

EVERY SCHOOLGIRL LOVES THIS SPLENDID PAPER!

# The Schoolgirl's Own 2<sup>d</sup>



## THE GIRL THEY MISTRUSTED!

A dramatic incident from  
this week's long complete  
story of the girls of Morcove  
School.



A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Morcove School, Featuring Mary Cavendish.



# UNABLE TO SPEAK OUT!

BY MARJORIE STANTON.

Fate seems, indeed, to be on the side of Mary Cavendish's enemies, but, no matter how black things look against her, Betty Barton and Co. are willing to trust her, and to offer her their help.

### A Task for Mary Cavendish.

IN the most mysterious way possible Betty Barton closed the door of Study No. 12, and five girls watched her with the greatest interest as she did so.

Betty Barton, as captain of the Fourth Form at Morcove, commanded a great deal of interest in the Fourth Form, but affairs had not yet reached the pitch when her every action was watched closely. In the normal run of things, Betty could have closed the door without the slightest notice being taken of the action.

Polly Linton, the madcap of the Fourth, would probably have commanded far greater interest—the interest in Polly's closing the door would quite likely have extended to the mistresses one or two floors away, where the closing of the door would have been heard with painful clearness. That was Polly's way of closing any sort of door.

Betty, however, closed the door very quietly and most sedately, so there was no occasion for interest.

"Very mysterious," smiled Madge Minden.

"Must be something important," opined Tess Trelawney, with a shake of the head, while Trixie Hope, who was extremely keen on French, murmured:

"Dans un moment, il y aura du causerie," and added necessarily: "In a moment there'll be some talk."

Probably Trixie's French was not the French that is spoken daily in Paris; but it pleased Trixie, and, looking round for approval, she got a grin from Polly Linton, who sat on the study table swinging her legs.

"Spout on MacBluff," said Polly flippantly. "We want to hear you chat, Betty."

"Yes, wather!" concurred Paula Creol.

"Oh, not you!" scoffed Polly. "We never do anything else all day but hear you chat, Paula. We want a change sometimes. Do talk, Betty, if only to keep Paula quiet."

"Right!" smiled Betty obligingly.

"But weally I wefuse to allow Polly to say that I chattah," murmured Paula in distress, and Paula actually sat up from her lounging position in the comfortable armchair by the fireside. That meant, of course, that Paula was quite excited.

"But I've said it," pointed out Polly. "What's said cannot be unsaid. Now do be quiet, Paula, and let's get on with the business."

"Yes, shush!" nodded Betty, with a wave of the hand at her elegant chum.

So Paula, not without a martyr-like sigh, reclined again in the armchair, and fanned her face with the daintiest handkerchief to be found in the whole of Morcove.

Betty Barton cleared her throat, and looked then at the assembly. Only Madge Minden, Tess Trelawney, and Trixie Hope were looking mystified. It was clear from the outset that Polly Linton and Paula were "in the know."

"It's about this," commenced Betty, and from the bookshelf she produced a roll of paper tied with a blue bow. Paula had tied the bow, of course; anyone could see that by the way it fell undone directly Betty touched it.

"That!" exclaimed Madge Minden. "It looks mysterious enough!"

"Do trop peutêtre—too much," translated Trixie Hope, with a shake of the head. "What is it?"

"A plan," ventured Tess Trelawney.

"Not a plan, it's something found at midnight in a house on the cliffs."

Very darkly Betty said that, and in her most mysterious manner. Polly nodded a suitable accompaniment, and Paula contrived to look very deep-minded.

"At midnight!" exclaimed Madge Minden, in great surprise. "Oh, and what were you doing out at midnight, Betty? I'm surprised at you—breaking bounds, and you the captain of the Fourth!"

But Betty only laughed. Sometimes she did

not take herself quite as seriously as Form captain as she might have done.

"We went out," smiled Betty, "to go to the houses. You know Mary Cavendish?"

Heads nodded at once then. Of course, they knew Mary Cavendish; they knew everyone in the Fourth Form at Morcove. Of course, Mary was a new girl, but even then they knew her.

"She's sharing your study," remarked Tess Trelawney flippantly, as though Mary were a girl difficult to place.

Betty was not at all nonplussed by that little piece of facetiousness.

"Yes, rather; and you remember that she dropped some gold coins out of her pillow that night we had a dormitory fight?"

Again heads nodded, for were they likely to forget that? Was it a usual thing that in a pillow-fight a girl scattered from her cushion gold coins as well as commonplace feathers?

"Old coins, though," commented Madge Minden. "Nothing queer in that, only—"

Madge broke off then shortly, for Madge was a girl with great imagination and a quick intelligence. Madge was able to play most difficult pieces of music—pieces that looked, so Polly said, as though a spider had gone for a promenade over the page. To do such a thing as that Madge Minden really had to be bright.

"Well?" queried Betty. "What, Madge?"

"Only wondering," said Madge. "I thought it queer myself when Mary dropped those coins. I suppose now you've found her store—the place where she found them. Must be a case of treasure trove, surely?"

"You're right enough there," agreed Betty. "But we found it just by luck!"

"Yes, wather! As a mattah of fact—"

But Paula Creel was not allowed to tell the story. As Polly pointed out, it had to be finished.

"As a matter of fact," interrupted Betty, "we went out cycling, and saw Mary go to the old house by the cliff—the one that is falling into the sea. You must have heard of it, you three."

"Yes, but not seen it," Madge said, with new interest. "I always wanted to, but one can't get round by road, and the only alternative seems to be to swim or row across the bay."

"We found a way by road, and Mary goes by rowing across the bay," Betty explained. "Still, that doesn't matter. Anyone who wants to can get there, and we got there easily enough. When we got there we found this."

Then she unfolded the sheet of parchment and put it on the table. Immediately heads craned over to look at it; and Madge Minden's keen eyes were focused upon it intently.

It was scarcely legible, however, just a few words standing out for them to read, the rest being far too faint, washed away by rain, and obliterated by the length of time they had been concealed.

"My word, but this is old!" exclaimed Madge. "The last will and testament of—of whom, Betty?"

"That," smiled Betty, "is what we don't know. It was lying at the foot of the old building. Probably had we left it, it would have gone into the sea with some more of the house. Luckily, we got there just too soon. It may be frightfully important; it may be nothing at all."

Tess and Trixie examined the will, although there was little enough to be seen. There was the date, seventeen hundred and twenty-four,

which was interesting in itself, but as to the contents of the will there was no clue at all.

"Two hundred years old!" breathed Madge. "Goodness! And to think that it might once have been of desperate importance! It might be a will for which people hunted goodness knows how many hours!"

Betty looked at Polly then, as much as to say "I told you so."

"But there's no name on it," Polly objected. "There was one," Madge smiled. "And you say you found it at the foot of the house. That means it was buried purposely."

"In an old cash-box," supplemented Betty. "Yes, that was where Mary found the coins. They were all hidden away together—some miser's hoard."

