

“THE GIRL ON THE FARM!”

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# The Girl On The Farm!



A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of the Girls of Cliff House, introducing Mabel Lynn and Lorna Manton.

By HILDA RICHARDS.

## In Possession!

**J**UST look at them!" That was Clara Trevlyn's utterance.

Clara was gazing at the six cheerful girls who had "taken possession" of Study No. 4, in the Fourth Form passage at Cliff House. Behind Clara were quite a number of other girls, drawn hither by her startling cry. Their astonishment seemed to be a source of huge delight to the girl who was lolling in the best chair in front of the fire.

"Anything you want?" she inquired blandly.

"You seem to have made yourself pretty well at home, Lorna Manton!" Clara managed to gasp.

Lorna Manton chuckled merrily. "Well, why not?" she said. "It's a bit of luck our getting an empty study like this, but there's no harm in enjoying it! Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, and Bessie Bunter have apparently been so kind as to go and get into a house where they've got measles, and now they're in quarantine! Ha, ha, ha! Hearty vote of thanks to them, eh, girls, for being so considerate?"

"Rather!" laughed red-haired Bertha Breton.

"I believe you knew that they couldn't come back here!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn. "That's why you've turned up here, Lorna Manton, after being away from the school for a week—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You may have bluffed Miss Steel into thinking that you've been home for the week that the others have been here, but you don't bluff me!" cried Clara, stung by the mocking laughter.

"You are clever!" said Lorna, with mock seriousness. "The way you've guessed that, when I was at the seaside yesterday morning, I suddenly had an inspiration that the same evening would see Barbara, Mabel, and Bessie compelled to stay away from Cliff House so—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed the other five joyously.

"I know you're pretending that you've been away for a week!" retorted Clara.

"But everyone here knows that you haven't. When Bertha and the others came here last Wednesday you were afraid to, and you hid in the clock tower until Friday, when we heard you shriek."

"How amusing!" drawled Lorna.

"After that you disappeared; but we know you've been about!" went on Clara Trevlyn. "You were at your house on Saturday when we turned up there, and you just managed to escape in the car. Then—"

"Have you seen me at all?" inquired Lorna sweetly

"No, I haven't, unfortunately!" admitted Clara. "But Mabs has seen you heaps of times, and Babs and Bessie saw you as well last Wednesday—when you were dressed so similarly to Mabs that she was mistaken for you and accused of working a jape at the Baby Show!"

"Mabs—Mabs! It's all Mabs!" said Lorna. "She's the only one who seems to have seen any of these extraordinary things that I must have been doing in my sleep!"

"You haven't been sleeping!"

"I wish I could meet this Mabs!" sighed Lorna. "She has such a beautiful imagination—she must be interesting! I wish she was here!"

"You only say that because you know there's no possibility of your meeting her!" said Clara bitterly. "Mabs has been wanting to meet you—it's worried her awfully. She's had to bear all the blame for what happened in Courtfield, and a bill for over five pounds has been sent to her parents for the damage you did!"

"Gets more interesting as it goes on!" smiled Lorna, looking cooler than ever.

"Anything else?"

Clara stared. She felt that even her belief in Lorna's guilt was wavering. She had already heard several in the Form say that there must have been some mistake. But Clara stuck doggedly to her guns.

"It doesn't seem very much good talking to you!" she exclaimed. "You understood that you were doing a safe thing in coming here. Perhaps Bertha's Aunt Tilly, who knew all about you, told you that it was safe. And, of course, you can afford to chuckle now: You know that they've put right the foundations of your own school, Oakvale House, and you'll be able to return there in a few days. That means that you're never likely to meet Mabel Lynn now!"

"And that's the end of the chapter?" asked Lorna, with an amused smile.

"Isn't there any more of it?"

"Only that we're going to see that you don't make a bear-garden of this study while Babs and Mabs are away!" said Clara.

"What's wrong with the study?" asked Lorna.

"What's right with it?" cried Clara.

"Look at the cupboard! You've turned everything out into the corner to make room for your own things—"

"Don't be such a fidget!" said Lorna.

"And the table pushed right away like that! It's smashed a picture—"

"Only a stupid water-colour by this wonderful Mabel!" said Lorna off-handedly. "Think we're going to stop in a stuffy old place like this when we found it? Not likely! The curtains are coming down next!"

"And we'll sweep all the old photographs off the mantelpiece," said Bertha Breton, the red-haired girl. "As for marble clocks—well, we hate marble clocks!"

"You'd better not touch that one!" said Clara. "You'll be sorry if you upset any more of the things in here!"

"Don't start a new chapter, please!" begged Lorna. "Put some more coal on, Alma—that's the way! Now a good poke!" Thud, thud! "That's better! Now you can go away, Clara. You're a bit amusing at first, but you keep on too long, you know! I expect you've been reading exciting books, and they've gone to your head!"

"Eh?" gasped Clara Trevlyn, quite insulted by such a remark.

"That's just about it! Ha, ha, ha!" tittered sharp-featured, but weak-looking Marie Tate-Graham. "Not a bit grateful because we've left their studies and packed in here. What stupid chairs they are! This one creaks every time you tip back on it!"

"Squark!" came from above their heads.

"My hat! What was that?" cried Lorna Manton.

"It's that mopsy-looking, horrid old parrot!" exclaimed red-faced Alma Wright. "Just look at it!"

"We'll bundle it out right away!" cried Lorna, springing up. "To expect us to stop in a study with a thing like that—not likely!"

"You leave—" began Clara, but the parrot cage was already unhooked from the wall.

"Who's going to have it?" asked Lorna.

"Eh?"

"Squark!" said Polly weakly.

"I'll put it in the passage, anyway!" said Lorna. "That finishes it!"

Marjorie Hazeldene spoke up with sudden indignation.

"Leave that parrot where it is, Lorna!" she exclaimed. "That's Bessie Bunter's pet, and she's very fond of it."

"Are you?"

"Ahem! Not exactly. Still—"

Clatter! went the cage, as it was stood not very gently in the passage.

"And that's that! I don't mind who has it!" said Lorna calmly. "It ought to be the same as Bessie—in quarantine! Anyone going to feed it? Here's the seed!"

