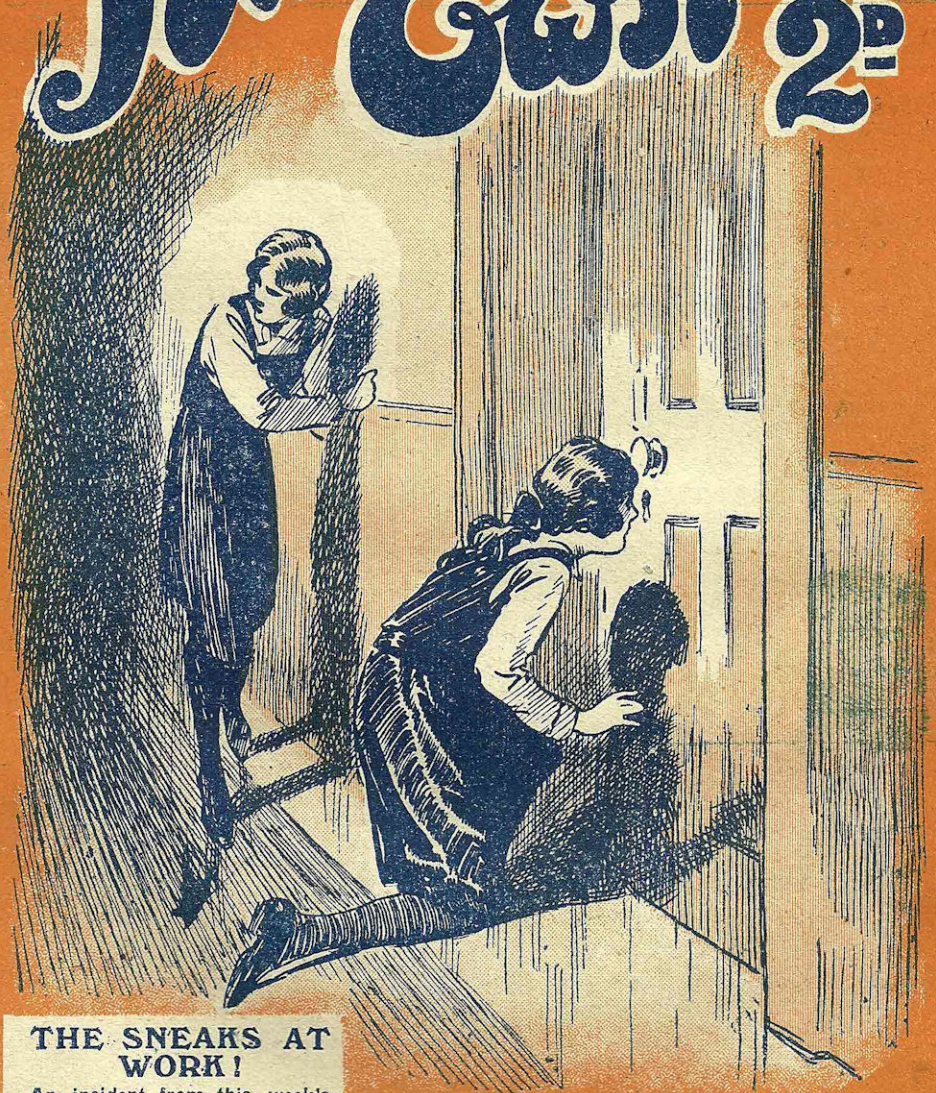
The Schoolgirls' Own 2d



THE SNEAKS AT WORK!

An incident from this week's long complete tale of the girls of Morcove School.

No. 250. Vol. 10.] PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY. [Week Ending November 14th, 1925.

Write to me, and address your letters The Editor, The Schoolgirls' Own, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

MY DEAR READERS,

NOW to tell you all about the wonderful programme of new features which I have arranged to commence next week. First and foremost, of course, comes the commencing story of a grand new series of tales of Morcove School. It is entitled:

"AT LOYALTY'S BEHEST!"
By Marjorie Stanton.

and it tells of a strange new girl who comes to Morcove. She is quite different from any of the girls who have yet been within the historic walls of that fine school—and the girls of the Fourth Form soon discover that. But, to their surprise, they find that she is friendly with Ursula Wade—Ursula, whose reputation, as you know, is that of a thorough sneak. What happens when the new girl and Ursula "chum" up together, and the views of Betty & Co. on the matter, are things which I will leave you to discover next week. But I think I have said sufficient to whet your appetite for this new series, and you will not be disappointed when you begin to read them next week.

Then comes

"CASTAWAYS OF MYSTERY ISLAND!"
By Gertrude Nelson.

Miss Nelson, as my old readers know, can always be relied upon to give us a first-rate adventure story, and my readers "down under" will be especially interested to learn that the girls who are featured in this grand new tale are New Zealanders. The story itself takes place upon "Mystery Island," which is situated somewhere—I do not know exactly where—in the South Seas. There are adventures galore in this story, and it hinges about the rivalry of two girls, one who is as sweet and charming a heroine as you could desire, and the other who is utterly unscrupulous in her dealings. I don't want to tell you too much about the story, for it would never do to spoil your enjoyment of it in the slightest.

The third new feature is a story by an author who has always held a warm place in the hearts of my readers. This story is:

"IN MOTHER'S PLACE!"
By Mildred Gordon.

Its heroine is a girl who is left alone in the world by the death of her mother. She has promised mother that she will look after her younger brother and sister, and she proceeds to do so. But things do not turn out as well as she had a right to expect, and she finds that she has embarked upon an uphill fight—a fight which is not made any the easier by the attitude of some of her relatives, who imagine that she is too young to take upon herself such responsibility. But she keeps the little home going until—— But I am telling you too much, am I not? I know you will prefer to read for yourselves what happens to the plucky girl.

As usual, there will be a second special complete story. This is:

"SHE TOOK ANOTHER'S PRAISE!"
By Ethel Derwent.

This tells of a girl who did a very heroic deed, and then, because of her friend's request, lets the other girl take the credit for the deed. But this almost leads to a parting of the friends, for the second girl is not animated by the same motives as the first. How things are eventually straightened out is a thing which Miss Derwent can tell you much better than I can, so I will leave her to do so.

* * * * * *

Now don't you think next week's issue is going to be a bumper number? I am sure you must think so, and your chums will think so, too, when you tell them all about the good things which are in store for them. And you *will* tell them, won't you? Because they will thank you just as much as I will, and I am certain that any girl who is not already a regular reader of our journal will certainly place a standing order for it when she sees next week's issue.

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Just a word about the three splendid issues of

"THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY,"

which are now on sale. The first is a grand new and original school tale by Louise Essex, and is entitled, "She Longed to be a Schoolgirl!" You will read in it how a girl achieved her one ambition—and what happened to her at a very great girls' school. The other volumes are also by favourite writers of yours. The first is "The Romany Schoolgirl," by Eileen McKeag; and the second is "No Happiness for Her," by Enid Earle. Both of these stories should not be missed, for they are excellent tales, well-told by talented writers. Take my advice and get copies of these three new books at once, if you have not already done so.

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I know that many of my readers are also readers of our splendid companion paper, "The Schoolgirls' Weekly." Those who are not should look out for a special announcement next week, for some magnificent free gifts are going to be given away with that paper—and they will be well worth having!

Your sincere friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

:: *Read in Your Editor's Chat About Next Week's New Features!* ::

THE GIRLS WHO CHANGED FORTUNES!

By MARJORIE STANTON.

Suspected by the girls of the Fourth Form, and faced with the continuous enmity of her rival of the Fifth, Mary Cavendish has by no means an easy time of it at Morcove School. But she makes a great discovery—which leads to even greater things.

A Black Outlook.

"HERE he comes!"

"Yes, wather, deah geals! Pway make woom, you know!"

