

"WHEN BABS LOST THE CAPTAINCY!" Dramatic Long Complete Cliff House story inside

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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EVERY 2<sup>D</sup> SATURDAY

Incorporating  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**A NEW CAPTAIN  
FOR THE LOWER SCHOOL!**

**And that position had been  
gained by treachery**

See this week's magnificent story of  
Barbara Redfern & Co.

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE story of the famous chums of Cliff House School—



# When Babs

There seems to be no limit to the cunning scheming of Faith Ashton, the wonderfully pretty girl who has taken Cliff House School by storm. Already, by crafty, subtle means she has turned popular opinion against her cousin, Barbara Redfern, while she herself has earned everyone's admiration. And now—she aims to win the coveted position Babs has held so long—  
—the Captaincy of the Lower School.

## Babs Explains!



FOR the third time that afternoon, in Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form corridor of Cliff House School, Barbara Redfern read the letter she had received by the midday post.

And for the third time Barbara—affectionately termed "Babs" by all those who were her chums—bit her lip. Naturally sunny and happy, always alert for fun and mischief, in spite of her position as captain of the Junior School, it was not often that one caught her wearing the worried and anxious expression she wore now.

And especially over such a letter—a letter so brimful of good nature and love and enthusiasm, and from the one aunt she adored above all others!

"But—but she's coming here," Babs muttered, and stared at the letter as though expecting it to answer her.

"Aunt Felicity is coming here. At this time?"

One paragraph in that letter seemed to start out at her.

"And of course, Barbara dear, you can understand my excitement at being in England again. I shall come to Cliff House as soon as ever I can. You were only six years of age when I left for Canada, taking Faith with me. I loved you then, and I love you now. You can understand how I am dying to see you again—and also Faith. I do hope I shall find you and your cousin good chums. I do hope that you are both getting along marvellously together—but then, I am sure you are."

Babs sighed. Rather agitatedly she folded the note.

"I do hope I shall find you and your cousin good chums!"

She smiled a little, but it was a bitter smile. She found an echo of mockery in her heart. Good chums—Faith Ashton and she! Good chums—that girl she had once so liked, that girl whom everybody so adored. That girl with the great wide eyes like the eyes of a doll, and her angelically innocent face. Good chums—with her!

"Oh dear!" muttered Babs.

For—impossible that! Just utterly

impossible! Sweet and forgiving and charming, Faith was—on the surface. But what a hypocrite, what a sneak, what an unscrupulous nature that marvellously pretty face hid! What a thorn she had been in Babs' side ever since she had arrived at Cliff House from Canada, where Aunt Felicity had taken her after adopting her.

Be friends with her—she, a girl whose every complex was one of duplicity, who, with those sweet, honeyed ways of hers, so impossible to fight, had already put half the Form against Babs, and had left even her own most loyal chums with the impression that she was rather jealous and churlish of her cousin.

The door opened. Two eyes, magnified by thick-lensed spectacles, peered at Babs. A plump form came in.

"Oh, hallo, 'Babs'!" Bessie Hunter said. "I sus-say, are you alone?"

"Hallo, Bessie. Yes, quite alone," Babs said, and eyed her fat chum curiously. "But what is it? You look excited about something."

Bessie did not look so excited as indignant. She closed the door.

"It—it's that cat!" she said wrathfully.

"Faith?"

"Yes," Bessie, the one girl in the school to dislike Babs' cousin from the start, blinked fiercely. "Have you heard, Babs? Rosa Rodworth and Lydia Crossendale have put her up for Lower School captain!"

Babs started.

"Faith!" she muttered. "Faith! Any other candidates, Bessie?"

"Nun-no! Oh, Babs, what are you going to do about it?"

But for a moment Babs did not reply. Her face had turned red. She might have expected that. Not, of course, that there was any reason why Faith should not put up for captain.

The election, which was to be held at the end of the week, was open to any girl who might be nominated. But it was not that. Babs, a fighter to her finger-tips, did not mind other girls entering the list, although, owing to

By

HILDA  
RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. Laidler



telling of the dramatic and sensational things which happened—

# Lost the Captaincy!

the general concession that there was nobody better than herself for the job, she had been returned unopposed for the last three terms.

She sensed at once a further blow against her prestige by this faithless, graceless cousin of hers.

"When did you hear this, old Bess?" Babs asked.

"I just now—in the Common-room," replied the dear plump duffer. "They were making an awful fuss of Faith. They—"

And there she giggled round and laughing voices were heard in the corridor outside, and bang! went the doors and into the room stepped two new figures—Mabel Lynn, Babs' golden-haired chum who shared the study with Bessie and herself, and—Faith Ashton!

"Oh, Barbara—darling, there you are! Oh dear, I say, guess what's happened?"

Babs stiffened a little. There was no smile on her face.

"I know," she said. "They've put you up for Form captain."

"Why, Barbara, how news does fly!" Faith giggled. "Yes, that's it—isn't it, Mabs? Of course," she said hesitatingly, "I—I didn't really want to stand—"

"Oh, no!" Babs scoffed.

"Babs, you—you don't believe it, do you?" Faith asked, her big blue eyes showing hurt. "You know, darling, that—well, in spite of the way you've treated me, I wouldn't do anything to hurt you for worlds. But they were so awfully nice, Barbara, so fearfully, frightfully insistent, you know, that I couldn't very well get out of it. Could I, Mabs?"

Mabel Lynn rather worriedly bit her lip. She gazed at Babs in that rather hopeless, mystified way in which she gazed at her so very often these days. Mabs did not know Faith's true nature. Faith, to her—outwardly, at least—had been the dearest and truest of friends since she had come to Cliff House, and Mabs' was a soul possessed of an enormous capacity for gratitude. Mabs, like the rest, could not understand this strange attitude of Babs towards her; cousin lately.

She gazed appealingly at her chum.

"Babs—"

"Thanks," Babs said, "don't worry."

Mabs. I don't mind anybody else standing up against me for captain, but I do," she added, flashing a steely glance at Faith, "mind you! No, don't look at me like that," she added scornfully. "You know jolly well you're not hurt. You know jolly well you've just secretly schemed and planned for this—you have for all the other things they have come your way."

"Hear, hear!" Bessie supported, glovering.

"Babs!" Faith cried, in a shocked, choked voice.

Babs looked at her scornfully.

"You know—well it's true!" she cried.

Whirrupon Faith's eyes brimmed with tears.

"And please," Babs put in stiffly, "don't act!"

"But—but oh, Barbara, darling, how unhappy you make me!" And Faith looked at Mabs, and, looking at Mabs, called up the ready tears to glisten in those gorgeous eyes of hers. "Oh, Mabel, please don't say you believe in these horrid accusations against me!"

Mabel Lynn flushed. She looked a little angry all of a sudden.

"But—but oh," she said. "And—oh, bother! What's the matter with you?" she said worriedly. "Why do you treat Faith like this?"

"Oh dear, dear Barbara—why do you hate me so much?" Faith choked.

"She knows," Babs said to her chum.

"And if she stays here I'm going—"

"Barbara, no!" Mabs cried. "Please! Babs, I've got to talk to you. I—I must talk to you. We—we can't go on like this," she added. "And—and—oh, Faith, would you mind leaving—please?"

Faith sobbed afresh. She looked so utterly miserable and wretched all at once that her expression would have melted a heart of steel.

"Well, if—if I'm not wanted, of course," she mumbled.

"Faith, you know it isn't that," Mabs said worriedly. "Oh, please do try to understand! Barbara is my friend. I—I—well, please just leave me alone with her for a few minutes."

Faith sniffed again, and turned towards the door. Her big eyes, full of pleading, yearning, and affection, fixed themselves upon Mabs as she went out, closing the door behind her. But as the door shut she made a face.

"Cat!" she gibed.

In the study there was an uncomfortable pause. It was broken by Mabs herself. She said:

"Babs, why do you dislike Faith so?"

"Because she's so jolly two-faced—" Bessie broke in warmly.

"Bessie, no; let me do the talking," Babs requested.

"I don't hate Faith, Mabs, but I think she's a little rotter." "Oh, I know you like her!" She made you like her."

Mabs went red.





"Well, how can I help but like her?" she asked. "Everybody in the school except you and Bessie does. And not oh Babs," she added unhappily, "it's been awful lately, with you and Faith both my chums, not being friends. And I can't see what you can have against her. She's always been so nice, so generous, and charming."

Bessie, plumped in the armchair, sniffed.

"That's all part of her pose," said Babs scornfully. "No, Mabs, please listen to me. You've never found me hard or unreasonable yet, have you? You've never found me going for any girl without cause. When Faith came here, I, like you, liked her. I was willing to do all I could for her—"

Mabs nodded.

"Then," Babs said, "I started finding out things. I found out first of all that what Faith wanted was popularity. She's clever; she's cunning. And not only does she lead in the downright way Lydia Crossendale might be. She waits for her opportunities to come along, and when they do she makes the utmost use of them. You remember, when Bessie had to leave the study—"

Mabs looked at Bessie.

"That wasn't Faith's doing?"

"No," Babs admitted. "But Faith could have prevented it. And Faith didn't help Bessie then, did she? In those cases where she did all she could to make matters worse. You remember, too, when Stella Stone came to the school, it was Faith who presented my illuminated address—"

"But—that wasn't her fault," Mabs said. "Oh, Babs—"

"Of course it wasn't her fault—not on the surface," Babs replied. "But she worked for it all right, she did that in my mind. I've never from the moment I started work on the address. And she got away with it in the end. But never mind that. Come to the next thing—the ice carnival."

Mabs' eyes opened in astonishment. "But, Babs, Faith was so frightfully nice about that. Oh, I do think you're being unreasonable! If—if it hadn't been for Faith I should never have been queen of that carnival!"

"If Faith had had her way you'd never have been queen of the carnival," she corrected. "Faith had marked that honour down for herself. It was she who got you gated so that you couldn't take part in the dress rehearsal, and Faith herself was chosen in your place. Well, you know what happened then. Just before the carnival Faith gave the part of carnival queen over to you. But do you know why she gave it to you, Mabs?"

Mabs stared.

"Because," Babs went on, a steely ring coming in her voice, "I made her. I discovered in time all the little tricks she had been playing. I told her that if she didn't hand over the queenship to you I'd expose her in front of the Form. And I could have done it then," she added, "because I had one very valuable witness on my side. That was Marjorie Hazeldene."

Mabs started at that. For poor Marjorie was still in the new Cliff House hospital, suffering from influenza. But if there was one girl utterly incapable of spite, or jealousy, of any bad feeling at all, that was certainly Marjorie Hazeldene.

