

OUR "ALL NEW STORIES" ISSUE!

# The Schoolgirls' Own 2<sup>d</sup>



**JEMIMA ARRIVES!**

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

The First of a splendid New Series of Morcove School Stories.



# AT LOYALTY'S BEHEST!

By  
MARJORIE STANTON.

*Jemima Carstairs, despite her rather old-fashioned Christian name, is certainly not old-fashioned. On the contrary, Jemima is a very modern young lady indeed! And when she gets to Morcove School she causes quite a sensation. It is not entirely the result of her up-to-dateness, but because she makes friends with Ursula Wade, the sneak of the Form. But you had better lose no time in reading the story and making the acquaintance of one of the most curious girls which Betty Barton & Co. have yet met.*

### Something Up Ursula's Sleeve.

MISS MASSINGHAM was annoyed. It was quite easy to tell when a mistress of the Fourth Form at Morcove School was annoyed, and Betty Barton and her friends had learned the danger signals of yore.

That the mistress was annoyed now, a child could have seen, let alone the experienced Fourth-Formers. For there was a flash in Miss Massingham's eyes and a tightness of her lips that showed clearly that someone was booked for trouble.

Apprehensively the girls looked straight in front of them. Paula Creel, looking elegant even in a drill dress, gave a faint gasp of despair, and blotted the page she had just written.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Paula. "Now what?"

"Paula, you will take fifty lines for talking," rapped Miss Massingham.

"Yes, wather—deah geal. I mean, of course, Miss Massingham."

Polly Linton had to giggle. Polly always wanted to giggle most when situations were serious, and that particular giggle cost her fifty lines. Not, of course, that madcap Polly really cared.

"I will maintain order," exclaimed Miss Massingham. "I have something most important and serious to say."

"Gracious!" murmured Paula, who simply could not keep silent; and Polly Linton only restrained a giggle by putting her hand in front of her mouth.

"Most important," repeated Miss Massingham, principally for Paula's benefit. "And I do not require a chorus. There is one girl in this Form—one unprincipled and unscrupulous girl who has endeavoured by trickery to outwit me."

"Bai Jove!" said Paula softly.

And Polly stuffed a hanky into her mouth and nearly choked.

"I gave you all," said Miss Massingham, accusingly and threateningly, "some twenty lines from a play of Shakespeare's to commit to memory, and what do I find?"

The girls sat back in their seats breathlessly now. It was no news to them that they had had to learn those twenty lines by heart.

What was coming?

"What do I find," reiterated Miss Massingham, "but that some girl, not having taken the trouble to learn the lines by heart, has written them down in order to cheat."

Then indeed did the alarm of the Fourth redouble. Polly Linton no longer felt inclined to laugh and Paula Creel raised her brows and said nothing at all.

One girl had cheated—one member of the Fourth had taken a mean advantage, and that was not playing the game according to the strict code of honour that bound the girls of the Fourth Form.

If one had failed to do the work according to schedule, one paid penalty. To cheat was despicable.

Instantly, then, eyes roamed round the ranks, and two girls were selected for special attention—Cora Grandways and Ursula Wade.

But Cora returned the glances defiantly; it was Ursula Wade who went white with guilt.

Cora might be reckless, and she might be unscrupulous, but cheating was not quite her game; it was far, far too petty for Cora.

"I would not have believed it possible," went on the mistress, in tones that were more hurt than indignant, "that any member of this Form could possibly cheat; but, to my mortification, I can now have no doubt whatever. Ursula Wade, come here!"

Ursula Wade, her thin face quite white, and her small, close-set eyes wide open and staring,

staggered out in front of the Form amidst a perfect buzz of whispering that died down immediately.

Her legs seemed leaden, and she walked with fear ruling her.

"Ursula," exclaimed Miss Massingham severely, "go back to your desk and bring me the piece of paper that you have concealed all the time beneath the blotting paper."

Ursula went back to her desk and brought out a small sheet of paper from the blotting paper. So much did her hand quiver that the piece of paper positively fluttered.

Miss Massingham, in scorn, snatched rather than took it, and gave it a casual glance.

"The time you have spent in writing those twenty lines in such small handwriting could have been better employed in learning them by heart," she said. "But, if you had not the conscientiousness to do the work, you might have had at least the honesty to pay the penalty. What have you to say for yourself?"

Ursula Wade gulped and said nothing.

"Nothing," exclaimed Miss Massingham. "You are merely a common little cheat—a disgrace to the Form. Had you managed to write this out in your book without my seeing you do so, you would have taken the full marks with never a word."

Then Ursula found her voice—a poor, thin voice it was, too!

"I—I would have made one or two mistakes," she faltered.

"Yes, just to allay suspicion," the mistress retorted. "Because you have never yet remembered anything word-perfect. No good motive has ever yet inspired you, Ursula, has it?"

"Yes, Miss Massingham," said Ursula heavily, and she gave the mistress a look that was very bitter indeed.

"I'm afraid it's not so," the mistress returned quietly. "I am disappointed to find that any girl of my Form is capable of such despicable conduct, Ursula, and I hope that you will in future be more honest. As a punishment, you will write out those twenty lines, twenty times, and when the task is finished I shall require you to come to me and repeat those lines faultlessly. If you do not—"

That sentence the mistress left unfinished, as though the hidden threat it contained were sufficiently awful for Ursula to be afraid to the point of desiring not to risk consequences.

"Very well, Miss Massingham," Ursula replied.

She walked back to her place not daring to look at the other girls, which was, perhaps, just as well, for the looks that she would have received were not complimentary in the least.

The Form was as disgusted with her as was the mistress—which was saying a great deal.

No one liked Ursula, and the Form was anything but proud of her. She was an eavesdropper, a girl who told lies, and now a cheat. There was no telling to what form of meanness she might be prepared to descend.

But Miss Massingham now regarded the matter as quite finished, and talked of the work that the others had done. She had the finished products collected that she might afterwards read them through, but Ursula's was not collected at all.

"There is one thing more," Miss Massingham said. "You will, of course, stay in this afternoon, to do that work, Ursula."

Then Ursula looked up.

"I have to go out this afternoon, Miss Massingham," she said.

"Have to go out! And what do you mean by

'have to'?" the mistress demanded sharply. "There is no necessity for your going out."

"I am going to meet the new girl," said Ursula sulkily. "It is all arranged."

"If that is all, the new girl can be met by someone else," said Miss Massingham. "Betty Barton, you will meet the new girl. It will be better, I am sure, for the girl to get a good impression of the school. You, Ursula, have not proved yourself the sort of girl that we would like to send as a sample of what *Jemima Carstairs* is to expect here."

"Oh, *Jemima*!" murmured Polly Linton.

And one or two girls smiled, and someone giggled faintly.

"There is too much whispering this morning," said Miss Massingham angrily. "I am just about tired of all this nonsense. I can see nothing amusing about the name of *Jemima Carstairs*. It is a very fine name indeed—a name of which to be proud. *Captain Carstairs* has written two extremely clever plays, and his daughter is, from all accounts, quite brilliant, too."

A quick exchange of glances there was then, for they had heard all about *Jemima Carstairs*, daughter of the playwright, and they had already planned that she was to write the Fourth Form a special play which they were to act.

What *Jemima* thought of that great idea they did not, of course, know, and, to tell the truth, they did not greatly care. For *Jemima* would only be a new girl, and, therefore, of very little account indeed.

"You, Betty," went on Miss Massingham, "will show the new girl her study. She is sharing a room with Ursula Wade. I understand, Ursula at present being alone in her study. As the girl does not arrive until five-ten, there will be ample time to meet the train at Morocco Road, Betty."