Thud!

The package burst on the passage floor, and spread its contents everywhere.

"Someone can sweep that seed up and tip it in the cage!" remarked Lorna.

"Come on, girls! Let's put this place a bit more to rights. Throw those work-baskets somewhere out of the way. We

don't want that sort of thing round about. On top of the cupboard—that's the way! Ha, ha, ha! Wonder whose things they were that went down the back?"

Clara Trevlyn strode indignantly into the study as there were murmurs of anger at the easy way in which the six girls were making the study to their liking, regardless of other people's property.

"You'll put those things back where you found them Lorna!"

"I don't think so!" said Lorna coolly. "No business of yours, clever one! We're in possession now, and we're going to make ourselves comfy. My hat! What's that girl yelling about outside?"

Katie Smith wasn't yelling, but she certainly looked excited as she appeared outside Study No. 4 at that moment.

"Girls, have you seen the notice that Stella Stone has just put up?" she cried. "She says that as Babs may be away for two or three weeks we are to elect a temporary Form captain."

"A temporary captain of the Fourth?" ejaculated Lorna. "That's an idea! Ha, ha, ha! Girls, I'll be your captain, if you like!"

"You?" gasped Clara.

"Why not?" cried Lorna. "I'm sure you must be fed up with the stupid way that Babs seems to have been bringing you up. You make me your captain, and

I'll guarantee that we have some good fun all right!"

The "nerve" of it fairly took their breath away.

"Do you think any of us would vote for you?" said Clara, at length.

"I don't see why not!" returned Lorna cheerfully. "Perhaps you yourself wouldn't; but, then, I don't want your vote. There are nine of us. That's nine votes! Plenty of you others must be fed up with the gloomy sort of time you've been having! I'm captain at Oakvale House, and I'll make you a jolly good captain here any day!"

"Rather!" echoed Bertha Breton. "This is the tamest school I've ever struck! Wants someone just like Lorna to brighten things up!"

Lorna was growing more and more excited.

"When's this election coming off?" she exclaimed. "Tell me the date, and I'll put up at once. This is Wednesday afternoon. I suppose it will be this evening—eh? You vote for me, girls. It'll be worth it! I'll see we enjoy our little selves!"

Clara Trevlyn stared in greater astonishment than ever. There really seemed to be no end to Lorna Manton's coolness!

"Do you think anyone would vote for you, knowing what you've done, and how you've allowed Babs to take your blame?" she ejaculated.

"Fairy tales—all fairy tales!" said Lorna airily. "Girls, you're surely not going to believe all these stories! I only wish that Mabel Lynn could turn up at this moment, so that I could convince you that—"

"My poor old parrot!"

A familiar voice uttered those four words from the end of the passage.

The effect was electrical.

Lorna broke off in the middle of her speech. Clara & Co. exchanged glances as though they could hardly credit their hearing. Then, as one girl, they turned.

And their ears had not deceived them.

"Bessie Bunter!" gasped Clara. "My hat! She—she—"

It was Bessie Bunter who came rolling cheerfully along the passage.

"Hallo, girls! I'm back!" was her greeting. "But, I say, why is poor old Polly out here, in all the draughts? I'm sure he'll catch his death of cold, and who—"

Clara grabbed her arm.

"What are you doing here? I—I thought you'd got to stay in the village!"

Bessie gave her a broad grin.

"He, he, he! We haven't!" she chuckled. "It wasn't silly measles at all. We've been allowed to come back!"

In Study No. 4 Lorna Manton made a choking noise.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Are Babs and Mabs here as well?" ejaculated Phyllis Howell.

"Rather! They're downstairs, talking to Miss Primrose!" said Bessie.

Clara Trevlyn gave a shriek of joy. She looked into Study No. 4, where Lorna was standing against the table, mute and pale, with eyes that reflected the horror that she felt.

"Lorna, Mabs is back, after all!" Clara yelled. "Hooray! We're going down to fetch her up, and then you can have a chat with her!"

"Lorna, what ever's the matter with you?" exclaimed Phyllis Howell. "You don't look half so pleased as you did! Don't you want to see Mabs?"

"I—I don't mind seeing her," Lorna forced herself to say. "It's—it's having to clear out of this study—"

"Oh, if that's all you've got on your mind, you'll soon be fixed up somewhere else!" Phyllis answered excitedly.



## THE ONE WHO CONFESSED!

By VIVIENNE LEIGH (Fourth Form.)

"I STOLE Connie's brooch!"

Marcia Loftus stopped in her stride. Her eyes glimmered, and she pricked her ears with expectancy.

Marcia was rounding the quadrangle, and it was beneath the window of Study No. 4 that she pulled up. From the window of that celebrated compartment floated the startling words:

"I stole Connie's brooch! Oh dear! I stole Connie's brooch!"

The words were faintly uttered, and Marcia could not recognise the voice that floated to her ears; but it clearly suggested a distraught girl bemoaning her deed—now that it was too late!

The prying girl drove a fist into her other palm.

"My—my word!" she muttered, hardly able to keep back a cry of exultation. "Then one of those girls in Study No. 4 is the culprit! What had I better do? Bring Connie to pounce upon her. She may confess if she is suddenly surprised!"

Marcia crept stealthily away. Even as she did so, the faint, plaintive voice once more floated to her ears:

"I stole Connie's brooch! Oh dear!"

Marcia's eyes glimmered again as she hurried her steps. Connie Jackson, of the Sixth, had missed a rather expensive brooch of hers that day, and had not omitted to remark the fact high and low, and far and wide. We had all heard about it, and nobody—except, perhaps, Connie—thought for a moment that anybody had pilfered it.

But this colloquial confession from an occupant of Study No. 4—well, Marcia Loftus could scarce believe her luck!

Round an angle of the building, as supervisor of the quadrangle, came Connie Jackson. Marcia dashed up to her.

"Oh, Connie!" she cried breathlessly. "Your brooch, you know. Someone in Study No. 4 has just confessed the theft!"

Connie stared.

"Someone in Study No. 4?" she repeated. "Impossible! I should say—what grounds have you for this, Marcia?"