"Easy enough to find out who it belonged to," Madge pointed out. "The records of that house must be kept and known, surely! We've got the date, and there's proof that the house existed. There were all kinds of records of the period, you know."

Betty had not thought of that, and she looked at Madge admiringly. Actually, it was very simple indeed. The person who had owned the house then had made the will, for who was likely to have secreted the will in another's house?

"Hum!" murmured Polly. "But what's the use of doing that? The thing's no good!"

But Madge smiled.

"No use, perhaps, but it would be very interesting, you must admit, Polly. I'd like to know who made the will. Just think! It's the latest will that counts, and people who alter wills usually do so for some good reasons, often in temper—"

"Yes, I suppose so."

Betty realised that clearly enough. She had brought Madge into this scheme because she was their friend, but partly because Madge was a girl with such an admirable amount of common-sense.

"But what has that to do with it?" Polly wanted to know. "What has the temper to do with it, Madge?"

"Yes, wather. I fail to see that, deah geal," agreed Paula. "Pway explain, deah geal!"

Madge Minden smiled.

"What I mean is simply this," she said quietly. "A person who alters a will in a temper throws away the old will. I should imagine that, under the circumstances, the will would be torn to shreds and even burned. It might not, of course, if it were hidden away in some impossible place. This one, however, was apparently in a money-box, a simple enough thing to find."

"Yes," said Betty, puckering her brows. "I see that, Madge. But I don't quite see the point of it even now."

"Simply that this one isn't torn up, Betty. Therefore, it is the important will, and therefore—"

"Yes?"

"Therefore," said Madge impressively, "the estate was not administered according to the will. Something happened to the estate, although what we don't know. But it seems clear enough to me that it was not disposed of according to the will."

They were silent then, looking admiringly at their chum. A simple enough piece of deduction it seemed, and Polly Linton went all through it again to assure herself that it contained no obvious flaws—other flaws, of course, Polly would never have been able to discover.

"The will," said Polly, ticking off the various points on her fingers.

"Theah," interrupted Paula—"theahfore, it wasn't destroyed, you know. That's what Madge means."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nearly that," admitted Madge, laughing.

"Very nearly," chuckled Polly. "Well, to get on. The will wasn't destroyed, therefore it is the last will, and the one which has to be studied when sharing out the money that the person who made it left. It's still to be found, therefore it wasn't discovered when it should have been, and so something wrong happened to the estate."

"Hear, hear!"

Polly had not, perhaps, been perfectly clear in her summing up. Not so clear as a high court judge would have been. But the others understood, and there was a nodding of heads.

"It certainly makes things more interesting," Betty sighed. "But, even so, Madge, what can we do? The will doesn't mean anything; it isn't even readable, is it?"

"Not quite," smiled Madge. "But we needn't worry about that, Betty. What I'd like to do is to discover who made the will, and that, by the way, I think I can do."

"Bai Jove," murmured Paula, "how vevy interesting, deah geal! Pewwaps it might be awfully exciting to flowish this new will befoah a solicitor and say we have found it, and what's to be done?"

"Yes, very exciting," agreed Polly. "The solicitor would get all worked up and excited—perhaps!"

"Je ne pense pas," chuckled Trixie Hope. "I don't think! Personally, I can't see any interest in a blank piece of paper that's two hundred years old!"

But Madge could, and Madge did not mind what they thought. Anything that was really old appealed to Madge, and she liked to think upon the person who had made that will, and the circumstances that had existed at the time.

"Possibly," she mused, "it was made by candle-light. Can't you picture it—a very old man writing his will by candle-light, sitting up in a four-poster bed with shadows flickering across the ceiling, and the sea howling outside the door in the house?"

"A quarter of a mile away from the door two hundred years ago," pointed out Betty. "There's a map in the library I looked at once which shows the coast there—"

"Which book?" Madge cried.

Betty scratched her head thoughtfully, trying to remember. But it was Polly who supplied the answer.

"An old book called 'The History of Barncombe Castle,' she said. "A dry as dust old book, but it made a topping ping-pong racquet!"

Madge Minden hurried down to the library then, leaving Polly to chuckle and tell the history of that—a ping-pong match in the library over a temporary net consisting of small books, and played with a real ping-pong ball and books as racquets. The score had been twenty all, when Miss Somerfield, the headmistress, had entered. The score was then fifty all—fifty lines each for the two players, Polly Linton and Naomer, the little dusky Eastern girl.

Polly's story was only just finished when Madge Minden burst into the study again, all excitement, waving a book in her hand.

"I've found it," said Madge. "The date is just right. Goodness, and who do you think it was?"

"The king!" said Polly frivolously.

"A Cweel," cried Paula—"yes, wather, a Cweel!"

But Madge shook her head. It was someone they knew, obviously, by the excitement written so clearly on her face.

"No, it's the will of John George Cavendish, lord of the manor of that time!"

"Cavendish!"

A quick exchange of looks there was when that name was mentioned. Cavendish—and there was



**CARLA GIVES ORDERS!** "Don't listen to a Fifth Former, Mary," said Polly, taking the other girl's arm. "Mind your own business!" snapped Carla. "Mary will do just as I tell her!"

Mary Cavendish in their Form—and it was Mary who had been rummaging about in those ruins! In a chorus they uttered the name, and as though in answer to it the door was thrust open, and there looked into the study a pretty, fair-haired girl of fourteen.

"Yes," she said, "do you want me? I heard you mention my name. I was just coming—"

She looked at them in surprise, noting their amazement, and Paula Creel, without consulting the others, jumped up in the greatest excitement.

"Yes, wather, deah geal; something fwightfully interesting! Look at the will of your gwandfather, John George Cavendish!"

Mary Cavendish stood quite still then, staring at that sheet of parchment in amazement, and her face was quite pale.

"My grandfather?"

"Great, great-great, perhaps," nodded Madge Minden. "Might be or might not; the names are the same. This man was lord of the manor here two hundred years ago, and this is his will."



"But where," exclaimed Mary, "did you find it—his will?"

And that was a question they found difficult to answer, yet it was the very one that they might well have expected her to ask them. What else should interest her but that—how they had come into possession of the will?

"We found it," said Betty. "Of course, it may not be yours—or it may. If you want to know, Mary, we found it in that old house by the sea."

Mary Cavendish gave a startled exclamation and stared at Betty Barton in some confusion and surprise.

"You found it there—you have been there?" she asked.

Then Betty coloured in an uncomfortable manner.

"Yes," she admitted, "we did go there. We thought there—there might be some sort of treasure trove, you know."

Mary nodded her head, as though she were not really at all interested in Betty's motive, and picked up the will. They noticed, as she did so, how stained her finger-tips were, how peculiarly stained with some kinds of chemicals.

Mary was always busy in the laboratory, and this was the result, of course. It made dainty Paula shudder to see those fingers, but, after all was said and done, they were Mary's to do with as she pleased.