And there, for the moment, the matter dropped. But Ursula Wade was wearing a queer smile indeed—a smile that was most mystifying, in view of the fact that she had been so "shown up." Most girls would have been ashamed and abashed, but Ursula had not even the grace or the humility for that. She just smiled at her desk as though she saw there something that amused her.

#### Jemima Arrives.

"I SUPPOSE you'll come, Polly?"

And Betty Barton, the captain of the Fourth Form, looked at Polly Linton inquiringly. Betty had just entered Study No. 12, to find Polly and Paula both there.

"Coming—where to? Oh, the station!" said Polly as she remembered where Betty was going.

"Yes, I'll come. May as well—ahem!—give her a good sample of Morocco," and Polly chuckled.

"Yes, wather," agreed Paula, blinking up from the armchair in which she was lolling. "Pewwaps in that case I had bettah come."

Then Polly Linton nodded her head cheerily.

"Why, yes, may as well give her something to laugh at," she agreed. "A new girl is bound to feel rather lonely, and from what we've heard of *Jemima*, she'll be lonely away from her pater."

Paula Creel opened her mouth and closed it. She wanted to say "no" to the first part of Polly's sentence and "yes" to the latter, so decided to remain silent—silent in a dignified manner, of course.

"Yes, you'd better come," smiled Betty. "The more the merrier. It isn't a very cheering ride down to the station, you know."

"Bai Jove, wather not," agreed Paula. "Pew-

waps I could wide on the back of Polly's machine," she said thoughtfully.

"Perhaps you couldn't," was Polly's blunt retort. "I'm tired as it is—"

"If you're too tired—" murmured Betty.

"Not too tired," and Polly roused herself with an effort. If Betty was not too tired after hockey, then Polly certainly was not.

Paula, however, remained in the armchair, blinking sleepily, and looked drowsily into the fire.

"I am in a difficult position," she murmured.

"Yes," Polly agreed. "Do you want to get out of it?"

"Yes, wather. You see, I want to go and welcome our new geal, but all the same I am wather pwestwate with exertion—"

"H'm!" mused Polly, the tease. "Very difficult. But I'll soon alter your difficult position, if that will help you—"

"That is vevy kind of you, deah geal."

"Then here goes!" said Polly flippantly, and she caught hold of the back of the armchair. A mighty heave she gave, then next second Paula Creel was sprawling on the floor, wondering how on earth she had got there.

"Bai Jove—"

Betty Barton threw back her head and laughed merrily, while Polly was obviously delighted.

"That's altered your position for you," pointed out Polly with great satisfaction. "That isn't nearly such a difficult position, you know."

"Good gwacious!"

"But if that position doesn't suit," Polly added, "I can easily alter it."

Paula Creel, however, did not choose to wait for that position to be altered; she just jumped up from the floor, and commenced to brush her dress.

"Poor Paula!" laughed Betty. "It really is a shame, when she was nearly 'pwestwate,' Polly! Let her stay here. We'll go alone. It isn't much of a ride, anyway."

"Yes, you stay here and keep the home fires burning," Polly agreed, with a nod. "The new girl will probably want some tea, too. Get the kettle boiling, and have everything spick and span."

That really appealed to Paula much more than going to the station, and her relieved look set them smiling again. Paula liked her armchair better than anywhere else, and she readily complied with the suggestion. Whether or not the kettle would be boiling when they returned remained to be seen.

It was more than likely that Paula Creel would be fast asleep in the armchair. But Betty and Polly did not worry about that. They closed the door of the study, and Polly wound a muffler round her neck.

They met Madge Minden and Trixie Hope arm-in-arm in the corridor, and halted just for a moment to talk to them.

"Going to the station?" asked Madge.

"Yes. Hope we aren't late. What's the time?"

Madge looked at her watch.

"You'll just do it if you hurry," she observed.

"I hear that Ursula's just as mad as a hatter that you're going instead of her. It beats me why she was ever going at all. New girls aren't usually met."

"Well, hardly," said Polly. "It gives them too big an idea of themselves," and Polly shook her head disapprovingly. "Can't have new girls getting uppish, even if they are the daughters of famous playwrights."

"Oh, she won't be uppish!" Betty returned, pull-

ing her hat well down. "I dare say she'll be a nice girl, and, anyway, we want her to write us that play, don't we? She'll probably be meek and mild, with a thoughtful, brainy look."

"Like me," nodded Polly. "Fearfully clever. Brains written all over her."

Then Madge chuckled, and Trixie Hope shook her head.

"Allez-vous-en!" advised Trixie, who simply couldn't help letting everyone know that she could speak French. "Buzz off! No time to lose."

So they "buzzed off" to the cycle-shed, and in a few minutes were cycling down the lane towards the remnant of the setting sun, hurrying to get to the station before the train arrived.

Devonshire in late autumn was beautiful, but the girls lived every day amongst its beauty, and they did not notice it as they whizzed along on their



**BOWLED OUT!** "You are merely a common little cheat!" said Miss Massingham. "A disgrace to the Form, and if I hadn't found you out, you would have taken the full marks with never a word!"

machines. They only noticed that the wind was raw and extra cold.

And when they saw the railway-lines just down the hill, and to the left a red light showing from where the signal stood, they free-wheeled the rest of the way gladly.

"Just in time!" panted Betty, and even as she spoke the signal dropped, and there was the gleam of a green light.

A second later, and the distant sky's darkness was broken by a red reflection from the funnel of the approaching train. Into the station they ran as the thunder of the train came to their ears.

"Phew! Only just did it," said Betty. "Thank goodness we weren't late, as we were specially sent. No mistaking her, I suppose?"

"Won't be more than one new girl," agreed Polly, slapping her hands against her sides to

warn them up. "She'll look nervy and very new and frightened, of course. But she'll get over that if she has any sense. Here's the old puffer!" she added.

Brakes were applied, and the train came to a standstill and sent out a shower of sparks, a red glow coming from the engine cabin as it went by.

Then, as it jerked to a standstill, two doors opened, and passengers alighted. Betty and Polly watched those passengers eagerly, for in all there were three.

There was an old farmer, whom they did not give more than a casual glance; there was a girl of about fifteen, and a smartly-dressed young woman who stepped from a first-class compartment.

Betty nodded towards the girl, who was talking to a porter, but Polly Linton was looking blankly at the back of the young woman. She was dressed in the modern style, with beige-coloured stockings and shoes, and a coat that did not reach much below her knees, a coat cut straight but cut well, and a hat that was made to the sleek, obviously shingled head.

That in itself was not amazing. True, one did not see many girls dressed quite like that in the country town of Barncombe, but in itself the fashion was not staggering.

Perhaps the cut of the coat suggested France more than England, but even so it would not have caused Polly's jaw to drop. It would not have caused her to judge Betty Barton as she did.

"Oh, look, Betty!" she gasped. "A—a monocle!"

And Betty, who had taken a step towards the girl of her own age, halted and looked at the other passenger.

True enough, as that smartly-dressed person turned, there came the gleam of an eyeglass—a horn-rimmed eyeglass—and Betty halted and blinked.

Only on the stage had she seen girls with eyeglasses, and the sight was queer indeed.

"Good gracious!" she gasped.

But just in time she remembered that she was staring, and that the girl's eyes were upon her, so she went forward rather more hurriedly than she would otherwise have done to greet the other girl, who was now handing her small luggage to the porter.

"Oh, excuse me," said Betty, "but are you for Morcove? Are you Jemima Carstairs?"

The girl halted and look at Betty, blushing as their eyes met.

"No, I'm not," she said. "I'm coming here to stay with my aunt; that is all."

Betty Barton, confused, stepped back a pace, almost on to Polly, and her confusion was not diminished by the fact that the young woman with the monocle was bearing down upon her.