"I've just heard her muttering about it! I can't quite tell the voice—whether it's Barbara Redfern's, or Mabel Lynn's, or Bessie Bunter's; but it's pretty certain to be one of the three."

Connie, though her eyes glinted with expectation, looked uncertain for a moment. "We will listen beneath the window," she said shortly, at last.

Very silently the pair crept to the spot beneath the window. They had only a moment to wait, and then again floated the voice, still faint and plaintive, yet unrecognisable:

"I stole Connie's brooch! Oh dear! I stole Connie's brooch!"

"This is sufficient!" exclaimed Connie exultantly. "Thank you, Marcia, for letting me know this!"

"Oh, I'm always ready to do you a good turn!" said Marcia gleefully.

A few moments later the pair were outside Study No. 4. A sudden wrench, and the door was opened—to reveal an empty room!

"My goodness!" stammered Connie. "There—there's—"

"She's taken the alarm—that's what it is!" said Marcia sourly. "Just as we'd got her, too!"

"I stole Connie's brooch! Oh dear! I stole Connie's brooch!"

Connie and Marcia positively jumped. Their eyes riveted themselves upon the parrot's cage, and its green occupant. For Polly, the parrot, was the speaker!

"I stole Connie's brooch! Oh dear! I stole Connie's brooch!"

Connie spun round upon Marcia furiously.

"You—you silly little duffer!" she exclaimed fiercely. "As usual, you have brought me on a fool's errand! If I were still a mistress I'd line you heavily! As it is, I'll box your ears!"

"Oh!" stuttered Marcia.

Then she jumped as Connie lunged at her. A moment later she was out of the study, and streaking along the passage, with the furious Connie in hot pursuit!

A little explanation is needed here. Why did Polly utter the words which Connie and Marcia had overheard?

The answer is simply. Polly only repeats what he has heard. After Connie burst into Study No. 4, and practically accused Bessie of the theft, Bessie was deeply hurt. "I stole Connie's brooch! Oh dear!" she had exclaimed dismally. "Fancy suspecting me, you know! I stole Connie's brooch! Oh dear!" We had pacified her, of course; but she had continued to mutter dismally a few times: "I stole Connie's brooch! Oh dear!" And Polly had evidently stuck to the words.

So it was only poetic justice that Connie's reckless accusation should have been the cause of that little "indignity" to herself!



"Come on, girls! Let's go down to Babs and Mabs, and then we'll see what Lorna really has to say."

"Rather!"

They were rushing off, every one of them, with Clara Trevlyn leading, and Phyllis Howell a good second. The silence that settled in Study No. 4 as they went down the stairs, was almost uncanny.

"They—they've come back, after all!" muttered Bertha Breton. "Oh, Lorna, what ever are you going to do? I told you you were a fool to come here and try to bluff it out!"

"How did I know this would happen?" snapped Lorna savagely. "You always know, of course! Always, when it's too late! How did I know the stupid doctor had made a mistake? I'm certain I heard him say that it was measles! If this hadn't happened, I'd have been able to bluff it out, and I could have gone back to Oakvale with no one knowing anything."

"You—you won't be able to now!" quavered Marie Tate-Graham.

"I know that—I know that!" Lorna muttered, taking an agitated step towards the door. "There are three of them. They'll all identify me as the girl they saw in Courtfield! I can't deny it then!" She squeezed her hands together distractedly. "There's only one thing. I must become Aunt Tilly again!"

"Aunt Tilly?" breathed Bertha.

"Yes. It took them in for four days—it'll take them in again! I've got all my make-up in my bag in the dormitory. I'll get it and dart into that room I had as a bed-room. Miss Steel assumes that auntie has gone, but I'll get a story to cover up that. I tell you it's the only thing!"

Bertha Breton nodded her head.

"You're right. I think it is, Lorna. Oh, hark! Why are they yelling like that?"

Lorna Manton darted into the passage. "I don't know," she said; "but I'm taking no risks. Tell them any story that you like—that I've gone out, or had a wire from home, or anything."

And she fled wildly—anywhere to be away from Mabel Lynn!

### The Evasive Lorna!

THE members of the Fourth Form reached the entrance-hall in record time to find that Bessie Bunter had omitted to tell them one thing. Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn were not alone with the Head-mistress; there was someone else there as well—a poorly-dressed villager.

They would have drawn back, but Miss Primrose, hearing them, beckoned.

"Come here, girls! You all have a right to hear this!" Miss Primrose exclaimed, in an almost joyful tone. "This is Miss Moxton, of Friardale. She has just made a very important statement to me, and you all have the right to hear it. It concerns the charge that I was compelled, yesterday, to bring against Mabel Lynn."

"My hat!" breathed Clara.

"Mabel, as you know, was accused of committing spiteful and wanton damage in Lady Barling's room. She said that someone caused her to do it, but I found it difficult to believe her. I am glad to say that this young lady here has come forward to tell me that she witnessed the incident, but was called away immediately, and only learnt later of the charge brought against Mabel. It is sufficient evidence for me to be able to say that I gladly withdraw what I said yesterday."

"Hooray!" cheered Clara Trevlyn;



# ALICE AND THE BULL!

By BARBARA REDFERN (Fourth Form).

**B**ETWEEN two such Forms as the Third and the Upper Third one would naturally expect a fierce rivalry to exist. But such is not by any means the case. The Third, for their part, are keenly willing to carry on a feud with anybody; but the Upper Third—

For such youngsters, their stately, dignified demeanour is rather amazing. Nothing is further from their minds than the idea of acting as rivals to anybody.

But what the Upper Third Form lacks in the spirit of rivalry, the Third Form amply makes up for. Rewardless as their efforts are, they can't resist a little "dig" at their rivals now and again. It was after one of their "digs," I understand from my sister Doris, that Alice Constable, the "unofficial" captain of the Upper Third, came in upon the more vicious Form—with a lecture!

"I am still in hopes that as time goes on you will learn to know better," Alice said impressively.

The Third-Formers yawned.

"It is far from maidenly," resumed Alice, "to arrange a bolster on the door of your sister pupils' dormitory in such a manner that it drops upon the head of the girl first to enter."