"Marjorie, in fact," Babs went on, "wanted me to tell you. But you were so happy that—well, I didn't want to spoil things for you. I intended to tell you the following day, but by that time poor Marjorie was laid up, and, as you

know, has been in isolation ever since. Then there was last week—the Hospital Fair. Mabs—that was my idea from start to finish. Faith stole it."

"But—but," Mabs faltered, "why haven't you told all this to the Form?"

"Because," Mabs said, "I have no proof. Marjorie is my one witness with regard to the carnival. Mr. Williams, Lord Courtfield's estate agent, is the only man who could prove what I say is true about the fair. Unluckily for me he is away at the moment. So you see why it can't be nice to Faith."

Mabs sank into a chair. Rather hopelessly she gazed at her friend. Babs—this Babs she loved so much—this Babs the soul of justice and fairness, normally—this Babs who had been behaving so queerly recently—could she be right about Faith?

"And all the time," Babs went on, "Faith has been pretending to be nice to me. Faith has been offering a friendship, she doesn't feel, taking jolly good care all the time to put me in a false position. I don't know what her game is. If she just wants popularity, then she's going a funny way about it."

"But—but what else could she want?" Mabs asked.

Babs shook her head. That particular point had occurred to her own mind many times.

"I don't know," she said. "But, anyway, there it is. I'm sorry, old Mabs. I—I hope you won't pass this one to anyone else, but—but I felt I just had to tell you."

Mabs bit her lip. Her eyes were very troubled.

She liked Faith, but it was impossible, looking at Babs, listening to Babs, to disbelieve her—impossible, knowing her for the sporting girl she was, and loyal, staunch chum who never, never before had ever let her down.

"Oh dear!" she said. "It—it's absolutely amazing! That—that Faith is— Oh, Babs, what can I do?"

Babs smiled tenderly.

"Nothing, old thing. I don't want you to do anything, except keep your faith in me. I felt it was only right to let you know my end of the case, and, at the same time, to warn you that Faith isn't all she appears to be. I—I didn't want you to think about me what others do."

Mabs gulped.

"Poor old Babs!" she said. "I—I'm sorry. I knew, of course, there must be something behind it, but—but, Babs, you know I still liked you," she said tremulously. "You know that—that I wouldn't be at loggerheads with you for all the Faiths in the world. And, really, Babs, I—I was upset when Faith was put up for the election."

"But you're going to stick up for Babs?" plump Bessie put in.

"Of course. I should have done that in any case," Mabs immediately answered. "I—I— Babs, there's a knock."

"Come in!" Babs called.

The door opened. The tousled head of Clara Trevlyn, Tomboy games captain of the Lower School, intruded.

"Oh!" she said, and gave Babs a queer, hesitant look. "What have you been saying to Faith?" she added.

"Well, I just found her along the corridor, sobbing as if her heart would break," Clara said. "She mumbled something about you, and so—so—well I— Oh, dash it, Babs! Why are you so jolly unfair to her?"

Babs stiffened.

"Is that what you came to see me about?" she asked.

"No. All right, don't be so jolly touchy!" Clara sniffed. "Blessed if I understand you one little bit these days! You've heard about the election?"

"I have," Babs said quietly.

"You're going to fight it?"

"Tooth and nail," Babs answered grimly.

"Well, then, that's all right," Clara said. "On the other hand, Babs, as a pal, I do ask you to climb down off the high-horse a bit. We're all anxious to see you returned as captain, of course—but you must admit that Faith's got a big following in the Form—and you, chump, have helped her to get it by your treatment of her. Still, that's neither here nor there at the moment. What I did come to tell you was that Miss Charmant is in Friarlane, and wants you and Faith to go to the Hathaway Tea Rooms."

Babs stared.

"Faith and I? But why?"

"I don't know. She didn't say. All she said over the phone was that she wanted to talk to you both. I've told Faith, and she says she'll wait for you at the cycle-sheds."

Babs frowned a little. She had a pretty good idea all at once what the mistress's intention was. And wasn't that just like the "Charmer," as the Fourth Formers called their extremely popular mistress.

Miss Charmant had probably heard about the election contest. Miss Charmant, knowing the bad blood which existed between Babs and her cousin, anxious at all times that the girls in her charge should be on friendly terms with each other, had thought of this method of getting them together, and so patching up things. Dear Miss Charmant! How like her to try an experiment like this—away from the atmosphere of the school, and in congenial and free surroundings.

"Right-ho!" she said. "I'll get along."

"You mean you don't mind going with Faith?" Clara asked.

"I do mind—yes," Babs' lips curled a little. "On the other hand, I'm not going to let the Charmer down. Mabs, would you mind collecting the impots for me?" she added. "I don't expect I shall be long."

She went out, making her way downstairs. There were many girls standing around, and quick looks and nods were exchanged as Babs was spotted.

Lydia Crossendale, talking to Frances Frost and Freda Ferriers, openly sneered as she came by.

"Well, thank goodness we shan't have that jealous cat for captain much longer," she said audibly.

Babs heard. Her ears burned. But stiffly she walked on. She reached the cycle-sheds, where Faith, no trace of tears on her pretty cheeks now, was wheeling out her cycle.

"Oh, Barbara!" she said, as that girl came up. "How perfectly sweet of you to come with me!"

Babs glanced at her in scorn.

"I'm not going with you," she corrected. "I'm going, because Miss Charmant asked, that's all."

She walked into the shed. There she got her bicycle, and trundled it out. Faith, preparing to mount, eyed her.

"I wonder," she said, "what Miss Charmant wants to see us about, Barbara?"

"We'll find that out when we get there," Babs returned shortly.

"You don't think it's because they're going to make me captain, do you?" Faith asked.

Babs started.

"Counting your chickens before they're hatched, aren't you?"

"Oh, not at all!" Faith smiled, and something rather unpleasant came into her pretty face as she looked round to make sure that no one was within earshot. "Because, you see, my chickens are practically hatched, Barbara dear! I've taken the trouble, while you've been sulking in Study No. 4, to go round and test out my chances, and I reckon at the moment it will be two votes for me to every one that you poll, Barbara dear. And won't," she added, with a pleased chuckle, "Aunt Felicity be pleased to see me captain in your place, Barbara sweetheart? And won't that captain's shield of yours look perfectly adorable in my study? Here, I say, don't cycle off when I'm talking to you!" she added furiously.

But that was exactly what Babs was doing. For only the second time since she had been at Cliff House, Faith had dropped the mask of hypocrisy. And Babs felt that if she stopped within hitting distance of her gibing cousin any longer, she would do something she might regret.

### Such a False Friend!



"BABS!" Faith panted. "Babs, Babs pedalled along grimly. 'Babs, you awful thing,

wait for me."

Babs, however, only pedalled the harder; and, being much more athletic than Faith, had no difficulty in maintaining the lead she had gained at the outset. If they had to meet Miss Charmant together, that was no reason why Babs should put up with her gibing cousin's insults during the journey.

So Babs pedalled hard.

Now she had passed Friardale Woods, was in sight of the first straggling cottages which marked the approach to the village itself.

Jasmine Cottage was the first of them, and instantly Babs' eyes sought out its pretty garden as she approached.

For there was a newcomer to Jasmine cottage—these days—a rather frail, elderly woman, whom Babs had first seen at Cliff House School, two days ago. Rumour said that she was an old servant of Miss Primrose, and that the headmistress had given her a part-time job in her private house as assistant to her own housekeeper.

A quiet, and, somehow, pity-provoking old lady she was, with her black shawl and her old-fashioned, steel-rimmed spectacles. Very obvious that she was really too feeble to do much work.

Yesterday Babs had caught her—her name was Mrs. Hubbard—staggering across the Head's garden with a full pail of water.

And Babs, of course, in that spontaneous, generous way of hers, had relieved her of the burden. The grateful smile she had received in return had made quite an impression upon her.

Now, nearing the cottage, her eyes sought for sign of Mrs. Hubbard, and suddenly, against the wall of the place, she saw her.

Mrs. Hubbard was perched on a short ladder. There was a pail of water on the sill of her first-floor window, a wash-

leather in her hand, and she was cleaning the windows. Almost as if she guessed Babs' eyes were upon her, she turned at the same moment. And then—

"Mrs. Hubbard!" cried Babs. "Oh, my goodness, look out!"

But the thing happened even as the warning left her lips.

Mrs. Hubbard had twisted a little too far, it seemed. There came a gasp as the ladder swayed, a little shriek, and it went thud—crashing down, Mrs. Hubbard slithering down with it.

At once Babs was off her bicycle. With a turn of her wrist had sent it whirling into the ditch. Heart in mouth, she dashed into the garden.

The elderly woman gave a little groan as she came up.

"Mrs. Hubbard," Babs cried. "Oh, my goodness, are you all right?"



LYDIA CROSENDALE sneered as Babs passed. "Well, thank goodness we shan't have that jealous cat for captain much longer," she said audibly.

A spasm of pain crossed the woman's lips.

"I—I—" she said. "M-my leg. I think. It—it's all right. I think. Thank you for coming to the rescue, Miss Redfern. Would you mind giving me a hand up?"

"Oh, poor, poor woman!" said another voice; and there was Faith, who had also witnessed the accident, and who had come rushing up the garden path. "Oh dear! Is she hurt, Barbara?"

"Thank you, I—I think I can manage," Mrs. Hubbard said, with a smile. "It was my own careless fault! But I was so anxious to get those windows finished. Oh, dear!"

"You're sure you're in no pain, dear Mrs. Hubbard?" Faith asked; but she stood aside while Babs did the helping.

"Can I phone for the doctor?"

"No, thank you, my dear. I—I have no phone," the woman faltered. "Besides, the doctor will be here before very long. He—he visits me every day,

you know. Will you help me in, Miss Redfern? I—I shall be all right then, I come to the rescue. My very kind of you to

Babs smiled. Faith simpered.

"Barbara always is such a kind girl," she simpered. "Aren't you, Barbara?"

Babs did not reply. If she had replied, she would probably have reminded Faith that it would have been more helpful to do something than just to hang round making sugary comments. With the woman leaning upon her she turned into the cottage and clean-looking main room of the cottage and sat her down by the fire.

"There!" she said. "Now, shall I have a look at the leg, Mrs. Hubbard?"

"Oh, please, no!" Mrs. Hubbard said hurriedly. "It—it's nothing, really. Please do not let me interrupt you any more."

"Yes, please, Barbara darling!" Faith said. "I am sure we ought to be getting along. Miss Charmant will be waiting."

"You're sure there is nothing I can do for you?" Babs asked.

"No, thank you, Miss Redfern. Unless—unless—" The woman paused. "I wonder, my dear, if you would mind making me a cup of tea?"

"Why, of course not!" Babs replied.

"Faith, put the kettle on."