"Doesn't look very exciting, though, does he?"

And at that there was a shaking of heads.

The man with the bowler hat and blue pilot-cloth overcoat, who was walking quickly up the path between the neat lawns of Morcove School, might have been excused had he shown some signs of nervousness. For it must have been extremely embarrassing to be the centre of attraction, and to have a dozen girls watching one's every step and whispering comments.

Quite a dozen girls there were. Betty Barton, as captain of the Fourth Form, was well to the fore, and arm in arm with her chum, Polly Linton, while Paula Creel, looking extremely elegant for the occasion, was eyeing the man in question somewhat sadly.

"Pewwaps it isn't the detective," she murmured in disappointment. "I am suah detectives don't look like that. Why, he is not even weawing a beard! He isn't disguised at all!"

Polly Linton simply gulped at that.

"Disguised?" she echoed. "Oh, gracious! Did you expect him to come in wearing a wig and beard and fancy-dress, then?"

The girls' laughter died away, however, as the man came into earshot, for it would not be good form to smile at a stranger, although they could not pretend possibly that they were not interested in him.

It was not every day that a detective arrived at Morcove School!

Of course, everyone knew that this one was coming. Everyone knew, moreover, why he was coming. And here, at last, he was!

He halted by the group, and raised his hat.

Very keen-eyed he was, with a clean-shaven face and a general air of stubbornness.

"I have come to see Miss Somerfield," he said, clipping off his words brusquely. "Can one of you girls direct me, please, to her room?"

"Yes, wather, deah geal—I mean, deah sir! Pway follow me, y'know!"

"This way!" said Polly.

And there was quite a rush for the position of guide. But Paula Creel had got there first, and it was her whom the detective chose to follow.

Paula, looking extremely important and rather excited, led the way across the quiet, solemn-looking hall to the corridor where Miss Somerfield had her study.

"Second doah on the wight!" announced Paula eventually, and she halted before the door and tapped on it.

Strictly speaking, the visitor should have been announced first by a maid, but Paula was too excited to think of this. She wanted things to happen as quickly as possible, and once the detective interviewed Miss Somerfield, then things might happen indeed.

Miss Somerfield, surprised at the unannounced visitor, jumped out of her chair, but greeted him with a smile, and pushed forward a chair.

Just a whisper of voices Paula heard, and then she scurried away to join her friends, who had gathered now in a small crowd in the hall.

"Miss Somerfield there?" Betty demanded.

"Yes, wather!"

"Good!"

"And now," decided Polly Linton, "something's sure to happen. What'll be the next thing, I wonder? I suppose they'll send for Miss Massingham and Ethel Courtway and Mary again."

"Mary, of course!" said Ursula Wade, and Ursula smiled in her queer way.

An unpleasant face Ursula had, and it was clear to see that another girl's misfortune gave her a great deal of joy.

"Yes, Mary," said Betty, more quietly and more worriedly. "But there's no reason why they should send for her more than for the others. She changed a pound note in the tuck-shop, it's true; but, then, so did the others. I don't see, just because there's a mistress and monitress concerned, that they shouldn't be questioned, too."

"Not likely they would change a false note!" scoffed Ursula Wade. "That's not in reason at all. But Mary—we know what we've heard about her!"

"Only rumour!"

"No smoke without fire!" said Ursula, with a nod of her head. "A lot of truth in that proverb, you know, Betty. Miss Massingham doesn't go out to mysterious houses on the cliffs at night; Miss Massingham doesn't have strange visitors who don't let their faces be seen."

"Shush!"

Ursula would have gone on, though, had not Polly Linton, with scant politeness, but great determination, put her hand before that girl's mouth to prevent further utterance.

Miss Massingham, their Form-mistress, was crossing the hall, with a very serious look on her face.

Miss Massingham at first seemed not to notice the girls; then she halted just before she reached them, and gave them an angry look.

"Betty, Polly, all of you," she exclaimed, "why are you gathered here? You know quite well that the hall is not the place to hold a general meeting. Begone at once!"

Hurriedly that meeting broke up then, and Miss Massingham stayed just long enough to watch them all disappear out of the school door.

Had she stayed a second longer, she would have seen Ursula Wade peering cautiously round the corner.

"Gone!" Ursula whispered to the other girls, who, in a more scattered group, were just outside the school door. "She's gone into Miss Somerfield's room. Ethel Courtway next, I suppose!"

"Oh, they'll all have to go," agreed Madge Minden in her confident way—"monitress, mistress, and anyone else! After all, one might pass a false note without realising it. Any of us might. All the detective wants to do is to make inquiries, and find out, if possible, the origin of each note."

"Of each one? What does the origin of the good ones matter?" asked Polly Linton, for Polly had not the beginnings of a detective in her. She was far too harum-scarum.

Madge Minden, however, laughed.

"Goose!" she said playfully. "And how is he to know which was the dud note? If he can trace back all the notes, though, there's a chance he may trace one of a doubtful character to someone outside the school. Suppose a dozen false notes are passed in the district, and suppose many notes are traced back to the same person—why, then, they have just to watch that person and examine every note that he or she passes."

"Then it mayn't be Mary at all!" exclaimed Grace Garfield, in some disappointment. "Goodness, what a shock! We mayn't even have much excitement here at all!"

"No, we may not" Ursula agreed. "For I'm quite ready to believe that Mary Cavendish could fool the police, or anyone else she chose. But I know what I think, and perhaps I may mention it to the detective!"

Defiantly she looked about her then, and that statement was taken with mingled feelings by the others.

"I don't see that it is your business," Betty demurred.

"Don't want to get Morcove mixed up in it," was Madge Minden's opinion, while Polly Linton shook her head, and gave Ursula a look that could not in any way be translated as one of approval.

Polly did not like Ursula at all, and never took any trouble to conceal the fact.

"I shall do as I please in the interest of justice!" Ursula said maliciously. "If Mary isn't guilty—well, no harm is done."

"Harm is done!" corrected Madge decidedly. "Until there is proof, we ought not to mention her name."

"Proof?" demanded Ursula. "Good gracious, haven't we proof, I'd like to know?"

"No, we haven't."

"Well, where is Mary now but in the school laboratory," Ursula demanded, "experimenting with chemicals? She is there every spare hour she has. Why should she experiment, except perhaps to help a gang of forgers? Her father was an experimenter, too. He lived alone in a lonely house, I've heard, and now Mary is carrying on with the same gang!"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Betty.

But Betty did not speak with any conviction. She felt rather anxious herself, and rather concerned. She felt still more concerned when, some minutes later, Ethel Courtway, the head monitress of Morcove, appeared in the school doorway.

"Where's Mary? Has anyone seen Mary Cavendish?" she asked. "Betty, is she in your study? Will you find her, please? She's about somewhere."

"In the laboratory, I think," said Ursula Wade. "She usually is there. Shall I see?"

But, as it happened, there was no need for her to go and see, for Madge Minden pointed to a figure that was coming forward towards them from the gates. Mary Cavendish it was they all could see, and Ursula had been wrong. For the laboratories were on an upper floor of the school, and not outside the gates.

"Mary!"

Waving hands hailed her, and Mary Cavendish came forward at a run. Her cheeks were flushed, and the mud on her shoes combined to tell that she had been for an energetic walk that afternoon.

In that there was nothing unusual, but Ursula Wade looked at the peculiar mud on those shoes and winked. What Ursula meant to convey they all knew.

She meant that Mary had been to that mysterious house on the edge of the cliff some miles away, a house that was in imminent danger of falling into the sea.

"You're wanted in Miss Somerfield's study at once, Mary," said Ethel. "But you'd better take your coat off first—and," she added, "better change your shoes as well. But hurry, please!"

Mary Cavendish's pretty blue eyes expressed surprise, but Betty Barton, always sympathetic, quickly eased her mind.