The Third-Formers yawned more widely. They were dimly wondering however they were to get rid of Alice without actually "throwing her out" of their Commu-room.

"I was the first to enter," added Alice solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the Third at that.

"I am sorry to say," said Alice stiffly, "that you show a most thoughtless disregard for the feelings of others. I really must go on to say—"

"Poor Miss Bullivant!" said Madge Stevens suddenly.

Alice started slightly.

"I beg your pardon, Madge! Did you say—"

"Poor Miss Bullivant! It was your talking about having concern for the feelings of others that suggested it, Alice," explained Madge, with a shake of the head and a wink of the eye farther from Alice. "I wonder what she must feel like to have lost her hearing so suddenly! Dear, dear, dear!"

"Lost—lost her hearing?" repeated Alice blankly. "Surely—surely Miss Bullivant hasn't been taken deaf?"

"It is surprising, isn't it?" agreed Madge non-committantly. "But what a misfortune to become almost stone deaf so suddenly! What must be her feelings?"

"Dear, dear me!" said Alice, quite touched. "I have an imposition to take to poor Miss Bullivant. I will most certainly condole with her upon her sudden misfortune."

"Don't forget to shout!" said Madge quickly.

"Certainly! I will most certainly endeavour to make myself heard, Madge, although shouting, in general, is most unmaidenly," said Alice seriously. "I am deeply—deeply pleased to see, Madge, that you have at last begun to concern yourself about other people's feelings!"

Very pleased with the Third Form, and with Madge Stevens in particular, she went straight away and procured her finished imposition, and visited Miss Bullivant's study.

There was no answer to her knock, and Alice entered. The Bull was seated at her desk. The fact that she had not answered the knock "gave colour" to Madge's suggestion that the Bull was almost stone deaf.

Alice stepped soundlessly over the carpeted floor, until she was within a foot of the Bull's ears.

"Miss Bullivant!" she roared at the top of her voice.

That lady almost jumped clean into the air.

"What—what!" she stammered, spinning about as if she had received a blow.

Alice apparently took those two "whats" to be of the questioning variety. If the Bull had not heard that word properly she must certainly be very deaf!

"Miss Bullivant!" bawled Alice, determined to make herself heard clearly. "There are your lines!"

"I—I—I—" floundered the Bull, in the completest amazement.

"I am sorry you are so deaf, Miss Bullivant!" vociferated Alice. "It is a calamity!"

"What—what—my goodness!" gasped the mistress.

"But I hope it is only temporary!" Alice went booming on. "I see by your look that you are unable to hear what I say—"

"Girl!" thundered the Bull, recovering herself at last. "Are you mad? What—what do you mean by it? What—"

"Then—then you're not deaf!" stammered Alice, in helpless dismay.

"Deaf! I deaf!" stormed the Bull. "No, girl, of course not! Who—what—who put that absurd idea into your head?"

And then, of course, it all came out! Alice gave away the Third-Formers before she knew where she was. In fact, it was quite a time before she realised that the Third-Formers had japed her at all! She thought they had simply been mistaken as regards the Bull's "deafness"!

Madge Stevens & Co.—Madge in particular—got it hot from Miss Bullivant. But impositions did not worry them in the least, for they had scored off the Upper Third, and made one of their stately number look very small indeed!

and the cry was taken up enthusiastically.

"Thank you, girls! I was glad to hear that cheer!" smiled Miss Primrose. "Mabel left school yesterday evening against orders; but as it was in response to a message from Miss Moxton, I cannot altogether blame her—especially as the reported infection has proved a false alarm, and the three girls have been allowed to return here."

Miss Primrose had a few more words to say, and then she smiled on them

and sailed away. Clara & Co. surged forward to hug Babs and Mabs, who had returned so unexpectedly to their midst.

"And Lorna Manton's here, Mabs!" was one of Clara's first excited remarks. "They've all settled themselves in Study No. 4."

"Lorna Manton!" Mabs gasped. "Here? Oh, you can't mean it?"

"She calls herself by that name, anyway!"

"But—but—"  
"Come and see her, Mabs. That's what we want!" ejaculated Clara. "She's still in Study No. 4. I believe she knew all along that you had been told you'd have to keep in quarantine. But seeing's believing!"

Babs and Mabs found themselves swept on towards Study No. 4.

As they went, they were told the whole exciting story; a story that, naturally enough, they found it very hard to credit at first. That Lorna, the girl for whom they had been searching, should arrive just when they had become prisoners—well, it was enough to sweep any girl off her feet!

"This way, girls!"  
Clara rushed to Study No. 4 and threw open the door. And then they saw her start back with a gasp of dismay.

"Gone!" she ejaculated.  
"Gone? Who's gone?" cried Katie Smith's voice.

"All of them—the whole crowd!"

"She's had to go out. Had a wire, I think."

"Had a wire!" said Clara scornfully. "As though we shall swallow that! Where's she hiding?"

A fresh voice spoke at that very moment.  
"Bertha! Bertha, my dear! What ever is the matter?"

They looked up, to see Aunt Tilly coming along the passage.

Bertha forced a smile to her face.

"Oh, some silly wild-goose chase, aunt," she said.

"Dear me!" replied Aunt Tilly. "What a queer— Goodness gracious! What's the matter with you?"

Mabel Lynn had jumped forward, and was holding Aunt Tilly's arm.

"You know!" said Mabs tensely.

"I—I know," quavered Aunt Tilly. And Bertha's expression was most extraordinary.

"Yes," said Mabs. "A girl has just

suddenly raised her hand and swept from the other's head the hat and veil and grey wig. The pince-nez fell to the floor and smashed.

Aunt Tilly stood exposed at last.  
"Lorna Manton it is!" gasped Clara Trevlyn. "My hat! No wonder she knew everything that happened! No wonder she pulled our legs! Oh, stop her!"

With one furious thrust Lorna had sent Mabs reeling back from her. Now she had taken to her heels, and was flying along the passage.

"After her!"  
"It's Lorna!"  
"Catch her!"

Mabs was the first to rush in pursuit, but she had plenty of supporters.

They knew the truth at last. They realised how they had been hoodwinked. There was not one of them but had some score to settle with the girl who had so cunningly hoaxed the whole school.