"But Miss Charmant—"

"Miss Charmant," Babs said, "will not mind—when she knows the reason. And I really do think," she added, staring at the woman's pale face, "that someone ought to stop with you until the doctor comes. Where's the tea, Mrs. Hubbard? Oh, here we are! Got that kettle on, Faith?"

"But I don't know where the water is," Faith answered helplessly.

"Oh, you—" Babs said. "Doesn't it occur to you there's a kitchen in the place? Wait a minute!" And she took the kettle away from Faith, filled it from a bucket of water in the kitchen, and propped it up on the fire, while Faith fussed round Mrs. Hubbard.

"There," she said cheerfully. "Now we shan't be long. But, Mrs. Hubbard, did you say the doctor came every day?"

"Well, yes." The woman bit her lip. "You see, I haven't been well for a long time."

"But you work?"

"I—I have to, my dear. It is the only way I can live," Mrs. Hubbard said, with that tired, patient smile.

"And do you live here alone?" Babs asked.

"Yes, my dear; of course."

"Oh, how shocking!" Faith exclaimed. "But, Barbara, Miss Charmant—"

"You mean to say you chop your own wood, and draw your own water?"

"Yes, my dear."

Babs blinked. Her brows came together. Poor, frail little lady! Babs knew that it was really hard work to draw water from the deep well which these cottages possessed; and she remembered now that there was precious little in the bucket in the kitchen.

"Oh, it's a shame!" she broke out. "Mrs. Hubbard, you'll go and knock yourself up. Is that all the water you have in the kitchen?"

"Well, yes, my dear."

"But, Barbara," Faith said, "what are you going to do? Miss Charmant will—"

Babs turned impatiently.

"If you're so jolly anxious, will you go and see Miss Charmant?" she said. "Tell her that I'm staying behind. I can't leave Mrs. Hubbard without water."

"All right, then," Faith said, but she shook her head. "Dear Mrs. Hubbard," she murmured, "I'm so dreadfully, frightfully sorry! I do hope you'll be better soon, and—and just to cheer you up, I'll send you the loveliest basket of fruit from the village. You like fruit, don't you?"

"My dear, yes."  
"Then you won't mind if I go?"  
"Not at all," Mrs. Hubbard smiled. Faith smiled. She went off. Babs, meantime, had grabbed up the bucket and gone outside. By the time she had drawn a bucket of water—quite a task from the thirty-foot well—the kettle was boiling, and she made the tea.

After she had handed the old lady a cup she went outside to collect her scattered window-cleaning paraphernalia.

"Oh, my dear, how kind of you!" old Mrs. Hubbard said. "Please do have a cup of tea. Miss Ashton has gone," she added, as though Babs did not know that. "I—suppose you and she are great friends?"

"She's my cousin," Babs said, not thinking it necessary to expand upon the subject further.

"But she's very fond of you, isn't she?" Mrs. Hubbard asked. "Up at the school they say what a nice girl she is."

Babs' lips compressed. She looked at the clock.

"What time will the doctor arrive?" she asked.

"I—I don't know, my dear. Any moment now," Mrs. Hubbard answered. "But please, Miss Redfern, don't stay—really. I shall be perfectly all right now, and—and he may be an hour or more. I gather that Miss Charmant is waiting for you."

Babs paused. She hated to leave the elderly lady, even though she was most certainly looking better now. On the other hand, she hated to disappoint Miss Charmant, who was at this moment waiting for her. She made up her mind.

"Well, if you don't mind, Mrs. Hubbard," she conceded. "But please don't go climbing ladders again. You know, you ought to have somebody to help you—at least, with the rough work. Oh, goodness, I don't like leaving you, but—I'll have to go. Can I come in later on and chop your wood and so on for you?"

"Oh, Miss Redfern, you're too kind—"

But Babs laughed at that.

Off she went, conscious that Faith had almost a quarter of an hour's start of her. Back to the road she rushed and picked up her cycle. And then, as she mounted, she stared.

What was wrong?  
But the first glance at her tyre showed her what was wrong. They were both completely flat. In dismay, she stopped to examine them, and then gave a start as she saw the thing that glistened in the rear one. It was a safety-pin!

Somebody deliberately had punctured those tyres.

Who?

### Storm in a Tea-Shop!



IN her inmost heart Babs could guess, but Babs, even in her dislike of Faith, did not like to condemn her without proof.

Anyone coming along might have done it, of course—but this would be just the sort of trick Faith would play to further delay her meeting with Miss Charmant!

Already she was late. Already Faith would be there.

Rather grimly—for there was no time to stop and mend the tyres, of course—Babs wheeled the machine into the cottage. Nearly half an hour later she arrived at the Hathaway Tea Rooms. Miss Charmant was there at a table with Faith, who was laughing gaily as Babs, flushed and breathless, came in. So, too, was another girl there—a girl slightly older than Babs herself, who belonged to Cliff House's Lower Fifth—watching with curious interest and a little envy the mistress of the Fourth and her pupil.

'Not a nice girl was Florence Ellison; rather a tale-bearer and a gossip-spreader, and never at any time a friend of Barbara Redfern and her chums.

Babs hardly noticed her tucked away in the corner. All her attention was concentrated upon Miss Charmant. She hurried forward.

"Oh, Miss Charmant, I'm sorry I'm late!—"

"Thank you, I understand, Barbara!" And, though, Miss Charmant smiled, there was just a hint of aloofness and frostiness in her bearing. "Faith has told me. You met a friend of yours—"

"Yes," Babs said. "Faith, did you explain?"

"Oh, Barbara, of course!" Faith announced hurriedly. "But I couldn't let both of us keep dear Miss Charmant waiting, could I, Barbara? You were so interested in your friend that you seemed to forget she was waiting."

Babs eyed her.

"You told her who the friend was?"

"Well, I didn't catch the name," Faith answered glibly. "I told Miss Charmant, of course, that it was someone very special."

"Oh!" Babs said, and her lips compressed. She looked at Miss Charmant, who quite patently had drawn the conclusion Faith had intended her to draw, and felt a sudden surge of anger well up within her.

What a fool to think for a moment that Faith wouldn't have twisted the story to her own advantage! What a fool to believe even for a second she would genuinely have played the game! Because it was pretty obvious now that Faith had suggested that Babs had deliberately dabbled to talk to a friend of hers, disdainfully ignoring Miss Charmant until that friend should be finished with.

She sat down.

"It was a very important friend, Barbara?" Miss Charmant asked gently.

"Yes," Babs replied.

Miss Charmant smiled forgivingly. But Babs' eyes were burning then, realising once again that Faith had put her on a false position.

"But apart from that," she said, "I had two punctures."

"Oh, Barbara, what bad luck!" Miss Charmant sympathised. "But I thought you had new tyres."

"I had," Babs said, "but even new tyres aren't proof against safety-pins. Somebody deliberately punctured them."

"Oh, Barbara, who ever did such a mean thing?" Faith asked, wide-eyed.

"I don't know, but perhaps," Babs added, an unintentional curl to her lips. "I can guess!" And she looked so directly at Faith as she said that that even Faith turned pink, and Miss Charmant, very readily reading the accusation in her face, looked troubled and turned the conversation with a hasty cough. She said:

"Well, Barbara, never mind, my dear. Have some tea, will you? Now please let us get down to business—and

please do forgive me if you think I'm interfering in something that doesn't concern me. I expect you can guess why I have brought you two girls together?"

"Oh, Miss Charmant, no!" Faith said. "But I do think it's a perfectly sweet idea! Next to dear Barbara, I think I am you better than anyone in the school!"

It was the mistress' turn to go pink, but she laughed.

"Thank you, Faith, that is a very pretty compliment," she said. "All the same, I am not sure that I ought to listen to it. I thought perhaps we could have a better and more informal chat away from the school, and I do think a little spread helps things ever so much, don't you? Now, Barbara—"

"Barbara dear, you aren't listening!" Faith said reproachfully.

"I am," Babs said. "Yes, Miss Charmant?"

"Well—Have one of these eclairs, Barbara? They really are delicious. Well, how shall we start? You know, Barbara, that I do admire your work in the Form very much. On the other hand, I also admire Faith's, and her actual class work is brilliant. I think you are two very, very nice girls, and—and well, to put it bluntly, I am rather disturbed to see that you are no longer friends."

Babs bit her lip. Faith sighed audibly.

"Dear Miss Charmant, how perfectly sweet of you!" she stammered. "Barbara, I do think that's really lovely of Miss Charmant, don't you? And I'm so frightfully glad," Faith went on. "It really does need some kind, understanding person like yourself to put matters right. Although, of course, for my part, I'm as anxious as anything to be Barbara's friend. I just can't understand why Barbara doesn't like me!"

Babs choked over her tea. She put the cup down hastily. All at once she found a sudden sort of trembling fit going over her.

"Barbara—" Miss Charmant said softly.

"Yes, please, Barbara, do let us be friends, dearest," Faith said yearningly. "I'm sure you wouldn't refuse dear Miss Charmant such a sweet request."

Florence Ellison in the corner was bending forward interestedly.

"I—" Babs blurted, crimson-faced. "I—Oh, goodness, Miss Charmant, I—I'm sorry," she added. "I don't think you understand."

"But, Barbara, I do," Miss Charmant said. "At least I think I do. And I do so hate, Barbara, to see you becoming so unpopular in the Form."

"Yes, Barbara, and so do I," Faith chipped in. "Do let us clear this matter up now. Why don't we be friends? We were such delightful friends when I first came to the school—"

"I'm sorry!" Babs replied.

Rather unsteadily she stood up. She couldn't endure this—she couldn't—she couldn't! To sit there facing that hypocrite—knowing that every honeyed word was a jibe, realising that, in spite of those flattering protestations, Faith Ashton was her worst enemy; that Faith Ashton was seeking by every subtle means in her power to do her harm!

No, no, she couldn't! Not even for Miss Charmant's sake.

"Barbara, you really mean you will not be friends with Faith?" Miss Charmant asked.

"No!" Babs said fiercely.

"But, Barbara, why not?"

"Because," Babs blazed out—it just had to come—"I can't be friends with a hypocrite! I can't be friends with a girl who hates me so! Yes, hates me! If she is my friend, why is she trying now to get the captaincy away from me?"

"Barbara!" exclaimed Miss Charmant.

Faith's large eyes filled with tears. "Oh, Barbara, how could you!" she protested gently. "I never asked to be put up for captain. Lydia Crossendale and one or two other girls did that, and—and I did protest, but they said I simply must. Oh, Babs, don't hold that against me!"

"Please!" Miss Charmant said. "Please! Barbara, I really do think you are acting very uncharitably," she said.