"The will of John George Cavendish," she echoed. "Oh, gracious, how strange that you should have found it there! I wonder—"

"You think he might be a relation?" asked Madge quickly.

"He was a relation," nodded Mary. "He was lord of the manor there."

"Oh!"

Proof that she knew what they thought.

"Well, then, you may as well keep it," said Betty Barton.

And Betty, with a look at her chums, walked towards the door. They had done their preparation for the evening, but Mary had hers yet to do, and probably wished to be left in quietness. They could go elsewhere to talk, of course.

So they all went out of the study, leaving Mary Cavendish to herself, and Mary, when they had gone, slipped an old notebook from under her arm and put it down on to the table.

For a moment she was buried in thought. Then she picked up the notebook and opened it. A queer book it was—once the property of her father. It was the only token she had of him, he who had passed away in poverty, honoured only by his daughter.

That notebook seemed a jumble of words and figures, but to Mary Cavendish it had a wealth of meaning, and she turned the well-thumbed pages slowly.

"Oh, daddy," she sighed, "if only you were here now to guide me! If only you could tell me which of these is the formula!"

Then she picked up the will, and stared at it as though staring alone were a means of bringing back to recognition words which the passage of time had faded.

"The last will and testament—the lost will," she muttered. "This was the will which left everything to us, and here it is, illegible!"

Then she leant back in her chair, her pretty eyes clouded and her forehead puckered in a frown, for somewhere amongst those formulas in the book was one that would mean much to her, one

that might bring back to legibility the lost words of the will!

Years and years her father had experimented. All day he had been in his laboratory in their old home on the edge of the cliff, and the formulas were all that remained of those arduous hours of work.

They all meant something—they all meant a discovery of some sort—but it was one particular discovery for which Mary was searching, the formula of a liquid that would bring back the vanished stain of ink by chemical treatment.

Such a liquid he had discovered and used, but where was the formula—which of all this mass was it? Only by trial and error could that be found, however; only by Mary's working even as he had worked, hour after hour in the laboratory, trying and failing—failing until at last came success.

Then, when success came to her, she would find what this will really said—find that it left the Cavendish fortunes to the Cavendishes for ever—to her father and to her!

Oh, but that seemed too wonderful to be true—far too wonderful that she, penniless and a pauper dependent upon relations, might become a rich girl.

Perhaps, after all, the will was useless and meant nothing. Perhaps it left all the estates to their present owners, the hated Vansittarts; to Mrs. Vansittart, whose charity found Mary her education, and to her daughter Carla, who provided Mary with all the hate and unhappiness that any girl could want.

Very tightly Mary's hands were clenched, and very firm her chin-line seemed. A daughter of Henry Cavendish she was, a plodder with tireless, boundless vitality. He had found the formula, and he had left it somewhere for her to find.

It could be found! It had to be found, and Mary vowed she would find it!

#### Betty & Co. are Puzzled.

CARLA VANSITTART halted outside the door of the school chemistry laboratory. Usually that door was fastened, but to-day it stood ajar, and Carla knew that, inside the laboratory, a girl was working.

Carla was beautiful at any time, with a perfectly shaped face and magnificent eyes. Yet they were not eyes to trust or to like, beautiful though they were. Some girls said that she was not beautiful at all, because she did not look a very nice girl.

Be that as it may, Carla's face was flawless, save in its expression.

Now the lips were set a little grimly; now, perhaps, the nostrils somewhat dilated. But then Carla was peeping through the chink in the door watching a girl at work within.

Very gently she pushed the door ajar and walked softly in.

By one of the benches the girl stood working, holding up a phial of coloured liquid to the light and peering at it with close scrutiny and complete absorption; such absorption as prevented her hearing the other approach.

"Hallo!"

Quite suddenly Carla made that exclamation, and so startled was the other that she wheeled and dropped the test tube of liquid, so that it was shattered in a thousand small fragments upon the bench, letting the liquid run over the beeswaxed top and go drip, drip, drip on to the floor.

"Oh, how you startled me, Carla!"

"I meant to," Carla said unpleasantly. "Yes, I

meant to, Mary. It is high time you finished fooling about in here. I want my tea!"

To that there was an obvious retort. Carla was a well-built, healthy girl, and one quite capable of getting her own tea. There was no reason at all why she should address Mary in that way—why it should be supposed to be of interest to Mary what Carla wanted.

That, anyway, was the opinion of Polly Linton, who came hurrying down the corridor.

"Mary!" called Polly. "Mary!"

She ran into the room, and drew up as she saw Carla.

"Oh, hallo—hallo!" said Polly. "Sorry to interrupt. Came to tell you that tea is ready, Mary!"

For a moment Polly Linton stood and stared at the Fifth Former and Mary, wondering what had been going on just before she had entered. Mary was looking indignant and defiant, Carla lofty in her objectionable way.

"Mary is going to get my tea for me," said Carla coldly.

"Get your tea! But, my goodness, Fourth Formers aren't fags; besides, the Fifth haven't a right to a fag!"

Polly was very annoyed, and she became positively breathless as she rattled that off.

"Most interesting, but your opinion was not asked, Polly," sneered Carla. "I have said that Mary is getting my tea."

"I am not!"

"You are!"

"Of course she's not!" flared Polly. "What cheek! Why, you'll be telling me to get your tea next. I'll like the chance to, I don't mind saying. I know you wouldn't want me to make another. Don't you listen to her, Mary. You come along to tea!"

And Polly went forward to take Mary by the arm, convinced that forceful intervention was the only way out of this predicament. Certainly no Fourth Former could be allowed to demean herself and her Form by taking orders from a member of the Fifth. That was really quite unthinkable.

"Oh, mind your own business!" snapped Carla. "Who asked you to interfere, Polly? Mary will do just as I tell her."

Polly Linton was half inclined to laugh, despite her annoyance. How Carla hoped to get obedience she did not know. Carla took herself very seriously indeed, and might well have been a monitress, to judge by the airs she assumed. Such things as that cut very little ice with madcap Polly.

"Poof!" smiled Polly. "The great chief has spoken. Bow down to your knees, Mary, and touch your forehead on the floor!"

But Mary, although she smiled faintly, did not look at all at her ease. She could quite easily have backed up Polly—could quite easily have defied Carla and mocked at her. For, after all, the Fifth was only just an ordinary Form, and the Fourth had no reason to treat them with respect.

Cheek, that was all it was, and Polly was quite flabbergasted when she saw how seriously Mary was taking it.

"I say," she murmured. "You're not going to cave in, Mary. Carla's only in the Fifth. She can't give you orders. You're new here, and don't know; but only monitresses can give orders, and the Fourth aren't bound to fag even for them!"

"I know," said Mary uncomfortably. "I—you see—"

"I see you're a silly duffer," said Polly gruffly. "Think of the Form, Mary; you simply mustn't fag for Carla. I won't let you!"

