, their Form-mistress, opened the door and blithely inquired:

"May we come in, girls?"

"Oh, don't get up—don't stop for me, please!" added Miss Lester, who was with the mistress. "I am sure you need every moment!"

Nice of her! So the chums were all thinking, working on as fast as ever, even whilst they returned her friendly smile.

Starting a round of the well-lit room, she first engaged the captain in some pleasant talk, looked at what Betty was doing, and praised it; then she moved on to another of the busy bees, to have a little talk with her.

"Just fancy! You girls only bought your materials yesterday, and yet you have got on so well!" came her delighted cry to all of them presently. "What businesslike, efficient girls they are!"

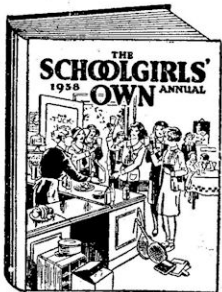
"The theatrical baskets would make too much for the girls to take with them, as well as their own luggage," the Form-mistress remarked. "So Betty herself is going to put them on the half-past nine train at Morcove Road."

"To go via Barncome, of course?" Miss Lester inferred. "And then you girls follow by the later train—the one that joins the London express at Exeter?"

"Will you be going up by our train, Miss Lester?" clamoured some of the girls. "We do hope so!"

"To give me a first experience of my job as official chaperone?" the lady laughed. "I'm sorry; nice of you all to want to have me with you on the

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There are also two other fine annuals The GOLDEN—3/6 and The POPULAR Book of Girls' Stories—2/6 both packed with enthralling features.

train. But I've got to go by the earlier train, and break my journey to see a relation."

"Then the next time we see you," cried Polly, "it will be where we're all going to stay in London?"

"At Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby's town house—yes," beamed Miss Lester. "How awfully good it has been of your parents, Pam, to give up the place to us all!"

"Yes, well," was Pam's serene response, "they saw it as a chance to do their bit for the Rock Hill House scheme."

"As I am sure I want to do my bit," Miss Lester rejoined, with an earnestness that was not lost upon the chums. "Good-bye then, girls—until to-morrow, in London!"

"Good-bye, Miss Lester—'bye!"

Then she was gone, leaving the sewing-room in a buzz of talk about her. Second time she had been amongst them all—and they liked her even better than the first time!

Up to the last possible moment, that last evening at Morcove, the sewing-room continued as a hive of industry.

Girls of other studies were holding high jinks, but Betty and her chums were just as happy, working away together. And, anyway, when at last they packed up for the night, they could let themselves go—with a vengeance!

From that moment, when the captain poked the key of the sewing-room door, to go romping away with the rest of the Co., there was no bit of Form fun in which they did not have the biggest share.

Bed-time, and there was the traditional "last night" raid upon the Fifth Form dormitory. As Miss Somerfield happened to be giving a dinner-party for the teaching staff, conditions were favourable to attack and counter-attack.

More pillows were burst than ever before. As victors, Betty's Form emerged from the final set-to with such thirsts as no mere water could be expected to assuage.

Accordingly, a foraging party went down, and got back safely with a residue of lemonades and "squash" from various studies, also a good many leftovers in the way of cakes and pastries.

Then, with the dormitory supper-party going well, it became the happy idea of Etta Hargrove—always one of Study No. 12's best well-wishers—to propose a toast.

"Look here, girls," said Etta, "considering what a jolly good thing it's going to be for all those slum kiddies if enough money is collected to buy Rock Hill House—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And considering what a lot depends upon Betty & Co.—I mean to say—er—you know what I mean—"

"Hea-rrr, hear-r-r-r!" faltering Etta was helped along.

"Well, then, jolly good luck to the Morcove Concert Party!" she blurted, standing up with a raised tumbler.

"With a—"

"Sh!"

"With a hip, hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!" cheered Betty & Co.'s Form-mates, not caring if such an ovation was heard downstairs. "Hip, pip, hurrah!"

"And again!"

"Hur-rah!"

"That's just about done it!" laughed Betty, standing up to reply. "So all I'll say, girls, before we nip into bed—"

"Look out!" whispered someone over



HORRIFIED, Betty turned to Dave. "Our props—they haven't arrived!" she gasped. Had their mysterious enemy stolen them?

by the door, but with such a grin as meant a false alarm.