"Thank you!" Babs said bitterly. "But, Barbara—"

"Thank you!" Babs repeated. She was white now. She hated that hurt, reproachful look in Miss Charmant's eyes. She did not blame her a bit, but all the bitterness of her heart rushed out towards her graceless cousin. "I—I think I'll go," she said shakily. "I—I don't really think that any good can come of continuing this conversation. Some time, Miss Charmant, you will understand."

Miss Charmant sat back, her own face rather pale. The ready tears rushed again into Faith's glorious eyes.

Neither she nor Miss Charmant moved as Babs unsteadily took her coat from the rack and walked towards the door. The door opened and closed. Miss Charmant sighed.

"Oh dear! I'm sorry—I ever thought of this idea!" she said.

"Poor, poor Barbara!" Faith said. "How she does carry on! If—if only she would hate me a little less! I—I suppose I am to blame, though," she added miserably. "Before I came to Cliff House it used to be Barbara who had all the bright ideas, and—and I think she's just a weeny bit envious that I've come forward with better ones. Miss Charmant, do you think it would be better if, when my Auntie Felicity comes, I asked her to take me away? It's awful to feel that you are making another girl so unhappy—"

Miss Charmant did not reply—in words. She merely shook her head as she gazed with sympathetic admiration into the wide-eyed innocent face at her side.

And Florence Ellison, an excited gleam in her eyes, rose and retreated by the side door.

For Florence, at least, had something to be pleased about. What a story to tell Cliff House when she got back to it!

### Tricked Again by Faith!



**Q**UIVERING. Babs flung out of the shop and hurried almost blindly down the High Street.

Faith! Faith! Always so subtle, so crafty, always putting her in the wrong, taking advantage of the slightest chance which came her way! The hypocrite! Faith, who, having put the Form against her, had now succeeded in blackening her in the eyes of the mistress she so admired!

So fierce were Babs' thoughts, so rioting her emotions, that she did not even see the Cliff House girl who came skimming past her, and jumped lithely on the waiting bus which was heading Cliff House-wards.

But Florence Ellison, as she darted

No. 26 of our delightful series for Your "Cliff House Album."

## CLIFF HOUSE CELEBRITIES

**N**OT pretty—decidedly plain in fact, with her straight, thin hair, and her greeny-gro eyes. Not even intelligent-looking—rather stupid, indeed, with that surly, aggressive expression so often present on her face.

Not very bright in class, short, rather stumpy in stature, but very strong and muscular—that's Brenda Fallace, of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School.

Never was a girl's appearance so true an index to her nature, as Brenda's is. Bitchy, truculent, she is obstinate to a degree; rarely giving up for herself, and so stupid that both mistresses and prefects despair of her. A girl with no real friends and but little charm. But, for all that, Brenda is not a bad girl at heart.

Brenda, with her lack of imagination, is always ready blindly to follow a keener intelligence than her own. She has unquestioning devotion, and unwavering loyalty for Lydia Crossendale of the Fourth Form.

For some reason Brenda has given all her affection to Lydia, and unquestioningly and often foolishly obeys Lydia's every word and whim! Which, of course, makes her a very useful ally of the Snob of the Fourth.

Unlike Lydia, Brenda is fond of games—never, never will Clara Trevelyan find a more reliable hockey goalkeeper, and never, never, a more stolid or safe wicket-keeper!

Only Brenda of all the Lower School can remain under water for over a minute, and when feats of strength are required it is Brenda who is always called upon!

She has no ambitions, never having

past, took one look at her shadowed, crimson face, and, in glee, chuckled softly to herself.

The bus had vanished when Babs reached the stop. There she paused, her mind all at once going back to her punctured bicycle and that dear old Mrs. Hubbard who lived so arduous and lonely a life at Jasmine Cottage.

Have to call in for her machine, of course; and there was sure to be something else she might do to lessen that sweet woman's labours before she left.

She paused again. Her eyes had fastened upon the florist's. A few flowers—Mrs. Hubbard would like those. A bunch of those bright daffodils, perhaps, mixed with another bunch of those adorable red tulips.

Babs remembered she had a half-crown in her pocket, and, marching into the shop, spent the whole coin on a really lovely bunch of flowers. Feeling happier and brighter somehow, she plodded off up the road in the direction of Jasmine Cottage with the bouquet in her arms.

When she at last arrived there and knocked, from inside came a quick, shuffling sound.

Babs knocked again. A moment passed before the door was opened, and Mrs. Hubbard stood there. Her eyes lit up at sight of Barbara.

"Why, Miss Redfern, my dear! And what lovely flowers!"

"For you, Babs smiled. "I thought you might like them!"

"Oh, my dear, I—I'd love them! But—but, they must have cost you a lot of money," Mrs. Hubbard said, and her lips trembled with the gratitude she felt. "You are back early."

"Yes," Babs assented.



Brenda Fallace

thought about them; no favourite colour, flower, or film star. She likes all films, not possessing the discrimination to choose between good and bad ones, but is not keen on comedies because she can never see the jokes!

In danger she is utterly fearless; in crises, always unmoved; in trouble fiercely and furiously mutinous, never thinking what she is saying, and always acting before she thinks.

Brenda was born in Birmingham. Both her parents are dead, and Mr. Donald Leverick, the uncle of a former Cliff House head girl, Stella Stone, is her guardian. She is fourteen years and nine months old, and her position in class is thirty-four.

"You saw Miss Charmant?"

"Y-yes!"

"Oh!" The woman looked at her rather shrewdly, Babs thought, and then, as if guessing something was wrong, tactfully led away from the subject.

"But your friend—Miss Ashton?" she said. "Such a charming girl, I thought, and so kind! Has she not returned with you?"

"N-no!" Babs stammered, and flushed a little. "I left her with Miss Charmant, you see. Has the doctor called, Mrs. Hubbard?"

"Yes, my dear."

"And—and he is satisfied?"

"Well, no." The woman looked away. "He—he is far from satisfied," she said. "He has told me that I must not move out of the cottage for at least two days, and get as much rest as I can in the meantime."

"But, Mrs. Hubbard, if the doctor told you to stay at home, what about your orderly?" Babs asked.

"Well, of course, it's all very well for the doctor to tell me what to do, but it's another thing to do it. Miss Redfern, when you have to earn your living, Glad as I'd be to take his advice, I'm afraid it can't be thought of—"

"But it must!" Babs cried. "Mrs. Hubbard, it must! You don't know what you might be doing to yourself, you know. Look here," she said eagerly. "I've got some money in the Post Office, and—and I'm sure if I asked Miss Primrose, she'd excuse you your duties for a couple of days. Please, Mrs. Hubbard, do!" she begged.

Strange that expression which overcame the face of the old lady then. Strange that wry look that came into it.

With all the love in the world she stayed at Babs' and then put her hand upon the girl's shoulder.

"Oh, Miss Redfern, do you really mean that?"

Babs flushed.

"Of course!" she replied. "Please, Mrs. Hubbard, will you do it?"

"Bless you, my dear child—bless you!" the woman said. "Yes, I'll do it—at least, if—if you wouldn't mind doing much, you must explain to Miss Primrose. But I can't take your savings, Barbara—no, not that. I have a little money—just a teeny-weeny bit—and—and I dare say Miss Primrose will pay me my wages. Oh, Barbara, what a dear child you are!"

Babs turned rosy red with embarrassment. But she was smiling gladly as she went out to mend the punctures in her bicycle tyres. Then she made the old lady tea, had some with her, chopped wood, and tidied up.

Mrs. Hubbard watched all those ministrations with something like wonder in her eyes.

"And when at last Babs was ready to leave—"

"Thank you, my dear, and—and bless you!" she said, clearing her throat. "You will never realise how happy you have made an old woman! When will you come again, Barbara dear?"

"To-morrow," Babs promised brightly, and felt—oh, so happy to see the gladness and the gratitude which shone behind those steel-rimmed spectacles of the elderly woman. "And whenever you want me," she added sincerely. "But I must hurry now. It's near prep time at school!"

And, feeling happy and light-hearted, she pedalled off in the direction of Cliff House.

It was almost dark when she entered the gates. She was regarded rather wonderingly and curiously by crusty old Piper, the porter, as she wheeled her cycle into the sheds. Carefully she stored it, and wended her way towards the school.

A crowd of girls was collected on the steps that led to Big Hall. There was a hush as Babs was sighted. Then a voice:

"Here she is!"

"Boo-oo!"

"Who insulted Miss Charmant?"

Babs stopped dead, staring at the hostile faces in front of her. Immediately she stiffened.

"What's that?"

"You heard!" Rosa Rodworth came forward. "What a pig," she cried scornfully. "What a fine old disgrace you are to the form! Oh, don't lose a moment, you know nothing about it! The news is all over the school. You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!"

Another figure came running forward, all fluttering agitation. It was Faith.

"Oh, please, please don't blame dear Barbara—"

"Wait a minute!" Babs eyed them steadily. "I want to know what all this is about," she said. "What am I supposed to have done?"

"Well, who walked out on the Charmer?"

"I see!" Babs' eyes glimmered a little. She turned scornfully upon Faith. "Your work, I presume?" she asked jolly. "Stirring up the mischief again?"

"Oh, Babs!" cried Faith. "Oh, Barbara dear, how could you! How ready you always are to suspect me of things. I haven't said a word."

"That's right, Babs," Clara Trevlyn spoke up—Clara who was looking almost worried out of her existence. "Faith hasn't said a thing. Faith, in fact, has been trying to defend you. We didn't

get the yarn from her at all. We got it from Florence Ellison. She was in the tea-rooms at the same time."

"Yes, Barbara," Faith said. "Don't you remember?"

Babs paused. She remembered now having seen Florence. Yes—she'd made a mistake. Yet it was a very excusable mistake, and these girls would have needed the first to admit it had they realised the duplicity of this other girl who now so artfully made herself to appear in such a virtuous light. She said:

"Well, if I've made a mistake, I'm sorry!"

"Hoity, aren't we coming down a peg?" Lydia Crossendale scoffed. "The dear thing actually owns up to a mistake. Well, supposing now, Miss mighty-fighty Redfern, you apologise for all the other mistakes you've made."

"I'm not aware," Babs returned icily, "that I've made any. But please let me pass. I don't want to talk. If you idiots don't know me well enough by now—well, you ought to. That's all. Let me go!"

"But, Babs—" Clara Trevlyn pleaded desperately.

But Babs burst through the crowd, running into Big Hall. Up the stairs she flew, and opened the door of Study No. 4.

And then she paused and stared.

"What on earth are you doing, old thing?"

For the dear old plump duffer, with ink stains on her fingers and face, was working laboriously on a huge sheet of cartridge paper.

She looked up at Babs and beamed.

"I'm starting an election campaign! I'm jolly well going to see that you're made captain again," Babs, and just for a start—look!" she cried proudly.