"You won't!" exclaimed Carla sharply. "My

goodness, Polly Linton, and pray what has it to do with you; I would like to know? Since when have you been appointed dictator of what girls shall do? Mary can please herself; but if tea isn't ready in twenty minutes' time—"

That sentence Carla left unfinished, and swung out of the laboratory with a final look at Mary over her shoulder. Some dire threat she had hinted in that sentence, and Polly knitted her brows in perplexity.

"Of course, you're not going to get her silly tea?" she asked.

"I don't know!"

"Don't know! You mustn't—of course you mustn't! Look here, tea's ready in the study now—really it is. Come on and leave that work!"

But Mary Cavendish did not move. She stood where she was, looking at Polly in perplexity. She wanted to please Polly. She wanted to be friends with the girls whose study she shared for the time being, and yet—how dared she offend Carla?

Carla was mistress of the situation; for she had only to say one word to her mother, and then—

No; that was unthinkable. Carla was acting in an outrageous way—in just the way that one might have supposed she would act. But it could not be helped, so it had to be endured.

It might be some satisfaction to condemn her; but no consolation.

"Well?" asked Polly.

And Polly spoke very grimly indeed: It was all very well for Mary to please herself; but what would the Form think? How humiliating for them to know that one of their number had been ordered about by a member of the Fifth; had, in fact, been bullied and treated as though she were a slave! It would be a slight on the Fourth, and a girl had that to consider.

"Well, I'll just clear these things up," answered Mary dully, and commenced to tidy up the litter on the bench.

"And then come down to tea?" asked Polly eagerly, and with a new hope.

"Perhaps!"

"I see!"

Once again there was a strained silence, and Polly, with a toss of the head, turned to the door. It was seldom that good-natured, cheery Polly lost her temper, but she came dangerously near to that now.

"I—I'm sorry!" murmured Mary. "Most awfully sorry, really I am, Polly. But, you see—oh, well—"

And at that the matter was left. For Mary could not find words to express her meaning, and Polly had not the patience to listen to a girl of such weak spirit.

Yet at the back of Polly's mind there was a suspicion, and that suspicion she nursed all the way back to Study No. 12, where Betty and Paula, tired of waiting, were already getting on with the buttered crumpets.

"Mary not with you?" asked Betty in surprise. "How that girl does work, Polly!"

"Um!"

"Wather stwange, too," murmured Paula, as she selected a nice crumpton, "that any girl could wish to work with nasty, howwid chemicals. I once stained my finger for two days, you know?"

"Terrible!" laughed Betty. "Really awful, that, Paula!"

But Polly did not even smile at the thought of Paula's carefully kept hands being stained for days. Polly was looking very black indeed; and Betty, quickly noticing that, asked the reason, and had to be told the whole story.





## A SUMMONS FROM THE HEAD!

"Miss Somerfield wishes to see you at once, miss!" announced the maid. The girls looked serious. That was a bad sign, for it showed that the headmistress was not in a good mood.

"And mind you," said Polly, "there's more in it than meets the eye. Why should Mary buckle to Carla unless she's afraid of her, and unless there's something in all this that we don't understand, eh?"

"It is queer, of course," admitted Betty. "Mary's a sensible enough girl, and from what I've seen of her I should think she's strong-willed—"

"Obstinate!" corrected Polly, who believed in calling a spade a spade.

"Well, perhaps," nodded Betty. "Anyway, she's the last girl I should have thought would have taken orders from anyone, you know!"

"The vevy last person," agreed Paula. "I flattah myself that I am a vevy good judge of chawacter, and I think that Mawy is acting vevy queahly indeed. Pwobably Carla holds some tewible secret of Mawy's, you know!"

"H'm!" said Betty, not convinced.

"Pewwaps," said Paula brightly. "Pewwaps, deah geals, Mawy is working on some tewivable chemical, you know, and Carla has learned the secret. I once wead a most exciting book where the man was making something or the othah, and someone else came along and did something—I forget what—and then the first man heard him talking to another man; and they both wan away, you know, and got killed. It was weally thwilling!"

"Must have been!" chuckled Polly.

"Yes, wather—frightfully thwilling. I can't remember what it was called, or who wote it, but I remember distinctly that the man did something vevy clevah in the end, and the other man came along and neahly discovered him, and his sister, who was mawwied to the man I told you about first, found the missing paper, you know, and then, of course, his uncle weported him to his gwandfather—"

Betty fanned herself, and Polly did a merry giggle.

"Sure it wasn't a cross-word puzzle, and not a story?" asked Polly facetiously. "Or did the man's uncle find the uncle's grandfather with the chap I told you about, running away and then going back to find the number he first thought of."

"Bai Jove! I don't understand, deah geal. There wasn't an uncle's gwandfather, you know. I'm not sure now there was an uncle. Pewwaps I am getting a little mixed about another stowly!"

"Perhaps," nodded Betty. "Well, pass the butter, dear!"

And Paula passed the butter, and wrinkled her brow to remember the details of that amazingly exciting story, and, while she was so occupied, Betty and Polly were silent, too. Polly thinking out some scheme for making Carla look very, very, very much smaller than she thought herself, and Betty wondering if there was not after all something in what Paula had vaguely suggested.

Why was Mary always busy in the laboratory making queer chemicals? And why did she bow down to Carla, whom she obviously disliked?

Perhaps the two were connected, and perhaps they might find that Mary was not half the nice girl they had imagined her to be.

## A Peace Offering—and the Sequel.

IT was Mary's idea of a peace offering, and she placed the bundles on the table in Study No. 12 and smiled.

She was really late for tea; for the others had just finished, but they had got the kettle on the fire, and Betty filled the pot when she saw who it was entering.

"Bought up the shop?" Betty asked pleasantly.

"Not quite," smiled Mary. "But almost. I thought a few cakes wouldn't be amiss, you know. They're awfully good, I believe!"

That she was confused they could see, and the arrival of the cakes did somewhat disarm any little programme of complaint and criticism they might have worked out.

They were excellent enough cakes, with icing—the most expensive cakes that the tuck-shop sold—and Polly Linton eyed them hungrily. The crumpets had been nice, but cakes of this sort were even nicer, and at that moment funds in the study were low.

A moment of great temptation that was for Polly. Whether to fall and eat those cakes, or refuse them and give Mary a lecture. That was Polly's problem, and her eyes were on the cakes.

Betty Barton, always kind of heart, picked up the bag of cakes and put them on the dish.

"It's awfully sweet of you, really, Mary," she said. "I know they're perfectly wonderful cakes."

"Wather," Paula agreed. "Vevy dainty, you know. I am not a great cake eater myself."

"Chocolates more your line," smiled Mary. "Well, try these!"

And she put a big box on the table.

No wonder that there was surprise. Mary usually had just enough pocket money, but not often did she allow herself such extravagance as this, and there was an opening of eyes. For there had been no letter for Mary by the last post, and she had not had the money by a previous post.

Yesterday, when Betty had needed some money urgently, Mary had been sorry that she could not oblige, yet here were expensive chocolates and cakes.