"It's only about the pound note," she said. "They haven't finished ferreting it out yet."

"Lucky," chimed in Ursula, "for you!"

That remark Mary either did not hear or else ignored, for she smiled a "Thank you!" at Betty and walked into the school, conscious that every eye was upon her, yet apparently heedless of the fact.

"Queer girl!" observed Madge Minden, frowning. "I can't make her out at all. But if it's true that she led a lonely life, and that her father's dead, perhaps it's understandable. She's not used to other girls."

"No; and perhaps it's wise to keep to oneself when one might let slip stray remarks—when one might arouse suspicions," put in Ursula hastily.

"Oh, stuff!" said Polly.

"Yes, wathah; wubbish, deah geal," Paula rebuked. "I'm afwaid you have a suspicious natuah, Ursula, of which I do not appwove."

"I don't care if you don't!" Ursula retorted.

"I dare say when I'm not present you say the samo things about Mary as I do. You believe she's up to some queer game, just as I do. Carla Vansittart does, I know."

"Oh, Carla!" said Betty. "Carla hates Mary."

"And Mary's afraid of Carla—don't forget that," said Ursula quickly. "Didn't Mary fag for her once? Why? Because she thought Carla had found out her secret."

Betty did not reply. She took Polly's arm, and Polly took Paula's.

"Coming in to get tea?" Betty said.

"Yes, and scones. Come on, Paula," urged Polly. "Don't stand there looking like a boiled owl!"

"A boiled owl!" gasped Paula. "Well, weally, Polly, what an expwession! I was thinking, you know. I have a good mind——"

"Not a bad one," said Polly. "This way, and mind the step."

"I did not mean that I had a good mind in that way," said Paula quickly. "You misunderstood me."

"Go hon!"

Paula shook her head sadly at her friend's slang, and Polly Linton chuckled.

"I was speaking in metaphor, deah geal; I meant I had the intention, you know, of looking into this mattah. Pewwaps if I investigate things, I might thwow suspicion off Mawy——"

"And very likely bring it on yourself," laughed Betty. "You'll be well advised, Paula, to leave well alone. Don't meddle in things like forgery. We don't want the police coming to fetch you away in a Black Maria."

"Good gwacious! You don't think they would?" asked Paula, in dire alarm.

"They might," said Polly seriously. "Think of being in prison with only bread and water, you know, and no comfortable armchair."

"But I should not go to pwison. I should wefuse——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Lot of good that!" Polly chuckled.

"I shall act as a detective, and bwing my bwain to beah on the mattah. I shall make inquiwies, you know, and then everything will be cleahed up. You see?"

"I see a silly goose," answered Betty. "Come and have tea, and think of something more cheerful."

With Polly dragging at her arm, there was really nothing else for Paula to do; but during tea she was very thoughtful indeed. Her mighty brain was working, and thinking out great theories and possibilities.

But the end of all that theorising was that Paula Creel, in her heart, was convinced that grave suspicion rested on Mary Cavendish, much though she liked the girl, and much though she would have liked to believe her innocent.

For Mary Cavendish things looked black indeed.

A Set-back for Carla.

CARLA VANSITTART looked cautiously to the right and to the left, then, assured that she was not being watched, and there was not another human being in sight, she rested her machine against the side of the old house and crept near to the edge of the cliff.

A slight drizzle of rain was falling, and below, at the foot of the cliffs, the sea boomed away mercilessly.

The cliff was very high there, and it needed great nerve to go near to it—not only on account of the height, but also because one never knew at what moment that piece of cliff might go tumbling down to splash amidst the rocks and sea below. Only daring spirits ever ventured to the edge of the cliff; only venturesome spirits ever discovered the old house. For to reach it one had to walk across fields from the roving lane that wandered from one small village to the next. It was scarcely a lane at all, merely a cart-track, and few were the people who saw it and cared to make use of it.

But Carla Vansittart, in the darkness, had cycled along it, splashing her way through mud, and roaming her way across the bumpy field to where she had been able dimly to see the gaunt old house.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER! "Carla! What are you doing here?" As she heard the words, the Fifth Former stared at the face she could see framed at the window. "Mother—you!" she gasped.

A queer place it was to visit at any time, and queerer still at night. Betty Barton and Polly had visited it at night, having found it by chance in the daytime; but there were few others who would have cared for the experience.

Carla herself was not liking the loneliness, and she shivered with something more than cold as the wind whistled through her and blew her against the side of the old house.

Suppose it toppled into the sea—suppose the crumbling rock were to give way!

She had a strong inclination there and then to snatch her bicycle and ride away in safety, away from the danger and loneliness. She would have gone, too, had there not come from somewhere in the empty house the sound of a footstep.

Then she could not move at all, but stood there

rooted to the ground. Not to save her life could she move then.

Haunted! The old house haunted!

The footsteps were moving nearer, and now—now there came a shaft of light which in the sudden darkness blinded her. It shone full into her eyes, and involuntarily she put up her arm in defence.

But that light was not a ghostly gleam—it was the very modern and ordinary gleam of a powerful electric torch, which vanished just as quickly as it had appeared.

"Carla, what are you doing here?"

Startled she was by that voice—by the suddenness, and by the fact that she recognised it instantly.

Her arm dropped to her side, and she blinked and stared through the darkness at the dim face which she could only just discern framed at a broken window close to her.

"Mother, you—you here!"

"And you!" echoed the grim voice of Mrs. Vansittart. "May I ask what you are doing here, pray? Come inside—through this window."

Carla obeyed meekly, but her heart was beating at a frantic rate with excitement.

For what was her mother doing in this lonely house at such an hour—what possible reason could she have for coming here?

"I thought it was Mary at first," her mother said, in a more calm tone. "That is why I flashed the torch. The foolish child has made a practice of coming here and standing on the edge of the cliff looking out to sea, and waving her arm until I quite thought she had gone insane——"

She broke off then to assist her daughter through the window. So cold were Carla's hands, despite their thick covering of gloves, that she had been scarcely able to get a grip on the sill, and would have fallen but for the timely aid.

"Mary—oh, yes," she said, when at last her feet were on the floor inside and all danger seemed past. "That is just why I came here, mother—to see why she comes."

Mrs. Vansittart, in the darkness, smiled. Carla knew that, even though it was too dark to see.

"Come—why should she come," her mother asked, "but to revive old memories? This was her home—this is where she spent the greater part of her life with her crazy father. It is sheer sentiment, that is all."

"Perhaps."

"What do you mean?"

Carla dug her hands into the pockets of her coat and looked out of the window cautiously, then she looked beyond her mother up the dark staircase.

"Better not talk too loudly, mother. We may not be the only people here."

"What do you mean, Carla? Who else would come to this tumbledown old place, in the name of goodness?"

"Who else? Why, her accomplices! Oh, you think Mary is merely harmless, and crazy on chemistry, as her father was. You think that she can be trusted, mother; but I know better. I hate that girl!"

Passion there was in her voice, and Mrs. Vansittart nodded her head.

"Yes, you hate her. You always have done. But I have never asked you two to be friends. In different Forms, why should you meet at all, Carla?"

"Oh, we needn't!" Carla shrugged. "There is this to be said for her. She doesn't force herself upon me—she doesn't let anyone know we are connected at all. Sometimes I have felt like telling people that she is only there on charity—only there because you pay her fees."

"But you have never done that, I hope?"

"No. But when I see her swaggering about, and putting on airs, and not being humble—as she ought to be—why then, mother, I feel I—I——"

"Yes, yes, Carla; but why worry if she does not interfere with you? She is quite harmless."

"Perhaps. I know better. Who is this mysterious visitor that comes to see her—hiding her face as though she's ashamed to let it be seen? And why is she always experimenting in the laboratory, and why does she come here at nights?"

Mrs. Vansittart made an angry, impatient exclamation.