And, horror of horrors, that person had actually halted in front of her, and was looking at her intently. Betty Barton almost sank to the ground, for what was coming now—a terrible reproach for that rude stare, or just a request for direction as to the village?

In any case, Betty felt that Polly would laugh, so when she did look that smartly dressed girl in the face she was as nervous as a debutante.

"One moment," murmured the person of the beige stockings. "One moment, I prithee, and you will excuse the abrupt mode of address; but did I hear you saying you had come from Morcove?"

Betty Barton dumbly nodded her head.

"Excellent," said the person, and adjusted her

monocle. "For, strange though it may seem, I, Jemima Carstairs, am bound for that seat of learning."

And she smiled at both Betty and Polly as though it were the hugest joke she had ever known.

Betty and Polly slapped gloved hands, and Polly squeezed Betty's hand very hard indeed.

"Wow!" said Polly, under her breath. "It speaks."

But Betty was looking at the new girl and blinking, for now that she saw that girl's face under the rays of the station oil-lamp she could see that it was younger than she had thought before. It was a well-shaped face, oval, with thin, well-curved lips, and grey eyes—eyes that seemed to have a queer expression, as though they were laughing. Yet the mouth was serious, and there was no sign of a smile.

"You—you are Jemima Carstairs?" Betty managed to falter.

"I—yes, why not? That is certainly my name. And you?" asked Jemima.

"I'm Betty Barton of the Fourth," said Betty, recovering her composure. "This is Polly Linton."

"What—this is?" said the new girl, with a nod at Polly. "Really charmed to meet Polly Linton."

Conversation flagged then, for the two Morcove girls were taking in the stranger's attire, and wondered what Miss Somerfield, their headmistress, would have to say about it; probably she would say a good deal, they considered.

"Charming little spot," observed Jemima gaily. "So bright and scintillating, what? I suppose one has a very merry time here?"

"V-very," agreed Betty.

"So I should think, too. And how far's the school?"

"Two miles," said Betty. "We've got our bikes. But I suppose you'll take the cab?"

"Or the cab will take me," murmured Jemima, with a nod. "I should simply hate to take the cab. I've always felt so sorry for cab-horses. Have you ever felt sorry for cab-horses?" she asked chattily.

"Oh, my word," gasped Polly, "is that how you always talk?"

Jemima looked at her, and readjusted her monocle.

"Same as usual," she agreed. "Up and down movement of the lower jaw, a few tongue actions, and so on—and, by the way, so forth. By the way," she added as the thought struck her, "don't call me Jemima, will you? Call me Jimmy. I'm always called Jimmy. 'Jimmy, my dear,' the gov'nor calls me."

"Guv'nor!" Polly gasped. "Oh, dear."

And then Jemima went to superintend her luggage, flicking a thick cane that she carried with her while Betty and Polly exchanged dazed glances.

"And that—that's it," said Polly blankly. "That thing's coming to Morcove, Betty. Did you ever?"

Betty just shook her head.

"I think she's—she's a bit—well, you know," she murmured.

Polly Linton tapped her head significantly, and left it at that. But if Polly meant to imply that Jemima was not quite right in the head, Polly was making a great mistake. For there were few brighter girls than Jemima Carstairs, for all her queer ways and her strange mannerism of talk.

She was waiting for them now in the booking-hall, and they went out to help superintend the putting of the luggage on the top of the ancient cab that was waiting there.

"Going to get in?" asked Polly, as the new girl deposited a suit-case in the misty interior of the cab, and then closed the door.

"No!" Jemima firmly shook her head. "I am not going to get in. I shall walk," she added, with a sigh. "Because it is Spartan to walk. The gov'nor's a soldier, you know, and the gov'nor believes in energy, and plenty of it. 'Spouse you haven't got another bike?' she asked thoughtfully.

"Fraid not," said Betty. "I'll lend you mine, though, and I'll ride in the cab. I'm not such a Spartan as you are."

"Couldn't rob you of the bike," returned Jemima hastily. "On second thought, I'd better not walk. I'll be a Spartan to-morrow. It's much pleasanter being a Spartan in the daylight. Besides, I might lose my way walking. So—so long! See you at the cheery old seat of learning, and all that merry old rot."

And Jemima got into the cab. The cabby flicked his whip, and she was on the way, but not quite. Betty and Polly, looking after the dark outline of the cab and its two oil-lamps, had not yet lost this new apparition, for the cab halted and "Jimmy's" head came out of the window. She was calling something to them, and Betty ran hurriedly.

"I say," said "Jimmy." "I believe there's a friend of mine at Morcove—old friend. I expected her to meet me, but she hasn't—so suppose something's wrong. Ursula Wade's her name."

Betty Barton did not reply at once, and Polly Linton, who had just joined her, gave an audible gasp.

"Oh—Ursula!" said Betty awkwardly. "Yes, Ursula's there—she was kept in, though, so we came instead. She'll be free now, though—"

"Splendid! I'll have tea with her. So long!" And the gleaming eyeglass vanished from sight as the queerest girl they had ever known vanished in the direction of Morcove School.

"A friend of Ursula's," Betty said. "How strange that sounds, Polly!"

"Yes, and a friend of Ursula's isn't going to be the sort of girl we shall like," was Polly's decision. "A jolly queer sort that, Betty, and, by-the-by, somehow I don't really dislike her."

And Betty, too, was just arriving at that decision. Queer the girl was, but, in her way, interesting and rather fascinating. But a friend of Ursula Wade's—that counted against her, and the chums of the Fourth, before passing a definite decision, intended to wait and see.

#### Ursula Makes Friends.

BETTY and Polly sprinted hard on their cycles, and they did not find it at all difficult to overtake the slow-moving cab and reach Morcove first by a short length. They rode straight in through the gates, and by the time they had packed their cycles away in the shed, Jemima Carstairs was settling with the cabby and having her luggage taken in.

There was no one about in the hall, and the new girl stood just in the doorway, as though not really decided what to do. Thus when Betty and Polly entered she looked at them with great relief.

"Oh, so here you are!" she observed. "So nice of you to have met me at the station, what? Looks quite a charming place—think I shall like it," she added, and gave a graceful wave of the

hand that took in everything in an all-embracing sweep.

"I wonder, though," murmured Polly, "if the school will like you?"

"Eh? What?" demanded "Jimmy."

"Nothing," replied Polly. "Nothing at all. I suppose you had better see Miss Somerfield before you do anything else. This way—"

And Polly acted as guide, taking the new girl to the headmistress. Polly was rather curious to know what Miss Somerfield would think of the monocle and the girl's attire; but perhaps Jemima had already divined that both might not meet with approval, for she tucked the eyeglass inside her dress when she tapped on the door of the study.

Polly went back to Betty in the hall, and the two girls waited so that when Jemima returned they could direct her to the Fourth-Form corridor, or, better still, take her there. While they were waiting, Ursula Wade came down the stairs.

She was looking for someone, obviously, and when her eyes alighted upon them, her expression clearly indicated whom it was she wanted to see.

Straight to the two she walked, and they looked at her with anything but pleasure. Ursula was not a girl whose company or conversation was a very much sought thing.

"She's arrived?" she asked, and her eyes were very anxious and very shifty indeed. It seemed that Ursula could never look anyone quite straight in the eye, and she looked beyond the two girls now.

"Who—Jemima?" asked Betty. "Yes, she's with Miss Somerfield."

"Oh, good," and Ursula paused awkwardly. It was evident that she had something to say—something none too easy for her to say, to judge by her constraint.

"What about her?" asked Polly impatiently; for Polly did not like people making mountains out of molehills in this way. If Ursula had something to say, why didn't she say it? And if she hadn't, why didn't she go? That was Polly's way of looking at it.