"Goodness!" said Polly, in finest amazement. "Have you been breaking a bank, Mary, or has some rich uncle died?"

"Neither," laughed Mary. "I had a remittance, that's all, and what better way of spending money than this? I don't suppose the choccs will last long—I hope they won't. I can never make them last long!"

With a flick she had taken off the dainty ribbon, and now the chocolates were exposed to view—most expensive chocolates of the best quality that made Paula's eyes gleam just to see. Chocolates were a great weakness of Paula's.

"Try one," urged Mary. "Try one of those with the raisins on, Paula!"

Paula's hand went out, and a chocolate went in. A delicious chocolate it was, and Paula sighed approval.

"You, Betty?"

Betty took a chocolate, and Polly Linton, with Mary's clear eyes upon her, swallowed, first her words of reproach, and then a chocolate. She could have kicked herself for doing it; there were so many stern things she had meant to say to Mary, and Polly could not help suspecting that Mary had guessed as much, and was taking them off their guard.

Yet that was not entirely fair, as Polly knew. Mary was quite a generous girl, and why shouldn't she buy cakes and chocolates?

In Study No. 12 everything belonged usually to all occupants. That was one of the unwritten laws that covered their lives.

If a girl were allowed to eat her share she ought to be allowed to pay her share.

"Stunning!" said Betty.

"Ripping!" nodded Polly. "Wish I could afford choccs like this!"

Mary smiled, and seated herself at the table.

"I can't always. Just now for two minutes I am in funds," she said. "Have a cake, Polly!"

"Well, just one, perhaps," said Polly.

But it ended with three of those splendid iced cakes, and by the time the third had vanished Polly's outlook on the world was very kind indeed, and Mary had risen in her estimation.

For Mary was smiling brightly and happily—happy to be able to give as well as to receive.

Not one word was said about Carla Vansittart; and how glad Mary was of that even they were unable to guess. They talked of hockey, they talked of tennis, and the new hard courts that had been put down; they talked of everything that did not introduce the Fifth Form, and the atmosphere was very merry indeed.

And how glad Mary was of the one-pound note that Mrs. Vansittart had given her—how exceedingly glad that she had not had time to give her pride rein, and refuse it!

For that note had saved her so much. And, after all, why should she not accept a little pocket-money when she had accepted her board, lodging, and education?

Was it not that much that was owed to her when the Vansittarts had taken from them their estates?

Oh, Mary was very pleased; for now she felt that she really was of the chums as well as being with them. They had taken her to their arms at last, instead of suffering her as they had seemed to before.

So when the door opened after a pause, and banged against the back of her chair, Mary felt a slight sensation of annoyance at the interruption.

She did not want Madge and Trixie and Tess to come in for a chat; she wanted to have Betty, Polly, and Paula to herself.

It was not, however, any of those girls; nor was it a member of the Fourth Form. It was a maid.

"Miss Cavendish?" the maid asked. "Oh, I

didn't see you. Miss Somerfield would like to see you in her study, please, miss!"

"Miss Somerfield!" exclaimed Mary. "Wants to see me?"

The maid nodded.

"At once, miss," she said, and looked at her commiseratingly.

That was a very bad sign, for it showed that Miss Somerfield was not in a good mood at all. Betty, Polly, and Paula looked serious at once; but Mary merely puzzled.

When the door of the study had closed behind the maid, Mary looked at them in wonderment.

"Why should Miss Somerfield want to see me?" she asked. "I haven't done anything wrong that I'm aware of!"

"You broke a test tube," pointed out Polly flippantly.

"And there's—"

But Betty did not finish that sentence. Betty wondered if Miss Somerfield had by chance heard of the Fifth Former's fagging a member of the Fourth. Miss Somerfield was hardly likely to approve of that, of course; but Betty did not put her thoughts into words. That subject was taboo.

"Better go and see," advised Polly. "Mistresses don't like to be kept waiting."

"Wather not. Pway huwwy, deah geall! Pprobably it is only something twivial!"

"It can't be anything else," said Mary, much puzzled. "I've got a clear conscience. I'd better go, I suppose!"

There was no doubt about that, so Mary went, leaving the other girls as puzzled as she, but more intrigued to know what was wrong.



### THE BACKBITER'S RECEPTION.

Betty and Polly turned as Carla came up to them. "I want a word with you," she said. "Fancy that!" said Polly. "What are things coming to when a Fifth Former runs after us, Betty?"



Betty explained her idea of the trouble to them, and there was complete agreement.

"If you ask me," said Polly keenly, "there's something rather queer about that money Mary's been spending, don't you think—?"

"In what way?"

"Oh, I don't know why," said Polly; "but it did just occur to me, Betty, that perhaps why Mary fagged for Carla is that Carla paid her for it. Girls have done that sort of thing before!"

"But that's forbidden, you know," pointed out Paula with a shake of the head.

"So's talking in class," grinned Polly. "So are heaps and heaps of things. But girls who are rather hard up will make themselves servants if they're well paid. Carla is one of the richest girls at Morcove, and Mary—"

"Well, Mary isn't poor!"

"But she may be for a time. And how about those chemicals she uses—they aren't all school things. Who supplied them?" asked Polly.

"My word," laughed Betty. "You're getting quite a detective, Polly. Blessed if I had thought of that, although it's true enough. Quite an amount of money goes on chemicals, and a girl who wants money for experimenting might stoop to being a fag. Yes, that's likely!"

"Bai Jove, wather, you know! And if Miss Somerfield heard of it—"

Polly Linton pushed away the box of chocolates in disgust.

"And we've been eating the spoils," she said in disgust. "We're really accessory after the fact. If Carla knew she'd be as pleased as anything. It wouldn't surprise me if she only did it just to annoy us—"

"Just to make us look small," nodded Betty. "Oh, Carla would do anything spiteful and mean. It would be worth a pound or two to score off us after that pillow fight fiasco."

"But pewwaps," suggested Paula gently, "it is hardly fair to suggest that, you know. It's possible she had the money given her. She had a visitah."

"That's so," admitted Betty, with a start. "I'd forgotten that. How horrible of us really to try to make out that she hasn't come by the money in the normal way!"

Betty looked really concerned, and Polly did, too. Perhaps they felt Paula was right; and yet—yet they could not help in their hearts believing that there was something a little bit strange about that pound.

When, two minutes later, Madge Minden looked into the study, therefore, by mutual consent they decided that nothing was to be said about it. Rumours soon spread, and a rumour based on surmise was simply cruel.

It so happened, however, that it was Madge who was destined to broach the subject. Madge was looking quite excited, and she stood in the doorway holding the door, and not entering.

"I say," she murmured, "have you girls heard about the tuck-shop?"

"Tuck-shop? No—what?"

"Don't say there are fresh cakes!" gasped Polly with mock surprise.

"No, not that," smiled Madge. "Something more serious. Someone has been there and passed a dud note—a dud one-pound note. Miss Somerfield has been told, and things are going to happen. Bit awful, isn't it?"