"Really, Carla, I wish you would attend to your own affairs. You are positively suffering from hallucinations. The girl is keen on chemistry—she is going to win a scholarship to get a degree in science—so why shouldn't she study hard? I should be extremely annoyed, I may say, if she did otherwise."

"Study—if it were only study, yes," said Carla. "All would be well. But why does she invent mysterious liquid to erase ink, and such things as that?"

"Who told you that?" demanded her mother sharply.

"I found out. I've found out many queer things. There was a false pound-note passed at Morcove the other day, mother, and Mary passed a note. She didn't get it from you, she got it from that queer visitor who came to see her. That visitor is someone we do not know, and that means she has secret friends who give her money—money to carry on experiments, I do not doubt."

"Nonsense, Carla. Do not be absurd!"

Carla tossed her head.

"Oh, you may think it absurd now, mother; but it won't seem so absurd when she is found to be associated with a gang of forgers—when that gang is found to have its quarters here in this lonely place. Her father was a queer man, as we know Perhaps he was mixed up with a coining gang or forgers."

"My dear Carla, what perfect rubbish you talk! I forbid you to go about as though you were sent down to Morcove from Scotland Yard, for you only succeed in making yourself utterly ridiculous, too."

"But, mother——"

"That is enough, Carla. I came here to search for a pendant I lost the other day, and I am glad for two reasons I came. Glad because I found it, and glad because you have now told me all this nonsense."

"But it isn't nonsense, mother. I tell you it was she passed that false note, and that she comes to this place to meet forgers, who have their headquarters here. Why else should she manufacture those strange liquids?"

"I do not know, Carla, and I do not care," said Mrs. Vansittart sternly. "Please be good enough not to say anything further on the subject. You have already said more than enough. It so happens that I know the visitor she received—an old friend of mine who happened to be passing the school, and whom I asked to take the girl a pound-note as payment for some experiments. She kept her face covered merely because she had

a bad cold, and did not wish it to be seen. That is all."

"Oh!"

Carla was too thunderstruck then to reply, too utterly amazed to know what to say. For that explanation certainly took the wind clean out of her sail.

"My friends are not in the habit either of passing false notes, Carla, so the less you say on that score the better pleased I shall be."

"I see, mother. I didn't know."

"So please do not go routing out hornets' nests, and making matters not only unpleasant for yourself, but incidentally for me. And you will please me greatly by never coming near to this place again!"

Sullenly then Carla said good-bye, and, conscious that her mother was watching, she walked across the field, and then, lighting her lamp, set about the unpleasant, muddy journey back to the school.

She had failed lamentably, after a tiring, loathsome journey, and she did not know even now whether somewhere in that house was the clue she wanted. But one thing was impressed on her mind.

Now more than ever she hated Mary Cavendish.

Her mother, who was always so charming to her, always so kind, had been harsh recently on two occasions, and both of them had been when the name of Mary Cavendish had cropped up in conversation.

Her mother was defending Mary, was carving a career for her, and bitter jealousy stirred Carla's heart. That anyone could have come between her and her mother she could not believe, but there was no doubt in the matter at all.

Fancy her mother, a woman who disliked muddy walking and the rain, going to this place at any time! She had gone merely to persuade Mary Cavendish that she should not risk her life and worry herself by revisiting the place where she had lived with her father.

Her mother had secrets with Mary, too. Why had she never heard about this friend of her mother's, and why had Mary been given that book of formulas by that stranger?

She was out in the cold, and it was Mary who was taken into confidence. That was hard to bear, very hard indeed, and Carla hated the girl as she had never hated her before.

All very well for her mother to make plausible excuses, but Carla knew better. Mary was at work on something mysterious, something very, very mysterious, and Carla meant to find out what it was, whether her mother liked it or not.

Even if she was wrong, even if Mary was innocent, was it not possible that the police could be made to suspect?

That daring thought took even Carla's breath away, and frightened her rather; but the thought of Mary's being out of the way in disgrace, perhaps even in a reformatory, brought gladness to the unscrupulous girl.

Now was the time to get rid of Mary, if ever! For if she stayed, might not the bond between her and Mrs. Vansittart get closer? Might not her mother get more and more fond of Mary?

That dread possibility was enough to decide Carla in her course of action. Mary should be proved guilty of passing that forged note, perhaps of making it herself, even though of such a crime she might be perfectly innocent!

How was she going to do that? She did not know, but doubtless, she reflected, some opportunity would present itself—and she would not miss it!

What Ursula Overheard.

"MAWY!"

Paula Creel had been silent for some moments. It was rarely, so Polly said, that Paula was silent, save, of course, when she was asleep. But now she had been silent, although from time to time she had looked rather curiously at Mary.

Mary, contentedly getting on with her tea, had pretended not to notice that, although more than once, finding Paula's eyes resting curiously upon her, she had smiled in a friendly way. It was rather awkward to have a person looking at one, and to smile was the only course possible.

Paula had smiled in a forced sort of way, too, as though she had been caught in some nefarious act.

It puzzled Mary rather, but it did not worry her, and now Paula had broken the silence.

The silence had been all the more queer because she and Mary were quite alone in the study. Betty and Polly had wandered off to give their opinion on a sketch that Tess Trelawney had just finished—a head and shoulders of Madge Minden.

Paula had chosen to remain because, for one thing, she had already given her learned opinion of the sketch, and because, for another, she wanted to stay and toast her dainty feet before the fire.

"Mawy," said Paula again and still more awkwardly—"Mawy, be weassured, deah geal."

Mary paused, the tea-cup half-way to her mouth. She had only just returned from her interview with Miss Somerfield, and tea when she had arrived had been cold. But Paula had, with admirable and unusual forethought, kept the kettle on the boil, so all was well.

Ever since she had entered the study, in fact, Paula had been unusually thoughtful and considerate. Not, of course, that in the ordinary way of things she was a thoughtless, inconsiderate person, but there had been just that little ceremonious manner that told of her kindness for some special purpose.

Whatever Paula's opinion of her qualities might be, it was evident to Mary that she was not a diplomatist. The last thing that Paula was able to do was to conceal her feelings.

So now, when her remark came suddenly and unexpectedly, Mary felt that it was coming "out."

"Pway be weassured."

"About what?" asked Mary, half inclined to laugh.

"About that pound-note, deah geal," said Paula, surprised, apparently, that Mary should not know just what she herself was thinking.

"Pound-note?" echoed Mary, who was slightly puzzled. Then recollection came. When she had not been thinking of Paula, her thoughts had been upon her experiments. Nothing, certainly, had been farther from her mind than the false pound-note. "Oh, that! Goodness, what have I to be reassured about?"

"Weal, geals are apt to talk," said Paula, with an old-fashioned wag of the head. "But pay no attention to them, deah geal. Your fwiends know bettah, you know. Pway don't imagine that we believe you are in with a gang of forgahs," said Paula seriously.

Mary brought down her cup with a clink; she had all but dropped it, in fact, so surprised was she.

"Forgers—I?" she gasped. "What do you mean?"

Paula looked really quite astonished.

"Good gwacious! Don't imagine that I am suggesting that, deah geal," she said. "I was only

THE SNEAK AT WORK! **"Would you like to see something interesting—someone making pound notes?" said Ursula, to the girls in the study. "What on earth do you mean?" gasped Madge Minden.**

saying that we don't believe it, you know. I'm suah you are not at all the sort of girl to get mixed up with forgahs."

Mary laughed merrily then.

"Well, I hope not," she said. "But how quaint you are, Paula! What ever makes you say that? Surely the girls——" Suddenly then she became serious. "You don't mean that the girls are suggesting it was I who passed the note?"

Paula, quite distressed, shook her head.

"Good gwacious, deah geal! They—people, that is, you know, wumoah——"

"Because they can if they want to," went on Mary lightly. "I really assure you, Paula, that I do not care that much what they think!"