"I say, you girls! What's the matter?"

Bessie Bunter appeared at the end of the passage.

"It's Lorna! Stop her!" yelled Clara. Bessie Bunter stepped right in Lorna's path.

"Stop, Lorna!" she exclaimed. "I've seen you now! It's no good running! I— Oooooer! Look out!"

Bump!  
Bessie Bunter sat on the floor and shrieked as Lorna sped on past her.

"Come back! Ow, my back! I'll jolly well run after you in a minute if you don't come back! Oh, my arm! Oooooer!"

They left Bessie Bunter still making hazy threats to anyone who cared to listen. Lorna had gone upstairs, but they were gaining on her.

At the top of the stairs they saw her turn. Mabs, not a dozen feet away, rushed forward to overtake her. She was just too late.

Lorna snatched at a half-open door, and darted into a room.

Slam!  
Click!

Mabs seized the handle of the door and rattled it fruitlessly.

"The bed-room she's been using—she's locked the door!" gasped Clara Trevlyn. "But we'll get her out somehow!"

Mabs was already banging on the panels.

"Lorna, open the door! It's no good now! I've caught you! You'd better come out. I shall wait here until you do!"

No sound came from the room.  
"It's no good, Lorna!" Mabs called angrily. "You won't escape now! Do you hear?"

They heard a noise inside the room at last.

"Goodness! She's opening the window!" gasped Babs.

Mabs looked startled at that.  
"But surely she'd never try to climb down the ivy to the ground!" she breathed. "It's madness! She'd be almost certain to fall!"

They waited. In the silence they heard another creak from the window, then a scratching sound.

"She's getting out!" muttered Clara. Mabs beat on the panels.

"Lorna, don't be idiotic!" she cried anxiously. "You'll hurt yourself! It isn't safe! If you should—"

There she broke off, an icy hand seeming to clutch at her heart.

"Help, help!" came a muffled, terrified cry. "Oh, help! I'm falling! Quickly! Help!"

The girls gazed at each other with white, scared faces.



### THE UNWANTED PARROT!

"We'll bundle it out right away!" cried Lorna Manton, seizing the cage.

"To expect us to stop in a study with a thing like this—not likely!"

Clara exclaimed, "Oh, my hat! What duffers we were to expect that Lorna would wait to see Mabs! I knew she doesn't, all the time! Why didn't we grab her?"

Babs and Mabs were staring into the disordered apartment that they had left so cosy and tidy.

"Have they been in here?" exclaimed Babs.

"Yes. They were just making themselves at home!" said Clara breathlessly. "But we've got to find Lorna—that's the next job. We must scatter and search all over the school!"

"And we will—if Lorna Manton's here!" cried Mabel Lynn. "I've said I'd force that girl to confess, and I will!"

There was a rush along the passage. Almost at once they came on Bertha Breton.

"Ah! Here you are!" Clara cried. "Where's Lorna?"

Bertha Breton scowled at them.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 150.

been up here. Unfortunately, she's gone. But she saw what happened at the bazaar yesterday. She saw the person who pushed me into Lady Barling's room. And that person was yourself."

Aunt Tilly tried to free herself from Mabel Lynn's grasp.

"Dear me! To say such a thing! Some witness you have paid—"

"There has been no paying," said Mabs, with deadly calm. "I've stood enough insults from you, and I won't take that one. You've been playing Lorna Manton's game all along. You've known— My hat!"

Mabs had taken a step forward as Aunt Tilly cowered back against the wall. Now she was hardly a foot away from her.

"Mabs, what ever is the matter?" Babs ejaculated.

"I've just seen something," said Mabs, so quietly that they knew that it was an assumed voice. "Not only has Aunt Tilly been playing Lorna Manton's game. It's clear now. She is Lorna Manton!"

And with that dramatic cry Mabs



"Help! Oh, quickly! I shall fall!"

Babs pulled herself together after that second of utter dismay.

"Come on girls! A ladder!" she panted. "She may be able to cling for a bit. It's the only thing to do. We can't get in the room, as the door's locked!"

"Hold on, Lorna, if you can!" Mabel Lynn cried, her anger gone in a moment. "We'll try and rescue you!"

They were off again at that, pelting down the stairs even faster than they had come up them.

Bessie Bunter, having at last convinced herself that she had not been hurt by her tumble, was coming up to see what was happening. They met her on the half-landing, and before Bessie knew anything else, she was once more seated on the unsympathetic floor in an anything but dignified manner!

"Ow!" gasped Bessie. "You've pushed me over, Mabs! Look at me! Help!"

But Bessie's troubles had to wait.

In a few more seconds, the leaders were streaming out of the back door of the building, and rushing towards the angle of the wall, around which they should catch their first glimpse of Lorna Manton.

Mabs was the first to turn the corner. Immediately she did so, her pace slackened. She pulled up abruptly, and stared up at the wall.

"Babs! What ever has happened?" gasped Mabs hoarsely. "See, she's not there!"

"But she hasn't fallen, either!" answered Babs, running her eyes swiftly over the flower-beds below.

"Has she managed to climb down, after all—even faster than we ran down?" ejaculated Mabs.

Clara Trevlyn was the one to guess the truth.

"My hat! It's a trick!" she gasped. "See, even the window's closed again! We've come down here for nothing! I don't believe she ever climbed out—she was just acting, to get us away from the door!"

"Oh dear!"

Mabs would have gone running back, but Babs checked her.

"Clara's right, I believe, Mabs," she said. "But it's no good going inside now. Lorna will have escaped long before this. Where will she go next? Try and get out the gates, I think!"

"Quickly—to warn Piper not to let her go!" cried Mabs.

The angrier had returned to her. Perhaps Lorna might argue that all was fair to a girl in such a desperate position. But it was a very shabby trick, for all that!

The shouts of a reedy and excited voice came suddenly to their ears.

"Help, help! I've found Lorna, girls! Quickly!"

"It's Bessie Bunter!" gasped Babs. "Sounds as though she's in the quadrangle, too!"