And Madge looked at the three girls—looked and wondered; for in the study there were no exclamations of excitement or expressions of interest—just dead silence.

### The Finger of Suspicion.

"A FORGED one-pound note," said Madge, reiterating her statement, because it really did seem that they could not have heard it. False notes were not changed every day of the week at school, and surely it was a matter to call forth excitement.

Sometimes a bad coin was passed in the tuck-shop, and always the proprietress complained about it. She could not pass bad coins into her bank, and she was too poor to suffer the loss herself.

One or two unscrupulous girls did try to exchange pierced sixpences, but a false note was an actual forgery, and therefore much more exciting.

"Oh," said Betty, somewhat dazedly, "how strange!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Strange!" echoed Madge. "I should say it is strange. It means that some girl has got hold of that note—and that it's a hundred to one that there's a coming gang in the district. You remember there was once before?"

"Yes," nodded Betty. "But who could have passed the note?"

Madge shook her head. Her information did not go as far as that.

"I shouldn't think it would be very hard to trace," she pointed out. "Some girl in the school, obviously, and there are not so many pound-notes changed in a day that one can lose touch with them. I should say that the tuck-shop woman could remember every girl that had passed a note for a week."

"Quite likely," Betty nodded. "Did any girl change one to-day?"

"Yes, wather!" nodded Paula, with a start. "I changed one for Miss Massingham. She asked me to get her change for a pound-note, so I took it to the tuck-shop."

"Oh!"

"Yes, and Ethel Courtway, too," said Polly Linton. "I was in the tuck-shop buying the crumpets when she changed a note. There was a whole crowd there at the time, I remember. That's two to-day."

But it was not likely that Miss Massingham or Ethel Courtway, the captain of Morcove and head-mistress, would change a bad note.

"But how can one tell that it is bad?" Betty wanted to know.

None of them knew that really.

"Pewwaps one counts the windows in the House of Parliament on the back," murmured Paula. "I've heard there's a special number of windows, you know, and that the forgers usually get them wrong."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my goodness!" gurgled Polly merrily. "Fancy having to count all the windows of every note one gets! You don't really think that that's how the tuck-shop woman found out that it was a dud, Paula?"

"Hardly," smiled Madge. "As a matter of fact, it wasn't she who found it out. I heard that Inspector Read, of Barncombe, came in to buy some of her special cakes, you know, as he often does, and she changed him a five-pound note."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Polly. "The police in it?"

"Apparently."

There were very serious looks indeed, then.

"But how can one say where one got a note from?" demanded Betty. "That must be fearfully difficult."

"Miss Somerfield is interviewing all the girls who changed notes there," said Madge.

"All the girls—now?" asked Betty. "Then that's why—"

"Why what?"

"Well, Mary bought some things at the shop," said Betty. "And she went to Miss Somerfield a moment ago. A maid came for her."

Sooner or later that would be all over the school, and there was no reason to suppose that Mary had changed the bad note, or, if she had done so, that she had known that it was bad.

Betty or Paula, or any of them, might easily have changed such a note had it come into their possession; for anything but an elementary forgery would have deceived them all completely.

"Thank goodness, for once I haven't pound-notes to throw about!" sighed Polly. "I'm sure I couldn't give an account of a note. How can you know a note's life history, anyway, save that one's pater sends it?"

"Yes, wather! That's all I could say," agreed Paula. "And that is all Mary can say."

"When did she get hers from home?" asked Madge.

But there was no answer to that, and the three girls looked at one another quickly. Once again there arose that question in their minds—whence had the money come?

"Perhaps—" began Betty; but Polly put her finger to her lips, and Betty did not finish her sentence, for down the corridor a girl was coming—a girl whom someone just that moment had addressed as Mary.

The footsteps came nearer, they halted, and Madge, at the door, stood aside.

Mary Cavendish, looking paler than usual, stepped into the study, eyeing them all rather anxiously, and perhaps a little curiously; for they were more than commonly silent, with a silence that was peculiar.

"Anything wrong, Mary?" Betty asked. "We've just heard about someone's changing a bad note."

Mary gave just a faint start, and looked at them in turn. But her glance was not anxious now, and she was not afraid.

"Yes, Miss Somerfield asked me all sorts of questions about the note I changed. But it wasn't bad. It couldn't have been."

"Not if you had it from home," nodded Betty. "I suppose it couldn't really."

"Of course not. It was someone else. I don't know anything about it," Mary added. "The police inspector was there, and he asked all sorts of questions. I suppose the silly note was a bad one, but I didn't have it."

"Miss Massingham passed a note at the tuck-shop," Polly exclaimed. "Paula took it for her."

"Yes, she was there, too," Mary said. "And there was Ethel Courtway and another girl who had passed notes. But the tuck-shop woman puts all the notes in a cash-box, and she didn't know one from the other. How could I possibly pick out the note I had been given?"

"Miss Massingham's was a new one," Paula said. "Fairly new."

"They all were. Ethel Courtway identified hers because it was rather old. But mine was nearly new."

Madge Minden, who always took a deep interest in anything that promised mystery, puckered her brows then.

"I suppose," she mused, "Miss Massingham didn't remember where she had got her note? It might have been in a shop, or from her bank, or almost anywhere."

"Hardly from the bank," pointed out Betty.

"I suppose not. That's true, Betty. But she

may have got it from somewhere else. She may have changed a five-pound note."

"Not likely to forget where she's done that," Polly exclaimed. "Goodness, I don't suppose she has armfuls of them, you know. I shouldn't forget, though Paula might, she being one of the idle rich."

"Weally, deah geal! I wish it weah twuse, but it isn't. Luckily I haven't had any money lately. Howevah, it will all come wight in the end."

"Hope so," nodded Betty.

And as they had no further facts before them, they could not get very much further by discussing the mystery. Someone had changed a pound-note, and no one knew who it was. The note might have come from London, or it might have been made locally. But in either case they could not hope to get information—it would be taken right out of their hands altogether.

"Scarcely likely that anyone's making false notes on the scene," chuckled Polly. "A girl couldn't go about making pound-notes without being noticed by someone."

"They photograph them and then print, I believe," said Madge. "Although, these days, they're so awfully clever that one can't tell. My father says that they can get chemicals to wash out the ink on cheques and so alter the amounts, and that they can get wonderful imitations of the paper and watermarks used by banks."

"Oh, they're clever enough—some of the finest chemists and scientists turn criminal for some reason," Betty nodded. "And there may be hundreds and hundreds of note forgeries which are so clever that they deceive anyone."

"Bai Jove!" Paula blurted out as the thought occurred to her. "Didn't you discover something that would wipe out ink, Mawy, deah geal?"

"I," said Mary. "Oh, I—"

"Why, yes!" Polly cried. "Don't I remember, too! You'd just got the formula for something, and then the stuff was dropped and it wiped out the ink writing completely—"

Polly broke off, trailed off lamely, and went rather pink, for Betty was frowning at her, and Madge Minden was raising her eyebrows in surprise.