She gave a defiant flick of the fingers.

"Yes, wather, I quite agwee. But I want to tell you that we don't think it, you know," explained Paula. "Pewwaps things look wather black, you know——"

"What?"

"And pewwaps," resumed Paula, feeling that things were not going quite as easily as they might—"pewwaps the evidence does point towards you, so the geals are not exactly to blame. They don't know you as well as I do, of course. I'm a wipping judge of chawactah. Geals who aren't think that the evidence is vewy stwange."

"They do?" frowned Mary. "They think it very strange, do they? Oh!"

"Yes, wather. So pewwaps theah is evewy excuse," added Paula tolerantly.

"I suppose so."

Rather shortly Mary said that, and she cast a rather queer glance at Paula Creel, upon which Paula, still looking distressed, smiled. As a diplomatist Paula thought she had excelled, but this matter certainly required extra careful handling if one did not wish to offend Mary.

It wanted more handling, in fact, than Paula was able to give if the result were anything by which one could judge.

"I don't see how the evidence can point to me more than anyone else," murmured Mary as she raised her cup again. "But if the girls imagine it does—well, let them. I've noticed that they've been strange lately. I couldn't help noticing the looks they gave me, and the whispering that has gone on every time I have come in sight."

"Yes, wather; but don't take it to heart, deah geal——"

"I shan't."

"No, you are quite wight. Tweat them with contempt, you know I have complete faith in you."

Mary wanted to laugh then, for Paula really was being too funny for words; but she managed somehow to control her features. Paula meant to be kind, whatever else she was succeeding in being, and that was what one had to consider.

"Ah, well," said Mary philosophically. "Perhaps I ought to be pleased that I'm giving them something to talk about—someone to talk about. If it weren't me, you know, it would be someone else, wouldn't it?"

"Bai Jove, that's wight, deah geal! That is the cowwect spiwit. Of course, it is vewy unfortunate."

"Most."

"But it cannot be helped—and what cannot be helped, you know, must be endwahed."

"Exactly. So I shall just get on with preparation, now I've finished tea, and after that I shall make a few more hundred notes."

"Weally!"

Paula was quite startled, for Mary spoke with absolute seriousness.

"Oh, well, a hundred's an exaggeration," said Mary, simply bubbling with mirth inside "Scarcely a hundred, because they take time."

"Bai Jove!"

Paula's jaw dropped, and she simply blinked at the girl.

"Still, even fifty is something," sighed Mary, "in these days when money is none too easy to get. More pleasant, anyway, to make fifty notes than to write fifty lines, eh?"

"Y-yes, wather!" murmured Paula.

"So to Latin, French, and then the laboratory," smiled Mary.

She threw back her head and laughed at Paula's startled expression, and Paula's troubled frown disappeared as though by magic. What a sigh of relief she gave, too!

"Bai Jove, you were joking!" she gasped. "Oh, deah, and I thought at first you meant it, you know. You're weally as bad as Polly at teasing."

"Ha, ha! And you trusted me, you know," teased Mary. "Oh, Paula, I shall die of laughing at you one of these days."

And Mary, in business-like manner, cleared her tea preparatory to getting to work, while Paula watched her thoughtfully—very thoughtfully indeed.

But neither she nor Mary was aware that up to the moment before Mary had laughed a girl had been listening outside the door. Ursula Wade could move as silently as a cat. Just enough she had heard before a door had opened along the passage, and then with a feigned air of unconcern she had walked on, annoyed, nevertheless, that she had not stayed to hear more.

And what a pity, too, that she had not!

Trembling with excitement, Ursula Wade was, and she walked up and down the corridor in some hesitation. She did not go to her study, but walked back to Madge Minden's study, where Betty Barton, Polly, and the three cheery girls who shared the study were laughing merrily.

Unceremoniously Ursula opened the door and peeped in.

The laughter stopped at once then, and Tess Trelawney put down the comic sketches that had been causing all the laughter. One of those sketches was of Ursula Wade with one mighty ear that had grown out of all proportion through constant listening at keyholes.

Perhaps it would have been good for Ursula to see that, but she did not even glance at the sketches. She could see them when she chose—when at some safe period the study was empty and she could search at her leisure.

"You want to see something interesting?" she said excitedly, her small eyes gleaming.

"Exciting?" said Polly. "Yes—what is it?"

For Polly was ready for anything that was "on."

"Someone making pound-notes," said Ursula casually, and she walked into the study and closed the door.

What a silence there was then, and how the girls looked at her!

"Someone making pound-notes?" echoed Madge Minden, in amazed tones. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Merely that someone is going to make pound-notes in the laboratory very soon," shrugged Ursula, as though that were quite an obvious thing for them to have supposed. "I thought you might be interested."

Betty Barton jumped up, and Ursula, with a glow of satisfaction, found everyone looking at her with eagerness and interest. She liked to "hold the floor" in this way, and it was a desire that was seldom satisfied.

Very rarely was Ursula able to command any sort of attention, save in a way that was uncomplimentary to her, but she did now.

"Who is it?" asked Madge Minden, although she could guess quite easily. "There must be a mistake."

"I just happened to overhear a word or two," said Ursula. "Just by chance, you know," and her eyes moved in their shifty way, not liking to meet the honest eyes that were staring at them.

"Um!" said Polly, and in that exclamation expressed a great deal of meaning.

"You needn't come if you don't want to, though," Ursula added. "I shall go, and it may be worth seeing. If you don't want to go, though ——"

And out of the room Ursula went, wishing that she had not been so impetuous, and anxious to go to someone who she knew would be interested—most interested, in fact.

She had thought rather late in the day of Carla Vansittart, who, as everyone knew at Morcove, hated Mary more than did anyone else in the school.

But she had told them now, and they could do as they wished.

Just for a second she waited outside the door to hear what they were going to do, but the sound of Polly's crossing towards the door soon made her hurry away, and Polly waited there until the footsteps disappeared.

"Well," said Betty, when Polly had given a nod of the head to signify that the coast was clear, "what about it?"

Madge Minden looked at Betty and wrinkled her forehead.

"I don't know what to think," she confessed. "Ursula listens at doors, and there's no reason to suppose she didn't hear the truth. But Mary wouldn't be likely to speak to herself, and therefore she must have been confiding in someone——"

"The mysterious visitor," exclaimed Polly excitedly.

"Oh, but Ursula said the study," objected Betty. "We haven't heard our door open. We know that squeak far too well to mistake it or miss it."

"We might have done," said Polly. "One can't always be sure. Remember, Betty, we were laughing a moment ago, and we shouldn't hear anything then."

"H'm!" said Madge Minden. "I can't make it out at all. I don't honestly know what to think. You say you saw Mary searching in the ground at that old house, Betty, and we all know that she had some very old coins she found there. Goodness knows, that would be sufficient reason for her going there—it was reason for your going."

That was true enough, and Betty inclined her head in assent.

"Yes, we only went there because we thought there might be treasure-trove. Not that we found much, though——"

"Only a silly old will," grimaced Polly, "which is illegible—a thing we can't read because the ink has all faded away."

"Well, anyway, you found something," went on Madge, reasoning things out. "And that shows that Mary didn't just pretend to find the coins. Of course, I admit that the coins might have been found accidentally when she really went for some

HER MOTIVE DISCOVERED!

As Mrs. Vansittart moved forward the detective whipped away the will. "No madam," he exclaimed. "This will be kept to be thoroughly examined. I think I see now why you wanted a liquid to erase ink!"

other purpose. Supposing she did go there to a meeting with counterfeiters, the coins and the will would still have been revealed by the house crumbling away just where it did."

"Ye-yes," nodded Betty. "But that doesn't take us any further, Madge. It puts us back—it makes it seem impossible that Mary does go there to meet counterfeiters."