"I wanted to warn you," Ursula blurted out suddenly, with the same anxiety in her tone. "There's no need to say anything to her about—about what happened in the Form-room. I mean she—that is, there doesn't seem any need."

Betty looked at Ursula in surprise. She had never before considered that Ursula would be ashamed of an action of her own; but if this were not shame it was something very much like it.

"Oh, we won't say anything," Polly retorted; and her tone was sufficiently curt for any girl to have realised that Polly wanted nothing at all to do with Ursula. "But if you don't want it mentioned you should have thought in advance."

"There's no need to lecture," Ursula whined. "I know I did wrong, and I'm sorry—"

"Yes, sorry you've been found out!" Polly scoffed cynically, although it was not like her at all to be cynical. As a rule, she was quite easy-going. Ursula, though, tried her patience to its limit, and even beyond.

"Not at all. I'm sorry," snapped Ursula. "I don't expect any sort of sympathy from you, though, or understanding or help. But there's no reason why my past should be dragged up against me. I'd prefer it not to be talked about. It doesn't seem much to ask."

"We've said we won't talk about it, Ursula," Betty said quietly. "But we can't help what the others do, and we can't help showing our feelings."



**A CHILLY RECEPTION.** "Oh, we won't mention anything about you cheating!" said Polly curtly. "But if you didn't want it mentioned, you should have thought in advance!"

We're not going to be hypocrites, and I don't suppose the others will be hypocrites. Jemima will find out quickly enough that—"

"That I'm not taken to the Fourth's bosom," sneered Ursula. "Oh, yes, I know she'll find that out; but our people are friends, and we're going to be friends, too."

"You mean you haven't met before?" asked Betty, in surprise.

But Ursula did not answer that question. For across the hall Jemima was coming, and as she approached she affixed her monocle.

"Oh—hallo!" she observed. "Waiting for me still? How charming of you! Dear old-world courtesies, and all that jolly old rot, what?"

Betty Barton smiled faintly, but Polly frowned. Jemima was obviously a poser, and Polly had not much use for posers. Paula Creel was sometimes called affected, but Paula was being perfectly natural. She couldn't help her lisp and her mannerisms, but this girl could.

"Yes, just going upstairs, and all that merry old balderdash," nodded Polly. "Then we shall do prep., and all that stifling old piffle."

Jemima looked rather hard at Polly, and then took out her eyeglass, polished it, and replaced it in her eye.

"So?" she asked. "This, then, is the wag of the Fourth, who supplies humour by the ounce and wit by the bagful?" She smiled at Polly in what Polly thought was a somewhat supercilious way.

Betty Barton hastily introduced Ursula Wade. "This is Ursula Wade who you were asking for, Jemima," she said.

Jemima turned upon Ursula and scanned her face. But, whatever her thoughts were, no one could tell from the expression on the face. Quite simply she extended her right hand, her left being dived into the pocket of her coat.

"Cheerio!" she said. "I've brought the gov'nor's regards with me. Hopes you are well, and all that—"

"Jolly old rot," supplemented Polly quickly.

Jemima turned her head and bowed.

"Splendid. How quickly you learn," she said. "I find life so much easier if one uses the same words, you know; but, if you'd like to be my little echo, stuttering along after me, you may consider yourself employed. There will be no remuneration, but you will broaden your intellect and pick up a lot of merry wit and brilliance."

"Charmed!" grinned Polly. "Delighted!"

"Good! Everyone now is perfectly satisfied, I hope," said Jemima. "One does hate disagreements, doesn't one? I've just had a slight disagreement with that old thing who chatted with me in the study. A charming old lady, one Somersfield by name. Doesn't quite like my style of dress. Still, we can't all think alike, you know. That's what makes the world go round. However, one must have respect for old age, what? And I'm going to take off this outdoor raiment and attire myself in young gentlewoman's drill slip, one blouse for same, stockings two, shoes two, and thus forth and so on."

Her tone of voice was quite pleasant, and Betty found herself smiling. Polly was grinning, but Ursula Wade was looking at the new girl very queerly indeed. As for Jemima, in those rare moments when she paused for breath she looked at Ursula Wade searchingly.

Ursula's eyes met hers once, and then Jemima nodded.

"Show me into the dormitory, please, and then I will partake of a little nourishment."

Ursula readily enough showed her to the dormitory, and Betty and Polly, their duties concluded, went to the Fourth Form common-room, there to tell all they knew, and to give as near a word painting of Jemima as possible.

But Jemima meanwhile was walking up the big staircase. For a girl who affected a masculine appearance she was anything but athletic. She was not a tomboy as Polly Linton was, and she could never have raced up those stairs. Half-way up she paused.

"Phew—it's tiring!" she observed in her lazy tones. "Tiring. Is there much more like this, little friend Ursula?"

"Not much," said Ursula. "Aren't you used to stairs?"

"I shall never get used to stairs. Prefer bungalows myself. Still, one must be Spartan. Remember, Ursula, we are of British stock—dear old bulldogs, and all that merry old rot. The Fighting British, you know!"

And she took Ursula's arm and plodded up the rest of the stairs.

In the dormitory she washed and changed, then plumped herself on the bed and looked at Ursula. Ursula, meanwhile, had been admiring the very neat shingled hair, and wondering what manner of girl this was.

"Hope my typewriter's safe," said Jemima sud-

dearly. "Algernon, I call it. Algernon will have plenty to do, poor fellow. I've got to re-type one of the gov'nor's plays."

Ursula Wade, standing only a yard away, tried to be surprised by that—tried to pretend that she had not known that all along.

"Oh, do you type his plays?" she asked. "Daddy has often spoken to me about your father's plays."

"Very clever plays," observed Jemima. "Brilliant—scintillating! I will read one of them aloud to you, with expressions and suitable gestures to improve your mind. A long, uphill task appeals to me."

Ursula Wade did not quite understand that. That it was not altogether flattering to her she understood, but she was not a girl who appreciated "smart" retorts.

But she was very interested indeed in that play that was to be re-typed, and she was not anxious to let the subject drop now that it had been raised.

"I hope I shall be able to help you with the typing," she said. "I'd love to be able to type. I can a little, of course—quite a lot really."

The effect of that upon the other was quite remarkable.

"So?" she said. "Then you shall have a little practice. I am a kind-hearted girl. The gov'nor keeps his plays very secret, and won't send them out. But your father is a confidential friend—so why not you, eh?"

"Why not?" said Ursula, keeping down a throbb of excitement.

"Excellent!" yawned Jemima. "And now let us go downstairs."

And downstairs they went to Ursula's study, where tea was prepared. Over tea they chatted—Ursula trying to bring the conversation round to the subject of plays—Jemima trying to ask questions about the school and the girls there.

Neither of them were natural, and, had a stranger been there, she would have noticed surely that Jemima was not at her ease with Ursula, nor Ursula at her ease with Jemima. It was a battle of wits, with Ursula trying hard to be friendly, to make herself agreeable, and Jemima, plainly bored, being laboriously polite.

Through Jemima's head ran the thought: "Can this mean-faced girl really be the daughter of my father's friend—the daughter of a man he trusts implicitly?"

Ursula, at the same time, was repeating to herself some portion of the last conversation she had had with her father.

"Keep in with her, Ursula, at all costs—whether you like her or not. I have some special work for you to do, my girl. You have wits, and you must use them; but never let her suspect. What it is I want you to do I will tell you later. First and foremost, keep in with her, let her take you into her confidence, and then you can help me very greatly indeed."

And Ursula, because she spied upon her father's private letters as she spied upon the letters the girls at school received, knew quite well that that work she had to do was connected with the plays that were rapidly amassing for the playwright a huge fortune!

How anxious she had been to find out what manner of girl Jemima was no one had known. Now she had found her to be an affected poser, with never a thought beyond herself—a duffer, if there ever was one!