She pointed to the big sheet of paper on the table.

Babs blinked a little, and then her face melted into a smile as she read:

"FOLLOW ME IF YOU GOING TO VOTER FOR BARBARA REDFERN."

"That's my placard," Bessie explained proudly. "I'm going to start a procession, you know. The idea is," Bessie added eagerly, "that everybody who's going to vote for you will fall in and march behind me, you know. Don't you think it's a ripping notion?"

Privately, Babs didn't, but she couldn't tell dear old duffer Bessie so. Bessie was hardly the girl to inspire leadership in the present state of affairs in Lower School. But she did appreciate her efforts.

"Dear old Bessie," she said, "of course it's a grand idea. But I wouldn't worry too much if I were you. And your spelling is a bit—Hallo, come in!" she called.

The door opened. Clara Trevlyn, Mabel Lynn, that strange girl Jimma Carstairs, and Leila Carroll entered. They all looked a little uncomfortable.

"What cheer!" Jimma beamed. "Nice drop of weather we're having, what? Ahem!"

"Ahem!" coughed Leila Carroll.

"You see, Babs—" Mabel Lynn said. "All right, leave it to me," Clara said bluntly. "Shut the door. Now, Babs, you giddy mystery, you've got to toe the line and answer a few questions. And the first question is this: Are you going to fight the election?"

"I am!"

"Good enough! But you're not making it very easy for yourself, are you, Clara asked. "I don't pretend to know what you've got against Faith, but you are rather making opportunities

for her, aren't you? No, don't look like that, fatted! As you're aware, we're still your chums, and if you'll only give us a dog's chance, we'll see you through the election yet. But we just can't go on groping in the dark, you know, Babs."

Babs eyed them.

"Well," she asked, "what do you want me to do?"

"Just, in the first place, come to your senses a bit," Clara said gruffly. "I'm sorry if I'm hurting, but it's just about time somebody did a bit of plain speaking. We're not keen to see a new captain of Lower School, but you know half Lower School has its back up against you. The whole trouble seems to be this silly feud you have against Faith—crowned now by the Ellison girl's story of your insult to Miss Charmant this afternoon. No, let me go on. Some pretty nasty things are being said against you, Babs—"

Babs winced.

"Go on!" she said quietly.

"And so far," Clara added, "you've done nothing—or next to nothing—to deny them. You can't wonder, then, that the school's losing faith in you. What's going to happen—and what must happen—is that the air must be cleared before we go any further. You agree?"

"Perfectly!"

"Well, then, O.K.! Because," Clara added, "I've arranged a meeting of the Lower School for to-morrow afternoon. You'll be wanted at that meeting, Babs. Faith will be there, too. We're organising it on straight lines, and you'll have a chance then to tell the girls anything you want to tell them. Faith, too. There'll be no interruptions, because I've asked Lady Pat to preside, and she'll control everything. Now, will you come?"

Only for a moment Babs hesitated. Then she stiffened.

"I'll come!" she agreed.

"And, for once, you'll put your cards on the table?"

"Yes."

Clara heaved a sigh of relief.

"Then that's good enough," she said. "Half-past two—remember! It's your one chance, Babs, before we begin the election campaign, of setting yourself right in the eyes of the school, so for goodness' sake take advantage of it."

"Trust me!" Babs said grimly.

And her lips set. Well, that was that. Good old Clara and Mabs and the rest! From that moment her mind was obsessed with nothing but her election campaign. From that moment she was working her speech out.

No sense, considering that she had no proof, in condemning Faith, of course. That should not be her line. But she would ask the Form to remember what she had been in the past. She would ask the Form to disregard any private quarrel there might be between herself and Faith, and make the captaincy not an affair of rival jealousies and friendships, but a sporting contest which should react to the school's best interests. After all, she had been tried and trusted for many terms. The girl who was up against her was a comparative newcomer to the school—

That should be her line of attack. That should be her plea to the Form. Before she went to bed that night Babs scribbled out all her notes, and during all the next morning was rehearsing her address.

And then just before she was due to go into the meeting—when, in fact, she was actually on her way to the meeting—came a telephone call.

Sarah Harrigan brought the news of it. Sarah Harrigan eyed her crossly as she gave it.



"Somebody in a dashed hurry on the phone," she grumbled, "you'd better go."

And Babs went. It was a voice she did not recognize which rang her.

"Please, Miss Redfern, will you come along at once to Jasmine Cottage? Babs' heart leaped.

"Mrs. Hubbard—" "Yes, yes! She wants you—most urgently. She told me to tell you not to wait a minute. Oh, please, Miss Redfern!"

And then, before Babs could reply, the person at the other end of the line had hung up.

Babs stared around, her heart jumping.

Mrs. Hubbard! What had happened to her? What sudden crisis had overtaken that dear old soul that she should send such a message?

The meeting—but oh, never mind the meeting! Mrs. Hubbard needed her now—at once.

No longer did Babs hesitate. She flew to the cloak-room to snatch down hat and coat, and whirled on down to the cycle sheds. And then dismay filled her as, wheeling out her bicycle, she saw that both tyres were flat.

Had Babs been in a less anxious frame of mind she might have suspected something then. As it was, there was no alternative but to wait for the bus.

It was nearly half-an-hour after receiving the telephone message that Babs was racing up the trim garden path and knocking agitatedly at Mrs. Hubbard's door.

As before, there was quite an interval before it was opened.

Mrs. Hubbard stared out. "Why, Miss Redfern—" "Oh, Mrs. Hubbard, what's the matter?" Babs panted.

"Matter, my dear? Why, nothing!" "But the telephone call you sent—" The elderly woman looked astonished.

"I, Miss Redfern? No, I certainly sent no call," she said. "What ever makes you think I have?"

Babs stared almost gasping. And then suddenly the truth dawned upon

her. The message was a fake, of course. Her tyres had been punctured to delay her.

Faith's work, of course—Faith who wanted that meeting to herself; who had thought of this way of getting her off the scene while she, as usual, made hay while the sun shone.

And she—fool—had fallen neatly into her trap!

"I see!" she said. "I'm sorry. But—but—oh, goodness!"

"But, Barbara, I don't understand," Mrs. Hubbard said. "Who sent the message?"

Babs shook her head. "I can guess perhaps," she said. "But—" she shrugged. "Well, I—I'm sorry to have troubled you, Mrs. Hubbard—"

"Miss Redfern, you know it's a pleasure just to have seen you," the elderly woman said sincerely.

"Eh—how is your friend, Miss Ashton?" she asked after a pause.

"Very well, thank you," Babs said bitterly.

"Didn't she say, Miss Redfern, that she was sending me some fruit?"

"She did," Babs admitted. "It hasn't arrived!"

"No, I was just wondering if—the fruiterers had got the address wrong."

Babs could have laughed at that. She had a pretty good idea her promise of fruit had gone out of Faith's mind the moment she had uttered it. She turned away, promising to look in on the morrow.

Back to school went Babs, hurrying in faint hope that the meeting might still be awaiting her. Vain, doomed hope, for even as she hurried up the stairs that led to the Fourth Form corridor the door of the Common-room was opening, and out was pouring a host of chattering girls.

Inside the room there was a commotion, and Babs started as she heard the name of "Faith! Faith!" followed by a slogan: "Faith for captain!" ringing out from the recesses of the room. Then suddenly there was a cry.

"Babs!"

"Babs, she's here!"

"Babs, you awful funk!"

"Why did you let the meeting down?" And then Babs, as she paused, gazing bewilderedly from angry face to angry face, felt herself suddenly and securely hemmed in by a crowd—a crowd whose faces were glowering, whose expressions were angry, who were gazing at her with hostility, disappointment, dismay. Even Clara was angry.

Very squarely she planted herself in front of Babs.

"Well, a fat lot of good our organising a meeting for your benefit," she snorted. "Where have you been?"

"I—I was tricked!" Babs gasped. "Tricked?"

"Somebody sent me a false telephone message."

From Frances Frost went up a pealing laugh of scorn.

"Oh, listen to it! And of course it was Faith Ashton," she mocked. "It always is Faith Ashton when our dear Barbara fails to do what is expected of her. Oh, stuff. Why not be honest for once, Barbara Redfern, and confess you were too funky to attend the meeting—"

"I tell you that Faith—" "Oh, I say, did someone mention my name?" Faith Ashton asked, and came out, her triumph-flushed face wreathed in smiles, to stare at Babs. "Why, Barbara dear, there you are!" she cried. "And we had to hold the meeting without you. Where have you been?"

Babs' hands clenched by her sides.

"I suppose you know nothing about it?" she asked tensely.

"Why, Barbara, what ever should I know?"

"It wasn't you," Babs blazed out, "who sent a faked telephone message from Mrs. Hubbard, was it? It wasn't you who punctured my tyres to delay me? You awful little schemer!"

"Babs!" cried Faith vibrantly, and stared with saucer eyes full of convincing horror. "Babs dear, what are you saying?"

"You know it's true!" Babs blazed out.



FAITH fussed round Mrs. Hubbard, making sweet, sympathetic remarks, but taking very good care that it was Babs who did all the work!

"Proof!" clamoured Lydia Crossdale. "Proof! Proof! Here, don't you push me, Bessie Bunter!"

"That was as Bessie, hurrying out of the Common-room to the rescue of her chum, knocked against her.

"I didn't push you," she expostulated, "at least, I didn't mean to. Here, you can't don't you pull my pigtail! Ow-wow! Babs!"

"Leave her alone, Lydia!" Babs cried.

"Rats!"

"I tell you—"

"Well, what do you tell me, fibber?" cried Lydia scornfully, and pulled Bessie's pigtail the harder.

"That was enough, Babs' eyes gleamed. Furiously, fiercely angry at this result of the trick played her, she was in a mood for action.

She strode forward, intent on rescuing hapless Bessie.

Spiteful Freda Ferriers jabbed out her foot, and caught her on the ankle. Babs flung round with a gasp of pain. She grasped Freda by the shoulder.

"Why, you—"

"Leave her alone!" cried Brenda Fallico.

And then—how did it start? No one knew. But immediately, it seemed, tempers became unleashed. A howl went up. Lydia's followers plunging to the rescue of Freda—in no very serious danger, but taking it upon herself to shout for all she was worth—jostled against Babs' supporters.

"Down with Barbara Redfern!" shouted someone.

"Faith for Captain!"

"Booh! Boo!"

Uproar at once. Packed tight in the corridor, girls swayed and jostled. Then suddenly there was a cry in a thin, acid voice:

"Girls!"

"Oh, my hat! Cave!" gasped Clara Trevlyn. "Miss Bullivant!"

"Miss Bullivant, the acid-faced mistress of the Lower Third, it was."