"All I'll say, girls, is—thank you all for your good wishes, and may you have as jolly good a time as we hope to have—"

"In Society!" drawled Fay Denver.

"Aw-haw!"

"Should Auld Acquaintance?" droned Etta, as a hasty means of overwhelming the jarring note struck by Fay, and instantly the supper-party was on its feet. Hands were joined.

"Should auld acquaintance be forsoght,"

sang the dormitory, at full strength,

"And never brought to mind—"

And so at last the Form was in bed for the last time this term.

Miss Merrick, coming up later on, would find the girls all genuinely asleep. Also, she would find a tidy dump of orange-peel, banana-skins, cake-boxes, empty bottles, paper serviettes, and fruit-cans, about which something ought to be said in the morning, only there never was a chance at a time like this!

The Mystery of the Baskets!

THERE were a hundred-and-one things for which time had to be found next morning by scholars and staff alike.

Packing to do; luggage to be got downstairs; studies to be finally tidied up; holiday addresses to be exchanged along with promises to "keep in touch." Above all, plenty of standing about in corridors and on the stairs for last snatches of sleep.

As for Betty, her activities had started at daylight, and one of them was the addressing of a linen label for each of the concert party baskets.

In a very large, clear hand, Betty wrote the address upon each untearable label. Afterwards, she and Polly securely corded up the baskets.

Then Morcove's chauffeur had to find

time to romp those baskets along to Morcove Road Station, with Betty and Polly on board to see them finally put to the guard's van of the nine-thirty to Barncombe Junction.

From this exciting little trip they were back at nine-forty, to find Morcove School in the very throes of "breaking-up."

Getting indoors, they were rushed at by Bunny Trevor.

"They've rung up from Grangemoor—the boys have! It's all right; they'll be joining our train at the station for their school!"

"Splendid!"

Then, when the old familiar chimes were ding-donging in their ears for the last time this term, all the chums of Study No. 12 were in one of the special hired conveyances running between school and station.

"Good-bye Betty—all of you! Good-bye!" came a chorus.

How they yelled their heart-felt response, as the motor glided away, Polly and Naomer and Bunny somehow managing to get their heads out of one window.

"Bye, Morcove, until next term! Happy Christmas! Bye again, Miss Somerfield—Miss Merrick!"

Handkerchiefs were fluttering.

"Three cheers for the Morcove Concert Party!" the headmistress' own appeal went up. "Hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!"

Then they were at the little wayside station, where a fine saloon carriage had its windows proudly labelled:

RESERVED FOR

The Morcove Concert Party.

But best of all was a subsequent stop at a country station where "the boys" were waiting to board the train.

Another minute, and the narrow mahogany table running down the centre of the saloon was nicely accommodating a gramophone, also various

boxes of chocolates and bags of fruit which had been bulging overcoat pockets when Jack and his pals got aboard.

The gramophone, set going, was more than a bit scratchy, the records having suffered rough treatment in a certain Grangemoor study.

But, even so, the music was deemed to be a pleasant background, as it were, to all the laughter and talk that went on during a first hand-round of sweets and fruit. Jack's banjo—one of them there was Jack's banjo—one that had no case, having been bought second-hand. That was why he had come along from the school this morning with the instrument slung across his back.

Until they got to Exeter, Jack contented himself with a mere thrumming at odd moments. Afterwards, however, with the express for London tearing along at sixty miles an hour, better use was made of the banjo. The "M.C.P."—initials for Morcovve Concert Party—didn't see why it shouldn't make use of the journey-time by holding a rehearsal.

So, one way and another, the happy band of juniors got through their great run to London, several taxis whirling them away from a noisy terminus to the Willoughby's fine house in Mayfair.

The manservant who opened the wide street door to them knew them all—every one of them. There was his glad smile as well as his usual bow to imply a "Welcome!" that Pam's own mother was next moment voicing.

In front of a jolly hall fire they became congregated, whilst luggage was brought in from the cabs. Then, with the street door closed against all the roaring note of mighty London, the first chatters-chatter had to end, so that the youthful visitors might be taken upstairs at once to their different rooms.