It certainly did, and Madge smiled wryly.

"Yes, that's true enough, Betty. Perhaps she does—and perhaps Ursula is right. I hate the idea of spying, though—I don't like a bit our going to watch her work in the laboratory, but there is no one there to see what she does, so it is just possible she has to finish off the notes by some chemical process, or make the watermark in some way."

"Possibly," sighed Betty. "But she doesn't seem that sort of girl."

"They never do," Polly remarked, with a wise shake of the head. "But one has to be prepared to suspect everyone, I suppose. It would be interesting to find out if Ursula is right, of course—provided we could do it without spying——"

"Which we can't," Tess Trelawney said.

Madge Minden, however, thought otherwise.

"One thing we can do," she said. "We can find out if Ursula is right at all. Ursula may have been pulling our legs—tricking us—but that doesn't seem likely, considering her excitement. And if she weren't—if she overheard something, then perhaps she heard it accurately. Let's see if Mary goes to the laboratory at all. That ought to be some proof. She doesn't always go in the evening, does she?"

"No—not in the evening," Betty said. "She'll probably be doing her prep. now—which is what Polly and I ought to be doing. If we can find out, though—if she goes out and admits she's going to the laboratory, we'll let you know."

But they stayed on there talking so long that there was little time at all for them to do their preparation, and in the end they scurried along to Study No. 12, almost having forgotten about Mary and her mysterious behaviour.

They burst into the study, to find Paula alone and busy with her preparation.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Betty. "Where's Mary?"

"Mawy?" murmured Paula abstractedly, while she tried to translate an easy Latin sentence into English. "Bai Jove, she's not heah, you know; she's gone to the laboratory."

Betty looked at Polly, and Polly looked at Betty; then they closed the door, and hurried back to Madge's study even more quickly than they had left it.

Mary was in the laboratory, so perhaps—perhaps, after all, Ursula was right!

The Investigators.

CARLA VANSITTARTS study on the Fifth Form passage was empty and in darkness when Ursula tapped on the door, but it did not remain empty long. Empty studies had a queer fascination for Ursula, and she hated the idea of a room being at her disposal to search as she willed, and yet not being able to search it.

So she marched in, after a cautious look up and down the corridor, and switched on the light.

Where Carla was she had not the faintest idea; but she was evidently not in the study, and was perhaps not in the school.

For the upper school had no common-room, and if a girl was not in her study she was either in somebody else's, or out of the school altogether.

That Carla was in someone else's study for more than a few seconds was not at all likely, for she was not a girl who had many friends.

The low state of the fire showed that she had been out some time, and it was an accurate guess of Ursula's that she was not in the school at all.

For a while, then, Ursula would be safe, and if by chance Carla should return suddenly, she could always pretend that she had only just looked into the study at that very moment. In a matter that required only cunning, Ursula fancied that she would be rather hard to beat.

With even ten minutes at her disposal she would be able to look round the study, and perhaps be able to find out a few interesting facts about Carla. She knew all too little from her view-point about Carla.

Ursula was interested in the private affairs of every girl in the school; their private affairs mattered much more to her than the everyday things about them that everyone knew. She wanted to find scandal, and, given time, she would have done. Inside Carla's desk there were bills from dressmakers—bills that were sufficiently large for her not to want Miss Somerfield to see.

But Ursula was not given time. There was a footstep in the corridor, and in a second Ursula had walked to the door, and was just switching off the light as Carla herself, in a very bad temper, arrived.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Carla, in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh, here you are!" said Ursula readily. "I just came to find you. Your light was on, so I thought you were at home."

"My light on! I didn't leave it on!" said Carla quickly, and pushed her way into the study. "Someone else has been here——"

"Yes, I saw a girl coming out," said Ursula, who was never at a loss for a convenient untruth. "Someone going to look for you probably."

And as she spoke she took stock of Carla, noticing the mudstained shoes and stockings, and the fact that the girl was obviously tired. Carla had been a long way, she judged.

"Oh, well, that's all right! Oh, what a fire!" Carla exclaimed. And, taking off her glove, she prodded the glowing coals with a poker. "You might have put a few lumps of coal on for me," she grumbled. "This isn't a very cheery home-coming. What did you come for, anyway?"

There was, so far as she knew, no reason why a member of the Fourth Form should want to see her.

"I came to give you some interesting information," said Ursula. "I happened to overhear something I thought you interest you—about Mary."

"Mary!"

At that name Carla was all attention, and put down the poker with a clatter into the grate.

"Mary—yes, I happened to overhear," said Ursula, hurrying over that portion of her statement, "that Mary is going to be at work in the laboratory—making pound-notes."

Carla was taking off her other glove then, but she paused, and stared at Ursula as though unable to believe her ears.

"Mary making pound-notes! What are you saying, Ursula?"

"Only what I heard Mary herself saying. Lucky, perhaps, that I chanced to be passing by—that I chanced to overhear her," she amended hurriedly.

Carla nodded her head. At any other time she would have expressed distaste at eavesdropping,

although, when the emergency arose, she was capable of it herself.

"And she said she was going to make pound-notes?"

"Yes, in the laboratory. She's there now," said Ursula. "I thought you might like to know. It would be better if a senior girl—a girl who Miss Somerfield would listen to—saw her," she explained, and she intended that flattery to have its appeal.

"I see," said Carla slowly. "This is most surprising. You say she's there at this moment?"

"Yes, at this very moment," nodded Ursula. "We can catch her red-hot in the act. Are you coming?"

Carla whipped off her coat and threw it into the chair and went. It was an opportunity too good, she thought, to be missed.

"Yes, I'm coming," was all she said, but in her tone there was a wealth of feeling.

"Good!" smiled Ursula. "I think we can put an end to her tricks for ever now."

But Carla was not intending to discuss things very deeply with Ursula. She had no fondness for that girl, and she could not help wishing that her informant had been some other and more likeable person.

All the same, it was information upon which she had to act, and she hurried in company with Ursula, although slightly ahead of her, up the wide staircase that led to the laboratory.

A light was burning inside, and Ursula dropped to her knees and peeped through the key-hole.

"Mind!" cautioned Carla. "If anyone sees you——"

"Oh, I can hear if anyone comes," said Ursula lightly. "Yes, there she is; and, my goodness, she's busy, too! Shall we go in?"

"Depends," murmured Carla. "Is she making notes at all? Can you see what's she's doing?"

But Ursula shook her head. As Mary was rather round the corner it was impossible to see clearly just what she was doing.

"Give her time," Carla advised, in an undertone. "The last thing we want to do is to hurry her, you know. Let her get really busy, and then we can burst in. Choose a moment," she added cunningly, "when she's just away from the desk."

Ursula nodded her head, and continued to watch through the key-hole while Carla kept guard, ready to warn her accomplice should anyone appear in sight.

For awhile there was no sound, and then from below came the patter of footsteps.

Carla made a quick movement towards Ursula, and that girl, taking the wrong meaning for the signal, whipped open the door of the laboratory.

There was nothing then for Carla to do but to follow her, and together they entered the laboratory, just ahead of three girls who came hurrying excitedly up the staircase.

Mary Cavendish, at work at her bench, turned quickly as they entered.

Her glance at first was quite casual; but, as Ursula rushed forward, she stood away from her bench with knitted brows annd a perplexed frown upon her brow.

"Caught in the act!" said Ursula triumphantly, and rushed to the desk.

"Yes, caught red-hot!" nodded Carla. "Don't let her touch anything, Ursula."

But Ursula was looking rather blankly at the chemistry bench, for on that bench there were the usual appliances; but there were no pound-notes at all! What she had expected to see Ursula did not quite know; but there was certainly no little mill churning out notes, nor even a miniature printing press.

"Oh!" she gasped.

And Carla Vansittart looked blankly at the desk, turning away from it only as Madge Minden, Betty Barton, and Polly burst into the laboratory.