"Cease—cease this instant!" she cried, ignoring the fact that the whole gathering had come to a dismayed halt. "Barbara, I perceive you are the centre of this disturbance. What is the cause?"

Babs turned red. But it was Frances Frost who spoke up.

"Barbara called her cousin a schemer!"

"What?"

"She did!" Frances reaffirmed angrily. "Because she was afraid to turn up at the Form meeting she excused herself by accusing Faith of luring her away."

"Barbara, is this true!"

"Yes, it is!" cried Babs.

"Pray, my girl, do not shout! Faith, what have you to say?"

Faith, on the verge of those tears she could summon so easily, shook her golden head.

"I—I don't know anything at all about it," she said. "Really and truly, Miss Bullivant, Barbara was supposed to turn up at the meeting, and Babs didn't."

"Because," Lydia's sneering voice put in, "she was afraid!"

"Lydia, take twenty lines for speaking when you are not asked, Barbara— and Miss Bullivant's eyes fixed themselves upon the delinquent sternly—"I presume you can substantiate what you say?"

Babs bit her lip.

"Can you?"

"Well, no—"

"I see!" The lips of Miss Bullivant came together. "Accusations," she said weightily, "should not be made with-

out proof, Barbara. I am extremely displeased. All you girls will go to your studies," she added, "and each of you will take fifty lines. Barbara, as the author of this commotion, you will take two hundred. Now, dismiss—please!"

### Not Too-Hopeful an Outlook!



"THE question is," Jimima Carstairs pronounced solemnly, "to be or not to be? Whether 'tis nobler, knowing nought of these strange whims and fancies with which our Babs assails her cousin, to trust her and to fight her cause, or, taking arms against her, to vote for merry old Faith? Which, you observe, is Shakespearian in essence, but rather cruder than dear old William himself would have put it."

Clara Trevlyn grunted. Her characteristic reply to that bright effort was:

"Don't rot!"

For Clara was looking worried as she faced Jimima Mabs, Leila Carroll, and Janet Jordan in Stud No. 7. Clara, indeed, was looking almost harassed.

"Well, we've got to make up our minds," she said. "Either we support Babs, or we support Faith. I don't understand Babs. I don't pretend to; but—well, dash it, all I can say is that either Babs is making a jolly big mistake, or we are. At the same time, Clara added a trifle bitterly, "nobody can accuse Babs of trying to better her chances in the election."

Mabs bit her lip.

"But—but—oh dear, we all know Babs!" she cried. "We all know she must have a reason."

"But what?" Leila asked. "What possible reason, I guess? If we know Babs, I figure we all know Faith, and what has that girl done to Babs?"

Janet Jordan coughed.

"But isn't that rather beside the point?" she asked. "Anyway, why waste time talking about it? Babs won't talk. Faith says she's as mystified as anyone as to why Babs should have her knife into her. The question before the meeting is not, as I see it, whether we should interfere in Babs' silly quarrel with her cousin, but whether we should support Babs against her cousin in the election."

There was a pause then. That certainly was the point.

Mystified and puzzled as they were over Babs' conduct towards her cousin, Babs was still their chum. Their instincts, if not their common sense, leaned towards her. But the worrying part of it all was that the Form was losing faith in Babs.

"After all," said Mabel Lynn, "Faith is a newcomer to the school. We don't know what she'd be like as captain. But we've all had experience of Babs. We know Babs is true-blue. We know how Babs has helped us out in the past, and, after all," said Mabs, "itching to tell them what she knew, but remembering her promise to Babs, "Babs has done nothing to us."

"True, O queen, true!" Jimima murmured. "Jolly old bulldog Babs—"

"Then we support her!" Clara asked.

"Yes."

"Good enough! Then let's get busy," Clara said tersely. "The first question," she added, "is to find out who's likely to vote for Babs. I've already sounded the Third Form, and I gather that the voting there will be about fifty-fifty. The Fourth, however, is an unknown quantity. Now, what I propose is that

Scout round the studies; let everyone know there will be a meeting of Babs' supporters in the Common-room this evening, and Babs herself will speak. Meantime, I'll go and tackle Babs herself."

There were nods. Faces cleared. Liking Babs in spite of her recent queerness, the chums were glad to have made up their minds.

"She split up, Clara going off at once to Babs' study. She found the captain of the Lower School rather half-heartedly scribbling lines.

"Hallo," she said cheerily. "Babs, I just want to tell you. We're getting up a meeting in the Common-room to-night and rounding up your supporters. Will you come and speak?"

"Oh, have I got any supporters?" Babs asked strangely.

"Don't be a chump! Of course you've got supporters. Will you come?"

"Thanks, Clara!" Babs said. "I will."

Clara nodded. She went out, bound for the Third Form Common-room.

She frowned a little as she neared that apartment, which, noisy as a rule, was in a perfect uproar now. From it came loud peals of laughter, accompanied by a bleating voice.

"Rur-really, you girls—"

Clara reached the door, pushing it inwards. And then she stopped at what she saw. The room was full of hilarious Third Formers—girls from the Lower as well as the Upper Third, and something like a riot seemed to be in progress there.

In the middle of the room, extremely forlorn and woebegone, sat fat Bessie Bunter. She was tied to a chair, and round her neck was her own electioneering placard, which proclaimed: "Vote for Babs!" Fifteen or twenty girls were capering round her, laughing as they did so.

It was obvious that Bessie had been electioneering.

"Look here—" she howled.

"Here we go round the Bunter bush, the Bunter bush—" Jessie Cranston carolled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clara grinned a little, then she frowned. She stepped into the room. At the same moment there came a cry from Fanny Tibbitts.

"Ware Fourth Form!"

"Oh crumbs, Clara!" Bessie bellowed.

"O.K.!" Clara said. "I say, you kids, this is taking fun a bit too far, isn't it?" she asked. "Give old Bess a chance!"

"Rats!" retorted Jessie Cranston.

"Why, you cheeky little—"

"I said rats," Jessie repeated, putting out her tongue, "and I say rats again! If this fat fump will come here asking us to vote for Barbara Redfern when we're all voting for Faith, she must jolly well expect what she gets. And don't you come interfering," she added hotly.

Clara's face became grim.

"And if I do, what will you do?"

"Throw you out!" squealed Ida Jackson.

Clara paused. She looked around the group. Neither Doris Redfern, Babs' young sister, nor Madge Stevens or their chums were in the room. She saw at once that she had fallen into a camp of enemies.

Her face became grim.

"Let Bessie go!" she said, and suddenly plunged forward.

"Rescue, Third!" cried Jessie Cranston.

Something like an uproar then. In a moment the whole group had fallen upon Clara. Desperately Clara turned.



CLARA blinked as she saw Bessie's predicament. The dear old plump duffer had come to the Third Form Common-room to get votes for Babs, but it was obvious that Babs had no supporters here!

Up from Bessie went a shrieking wail as, in the melee, her chair was bowled over, and, since she was securely fastened to it, Bessie with it. What might have happened it was hard to say. But at that moment the door was flung open. Sarah Harrigan, a scowl upon her unpleasant face, stood there.

"Stop!" she cried. "Stop! What a din! Clara—here, somebody untie Bessie. Clara, I presume you are the cause of this commotion."

"I—I—" stammered Clara.  
 "Take a hundred lines!" snapped the unpopular prefect. "All you other girls will take fifty. And if," she added, her eyes gleaming, "this is the way you are going to conduct your election campaign, I'll jolly well see that campaigning is stopped altogether. Now, Bessie, get up!"

Bessie, her lips quivering, got up. With Clara she turned. Sarah held the door open, and they both departed. And from the Third Formers went up a little hiss.

It seemed, in that room at least, there were no prospective voters for Barbara Redfern!

Further Trickery!



"NOT too good, eh?" Barbara Redfern asked.

"Nun-no, Babs. I did my best," Bessie said glumly.

Babs nodded. But her face was rather worried. She had finished her lines now, and was standing by the window of Study No. 4, watching the scene in the quadrangle below.

Bessie, blinking, stood by her side looking over her shoulder.

It was not, to say the least of it, a very inspiring picture that met their eyes, though, to be sure, it was animated enough.

Down there in the quad a great crowd

of excitedly cheering girls was gathered about Faith Ashton. Two of the crowd were carrying placards. The first read: "FAITH FOR CAPTAIN!" and the other: "DOWN WITH BARBARA REDFERN!"

Babs, sick at heart, turned away. What chance had she?

But she was not going to give in. Tooth and nail she would fight her faithless cousin.

The door came open. Clara Trevely looked in.

"Hallo, Babs!" she said. "I say, I've got some news." She threw a list on the table, and Babs brightened as she saw the string of names there. "Those are promises of votes," Clara announced.

Babs took the list up. The names were of Third Form girls. Her eyes sparkled a little as she read the first batch. Doris Redfern—dear young sister Doris! Fay Chandler, Madge Stevens, Mary Trehearne, Lucy Camperbill, and a dozen others. In the lower and Upper Third Forms there were sixty-two girls, and of that sixty-two a full twenty-five were on that list. Better than she had hoped for, that. She brightened.

"And the Fourth?" she asked.  
 "Not too bad," Clara said. "It all depends on the meeting now."

Babs smiled. She took heart from that. Well, it shouldn't be her fault if the meeting were not a success. She still had her notes from yesterday, and, taking them up now, she strolled off with Bessie and Clara to the Common-room.

June Merrett was the first to arrive. She was followed by Marcelle Biquet, Jenima Carstairs, and Leila Carroll. Then Mabs and Margot Lantham, accompanied by the priceless Terraine twins, came in, and shortly after them Joan Charman, Bridget O'Toole, Jean Cartwright and Janet Jordan. A five minutes' pause, after which Peggy Preston and Henrietta Winchester, both looking rather dubious, entered.

Jane Mills came next, biting her lip a little and shaking her head as though in answer to some unspoken thought. Six o'clock chimed. Lucy Morgan came in. Five minutes went by. There were no more callers.

"O.K.!" Babs said quietly, but her face was a little brighter. There were eighteen potential supporters in the room now, and if she could secure those eighteen votes it would give her a slight majority over Faith.

Quietly she began her speech, making no reference at all to Faith, asking them to forget the personal element in the case, to remember not what was taking place now, but how she had served them in the past, and she concluded with the words:

"If you elect me, and you consider I have failed you, I give you my solemn word of honour that I will resign. I make this statement just to show you, whatever you may think, that I have not changed. That is all."

And quietly, orderly, the meeting broke up. But it was obvious that upon all those who had attended it a profound impression had been made. That night there was a great deal of talk in the Common-room. Waverers like Peggy Preston, Lucy Morgan, Henrietta Winchester, and Jane Mills were rather inclined, after all, to support the girl who had been tried and trusted in the past.