"Yes, I did!" Mary said stolidly. "But I don't go about erasing the amounts from cheques!"

Something defiant there was in her tone, and it really seemed a case of the cap's fitting; for Madge Minden turned down the corners of her mouth at Betty, and Betty knitted her brows in perplexity.

"No need to jump on Polly like that," she expostulated. "No one suggested you would do such a thing, Mary. It was only natural, though, that we should remember that, isn't it?"

Mary Cavendish went very red then. She could have bitten off her tongue for having so foolishly snapped at Polly. After all, they had only spoken the truth.

True they had probably put two and two together. Who would not have done, knowing that she had discovered such a fluid, when Madge had made mention of it?

Oh, it was natural enough, and yet—yet it was very awkward indeed, and after that outburst there was a fension that was most uncomfortable for everyone concerned.

"I must do my prep," said Madge, after a pause.

"Hear, hear!" Betty agreed, rising with a sigh. "What a perfect nuisance prep is!"

And Mary wished that the topic had not been changed; that they could have gone on talking, and talked until there was no suspicious mystery



about the liquid whose existence she had discovered.

Matters would be left most unsatisfactory at present; yet the other girls obviously had no intention of going into them more deeply.

Afterwards, when she was gone, they might talk, and not they alone. Everyone would be talking, and she, as the junior person concerned in the mystery of the pound-note, would be mentioned more frequently than most.

But, even then, Mary Cavendish did not foresee the far-reaching consequences of her innocent experiments, nor the combination with them of Carla Vansittart's hatred.

One wagging tongue only was wanted now, and that wagging tongue was Carla's.

A girl who went sneaking off to a lonely empty house on the top of a cliff was, Carla thought, very queer indeed; a girl who experimented ceaselessly with chemicals was even more strange. But what could one say of a girl who claimed that she had obtained a pound-note from her guardian, when the person from whom she had received it had arrived so mysteriously at the school and disappeared in a most mysterious manner?

There might be doubt in Miss Somerfield's mind as to who had actually passed the offending pound-note; but in Carla's mind there was no doubt whatever.

Carla was putting two and two together and making them six at least!

#### Carla Sows the Seeds.

"BETTY!"

Betty Barton, arm-in-arm with Polly Linton, did not hear her name called. There was, after all, more than one Betty at Morecove School, and the voice was not that of one of her friends.

Betty was chatting with Polly about hockey. But it was Carla who had called out, and Carla did not mean to be ignored. Betty had gone heedlessly up the staircase, so Carla followed her and caught her up just as the girls reached the landing above.

"Betty, I want a word with you—"

Then Betty turned, and Polly turned, too.

"Why, it's Carla," said Polly facetiously. "Fancy that! What are things coming to when the Fifth starts running after us, Betty?"

"Yes, I wonder!" Betty smiled.

But Carla was not to be put off by any funny remarks from Polly Linton. For some strange reason she wanted very badly to talk with Betty, and her dignity had to be swallowed.

All the same, she gave Polly a look that was anything but pleasant. Such looks Polly could return with interest, so Polly didn't care in the least. There was no love lost between her and Carla—a fact she took no trouble to conceal. For Polly was one of those kind who mean what they say and say what they mean.

"I want a word with you, Betty," repeated Carla, and she frowned meaningly at Polly.

"You can have more than one," said Betty after thought. "Say two. How will two do?"

"Oh, don't be rash," warned Polly, with mock anxiety. "Don't cheapen your wonderful words, Betty, by scattering them about. Hoard them up and they'll get more and more valuable. That's supply and demand. Carla's the demand, you know. She's always demanding things."

"You be quiet," retorted Carla. "I'm not addressing you."

"Oh, if you're addressing me," smiled Betty sweetly, "we're together. You haven't anything to say to me that Polly can't hear."

Carla shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "Polly can hear if she chooses to listen," she said ungraciously. "But we can't talk here, you know."

"We can," said Betty. "What's the matter?"

"I want to speak privately," said Carla, who was getting more and more furious. "Can't we go to your study—or you come to mine?"

Then Polly looked at Betty and curled her nose in distaste.

"Go into a Fifth-Form study!" she said in horror. "Good gracious, what would my people say?"

"Well, we might if Carla promised to keep it quiet," Betty demurred. "If she goes first, we could hurry along afterwards so that we're not seen together. One has one's prestige," she added with mock dignity.

"What-ho!" agreed Polly cheerfully. "And two have two's, you know."

Carla stamped her foot with impatience, and her eyes gleamed unpleasantly.

"Must you fool in this way?" she demanded. "I have something very serious to say about a friend of yours, and I'll say it here and now, if you wish. But I fancy you'll regret it."

"Oh!"

That altered things completely, and Betty and Polly's facetiousness dropped from them completely. What Carla could possibly have to say about a friend of theirs which could not conveniently be said in the corridor they could not guess, but Carla was looking unusually serious, and there might be some truth in what she said.

"May as well go to the study, then," said Betty slowly. "Although I can't think whom you mean, Carla."

Readily enough, they led the way to Study No. 12, and Carla closed the door. She looked mysterious and solemn—quite excited she was, too.

"It's about Mary," she said. "Of course, you've heard about the forged pound note."

"Who hasn't?" nodded Betty, and she gave a quick look at Polly that might have been intended to say, "You were right, then."

"She shares your study, so perhaps you know more about her than I do, although I've been keeping an eye upon her lately," Carla resumed.

"So I've noticed," agreed Polly. "You were ordering her about pretty freely yesterday. If that's what you call keeping an eye on her, you want a megaphone to improve your sight, not glasses!"

"Oh, you be quiet! I'm not talking to you!" snapped Carla. "I'm addressing Betty. Betty has some sense."

"Sense enough not to listen to scandal," agreed Betty.

"It's not scandal. I've been putting two and two together," Carla retorted. "It's pretty obvious that Mary passed that forged note. Where did she get it from; eh?"

She looked at them with narrowed eyes, and Betty returned the look in surprise.

"Where— Why, how should I know?" she asked. "I'm not Mary's guardian angel, you know!"

"Perhaps," suggested Polly, "someone gave it to her for fagging?"

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say—what else?" asked Polly. "She didn't have a letter yesterday, and she was broke in the morning."

"Until she had her visitor," added Carla. "She got that note from the visitor. I've found that out. But who was the visitor?"

"Goodness knows!" said Betty. "A relation, perhaps."

"She has none."

Quick as a flash Carla retorted that, and the two Fourth Formers regarded her blankly. If Carla had been putting two and two together, she had acted with extraordinary rapidity. How she had found out all this they simply could not imagine.

"Well, my goodness!" gasped Polly. "Welcome, little Miss Scotland Yard! This is what comes of going to the pictures, Betty!"