They stood quite still, staring at the desk and at the other three, while Mary looked angry as well as surprised, regarding them intently.

"And now," she said, in calm, even tones, "perhaps you will tell me the meaning of this?"

Because of the Formula.

MARY CAVENDISH'S voice had a hard ring, and it echoed in the laboratory as she flashed her eyes angrily upon the group of sheepish girls who regarded her.

"Oh, we came," said Betty, "to—to——"

"Because——" murmured Madge, feeling perfectly stupid.

"Just to see what you were doing."

That was Polly, of course. There was no secretiveness about Polly. They had come just to see what Mary was doing, so why not confess it? Why not be perfectly honest? There was no harm ever in honesty that Polly was able to see.

"To see what I am doing?" murmured Mary. "Well, I'm experimenting. That is all."

"Yes, but with what?" demanded Carla. "We meant to catch you in the act, but you were too clever for us. Another time——"

"Too clever?" repeated Mary. "Oh, why, I don't mind anyone seeing what I am doing. I am busy with a formula now, and I have found it out at last!"

"What formula?" asked Carla. "There is no sense in pretending now, Mary. I have been watching you. Everyone has been, and the detective is on your track."

Mary smiled faintly.

"Oh, please don't be so dramatic, Carla," she said. "There is no reason at all why I should be afraid of a detective. I am not ashamed of experimenting, and there is no reason why I should be."

"Oh, you're clever enough to conceal what you're doing!" retorted Carla. "When inquiries are made, of course, you'll just chance to be at work on something perfectly innocent. But what about your marvellous discoveries in aid of your counterfeiting friends, who have been meeting on the old house on the cliffs?"

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mary. "What are you saying?"

"And what about your mysterious visitor who comes so strangely?" went on the enraged Fifth-Former, who, foiled at her desired denouement, was giving way to blind anger. "Perhaps you will tell us what you are experimenting upon?"

"With pleasure, yes. I——"

But there Mary broke off, suddenly remembering her promise to Mrs. Vansittart. She had given her word not to say anything to Carla of the experiments she was making, nor to let that girl know for whom they were being made. So, instead of giving the ready answer that had sprung to her lips, she shook her head negatively.

"I'm sorry I cannot say."

"You can't say!"

A chorus that was, and Carla's eyes gleamed.

"You cannot say! You mean it wouldn't do for you to say?"

"Yes, it would not do for me to say."

"Because you are afraid of what might happen?"

"Yes."

Mary's candour took their breath away.

"You're on an experiment for the mysterious person who came to visit you, I suppose?" Carla said viciously. "That is who it is, of course! I can guess that."

"Yes."

Betty Barton frowned then, for Mary's answers were not at all satisfactory. She could understand the girl's frame of mind readily enough, but the answers were not the best that Mary could give in her own interests.

"I think you ought to answer—for your own sake," she said quietly. "Rumours are flying about, and rumours do no one any good. It wouldn't be pleasant if the detective——"

"The detective is here."

That fresh voice, breaking in suddenly upon their conversation, caused every head to turn, and there was a gasp as framed in the doorway was the keen-eyed man who earlier in the afternoon interviewed the headmistress.

He advanced now straight into the room, and halted before the girls, looking from one to the other of them until his eyes rested upon Mary Cavendish.

"And what," he demanded, "is it that might be awkward or unpleasant for me to hear?"

There was a silence, and no one quite liked to meet his eyes. Everyone instead looked at Mary. For this was her affair. She was in deep water now, and the best thing she could do was to get out of it as quickly as possible.

"She won't answer," returned Carla shortly. "I came here to see what she is up to——"

"Ah! That is precisely my reason for coming here," nodded the detective. "I understand that Miss Cavendish is busy experimenting. You spend quite a good deal of your time in that way?"

"I do," said Mary. "And I don't see why I should not. If, instead of being interested in chemistry, I swotted Latin, there wouldn't be so much surprise."

"Possibly not," agreed the detective dryly. "But Latin, after all said and done, does not lend itself to the same variety of uses as chemistry. May I ask what your present experiment is?"

Mary hesitated then, and it was Carla who answered.

"Oh, we've asked her that already," Carla said. "And she won't answer! But I can tell you that it is not mere experimenting. She is doing it for some person."

"Ah! For whom?"

"For the mysterious visitor who comes to see her!" Carla finished excitedly. "Let her deny it!"

Quite calmly the detective turned to Carla.

"Perhaps you will be good enough," he suggested, "to remain silent for—shall we say two minutes?—while I am allowed to ask my questions and to obtain answers to them!"

Carla bit her lip and fell back a pace, her face dark with anger. To be snubbed in that way before juniors—it was too bad! And yet she had certainly asked for it!

"Now," said the detective, "is what this girl suggests correct? Are you making these experiments for a mysterious person?"

"Not for a mysterious person. For a woman who came here the other day."

"Ah! The woman from whom you obtained the pound-note?" nodded the detective quickly.

"Yes."

Carla nodded her head, and then, resting against the experiment bench, folded her arms. That was the very fact that she had wanted to elicit. It was elicited all right now without her aid.

Betty Barton grimaced at Madge Minden, and Madge nodded her head.

"And she came here to make some pound-notes!" broke in Ursula Wade. "I heard her telling someone!"

"Telling whom? We don't want hearsay evidence. Whom did she tell?"

"Paula Creel," said Ursula.

Betty Barton positively jumped then, and Carla looked at Ursula in surprise.

"Kindly request that girl to come here," said the detective. "This must be thrashed out!"

It was three or four minutes before Paula, all of a flutter, appeared on the scene. She had stayed to arrange her hair and to brush her dress, and to see that she had a nicely-scented hanky with her.

"You wequire my assistance?" she asked the detective sweetly.

What a chuckle there was at that innocent remark; but the detective did not chuckle, although he looked at Paula rather queerly.

"In a way, yes," he admitted.

"Vewy well. I shall be delighted to—ah—place my powahs of observation and detectifism at youah disposal," said Paula, with a gracious air. "Howevah, I may as well tell you in advance that I have decided that Mawy is quite innocent, you know."

"'Um!" said the detective, fingering his watch-chain. "It is always as well to decide a matter before it is investigated. But why I really require your presence is to know just what this girl said to you——"

"About making pound-notes," interposed Ursula, despite a gesture from the detective.

"About making pound-notes?" Paula frowned, and then suddenly her face cleared and she laughed merrily.

"Really," rebuked the detective, "it is no laughing matter!"

"Oh, deah! Sowwy, you know! But, weally, Mawy was joking. I took her sewiously at first. She said she was coming heah to make fifty pound-notes, y' know, and then I found she was wotting."

"Whatting?" asked the detective, in surprise.

"She means ragging—teasing," explained Betty, with a smile. "It's only her accent."

"Oh, I see!" nodded the detective. "She was being flippant. Is that it?"

"Yes, wather."

"Well, I do not think it likely that a girl would go about giving gratuitous information regarding her actions," said the detective. "But let us go back again. You are making this experiment at the expense of your visitor, and you cannot say what it is. It is a secret?"

"Yes, in a way."

"This woman is, of course, your guardian, Mrs. Vansittart?"

"Yes."

Carla Vansittart, whose expression had been undergoing a change, gave a violent start.

"My mother!" she exclaimed. "That is absurd! It was not my mother. My mother said it was a friend of hers. She told me so distinctly."

"It was your mother," said Mary. "I can't deny that. She didn't want me to let you know, though. I wouldn't have done, but for this."

"My mother has no secret from me, I tell you——" flared Carla.

But the detective held up his hand.

"Please, please!" he implored. "We don't want any bickering just now. You," he went on, addressing Mary. "Do you refuse to tell us what

manner of experiments you are carrying out? If you refuse, then I must interview Mrs. Vansittart. This must be thrashed out, of course."