Faith herself was there, listening and beaming, but inwardly shrewdly calculating her chances. Now that the election was so near at hand it seemed that the Form was having second thoughts.

Like Babs, she was beginning to realise that the election was not going to be the walk-over she had hoped for, after all.

Rather thoughtfully she looked round. She spotted Mabel Lynn, Bessie Butler, and Clara Trevely talking in a corner.

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and a smile came to her lips. Unobtrusively she slipped out.

To be met in the corridor by the telegraph-boy. He smiled up at her.

"Miss Ashton, miss?"

"Yes," Faith said.

"Telegram for you and Miss Redfern," the boy said.

Faith opened it, and then her eyes gleamed.

"Shall arrive to-morrow. Hope you are both keeping well."

"AUNT FELICITY."

"Thanks!" she said coolly, and crushed the telegram and put it into her pocket.

The boy, half-expecting to be tipped, looked at her; but Faith had turned away, that gleam still in her eyes, for some reason looking unaccountably excited. As she went off down the corridor she was muttering to herself.

"To-morrow—eh? Thanks, aunt! I'll take jolly good care though, that Babs knows nothing about this. And what," she chuckled softly, "a surprise for you when you do arrive! How surprised you will be to find your adorable little Barbara the outcast of the Form, and your own dear little Faith top of the tree and captain! Faith, old thing, play your cards carefully now!"

She laughed a little—a rather strange laugh—then, halting before the door of Study No. 4, she composed herself.

The voice of Barbara Redfern said "Come in!" as she knocked, but her face seemed to turn to stone as Faith opened the door and stood on the threshold.

"Oh, hallo, Barbara dear! Are you busy?"

"I am! Please buzz!" Babs said briefly.

"But, Barbara darling—"

Babs looked up, her eyes gleaming. Farther down the corridor the Common-room door opened, and girls' voices were heard chattering excitedly as they came flooding out.

Faith took another step into the study. Babs rose.

"I'm busy!" she said curtly. "Frightfully, tearfully, fearfully busy. There's the door!"—and she pointed her hand towards it.

Faith turned as if to look at the door. And then Babs froze. For suddenly from Faith went up a strangled cry. And suddenly in front of her astonished eyes Faith flung herself backwards.

There was a crash as she hit the door, a wail as she went flying of her own volition into the corridor, to bring up with a thud against the wall, and then sither, half-sobbing, to the floor.

Simultaneously from down the corridor came a cry:

"Faith! Look! Oh, my hat!"

"Faith!"

And then half a dozen girls were tearing up, half a dozen figures were anxiously bending over Faith. While Babs, still stunned by the unexpectedness of the happening, hardly realised yet it was just another trick, came to the door.

"Faith, what happened?" Lydia Crossendale asked.

"Babs—" gasped Faith. "Babs threw me out of her study. Oh dear!"

"Babs—"

"Please give me a hand up," Faith pleaded. "And—don't blame Babs too much. After all, we do all lose our tempers sometimes."

"Why, you—you little schemer!?"

gaped Babs. "You—you fibbing little traitor! I never touched you!"

"Oh, yes?" scornfully cried Frances

Frost. "You'll be telling us next that she did it herself!"

"Which," Babs blazed out, "was exactly what she did do!"

"Oh, stuff!"

"Babs!" cried Clara.

"I tell you she did it herself!" Babs

cried. She was quivering with anger

then. "Oh, my hat! What blind, idiotic fools you all are! Faith came to me—"

"Thanks!" sneered Lydia Crossendale. "I think you've told us enough. It's pretty plain what's happened.

Hating Faith, jealous of Faith, you just couldn't keep your hands off her.

Well, all I hope," Lydia added viciously, "is that the Form will remember that when it comes to vote for you to-morrow. Come on, Faith!"

And as Babs, quivering, stood at the door, she put her arm round the shaking shoulders of her cousin and led her off down the passage.

### Humiliating for Babs!



NATURALLY, that incident did not react very favourably to Babs' advantage, and for the rest of the evening she remained in her study with her worried chums. They hardly knew what to believe, though their own knowledge of Babs' nature told them that such an action was so utterly foreign to it. All the same, the news went round the Lower School like wildfire.

One or two girls who had been in doubt were indignantly heard proclaiming that they wouldn't vote for Babs now if there was not another girl in the school, and when Babs went to bed that night she was met by hostile glares, averted faces, and shrugged shoulders.

After breakfast Dulcia Fairbrother, the captain of the school, accosted her. "The election will be held at ten o'clock," she said. "Have everybody in the Common-room. Miss Charmant is going to officiate."

Babs nodded. Ten o'clock. That meant she had two hours yet. Two hours of nervous tension—two hours wondering what was going to happen. She felt she must do something, and then suddenly she mustering herself of Mrs. Hubbard, blushed with a little self-conscious shame to reflect that that dear old lady had been completely out of her thoughts just recently.

Well, here was her chance. It would help her to forget other things by doing something useful for her.

She turned. Faith, who unknown to Babs had been standing by idly watching her, smiled.

"Hallo, Babs! Going out?"

Babs just gazed at her and passed on. She hurried to the cycle-sheds. Faith went after her.

She saw her take her cycle out, watched as she mounted and turned through the gates, heading in the direction of Friardale.

And then a smile curved her lips, a gleam came into her eyes. Hastily she rushed back to Study No. 1, which she shared with Lydia Crossendale and Freda Ferrier. She spent perhaps two minutes in there, and then struggling into her coat, dashed out. Lydia Crossendale met her in the passage.

"Why, Faith, you're never going out!"

"Yes, I must. I—I've got to."

Faith said. "It—it's rather urgent and—and secret. I'll be back in half an hour, though!"

Off Faith went, taking out her cycle. But she did not follow Babs this time—she bowed off in the direction of Friardale Woods.

Meantime, Babs, propping up her cycle by the gate, had reached Jasmine Cottage and was knocking at the door. There was no reply.

Again she knocked. Then Mrs. Granger from next door came out. She smiled at Babs.

"If you want Mrs. Hubbard, I'm afraid you're wasting your time," she said. "She went out half an hour ago."

"Oh dear! And—and did she say when she'd be back?"

"She didn't!" Mrs. Granger shook her head. "A private car called for her," she said, "with a driver in uniform and all, if you please!"

Babs nodded. She felt a little intrigued. Still, it wasn't her business.

She looked at her watch. Nine o'clock now. Well, might as well get back.

She mounted her machine, and very leisurely rode back. It was half-past nine when she reached the school, twenty to ten when she entered the Common-room.

Dulcia Fairbrother was there; Miss Charmant was there; half the Lower School was already present.

Quietly Babs took her place on the dais in one of the candidates' chairs.

The minutes ticked away. More and more girls came in. Some smiled at Babs, some looked away, some simply glared; and Freda Ferrier, ill-mannered junior as she was, got twenty lines for putting her tongue out.

Five to ten; three minutes to ten. Miss Charmant coughed.

"Dulcia, will you please call the register?" she asked. "But where is Faith Ashton? And Lydia Crossendale, too?"

"Here!" cried a voice; and in came Lydia, her face flushed with excitement. "Miss Charmant, I call for a postponement of the election! Faith Ashton isn't here because there's been foul play! Faith Ashton isn't here," she repeated, "because Barbara Redfern doesn't want her here. Barbara Redfern thinks if she isn't here she'll win this election!"

An electric thrill shot through every girl there. Babs half rose to her feet.

Miss Charmant flushed.

"Lydia, how dare you! What grounds have you for making such an accusation?"

"Because," Lydia said, "I saw Faith Ashton nearly an hour ago. That was just after Barbara Redfern went out of the school on her bicycle. Barbara came back, but Faith did not. That's what made me late—looking for her. It's my belief," Lydia cried, her voice ringing, "that Babs has shut her up to keep her out of the way! And this," she added, "is the reason for that belief. I found this with Faith's other things in the study!"

Now there was silence. Everybody was holding their breaths. Babs, her face white and strained, had risen to her feet. As the note passed from Lydia to Miss Charmant she caught a glimpse of it, and her eyes opened wide as she recognised her own handwriting.

Miss Charmant took it, gazed tight-lipped at Babs, and then handed it to Dulcia.

"Read it out, please, Dulcia," she said.

And Dulcia read:

"I must talk to you—in private and alone. Meet me in ten minutes at the



Rangers' hut in Friardale Woods. Tell nobody of this.—Barbara."

"Oh, my hat!" cried Freda Ferriers. "Barbara!"

Barbara was staring almost stupidly. "But I didn't write that!" she cried. "I didn't! Somebody has forged that note. I tell you I never saw Faith—"

There was a buzz.

"All the same," Miss Charmant said, "the matter cannot remain uninvestigated. Dulcia, will you take three girls with you and go to the Rangers' hut at once? I do most sincerely hope," she added worriedly, "that there is nothing in this. You affirm, Barbara, you did not write this?"

"I most certainly do!" Babs cried. "It's like my handwriting, but I didn't write it!"

Miss Charmant shook her head. She did not look at Babs after that. But the whole of the Lower School was staring at her.

Dulcia, accompanied by Lydia, Frances Frost, and Clara Trevlyn, went off. A deathly silence fell.

But it was a silence that was excitement. One could almost hear the thoughts buzzing in the brains of the girls there.

Minutes went by; a quarter of an hour passed; twenty minutes—twenty-five. There was a restless murmur.

What had happened? What was happening?

Half an hour. Babs felt as if she were sitting on electric needles. Then a sudden rattle, the sound of footsteps in the corridor outside. While everybody jumped the door was flung open. In came Dulcia Fairbrother, and behind her, supporting a Faith who looked half-dead, whose stockings were torn and who had a great scratch across that angelic face of hers, Clara Trevlyn and Lydia Crossendale.

At once there was a movement. Miss Charmant stood up.

"Faith, where have you been?"

"No need to ask her, Miss Charmant," cried Lydia. "We found her—as I expected. She was shut up in the Rangers' hut. The door was locked on the outside. Barbara lured her there, and Barbara shut her up!"

White to the lips, Babs rose to her feet.

"I didn't! I tell you I didn't!"

"Barbara, silence, please! Silence, all of you!" Miss Charmant ordered, as uproar began to be let loose in the Common-room.

"Faith, dear, I am sorry—" and gentle she helped the gasping girl on to the rostrum. "Barbara, I will speak to you afterwards," she said, with a wonderingly stern glance at the captain of the form. "In the meantime the election will proceed. Now silence, please!"

There was silence, but it was a glowering silence, and Babs could almost feel the heat of the glances which seared towards her.

"We will now take the vote in the time-honoured way," Miss Charmant said quietly. "Dulcia, will you please help me to count? Barbara, as captain, shall be taken first. Hands up all those who vote for Barbara Redfern!"