They rushed along the back of the building, and then along the side. They came to the lower part of the quadrangle. Two figures were visible at once. Lorna Manton was leading, and had nearly reached the old clock-tower. Some distance behind her, but shouting lustily, was Bessie Bunter.

"Lorna's going in!" gasped Babs.

It was true. They saw her pause outside the tower and produce a shining and new-looking key. Already the girl had cast off the garments of her disguise, and was Lorna Manton once more.

The lock seemed to yield at once. The heavy door creaked on its hinges as it opened. Lorna threw one glance behind her, and seemed to realise that pursuit

was too near for her to attempt to lock the door again. She darted inside the tower, and disappeared from sight.

Bessie Bunter puffed up just as Babs & Co. arrived.

"Jolly smart of me—oh?" said Bessie breathlessly. "I guessed she'd—phoooh!—trick you, you know! Takes a lot to deceive me! Ow! Oh dear!"

Bessie was too breathless to say all she wished to say.

"We'll catch her now if we're lucky!" muttered Mabs, as she rushed within. "She can't have had time to go far!"

Their steps echoed queerly as they went streaming up the old wooden stairs. On the first floor there was still no sign of Lorna Manton. They came to the second, and top, floor. It was the same as when they had seen it last!

There was no sign of the girl anywhere!

"My word!" breathed Katie Smith.

"She's gone, girls! She must be in the secret place that we've never been able to discover!"

Katie was on her knees, pointing to the stonework.

"Those black marks!" she cried exultantly. "And this—it looks as though a boot had grazed against it. Yes, the other marks are boot-polish, I expect. My word, someone's been kicking the wall just there—recently, too! I'm sure they were never there before!"

"Then I'll give it another kick!" exclaimed Clara.

She did—heartyly! And even Clara gasped at what happened.

There was a click—a wheeze—and then their startled eyes saw a portion of the wall slowly open inwards!

"Good gracious!"

"Hooray!" yelled Katie Smith.

"We've discovered the secret at last!"

"It's a dark staircase!" breathed Clara, in quite an awed voice. "And to think—Bessie! Where ever are you going?"

Bessie Bunter had squeezed her fat figure through the opening in the wall!

"I'm going down!"



**UNMASKED!** Mabel Lynn suddenly raised her hand, and swept from "Aunt Tilly's" head the hat, veil, and grey wig, whilst the pince-nez fell to the floor and smashed! "Lorna Manton!" cried Mabs dramatically.

### The Secret of the Tower!

**F**OR a moment there was complete silence.

"We must find her somehow!" said Mabel Lynn suddenly.

Katie Smith began to dart about from side to side. This was something that really suited Katie. The very mention of a secret passage always made her thrill.

"Rather!" said Katie. "And it's in this room, too, I believe. Remember how we found Bertha & Co. up here, grinning, after Lorna gave that yell last Friday? And I believe it must be in this thick part of the wall that I've always suspected. It's at least three feet thick here!"

Instinctively, they followed Katie to the wall between two of the windows. That particular stretch of wall had always been a bone of contention in the Fourth.

"Look!" Katie yelled suddenly.

"Look at what?" Clara cried.

"Come here!"

Clara made a grab at Bessie Bunter's famous pigtail—just too late. Bessie was already shuffling down the dark stairs, so great was the pitch to which her curiosity had been roused.

"Bessie, come here, you noodle!" cried Clara, beginning to grope in pursuit. "What good do you think you'll be, leading? Let me go first!"

"I—I'm all right!" said Bessie's voice, but not so confidently. "You follow me, and—Ooooooh! What was that?"

"I didn't hear anything!" said Clara. "Bessie, hurry on—do!" cried voices from behind. "We all want to come down!"

Bessie was shuffling on, more slowly than ever.

"Go on, you silly duffer!" hissed Clara.

"It—it's all right!" quivered Bessie's voice, now from complete darkness. "Best to t-t-take your time. We'll get down all right!"

"Yes, when we're old ladies!" retorted Clara. "Here, let me pass."

"Bessie, move on!" came a chorus from those behind.

"I—I am moving on! There, I'm on another step! Now I—I'm on the next one! Oh dear! Don't you think I'm brave, risking my life like this?"

"Go on, and don't chatter!"

"Oh, really, I—I—I'm going on, absolutely fit-fif-fearlessly! It isn't every girl who would— There, I'm on another step! Now I'm going to— Oooooo! What was that?"

"Nothing!" cried Clara.

"Yes, it was!" gasped Bessie. "Oh dear! I—I b-b-believe the old gig-gig-ghost's down here! I ain't going any farther! I say, Clara, I—I want to come back!"

"You giddy chump!" said Clara sulphurously. "There's nothing! Hurry on! We're all behind you!"

"Here's a match, Clara!" exclaimed Dolly Jobling's voice. "Had them for lighting the spirit stove, and forgot to return them. See her if you can!"

The match scraped, then fizzled to light. Clara gazed down the eerie, winding staircase, saw Bessie Bunter, and burst into a peal of laughter!

"Ha, ha, ha! Girls, she's right down the bottom, sitting on a pile of blankets! The blankets that the matron couldn't find!"

"Never!" they chorused.

"Oh, really, Clara!" said Bessie's dismal voice. "Is it blankets? I—I felt sure it was a lot of horrid old rocks! In any case—"

"Girls! Quickly! She's escaping!"

That yell, in the voice of Philippa Derwent, came from the top room of the tower, and more than startled them all.

"Escaping?" gasped Mabs.

"Yes," Flap answered them. "She's

Mabs gasped. "She must have gone amongst the trees! Come on, girls! I'm going to search there, anyway!"

They were off immediately. The opposite side of the lane was thickly wooded. Mabs' suggestion was a very commonplace one.

But from the cover of a dry ditch the eyes of Lorna Manton watched them go. Lorna had not run at all. She had chosen the very first hiding-place, right against the wall she had scaled. So obvious was it that no one thought of looking there at all.

Scattering as soon as they reached the trees, the Cliff House girls spread out in all directions. Some stopped to beat in every cover; others went straight on, not realising the uselessness of their search. Around Cliff House itself there were none remaining. And Lorna, seeing her opportunity then, took it.

The searchers gave up the chase very reluctantly.