That is how Ursula saw Jemima, but how Jemima saw her she did not guess. She did not even trouble to think—yet!

The Girl Who Claimed Her Friendship.

JEMIMA CARSTAIRS wandered out into the quadrangle alone, a letter in her hand. The morning was early and fresh, with birds singing gaily and a sharp touch of frost in the air.

But Jemima had on a thick, severely-cut coat, although her gleaming, dark, reddish-brown hair was uncovered. It did not blow in the wind, however, for neat waves kept it together, and, in truth, there was very little of it to be blown.

Across the springy, moist turf she wandered to an old seat, a stone seat that was dark with age. There she sat down with her letter.

She did not at once open it, but surveyed the school building through her monocle, apparently unconscious of the attention she was receiving, and of the nudging that was going on amongst the girls who passed close to her in two and threes.

Yet she must have noticed that they were going out of their way especially to pass her, and to giggle at that extraordinary affectation—her monocle.

Far from being aware of it, she was as natural as if she had been alone in a desert. Carefully she surveyed the whole school, with its grey walls, reflecting the sun, and its creeper covering. Then she turned to her letter, which was addressed in neat, small handwriting.

Carefully she slit the envelope and pulled out the single sheet of blue paper, closely written upon in a round, neat hand.

It was from her father, and his letters always interested her. But as she read this particular missive, a faint smile played at the corner of her mouth, and she shook her head rather sadly.

"My dearest Jimmy," it ran,— "By now, of course, you are settled in Morcove, and probably



JEMIMA KNEW THE TRUTH!

"Thanks awfully for standing by me," said Ursula. "Oh, that's all right," said Jemima. "But if you've finished with the jolly old letter of mine, you might hand it back to me."



enjoying the new life immensely. I am sure you'll like school, if only because it will throw you into the company of other girls and broaden your understanding of people. Ursula you must have met, and; having met, you are, I hope, great friends. You will not forget that she is the daughter of my dearest friend, and that I want you to be great friends with her. He has a high opinion of her, so she must be a perfectly charming girl. If anything happened to that girl, it would ruin his life, I know. Once, I believe, she caused him a little worry; but it cannot have been her fault. Like him, she is probably the soul and spirit of honour. Provided she is loyal, she must be a nice girl. For loyalty is the greatest virtue. Loyalty before anything, and by that alone you can judge her.

"But I do not want to lecture you, Jimmy. Goodness knows, you don't need it. But that you should be friends with Ursula is my greatest wish, and I know that you will respect it. If there are little difficulties at first, they can be overcome. But, naturally, as her father and I will spend a great deal of time together, we would like you two girls to be with us in the holidays. We shall all be happy together, I am sure."

At that, Jemima rather abruptly folded the letter, for a shadow fell across it, and she found herself looking up at Ursula Wade.

"Oh, cheerio!" she said. "How goes the morning?"

"Splendid morning!" said Ursula uncomfortably, for just then Madge, Minden and Trixie Hope were passing.

They looked at Jemima and smiled, but they did not look at Ursula at all.

Jemima's keen eyes did not fail to notice that, but Ursula, hoping that the slight had been passed over, looked at her now friend.

"Who are they?" asked Jemima.

"Two of our Form—Jimmy. I may call you that, mayn't I?"

"Why, of course!" said Jimmy carelessly. "Call me 'Jimmy.' Everyone does. Nice girls those, by the look of them."

"Oh, not bad!" said Ursula shortly. "Madge Minden thinks a lot of herself, though. Swanks about her piano-playing, and that sort of thing. Trixie says every other word in French. She thinks she can speak it, but she can't."

"Friends of the other two—two that met me yesterday," remarked Jimmy, as Madge and Trixie halted by Betty and Polly.

"Betty's captain of the Fourth," said Ursula.

"But I shouldn't have much to do with her."

"Oh, why not? Isn't she a nice girl?"

"Not bad," said Ursula awkwardly, and wondered what she could say to prevent Jimmy's making friends with Betty without giving the impression that that was what she was trying to do. "She's all right in her way. But they're very cliquy, you know."

"What, all of them?" asked Jimmy. "Or only those four? Point me out the Fourth Form children who aren't—er—cliquy! Who are your own special friends—that girl over there, the one fiddling with her hair?"

And she smiled in the direction of Paula Creel, who smiled in return.

"Tha—oh, that's Paula!" said Ursula, with a short laugh. "A bigger duffer never lived than Paula. You ought to hear her talk! Her accent is too affected for words. And the airs she puts

on about her family! Anyone would think she were a duchess, at least!"

"And she isn't?" asked Jimmy innocently.

"Of course not! What a funny question!" returned Ursula, looking sharply at the new girl. "Of course, she's not a duchess—just plain Paula!"

"Rather pretty, it seems to me," said Jimmy.

"I mean her name's plain," explained Ursula, who was getting rather exasperated.

For, really, Jimmy did strike her as being silly. It was better so, but having to be about with her always would be something of a bore.

"Point me out," suggested Jimmy, with deep interest, "a Fourth Form girl who isn't cliquy, or plain, or affected; who doesn't talk French or play the piano, or anything like that, you know."

Ursula Wade did not answer for a moment.

"There's Cora Grandways," she said sulkily at last. "Here, Cora—Grace!"

Cora Grandways and Grace Garfield came hurrying across, and both were introduced.

"My friend Jemima, daughter of Captain Castairs, the playwright," explained Ursula.

Cora and Grace were almost humble in their welcome of the girl, and most effusive, for they were much of Ursula's type, without her pettiness.

But to know the daughter of a great playwright struck them as being a thing eminently desirable, and they were willing to extend friendliness and hospitality, in hope of gifts and favours to come.

Holidays, for instance, had to be spent somewhere, and it was not always pleasant to spend them at home. To be able to spend a vacation with Jemima would be something worth while, indeed.

But Jemima did not seem particularly interested in them, although they tried to make themselves interesting, and tried their very hardest to worm themselves into her good favour.

"We can make a good set here altogether," urged Grace Garfield. "It is about time, I think, that Betty Barton was taught that she cannot have it all her own way. Betty's by way of being a prig."

"Too much so for my liking," agreed Ursula, and she took Jemima by the arm.

"Suppose we go round to the old tree I offered to show you?" she suggested, and there was some quality of anxiety in her tone that told the new girl that it was only right she should comply with the suggestion.

Together, therefore, they went, and Grace Garfield and Cora Grandways were left to their own devices. Ella Elgood came hurrying up at that moment, just a second too late for an introduction; but Ursula, looking back, seemed rather pleased at that girl's tardiness.

"One thing," she said suddenly, as she walked by Jemima's side, "I want to warn you about. Don't listen too much to what those girls say—to what any girls say."

Jemima looked down at her sideways.

"I thought there was something more than the old tree!" she smiled. "What's the dear old secret, Ursula? Some skeleton in the family cupboard, what? Some dark and awful hidden story that I might be told?"

Ursula went red.

"Not at all," she denied. "But girls talk such scandal here, and they say— Well, they might say things that—that weren't true!"

"Or polite—to you?" asked Jemima. "But why should I listen to, or believe, scandal, my dear

Ursula? You are very popular in the Form, surely?"

"Yes, with the girls I like!" Ursula returned, somewhat sharply. "Of course, I am!"

"I'm so glad," said Jemima simply. "You do not wish me to listen to scandal, then, is that it?"

"Yes."

"Very well, I won't."

But the look that Ursula received then was very queer indeed!

#### The Sneak's False Move.

**F**EW new girls caused so much comment as did Jemima. But, then, no one could help discussing Jemima!

She had a way of her own, and the fact of her wearing a horn-rimmed eyeglass would itself make her distinctive, even despite her peculiar mannerism of talking and her perpetually bored expression, counteracted so strangely by the keenness of her grey eyes.