Bessie Bunter's hand shot up at once, so did Mabs', Doris Redfern's, Fay Chandler's, and Madge Stevens'. Then Clara's, Leila's, Marcelle's, Jermina's. Then after a pause Janet Jordan and the Terraine twins. Then Jean Cartwright.

Miss Charmant paused. "Thirteen," she announced. "Any more please?"

A moment's hesitation. Then, looking worriedly unhappy, Margot

Lantham raised her hand. It was followed, after another moment, by Mary Treherne's.

"Fifteen. Any more?"

Not a girl moved.

"Very well, then!" Miss Charmant shook her head. "Now for Faith."

A perfect forest of hands shot into the air. Dulcia, amid a breathless hush, counted them.

"Eighty!"

"Eighty!" Even Miss Charmant looked staggered. Babs, sitting there, felt her face go white, then red, felt suddenly as though every drop of life ebbed from her.

"Three cheers for Faith!" yelled Lydia Crossendale.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"And," piped up Frances Frost, "three cheers for Barbara Redfern!"

"Boo-oh—oh! Hiss! Hiss!"

Babs winced. Unsteadily she rose. She wanted to run, she wanted to get away.

And then with the noise at its height, with Miss Charmant calling desperately for silence, the door opened.

Dazedly Babs gazed. Then she gave a little croak.

"Aunt Felicity!"



FAITH pointed at Babs as the girls dashed up the passage. "Babs—" she gasped—"Babs threw me out of her study!" Babs stared. Faith had told a deliberate lie—a lie to get sympathy and turn the girls against her!

Eighty votes against fifteen. Faith, thanks to her scheming, her lying, her treachery, and her deceit, had made that election such an overwhelming humiliation for her that Babs, at that moment, felt she would never, never be able to hold up her head again.

Quietly Miss Charmant announced the result.

"The election is won by Faith Ashton," she said. "Faith Ashton is your new captain. Faith, I present you with the captain's shield, and I—"

She got no further. While Faith stood up, pink cheeks red, blue eyes shining, there went up a roar of cheering.

"Faith! Faith! Good old Faith! Hurrah for Faith!" everybody seemed to be yelling.

Faith was captain! Faith it was who had the triumph!

### Sensation of Sensations!



AUNT FELICITY it was. She stood still, gazing from the shouting girls to

the white face of Barbara as one in a dream. She heard those names which Babs was being called. She saw in the sweeping first glance round the triumphant face of Faith.

And then, with a gleeful laugh, Faith, hugging the captain's shield, was rushing towards her.

"Aunt!" she cried. "Aunt dear—" The noise abated. Girls turned to look at the newcomer.

"But—but—" Aunt Felicity stared. "Oh, my goodness, what is all this? Faith—"

"I—I've just been made Form captain," Faith cried.

"But, Barbara, I thought you—"  
Babs hung her head. She could not speak for the welter of emotion rising within her.

"Babs was captain, but Barbara—"  
Faith sighed. "Oh, dear aunt, it—it's a dreadful story, and I'm sure now," Faith said sweetly, "we do all want to forget it. Dear Babs—well, dear Barbara hasn't been very well just lately, you see."

"But, my dear, I do not understand."  
"Then, perhaps," said Lydia Crossendale boldly, "I can tell. We are all pleased to see you, Miss Redfern, but—well, you may as well know the truth. Ever since you sent Faith to this school Babs has been a cat. She's done all in her power to get Faith into trouble, to be hateful and jealous towards her. To-day there was an election, and Babs, in order to get Faith out of the way, shut her up in a shed in the wood—"

Aunt Felicity looked scandalised.  
"Barbara, is this true?"  
"No, it isn't," Babs blurted desperately. "It isn't!"  
"But—but—"

"Aunt dear, can't we let bygones be bygones?" Faith asked softly. "Please don't be too hard on Barbara. Come along here and meet our mistress."  
Miss Charmant smiled and shook hands as she was introduced.

"I could have wished you to arrive on a less painful occasion," she said. "All the same, Miss Redfern, I am very pleased to tell you on behalf of all the school how much we admire Faith Ashton, and what a great mark she has made in the school since she has been in it."

"So I gather," Miss Felicity Redfern nodded. "And these, I presume, are all Faith's friends?" she asked. "Would you mind very much, Miss Charmant, if I spoke to them?"

"Why, of course not!"  
"Thank you!" Aunt Felicity turned, facing the room. Babs, near the door, with Bessie sympathetically grasping her arm now, glanced up. "Girls, I would like to say a few words to you, if I may," she added. "Not only as an ex-Cliff House girl, but as the aunt of these two candidates to whom you have given your votes. You may have heard about me. You will perhaps know that the two girls I have always loved most on earth are these two nieces of mine."

"You can imagine, therefore, with what mixed feelings I see them both to-day," Aunt Felicity went on, "especially in these circumstances. You may guess that, loving them both so much, and realising that the day must come when I must dispose of the wealth and riches I own out in Canada, I was sorely perplexed in my mind as to which of them should become my heir. There are certain legal reasons why I could not divide my wealth up between them, and so obviously one, and one only, could be named as the beneficiary under my will."

The girls stared. Why was Miss Redfern telling them this?

"And so," Aunt Felicity went on, "I had an idea. I decided to send Faith to Barbara's school. I decided, without telling either of them, to test them out. School, I thought, would make friends of them, would bring out the finer qualities in each girl. After a certain time I planned to come to this school and judge for myself. That time has come. It is to-day!"

"And to-day," Miss Felicity went on, "this morn'g, indeed, I am going to make my decision. I have already received from Miss Primrose a report of each girl's progress since the beginning

of the term. I have caused other inquiries to be made. And as a result of these inquiries there is now obviously only one girl to whom I can hand over all the gains of my lifetime when I die. She is—"

She paused. Everybody was silent now. Faith, rosy-checked, eyes modestly downcast, shuffled her feet. Babs felt as if in a daze. Then Miss Redfern spoke again.

"She is," she pronounced, and if a thunderbolt had exploded in the room there could not have been a start of greater amazement, "my niece, Barbara Redfern!"

Babs jumped. Faith staggered.  
"Barbara, aunt?"  
"Barbara!" her aunt said firmly. "The most unselfish, the kindest girl it has been my lot to meet. She will be my heir!"

Faith's face flamed.  
"But Babs!" she cried wildly. "Aunt, are you mad? What about me? What about this?" she added, her face undergoing a swift change. "Practically every girl here will tell you what Barbara Redfern is—just a self-seeking cat! Barbara tried to make me lose the election, didn't she?"

Barbara shut me up! Barbara—"  
"Faith, please!" her aunt said sternly. "I said that I have been making inquiries. Ever since you came here, Faith, you have both been watched, even though you did not know it. Every day, wherever I have been, I have received a full and detailed report

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of what has been going on. One of my agents who supplied me with information was a man named Williams—"

"Williams?" breathed Faith, and Babs' eyes opened wide.

"Williams," her aunt repeated, "the agent of Lord Courfield. It was he who told me about Barbara's idea for the fair."

"Barbara's!" exclaimed Lydia. "But—but that was Faith's idea—"

"It was Barbara's," Miss Felicity said quietly. "Another girl I have interviewed recently is Helen Holland, who helped to organise the carnival at which you, Faith, tried to depose Mabel Lynn from the queenship. But the third, and the most valuable of my agents—"

And she looked towards the door.

"Babs, open that door, please!"  
"Like a girl in a dream Babs pulled it open, and then she gave a cry.

"Mrs. Hubbard!"  
"For there in the passage stood the little elderly woman.

"Please, Selina, come here!" Miss Redfern smiled. "This is my third and most valuable agent—a woman I have employed from a detective agency. You see her old and frail. At my request Miss Primrose gave her a post in this school, so that she could keep a watch on Barbara and Faith.

"She will tell you how, the other day, through the window of her cottage, she saw Faith puncture Barbara's bicycle tyres before Barbara was due to keep an appointment with Miss Charmant. She

will tell you how this morning she watched Faith shut herself in the hut in the wood, taking care to lock the door outside before she climbed into the shed by the window. She will tell how Barbara, not knowing who she was, came to her aid, helped her. Selina!"

And the elderly woman, before all their dazed, stupefied eyes, put up a hand. The hat came off, and with it a wig. The glasses were removed. She smiled, and somehow the lined face seemed young and fresh.

"I am convinced now," said Miss Redfern quietly, "that Faith somehow discovered my intention to test her and Barbara, and the reason behind it. Faith schemed, but has lost to a girl better in all respects—Barbara."

DAZED, STAGGERED, dumbfounded—that was the Lower School at Cliff House. It all sounded like a dream. It was all too fantastically unreal to be true.

But it was true—it was! What fools they had been! What traitors to the captain who had served them so well!

Great the hubbub, and great the excitement in Cliff House that afternoon. Breathlessly, pattingly Cliff House waited for news.

That afternoon it came.

Faith—an amazingly subdued and humbled Faith—now—Aunt Felicity, Babs, and Miss Charmant had two hours' session in the Head's study. Miss Felicity wanted to take Faith away, but it was Babs—Babs, the wronged one—who had pleaded for her to be given another chance. Babs who had urged that Faith's exposure had been sufficient punishment in itself, that Faith might make good on a second chance.

Dear old Babs! She wasn't a hypocrite. She meant what she said.

And Aunt Felicity had agreed, though she said Faith was going away with her for a few weeks in order to live down her wretched past. When she came back the Fourth would know her no more. She would go into the Lower Fifth.

And that afternoon she went—wretched, drooping head, afraid to look at those girls who in silence watched her departure. Then a shout went up.

"Babs! Babs! Babs!"  
And there was Babs, radiant, standing in the midst of them all, with Bessie, her face as red and happy and shining as the sun, clinging to her arm. Beside them was Babs, smiling fondly at Babs.

"Babs! Oh, Babs, you marvel!"  
Clara whooped. "Babs! Babs for captain! Babs, will you stand for election again?"

But it was Rosa Rodworth who pushed her way forward.

"Babs won't stand for election," she said, "and neither anybody to stand against her. Babs was our captain this morning. Babs is our captain now. Babs, I'm sorry; we're all sorry. But you don't bear malice, do you?"

"Not a scrap!" Babs laughed.  
"And you'll still be skipper?"  
"If you want me to."

"Then," roared Rosa, and waved her hand, "up with her, girls! Shuders, quick! Lydia, you can come and give me a hand. Freda, Frances—all of you. Is there anybody who says we don't want Barbara Redfern for captain?"

And back came a thunderous, reverberating cheer, in which even Lydia Crossendale and all Babs' old enemies joined:

"No!"  
END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.  
(See page 20 for details of next week's wonderful Cliff House story.)