The first couples began to return after half an hour, but Mabs and Mabs did not come back to the school, dusty and footsore, until it was nearly tea-time. They made their way to Study No. 4, and found a disconsolate Bessie Bunter sitting in the rocking-chair.

"Did you catch her?" asked Bessie.

Mabs shook her head.

"She dodged us in some manner. And we've tramped miles and miles, looking everywhere."

"After I caught her for you, too!" said Bessie.

"After you what?" gasped Mabs and Mabs together.

"I hope that you're not going to deny that I chased her into the tower!" said Bessie Bunter, with dignity. "I've really done my best for you, Mabs! I know you want to catch that girl, and make her own up about Courtfield, but I—"

"You jolly well made us lose her, Bessie!" cried Mabs. "Fooling about on the secret stairway as you did gave her that start!"

"Oh, really! It's rather mean to turn against me like that!" returned Bessie airily. "Still, I expect you're feeling disappointed and rather quarrelsome. I'll get some tea, and then you'll feel better. I'll have to find her for you again, I can see!"

Mabs decided to let that pass. Bessie usually had the last word.

"Has Bertha Breton been in here?" asked Mabs.

"No. They've all gone out," said Bessie. "After you went chasing Lorna they said they'd have a look themselves. I expect they're rather worried."

"Wait till after tea, and we'll give the matter a good thinking out!" said Mabs. They sat down to the tea that Bessie had prepared.

Ten minutes later the door opened, to admit Miss Steel.

"Barbara," she said, "do you know anything about Lorna Manton?"

"Lorna Manton?" gasped Mabs, and wondered what to say.

"Yes. She appears to have left the school," said Miss Steel. "I have received a telegram from her, despatched in Courtfield, saying that she is returning to the seaside, and her parents will write to me. Did she tell you that she was going?"

"Not—not exactly," admitted Mabs.

"I see," said Miss Steel. "I must tell Miss Primrose."

They heard her footsteps as she went away.

"Lorna Manton—gone to her parents!" breathed Mabel Lynn. "Can it really be true this time, Mabs?"



## SECRETS THAT ARE OURS!

A Mysterious Contribution from Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear, of the Second Form, with the spelling corrected to make it understandable

**I**N the Second Form we pride ourselves on the number of secrets that are ours. We guard our secrets with the greatest of jealousy. Most of our secrets will remain secrets for ever and ever. But some of them we might let out later on and cause great sensations!

In the Second Form class-room there is a big, iron-bound box clamped to the floor. There used to be a key always sticking in the lock of this box, but that key disappeared mysteriously. You wouldn't think that we had anything to do with that, would you? Ah! And this box used to be empty. But we might tell you that it is not empty now! How do we know that? Ah! Miss Scott thinks that box is still empty, and that the key has got lost. Ah! But this is only one of our secrets.

The fixtures on the wall of our Common-room look all right. They do not look suspicious at all. Nobody would think that behind one of them is a secret cavity in the wall. Nobody knows what we hide there! But is it likely we shall tell you where this secret cavity is? Ah!

We have explored all over the school, and we have found out all sorts of secrets. We have found a secret door. It looks like an ordinary one, but we have all firmly decided that it is a secret one—leads up a long and narrow flight of stairs.

These bring you to a room which is simply crammed with mysterious chairs! And then there is another flight of stairs, which leads you to a small, square hole, and this leads you on the rafters.

Oh, we have walked along these rafters for miles and miles, all in the dark! I don't believe anybody has ever heard of them before. It is one of our great secrets, and we don't believe anybody else knows it! Ah! We were very disappointed when we saw Piper go through our secret door one day, when a concert was given in the Big Hall, and came down with some of the mysterious chairs.

Madge Stevens, of the Third, says that everybody knows about the chairs being up there, and that they are kept there to be brought down into the school when they are needed. We don't believe her. And, anyway, even if people know all about the chairs they don't know anything about the rafters! Ah!

We have heaps—heaps more secrets! But we are not going to tell you anything about them. Ah!

"I—I—I'm not going! He'll j-j-jolly well grab me first! I say, Clara, you k-k-kick-com me past me!"

"You're too fat, you goose! No one can pass you! Go on!"

"But the gig-gig-ghost—"

"Will you go on, Bessie?" came a howl of vexation from the following juniors.

"Oh, really! Risking my life, and then you shout at me! Besides, I—I've j-j-just got a touch of rheumatism come on! I can only walk upstairs now. Often takes me like— Help! I'm falling!"

Bump!

Clatter, clatter!

"Yarooooo!" came a yell from Bessie Bunter, now a considerable distance away. "My back! Fractured all over! Both my arms broken; so's my neck! I can feel it! Oooooo!"

There was consternation on the dark stairway.

"Where ever is she, Clara?"

"I can't see," Clara answered. "But I hope—"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 150.

just come through the trapdoor from the vaults. That's where the staircase must lead, after all! Quickly, or she'll get right away!"

With one accord the girls turned and started running up the stairs again.

Bessie Bunter gave a squeak of fright.

"Clara! I say, Clara, don't leave me! I'm much better now, Clara! I say, I'm coming up!"

And Bessie Bunter started to pound up the stairs in a manner that was very creditable indeed, considering that she said that her back was fractured all over.

Flap Derwent was the leader now in the new chase. She went rushing down the stairs of the tower, and fled into the open. Behind her came a long file of girls. They were just in time to see Lorna leap from the top of the school wall, and disappear into the lane beyond.

They tore with one accord for the gates. But Lorna had disappeared already! Where?

They clustered in a group, looking this way and that.

"She hasn't had a minute, anyway!"



Babs inclined her head.

"Somehow, Mabs, I think it must be true!" she said. "Lorna was in an awful pickle here. I don't think she dare hide near the school again, and we should see through another disguise. Perhaps she's decided to go to her people and make a clean breast of it."

"Or as much as she thinks necessary," said Mabs dejectedly. "She won't mention Courtfield. I've lost her, Babs—lost her, after all! I'm partly cleared in Miss Primrose's eyes, but Lady Barling will still be against me. They'll know it in Friardale and in Courtfield. It'll linger—they'll be ready to suspect anything anything else against me. My pater will be called on to pay that bill for the repair of the cup. Oh, I feel miserable, Babs!"