Wonderful hair she had, too, so that many a girl found her eyes seeking out that head of hair in the Form-room, and many a girl was wishing that such hair had been hers to shingle and bob.

She had a somewhat lackadaisical way of lounging back in her seat, too, as though lessons were not things to be taken with too great seriousness, and her glance that was bestowed upon Miss Massingham was very charming and very friendly—almost, one might say, encouraging.

Once or twice she caught the glances that were bestowed upon her, and smiled, or nodded her head. She particularly sought out Betty, and watched that girl with approval.

"Jemima," said Miss Massingham, when she had endured the girl for some minutes in patience, "will you please have the goodness to sit up straight in the Form-room?"

"Straight?" exclaimed Jemima. "With pleasure! Wasn't I sitting up straight?"

"You were not," rebuked Miss Massingham. "You were lounging."

"Lounging?" repeated Jemima, in sorrow. "Oh, gracious!"

She covered a sigh, and sat up bolt upright, shifting somewhat uncomfortably now and then. For one had to be a Spartan indeed to sit in comfort on those hard seats, and Jemima was used to well-sprung upholstery.

And when Miss Massingham departed, at the end of the lesson, to make way for the French mistress, Jemima lounged back again in comfort.

"Bit of a Tartar, Miss Massingham!" whispered Ursula, who had made sure of the new girl's getting a seat next to her.

Jemima turned towards Ursula, and affixed her monocle.

"So?" she observed. "Bit of a Tartar, what? Fine jaw movement, I noticed—so rhythmic and unhalting. Quite fascinating to watch. Marvellous the way she goes on and on, and then on, you know, without pausing for breath. Good lungs!"

Ursula smiled wanly.

"Yes, and she's mighty strict, don't you forget," she said—"mighty strict. French next!"

Jemima inclined her head, and looked thoughtfully out of the window at the smooth lawns.

"Are you good at French?" asked Ursula hopefully. "I'm pretty dud."

"At French?" asked Jemima politely. "You cause me considerable surprise. I should imagine you would talk French with the fluency of a Parisienne. You have that dash, you know, and chic, and all that merry old rot!"

Perfectly serious Jemima was, but Polly Linton, who was sitting behind, chuckled, and one or two girls wore broad smiles, for the last thing one could ever call Ursula was "chic."

"Well, I'm not good at French," she said sullenly, "although—"

She gave a cautious look about her, while Jemima polished her monocle thoughtfully.

"Tell you what—I've got a ripping French dic. here," whispered Ursula.

"Got a what?" asked Jemima, with interest. "French chick?"

"Dic!" said Ursula, with a heavy frown, and she waved her hand. "Not so loudly."

Jemima affixed the monocle, and gave Ursula a look that was very thoughtful indeed, but Ursula was looking more anxiously at the girls near by than at Jemima. And she saw that those girls were whispering, and not giving attention to what she was saying.

"I mean we can look up the words in it under the desk," she said, with a quick, nervous giggle. "It's a crib really!"

"Ah!" said Jemima. "What the dear old-fashioned people would call cheating, I suppose?"

"Shush!" hissed Ursula. "Not so loudly! It isn't really cheating. Heaps of girls do it."

"Betty Barton, Polly Linton?"

"Oh, them!" said Ursula in scorn. "Of course not! They're just prigs. You wouldn't get them cheating!"

"Ah!" said Jemima, and a smile flickered round the corner of her mouth. "I see. They're just common outsiders, what? Not in the merry old gang, like us?"

"Oh absolutely outside the pale!" agreed Ursula, brightening up. "Glad you've seen through them. They're not our sort—not like you and me at all."

Jemima's glass dropped from her eye, but she replaced it hurriedly. The French mistress was a long time in coming, and everyone was chattering, so that the conversation between these two was not heard by the others at all.

"Not like us?" echoed Jemima faintly. "Dear me, how perfectly appalling for them! And what is this principle of cheating that you have worked out?"

"Well, we just—I'll show you later," she said quickly. "But I'll lend you this dic. now, if you like."

Jemima, rather hurriedly, then shook her head. "Not this morning," she implored—"please! I am but a new and humble member of the Great and Honourable Company of Cheats!"

Ursula, however, took no notice. She was making a face, and moving her hands frantically.

"Quick!" she urged. "Here it is!"

Jemima took the crib, and, to Ursula's horror, placed it in full view on the top of her desk, clearly to be seen by all the others, who certainly knew what it was.

"But I shan't open it," she added to Ursula. "One must be a Spartan, you know!"

"Hide it, you silly," panted Ursula, going pale as the mistress's footsteps came, "or give it back! I meant to put it on the seat, where we can both see it."

But either Jemima was excessively stupid, or else she was stone deaf, for she opened her desk, and put the crib inside. As she flicked it over carelessly, more than one girl got a glimpse of the crib, and there were many nudges.

"See that?" exclaimed Madge Minden to Betty Barton. "That book?"

"No."

"Ursula's crib, and Jemima's got it! They've been whispering pretty mysteriously, and Jemima has been smiling. And that means—"

"Oh, goodness!" gasped Betty. "She doesn't look that sort."

But Madge Minden shrugged her shoulders. Madge could put two and two together, she thought. And there was no mistaking that French crib which was now in the new girl's desk, and the new girl must know what it was.

The door of the Form-room opened at that minute, and the French mistress entered. The whispering died away, but the keen looks remained, and they could still nudge meaningly.

"Birds of a feather," murmured Tess Tre-lawney, "flock together!"

And many a sapient nodding of heads there was then, and the looks that Jemima received were neither so friendly nor so admiring. But, then, they did not understand Jemima, and they did not know the agonies that Ursula suffered when she wanted her crib urgently, and knew that it was locked in Jemima's desk!

#### The Friend She Chose.

"JOLLY!" observed Jemima, blinking in the sunshine.

For it was surprising how warm the sun could be down in Devon, even so late in the year. And now that dinner was over, and they were waiting for afternoon lessons bell to ring, the girls were out in the quadrangle.

Jemima stood in the doorway, propping it up and polishing her eyeglass. Her arms were akimbo, and her attitude boyish in the extreme.

Cleaning in the sunshine her hair was, and Jemima seemed very pleased indeed with life.

"Jolly," she observed, as Betty came through the doorway, "what?"

"I beg your pardon!" Betty said, and flushed slightly.

For Betty did not look quite at her ease, and Polly, who had her by the arm tenaciously, appeared to be dragging her out towards the sunshine and the lawns.

"I said," repeated Jemima, with a smile that astonishingly concealed how serious was the expression in her grey eyes, "that it is so jolly—all this merry stuff!" And she made an expressive sweep of the arm. "Sunshine, birds singing, bright lawns, and that. Jolly, what?"

"Yes, very," said Betty uncomfortably.

"Oh, come on, Betty!" urged Polly. "Paula's waiting for us!"

"Just the afternoon for a little tennis. I noticed the hard courts. You play tennis here?"

"Oh, yes!" Betty said, drawing Polly back, for Betty always was polite.

Even if this girl wore a bird of Ursula's feathers, one had to remember that she was new to Morocco and its ways, and had not yet found her level, though some there were who said she had—and quickly, too.

Jemima regarded Betty thoughtfully, although Betty saw only a charming smile.

"After tea, perhaps, the cheerful and gay Ursula might help us to make up a four," Jemima said. "For we Britishers must do the right thing, you know. Athletic womanhood, budding Atalantas, and that dear old stunt!" she sighed.

"Yes. I'm afraid, though," said Betty, "it will be dark after tea, and there are lessons this afternoon. There isn't time before lunch."