"I can tell you another experiment I was on. One I have completed. It was a formula of my father's."

"Well?"

"A liquid to bring into prominence writing that has completely faded."

"Ah! And why did your father require such a liquid?"

"I—I don't know."

"You are sure that it is that?" the detective asked, giving her a keen look. "Have you some here that you can show us?"

Mary brought forward a dark bottle.

"Yes, this."

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid even now we are no better off. We have no faded writing. Writing only fades with years, and we don't carry years old parchment with us."

Then it was that Betty clapped her hands with excitement.

"Old parchment? Why, we have some!" she cried. "We have an old piece of paper with faded writing on it—or, rather, Mary has it. Mary, where is that old will?"

"The will?" exclaimed Mary. "Oh, in the study, Betty, in my grammar book."

That was just what the detective wanted, and in a moment Betty Barton was rushing off to fetch it. In the meantime, he went on questioning Mary.

"You are sure before we experiment that this liquid is not for erasing ink?" he asked. "I do not wish to trap you, but I warn you that I shall test this liquid thoroughly."

"No, that is not for erasing ink; but—but I have such a liquid," admitted Mary.

Then the detective became all eagerness and alertness.

"And what is that to be used for? Is that being made for Mrs. Vansittart?"

A brief hesitation there was, and then Mary nodded her head in assent. There was little use denying it when Mrs. Vansittart herself would soon be interviewed. Besides, what was there shameful in making such a liquid?

"Yes," said Mary.

"Thank you! That is all, then. I must see Mrs. Vansittart at once, and ask her a few questions."

He turned to go then; but, before he reached the door, Betty, all excitement, had entered, waving in her hand the old will they had discovered in the lonely house on the cliff.

"Here it is!" she panted, exhausted by that rush up and down the stairs. "An old will!"

The detective took it, looked at it, and then, with every eye upon him, placed it on the desk. Only Carla stood apart, biting her lip anxiously and vexatiously, frightened—though she would not have admitted it—by the recent disclosure.

IT MEANT MUCH TO HER! As the writing became legible the detective gave a cry. "Hallo!" he exclaimed. "This is a will made two hundred years ago by a Cavendish!" "Yes, he was one of my ancestors," said Mary.

"You do it," advised the detective. "I may blunder."

Mary Cavendish applied her liquid carefully. Some moments it took, and then, very slowly, the lost writing came into prominence, a faint brown. The brown became darker until it was a sepia tint, every word clearly legible.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the detective. "What is this? Last will and testament of one Cavendish, made two hundred years ago. Leaving his estates for ever to his heirs. Properly attested and witnessed, too!"

Mary Cavendish nodded her head.

"Yes, that man is one of my ancestors!" she exclaimed. "We had a portrait of him; he was the last Cavendish to own these estates. Then they passed into the hands of—of the Vansittarts," she added, with a look at Carla. "But now—oh, read!"

But Carla's face was suddenly pale, and she looked at the will in alarm.

"They are ours—the will is useless," she said. "Quite useless."

"Not now—now they are ours!" said Mary excitedly. "Oh, when was this found, and how? Oh, what a piece of luck?"

And then there entered on the scene a tall woman clad in a dark coat, with a collar turned up high and a hat pulled well down. In the doorway of the laboratory she halted beside the maid, who looked curiously into the room.

She would have drawn back then, but Carla Vansittart ran forward.

"Mother, mother, they have found a will. Tell them that it is wrong. It is useless."

Mrs. Vansittart hesitated on the threshold. Even then it looked as though she would have turned away; but there was no escape, and she entered the room boldly.

"What is all this?" she demanded. "I came to see you, Mary—to see if——"

Then she looked at the detective, and bowed her head.

"You, sir, are the detective, I presume?" she said coldly.

"At your service, madam. I have been making a few inquiries about the experiments this girl makes at your request."

"Oh, there is no secret about them. I merely set her to work in order that she may be kept busy and away from mischief. You have finished the experiment, Mary?"

"Yes, Mrs. Vansittart," Mary answered. "It is here."

She handed Mrs. Vansittart a bottle of liquid.

"This will obliterate ink?" asked Mrs. Vansittart casually. "Splendid. Now perhaps I can get the horrible ink-stains out of several valuable first editions I possess." And she looked challengingly at the detective, as though expecting him not to believe her reason for wanting that particular liquid.

He, however, took no notice.

"While you are here, madam," he said, "perhaps I can call your attention to this will of John George Cavendish, made two hundred years ago, leaving his estate for ever to his heirs, the Cavendishs."

Mrs. Vansittart gave a violent start, and for once lost her composure. She stared at the will, and then at Mary.

"So you found it!" she exclaimed. "You found it, and it is legible!"

"Made so by the wonderful fluid this girl has discovered—her father's formula," explained the detective.

"Your father's formula? Oh, what a fool I was," panted Mrs. Vansittart, "to give you that book! That is what he would do, of course. But now——"

She looked at the will closely, and then drew back.

"Very interesting," she remarked, "but quite useless, I'm afraid!"

And, as she spoke, her slim fingers took from the bottle the cork which Mary had rammed in, as a precaution.

Next, the woman leaned over the will, and leant at such an angle that one inch further forward and the liquid would be spilled from the bottle, erasing for ever the writing from the will, taking for ever the stains of ink from the paper, so that not even Mary's wonderful fluid could bring them back to legibility.

But that movement did not come, for the detective, quick as a flash, whipped away the will, and folded it hurriedly.

"No, madam," he exclaimed, "not this time! This will be kept, and be thoroughly examined. I think I see now why you were anxious to get a liquid that erased ink!"

Mrs. Vansittart panted for breath, and looked upon the detective with eyes that burned with hatred. Then, by a great effort, she composed herself, and elevated her chin scornfully.

"You will hear from my solicitors regarding this!" she said contemptuously.

Out of the room she swept, with Carla, white-faced, hurrying after her. The door closed upon them, and then Mary looked at the girls with flushed face and excited eyes.

"Oh, my goodness," she murmured, "to think that you found that will, and I didn't realise its value! Yet daddy had hunted for it for years. That was why he wanted that ink reviver. He knew we had been robbed of our lands. But now——"

"Now you'll get them back, and a good job, too!" said Polly. "Of all the mean schemers, that Mrs. Vansittart is the worst. Oh, Mary, what luck!"

* * * * *

Some time it took for the will to be examined and checked and compared with other wills, but Mrs. Vansittart made no fight. Only too well she knew, as her family before her had known, that the Cavendishs had been tricked out of their lands.

The counterfeit note was traced back to a coining gang not thirty miles away, and there were full reports of the police raid in the papers.

But that had paled into insignificance beside Mary's acquisition of wealth and the Vansittarts' losing of it.

"And now, I suppose," said Betty, when they talked it over one evening in Study No. 12, "Carla will be leaving school, and earning her way in the world. She'll find it hard."

Mary shook her head, and flushed slightly.

"She won't be staying at Morcove," she agreed, "but she's going to some other school, and they're moving to a smaller house, further away."

"But I thought they hadn't any money!" exclaimed Polly.

"They haven't."

"Then—then you——" gasped Betty. "Oh, Mary, fancy after the way they treated you!"

"And, also," said Mary quietly, "I'm going away, too. I'm going to devote myself entirely to science, with special professors, at home now, with a wonderful laboratory."

"What, leaving Morcove?" demanded Polly.

"Yes, leaving school. But I shall come and see you again occasionally," smiled Mary.

"And so I should think!" added Betty. "I was hoping you'd stay on."

"Yes, wather! But I know what, deah girls. We must give her a wipping send off! We must have a weal banquet, you know, with Mawy as the guest of honour!"

And there was a nodding of heads at once. A banquet was what they all wanted. And what a banquet it was, too—a banquet that Mary Cavendish would never forget!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)