No sooner was Betty left alone with Polly and two other chums, with whom she was going to "share," than she darted to one of the windows, held the blind aside, and peered out.

All around, in the early darkness of this December evening, were the homes of the great and the grand, for some of which the "M.C.P." already had its invitations.

How, then, could the concert party possibly fail in its worthy purpose?

Betty, asking herself that question, let a confident little laugh answer it.

"Say, girls," she next moment came away from the window to exclaim at her room-mates, "Miss Lester's late, isn't she?"

"And what about our dress-baskets? They're not here yet!"

"Oh, but they soon will be!" Betty was in a position to answer happily. "Pam's mother told me, downstairs; someone is even now picking them up by car, at the station, in case the railway company might not be able to deliver them until the morning."

Then came an unexpected tap at the door, and Mrs. Willoughby entered.

"About your dress-baskets, girls—the man's back from the station without them."

"What!" stared all four juniors.

The baskets, they knew, should have been taken off the train hours ago.

"It's hard to understand why they were not there," Mrs. Willoughby frowned. "Hope to goodness they haven't got mixed up with goods-traffic stuff!"

"Can't have done!" Betty insisted. "I marked the labels so plainly 'Per Passenger Train.' Perhaps I'd better keep my things on and go and see about it."

"I think perhaps you had better," Pam's mother approved the idea.

"We know what the railways have to cope with at this time of year. But take one of the boys with you, dear."

"Right-ho!"

Quiet Dave chanced to be on hand, downstairs, when Betty ended her race down from the bed-room. Of all five lads, he was the very best to go with her. Out on the pavement, they hailed a passing taxi that had the flag up, and so he and she were soon being sped back to the huge terminus at which the entire party had so recently detrained.

At first Betty had thought how nice it was to have Dave with her, simply because his reasonable, even-tempered nature would be such an asset, if the coming inquiry led to any argument with over-worked railway officials. But

now she felt thankful for her own sake as well that this was Dave sitting beside her in the taxi.

None of the other boys could have saved her from getting in a bit of a dither about those dress-baskets, as Dave saved her, by talking about all sorts of other things.

In a greater roar than ever was the thronged terminus when they got to it. Jumping out of their cab, they were aware of a dozen other taxis drawing up behind, to set down intending travellers.

Rumble, rumble, porters' barrows were being trundled, piled high with luggage. With a vision of the enormous stacks of trunks and portmanteaus being dealt with at the Passengers' Luggage Office, where the dress-baskets should be, Betty wanted to rush to make her anxious inquiry. But Dave kept her to a calm walking pace.

"You say they were linen labels," he said. "And that's everything. There's the counter you have to ask at, anyhow."

With such a crowd in front of it! For two minutes, at least, did he and she have to wait, whilst people in front of them received attention. Then a shirt-sleeved, perspiring man behind the metal-topped counter asked wearily with his eyes:

"Yes, miss?"
"You have three theatrical dress-baskets sent off by passenger train from Morcovve this morning?" Betty rather panted. "The nine-thirty," she stressed.

The man turned his back on her to bawl the inquiry to some mate toiling amongst the dumps of luggage.

"Bill! Three dress-baskets off this morning's up-slow from Morcovve?"

Kept waiting, Betty set her eyes hunting for a sight of the baskets, knowing that Dave also was trying to pick them out.

"Don't see them!" she quavered. "Oh, Dave, what does it mean? If they're lost, then we're all done!"

The man behind the counter faced round again.

"No dress-baskets here, miss."
"What? But they must be! I saw them get into the van at Morcovve."

"Well, they haven't arrived."

"You mean to say?" Dave now quietly pressed the inquiry, "you've seen nothing of them? Dress-baskets—you'd surely remember them?"

"Should do. That's why I'm telling you both—they haven't turned up. Next, please!"

Betty and Dave stood away from the counter, making room for others.

"Stolen?" she panted her sudden terrible belief "Stolen in transit, Dave?"

"No."
"Where are they, then—where?"
"Somewhere," said Dave, with a ready-for-action smile, "and we're going to find them."

Betty nodded. She felt like that, too.

Then, as they started to drift away together—

"Hallo, you two!" they were merrily hailed.

And right in front of them, looking ever so amused by this chance encounter, was Miss Lester.

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