"And if there were," said Polly briskly, "we couldn't play with Ursula!"

Jemima appeared not at all taken aback. She just kept on smiling blandly.

"You see," continued Polly, "the fact is, Jemima—"

"Oh, 'Jimmy,' please! 'Jimmy, old thing,' if you like, or even 'Jimmy, old frozen turnip!' I have been called that."

"I dare say," nodded Polly, "Jemima! But I was going to say, before you interrupted, that when we play tennis we like to play with people who don't say 'out' when a ball is in, and things like that?"

Jemima's face revealed nothing of her own thoughts.

"I see," she agreed. "Each to his own, as Socrates—or was it Wordsworth?—said. That's the sort of thing that makes the dear world go round. Must say it adds to the cheeriness of the game, though, if you get someone like that playing—don't you?" she asked innocently.

Polly Linton did not say what she thought. She just addressed Betty, treating Jemima as though she were a part of the post she supported, and, with a quick "Let's sprint for it," she took Betty, running, across the quadrangle, leaving Jemima looking after them with an expression that was very thoughtful indeed.

"Oh, that girl!" said Polly in disgust, looking round to see that Jemima was really out of ear-shot. "Did you ever—?"

But Betty Barton was frowning perplexedly. "I'm not so sure she wasn't joking, Polly," she said. "She doesn't seem the sort to cheat, and I, for one—"

"What about that crib of Ursula's in French lesson? I tell you she's the same type as Ursula! I admit she's charming," said Polly, "but a charming cheat doesn't make a cheat any the nicer from my way of thinking."

"No, I suppose not. Only—"

But Polly hurried Betty on, and, anyway, Paula Creel was just ahead, waiting for them, with Madge Minden by her side.

"Oh, heh you are!" exclaimed Paula. "I wondered when you were coming, dear girls! I've been waiting a fearful time. Very tiring waitin' like this. Madge has something frightfully exciting to tell us."

"Very exciting!" Madge nodded, with a grim look. "Most exciting! What do you think I caught Ursula doing a moment or so ago?"

"Oh, Ursula!" exclaimed Polly in a tone that clearly implied that she, for one, would not be in the least surprised at anything that Ursula Wade did.

"Well," said Madge indignantly, "I was passing by the small housemaids' pantry on the dormitory floor, when I heard someone in there. The door happened to be just ajar, and there was Ursula—"

"In the housemaids' pantry? She had no business there!" Betty exclaimed.

"Wait a bit, though," Madge murmured. "That isn't the worst. She was there with a small gas-jet going, boiling a kettle, and the noise of the boiling kettle prevented her hearing me. What do you think she was doing?"

"What could she have been doing?" asked Betty.

"She was trying to steam open an envelope," Madge said—"steam open someone else's letter, to read their private correspondence. I noticed she

went down early this morning. Probably she went down to get that letter."

"My goodness!" gasped Betty. "She—she wasn't going to that length, surely, Madge? Not even Ursula—"

But Madge Minden had made no mistake.

"You should have seen her face when she heard my footsteps and opened the door!" Madge added. "If ever a girl looked guilty, it was Ursula at that moment. She had hidden the letter, but the gas was still going."

"And what reason did she give for that?" Betty asked.

"Reason? Oh, she mumbled something!" Madge said, with a grim smile. "She told some awful fib about watching the kettle for the housemaid."

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Polly. "Can't you just see her doing anything for anybody?"

"She was trying to open the letter!" Madge declared. "There's no doubt whatever about that."

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps I had bettah see into

all Ursula's questions, while Jemima, who had arrived, with Ursula, well on time, sat on the fire-guard, in a blue "smoking-jacket," as she was pleased to call it—a coat of masculine cut and severity which suited her rather well.

That blue jacket came in for any amount of comment when the girls streamed in, and Jemima, before the fire, nodded cheerily to them all.

"Come in!" she remarked cordially. "Back to the scenes of slaughter! What are we going to do, Betty—chat over the lessons we have learned to-day, hold a post-mortem on quadratic questions, or something frightfully jolly like that?"

"Not quite," said Betty. "It's a serious meeting."

"Very serious!" said Madge Minden stiffly.

"Good!" said Jemima, with strong approval. "Nothing like seriousness to further the cause of athletic womanhood! Noses to the grindstone, you know, all hands to the plough, or whatever the war-cry is, and back to the cheery old land!"



**THE SNEAK EXPOSED.**

"Who was the girl who steamed open another girl's letter?" demanded the meeting. Madge turned and looked at the sneak of the Form. "It was Ursula Wade!" she answered slowly.

the mattah, geals," Paula decided, with a wise shake of the head.

"Perhaps you had better not," Polly suggested, with a grin. "We want the thing settled. We'll leave it to Betty, or put it to the vote."

"Oh, to the vote," Betty urged worriedly, "please! We can call a general meeting, and have Ursula up—say, after tea."

So that was quickly arranged, and when they went into the Form-room for afternoon lessons, Betty put a notice on the board, calling that meeting.

The notice caused a great deal of surprise. But there was no mention of Ursula, so that girl was just as curious as anyone else. Rather queer it was, really, that Ursula should be amongst the first there. For, had she known the object, she would have taken excellent care to hide herself away.

As it was, fired by curiosity, she got to the Form-room just in advance of Betty.

Betty made up the fire, and shook her head to

"When," said Polly brightly, "the loud-speaker has been turned off—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Closing down now," beamed Jemima. "But my voice is rather attractive, don't you think? Something perhaps slightly reminiscent of a nutmeg-grater, slightly perhaps recalling those sweet and dulcet tones of—"

"Order!" called Betty, hiding a smile. "Order, please!"

A great deal of shuffling there was, and then every girl went to her desk, leaving Betty Barton out in front.

"I call upon Madge Minden, please," said Betty, "to tell you a certain incident that came to her notice."

Then out to the front went Madge, and, without hesitation, she told them all the story, as she had told it to Betty, Polly, and Paula.

"That such a despicable thing could happen doesn't seem quite possible!" said Madge bitterly. "But I give you my word of honour. And I want

to know now whose letter it is. The owner ought to be told."

"Who was it?" demanded Ella Ellgood.

"Yes, who, Madge? Name, please!"

Madge looked at Betty Barton, who nodded.

"Ursula Wade!" said Madge slowly and distinctly.

Ursula staggered somehow to her feet.

"It's not true!" she panted. "Madge is making it up! I—I wasn't near the place at all! I—I—"

A murmur came from the others, an angry murmur.

"I give my word it was Ursula!" said Madge, in contempt.

"And I give my word that it was not I!" blurted out Ursula. "It's one girl's word against another's, and one girl's word is surely as good as another's?"

What a mocking laugh went up at that—and what scoffing, too!

"It wasn't me! I tell you it wasn't!" gasped Ursula. "It's a lie!"

"Put it to the vote," suggested Tess Trelawney. "Ursula's word or Madge's—Madge's word."

Tess put up her hand, and it was a lead that was quickly followed. A shower of hands went up at that, a whole forest of hands, and there was a laugh.

"Ursula's word," said Betty quietly.

Ursula sullenly looked about her. Was there no hand at all—not one?

Beside her sat Jemima, perfectly cool and fresh, with her right hand held up in the air.

"You—you are taking Ursula's word before Madge's?" exclaimed Polly Linton indignantly.

Jemima lowered her hand. For all her coolness, she seemed to be slightly shaken and distressed.

"Oh, well," she said simply, "Ursula's my friend!"

"Oh!"

"Sorry, and all that rot!" sighed Jemima. "But a friend's a friend!"

"Your friend!" said Polly in exasperation. "My goodness, you've got a lot to learn about your friend!"

Ursula Wade looked down at Jemima, and the colour returned to her cheeks.