"It's what comes of keeping one's eyes and ears open—"

"Or mouth," added Polly, in her usual flippant style. "You've been swallowing a lot of information, I must say. If you'd kept your mouth shut occasionally—"

"Will you be quiet?" demanded Carla, with a furious stamp of the foot. "This is a serious discussion. I'm trying to show you that Mary

answer to that; Mary went with the intention of hunting for more mysterious gold coins. But they said nothing.

"She goes there," Carla resumed, with narrowed, cunning eyes, "simply to meet a gang of forgers, and she's their chemical expert. Her father was, before her, and she has taken over his work. That is the explanation of the mystery; that is the explanation of these mysterious visits she has, and that is why she goes to the strange house."

Betty was impressed, and Polly, despite herself, found her flippant view of Carla's theory shaken.

After all, what did they know of Mary? And were they not sure in their own minds that it was she who had passed the forged note?

"But—" murmured Betty, and then finished. "There are no 'buts,'" said Carla firmly.

"What I came to see you about was to ask you questions. Mary is in this study. You may know something about her. She is always experimenting?"



**CARLA'S VINDICTIVENESS.** "I tell you that Mary Cavendish is a criminal, and wants watching!" said Carla. "There is more than meets the eye in all this experimenting. I have watched her, and I find my suspicions are justified!"

got that pound note from some strange, mysterious person who came here dressed in such a way that she could not be recognised. That person, moreover, gave her a book of strange formulas, and I managed to take one—"

"Steal one," nodded Polly. "I see."

"Take one!" snapped Carla. "I got one, I say, and it is being made up by the chemist now."

Triumphantly then she regarded the pair of them, and they in turn regarded her.

"Well, even so," mused Betty, "I don't see that it is proof of the note's being forged. How can it be, when you come to think of it? There's no reason why the visitor shouldn't give her a good note, is there?"

Carla did not attempt to answer that question, but finished it with another.

"You may not know it, but Mary has been making secret visits to a mysterious house on the edge of the cliffs. Why does she go there, do you think? Why should she go to some mysterious house sometimes at night, too?"

Betty and Polly had what they thought a good

"Yes."

Betty deliberated for a moment or two.

"Oh, because she wants to, I suppose! I believe she's at work on something that can obliterate ink, you know. She had a formula when we came in one day, and she spilt the liquid and the formula was quite wiped out."

"Just as I thought," nodded Carla. "Perhaps you have heard of such inks being used on cheques. The amount of the cheque is wiped out by this liquid, and then a fresh amount filled in and the cheque cashed. The liquid leaves no trace, and there is, so far as anyone can see, no alteration. Why does she want such a fluid?"

Betty did not know, and Polly did not know, either.

"Then isn't it clear?" demanded Carla, in triumph. "I tell you that girl is a criminal, and wants watching. There is something more than meets the eye in all this experimenting, something very deep and cunning, and I am going to find out what. From the moment I saw her, I have suspected her, and now I find my suspicions are justified."



"I—I suppose they are in a way," admitted Betty.

"In a way? In every way, you mean! Watch her, but don't let her know that she is being watched, for if we give her enough rope— You know the rest!"

Then Carla, having finished all that she had come to say, swept out of the study, leaving the two girls silently wondering, and yet almost convinced.

"I suppose there's a lot in it," mused Polly.

"You mean we may be harbouring a forger, a criminal, in the study," said Betty quietly. "Goodness, I hope not, Polly! And yet—I wonder!"

"Yes, I—"

Betty's fingers went to her lips, and Polly broke off abruptly, as the door opened and Mary Cavendish entered. There was chemical stain on her fingers, and she was looking rather tired.

"Working?" said Polly.

"Yes, still working," Mary answered, brushing hair from her eyes. "I am a busy little bee, aren't I?"

"Very!" Polly agreed. "I can't think how you can spend all those hours in the lab. Chemistry bores me stiff!"

"I like it."

"You must do, to stick all the time you do in the place. What are you making—some frightfully clever invention?" Polly remarked lightly.

"No, just working," said Mary. "Has the bell gone yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then I'll rush off and wash."

They heard her footsteps die away, and Betty looked at Polly with raised brows.

"Queer!" was all that Betty said, and Polly nodded assent, but it showed that Carla's words had struck deep.

She had sown her seeds of suspicion in fruitful soil, and before long they would be fruit which the girls, at least, would find bitter all through.

For Betty and Polly confided in Madge Minden, and outside the door, as they confided, crouched Ursula Wade, listening intently, so that she could spread through the school all that she heard.

But Mary Cavendish, as she returned from washing, hummed a gay tune to herself, and pondered upon the experiment that she had left half finished, little dreaming what there was in store for her, little dreaming that rumour was travelling at a tremendous pace to make her the cynosure of every eye, to make every eye regard her with suspicion!

Just one more case, it was, of ignorance being bliss!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Whatever you do, you must not miss next week's splendid long complete tale of the girls of Morcova School. It is entitled "The Girls Who Changed Fortunes!" and is crowded with unexpected developments, in which Betty & Co. and Mary Cavendish are all concerned. Order your copy now.



#### A Talk About Trees.

A VERY fine tree is the horse-chestnut. An avenue of these in blossom is a fine sight. The white cones of blossom against their background of glossy green leaves, the straight, sturdy trunks, and the orderly spreading of their branches, makes this tree easily recognisable.

The leaves are large, consisting of seven parts, which are joined at the base and form a sort of fan. The fruit, which appears in the autumn, is enclosed in a prickly case, which, when split open, reveals the horse-chestnuts.

The elm is another distinctive tree, and easily recognisable. It grows tall and sturdy, something like the oak. The leaves are heart-shaped, with a saw-like edge. The timber is tough and highly valued for keels of ships, spokes of wheels, foundation piles, etc., owing to its resistance to dampness

and water. The elm tree is to be found in many parts of the world besides England and Scotland.

#### One More Good Turn.

THERE is one girl in my company whom I consider a shining light in regard to good turns. I was coming home from business rather late one night, when I found her standing rather disconsolate at the corner of my road.

"I'm in an awful way, captain," she said. "I haven't done my good turn to-day. It's been on my mind since tea-time, but I can't really find a single good turn to do. Give me your bag," she went on in the same breath. "You look so hot and tired."

It was rather a heavy bag, and as she was anxious to do a good turn I let her take it. I was about to tell her laughingly that at last she had accomplished her good deed for the day when my young friend paused to open a gate for a dog which stood barking outside, and was thus able to get back to his home. Hilda not only pushed open the gate for him, she went to the door and rapped with the knocker, so the doggie was able to go right indoors.

Yet apparently still unaware that she had done two good deeds in as many minutes, she kicked some banana skin from the pavement, and righted a bicycle which had fallen over from the kerb.

"I don't think you need bother about doing any more good turns to-night, Hilda," I said, as I reached my gate and took my heavy bag from her. "I should be very proud if every girl in the company were as thoughtful for others as you've been in this little walk with me."

But I don't believe that simple-hearted Hilda really understands now what I meant. Doing good turns has become a habit with her.

# ANSWERS

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