"You can all think what you like!" she said, with dignity, that surprised them all. "I am not interested in what you think. You have all got your knife into me, anyway. But as long as Jemima believes in me, I don't care!"

There was silence in the Form-room, and every eye was upon Jemima.

"Everything settled?" she asked. "Minutes of the meeting taken, and that sort of thing?"

Betty nodded her head dumbly.

But Madge Minden intervened.

"I suppose you know what this means, Jemima," she said grimly. "The Form has taken my word, and they are sending Ursula to Coventry. That means that every girl who speaks to her will be sent to Coventry, too."

Jemima arranged her monocle.

"Charmed!" she assured them. "For, you know, I have never been to Coventry. Now, that's perfectly true. I have never been there. I'm sure, if you're all going to be so kind as to send us on a little excursion, my bosom pal and I—"

She beamed at Ursula.

"Sent to Coventry," frowned Betty, "means being sentenced to silence, Jemima! If you speak to Ursula, no one will speak to you. You'll be cut—cut dead!"

"I shall be honoured," she beamed, "at being

butchered to make a jolly old Roman holiday, as it might be! I am but little Mary's lamb, you know—Ursula's shadow, as it were. I shall be weeping most frantic tears at missing your bright conversation and childish chatter; but when you gather in your studies and mourn for the lost pearls that might have fallen from my wise lips, always remember the blame is on your heads!"

"Then you are going to stand by Ursula?" asked Madge impatiently.

"Why, of course!" said Jemima in surprise.

She extended her arm to Ursula, who dazedly took it; but who, as she reached the door in Jemima's company, looked round in bitter triumph.

"We'll send you," offered Jemima, "a pretty picture postcard of Coventry when we get there."

And the door closed on the queerest girl who had ever been to Morcove—a girl who seemed to prefer the company of a proved spy and cheat to the other girls in the Form, a girl who put loyalty before all!

Ursula dropped into the armchair in the study, while Jemima stood frowning by the window.

"I say, thanks awfully for standing by me!" Ursula said anxiously. "It was splendid! Of course, I didn't open the letter!"

"Ah, the letter!" nodded Jemima, turning. "Thought there was something I wanted to say! If you've finished with the jolly old thing, you might hand it to me!"

Ursula's eyes almost started from her head.

"I haven't got it," she denied, flushing. "What do you mean? What are you saying?"

Jemima shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't quite know," she said. "I am what you might call all of a dither. I do hope I have used the right expression! But when you've finished rattling out the pretty little stories, my dear, you might put the letter into the desk!"

"It was someone else," panted Ursula. "If you believed I did it, why did you pretend that you didn't—why?"

"Hark!" said Jemima imperatively, and raised her hand. "The echo is answering softly, for only the echo knows!"

Ursula leant forward in her chair.

"I swear it wasn't me! It was—I know who it was! I'll tell you, if you promise not to tell. It—it was—was—"

Jemima raised her hand wearily.

"Good! Don't tell me," she said. "Tell her to put the letter in my drawer, and we'll forget it. Now, what's prep.?"

And Jemima sat down at the table to begin work, whilst Ursula, after a furtive glance, pretended to be busy. But Jemima went out of the room some minutes later, and then it was that Ursula slipped the blue envelope into that girl's drawer. For such a girl had Jemima Carstairs sacrificed the friendship of the girls she liked, cutting herself adrift from the rest of the Form, to lead a lonely existence in the company of a girl she despised—but the girl whom her father had hidden her befriended!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

And so, from a mistaken sense of loyalty, Jemima has allowed herself to be shunned by the other girls. What will happen now? Do you like Jemima? If so, tell your friends about her. They will be pleased to make her acquaintance. She will be featured again in next week's long complete Morcove School story, which is entitled: "The Cost of Friendship!"



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

### MY DEAR READERS,

I PROMISED you last week that this should be a "bumper" number, and I think that, when you have read all the fine stories which I have collected for you, you will agree with me, and say that I have kept my promise.

First of all, of course, there is the long complete tale of Morcove School. Don't you think that *Jemima*—despite her somewhat old-fashioned name—is a really "topping" girl? I am sure that you will immediately "take her to your hearts," as the saying is. Even if she has taken up with *Ursula Wade* instead of *Betty & Co.*, she has done so from a sense of loyalty, and I am sure you will think none the worse of her for that. In next week's long complete tale, which is entitled:

### "THE COST OF FRIENDSHIP!"

By Marjorie Stanton,

you will continue to read of the adventures of *Jemima*, and the things that followed as a consequence of her decision to stick to *Ursula*, even though she knows that the sneak of the Fourth is the girl who stole her letter and steamed it open. Whatever one thinks about *Jemima*, they cannot help but admire her for sticking to a girl she distrusts because she thinks it is her duty to do so. If you like *Jemima*, why not tell your school chums about her? I am sure that they will like her just as much, and they will thank you for telling them about her!

So far as our serials are concerned, I really think that I could not have chosen any writers who are more popular than *Miss Gertrude Nelson*, and *Miss Mildred Gordon*. In our adventure serial:

### "CASTAWAYS OF MYSTERY ISLAND!"

By Gertrude Nelson,

you have a tale which is bound to appeal to every girl. Who of us has not longed to visit the romantic islands of the South Seas? But, alas! that is a pleasure that is denied to most of us, and the next best thing we can do is to read of the adventures of girls who have done what we would like to do ourselves. My Australian and New Zealand readers will be especially interested in this story, as, of course, the heroines are New Zealand girls. But even we stay-at-homes who have never visited these Colonies will be just as much enthralled over the adventures of the heroines as are the girls who hail from the lands "Down Under."

And, just as we are interested in the doings of New Zealand girls, so will my New Zealand readers be interested in the doings of *Emily Davis* in our new serial:

### "IN MOTHER'S PLACE!"

By Mildred Gordon.

*Emily* is a thorough British girl, and even adversity cannot daunt her spirit. She has taken a heavy task upon herself, for it is no easy matter for a young girl, such as she is, to shoulder the responsibility of bringing up a younger brother and sister. But I like to think that if any of my readers had been placed in the same position they would do the same thing. I am sure they would do so, and that is why I am sure also that you will enjoy this story, and will say that it is the best that *Miss Gordon* has yet given us.

### "THE HONOUR SHE REFUSED!"

By Joan Inglesant.

Next week's special complete story is written by the author of that splendid serial, "Prisoners of the Desert!" so that is sufficient to assure you of a really fine tale. This is a story of two circus girls, one pretty and one plain. But, despite this disparity, the two girls are firm friends, as they prove when the time of testing comes.

I am going to ask you to do me a favour now. When you have finished reading this issue of THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, will you lend it to a friend who has not yet become a regular reader? You see, I am quite proud of this issue, because I have really tried to get together a first-rate collection of new stories by authors who have proved themselves to be in the front rank of fiction writers. *Miss Marjorie Stanton* you know of old, and I cannot possibly imagine this little paper of ours without her long complete tales of those wonderful girls, *Betty Barton & Co.* Can you? Then *Miss Gertrude Nelson* is one of the widest travelled of girls' writers, and her adventure stories are the finest you could possibly have. As for *Miss Mildred Gordon*—well, can you tell me any author who can write a better home-life tale? Our shorter complete stories will, as formerly, be written by authors who are prime favourites with all of you. This little journal will continue to uphold the standard which I have set, and that is, as you know, to be "the premier schoolgirls' paper published." So let your friends see it, and urge them to lose no time in joining our happy band of readers and become "one of us."

Now turn to page 578 of this issue, and read the details of some magnificent free gifts which are to be given away with "The Schoolgirls' Weekly." They will interest you!

Your sincere friend,  
YOUR EDITOR.