She rose, crossed to the window, and stared across at the old tower. Katie Smith was leading parties in, and flashing an electric pocket-lamp from the windows. But that excitement, now that Lorna had flown, seemed so empty that Mabs turned away again.

"No, I shan't do it now, Babs—it'll always be remembered against me!" she muttered. "I can't stop anyone thinking what she likes. I've been near to Lorna Manton—I've held her—and yet she's dodged me, after all!"

"I expect I shall catch her if I do a bit of thinking!" said Bessie Bunter gravely; but they did not seem to hear her, although she repeated it twice.

Babs was trying to comfort her chum and cheer her up, but there was little or nothing she could say. Lorna seemed to have beaten them, after all! If only her parents sided with her she could escape scot-free—and laugh at them all!

"She's tricked me, after all!" Mabs said heavily. "You can't get away from that. I had the chance. We all ought to have seen through her disguise, but we didn't. Lorna's scored all along the line!"

### Trapped in the Barn!

WHERE was Lorna Manton? Twenty-four hours had passed since her flight from Cliff House School, but she was not so very far away, after all. Lorna had not gone to her parents; a very judicious letter had been sent instead, apprising them of just as much as she thought advisable.

And Lorna, instead of leaving the district, had found work! But the queerest thing of all was where the work was situated. Lorna was on a farm!

When she eventually fled from the school her steps had taken her, naturally enough, to the open country. She had come to this pretty little farm, and ventured to go in for refreshment. Fearing the farmer's questions, Lorna had quickly invented a story that she was staying with relatives in Courtfield for a holiday, and was tired of doing nothing. The offer that the pair made for her to stay with them for a few days, help, and receive a small salary, had taken her absolutely by surprise.

But Lorna had been clever enough to see her opportunity, yet not accept it too readily. What a good idea it was, in reality! Who would think of giving a farm-girl in a smock a second glance? Who would look for her on a farm at all, especially one fairly near to the school?

It might be a trap, of course! For the first few hours Lorna was very wide-awake, but she soon lost those suspicions. The simple old people, convinced that she reminded them of an absent daughter, were evidently to be absolutely trusted.

And so Lorna was remaining quite true to her Oakvale House companions

after all. She had written a note, in a disguised hand, telling Bertha Breton all about what she had done. Now she was waiting to hear from Bertha to know when they would be able to meet again. But she was not very worried now.

Quite blithely was Lorna scouring out a milk-float that afternoon when the farmer came up to her.

"I want you to run a little errand, young lady," he said. "The missis is poorly with so much rheumatism. You'll be able to help her. It's to take out a basket of eggs."

Lorna looked up with her demure and obliging smile.

"I'll go with pleasure!" Lorna murmured. "I expect I shall find the way all right!"

"You'll do that!" said the bluff old farmer. "Here are the eggs. You might take them over as soon as possible. Maybe some will be wanted for tea."

"Certainly!"

She watched the farmer go away. How could Fate be so cruel? Twenty-four hours only—and now her confidence was so rudely shattered. She hadn't finished with Cliff House after all! The farmer would expect her to go, and go almost at once.

What could she do? True it was a



By BESSIE BUNTER (Fourth Form.)

DEER readers, it is one thing to have a programm, and another thing to keep to it. But I am a girl who believes in dealing with one thing at a time, and I will therefore deal with the first menshun.

I have a programm, and I call it my helth programm. This it is that keeps me in perfect, vigorous helth, and gives me my good figger, and I rekommend it to all readers. It combines in the most ideal way, studdy, eksersise, poetic appresyshun, singing, and horrtority.

1.—Get up with the morning star every morning, and walk to the top of Black Pyke to see the sun rise.

There, deer readers! Does not that ster you to poetry? Could anything be more poetic than the site of the sun rizing over the sea (which is due south of Black Pike!—Ed.), the golden clouds rushing away as the sun approaches, the fresh morning breeze wafting your face, and the white-crested waves below you rushing in to the shore!

I mean to begin this part of my programm to-morrow.

2.—Fifteen minutes sprint round the quad between prayers and first lesson.

This is the trating to bring you into the pink of condition, deer readers! This is the thing to make you feel fit all day. After it, you can grapple with anything in the way of lessons. I mean to start this to-morrow.

3.—Three hours' strenyewus brane-work in class.

Why are we at school, deer readers? To idle our time away? To sleep our time away? Not a bit of it! We are heer to lern—we are heer to imbibe nollidge! To-morrow I mean to see what it is like to keep wide awaik throughtout the hole of the lessons.

4.—A good dinner, then a long walk rite round the outsides of Friardail Woods.

All you who lack an appittight, all you who suffer from indigestion, talk cairful noat of this part of my programm. Nothing could be better for the helth and fitness, and I mean to try this to-morrow!

5.—Three more hours strenuous brane-work, and then a good tea.

I need not enlarge upon this part of my programm, eksept to menshun that I am beginning to-morrow. The latter part, however, I have followed out as long as I can remember.

6.—Crickit practise in the kloose, and then preparation.

The crickit season is not here yet, and that is why I have not started on this item first; but when the summer comes I mean to show the girls here the kind of player I really am, and then, if they keep me out of the teams, they will have to admit it is theer sheer jealousy. Then I finish off preparashun with promptitude and despatch.

7.—Singing to the gerls in the Common-room, and thareby bringing joy to thare harts.

Sad to say, deer readers, this part of my programm is not appreshiated. In fakt, I am yewyswey not aloud to carry it out. If I try to, I am carried out myself! But there's no one at Cliff Howse who can appreshiate good musik.

8.—Eksersises in dormitory larst thing at nite.

Another item of my programme, deer readers, that I am not aloud to carry out. The girls say that I shaik the floor, and shaik them out of thare beds, which is a groce eggadgerashun. Then Miss Bullivant comes in, and tries to imply that I am shaikin the hole building, and I am kompelled to stop.

With a programm like this, deer readers, what wonder is it that I am the fittest, cleverest, and best-figgered girl in the Forth Fourm?

"Oh, I shall be delighted to do anything, I'm sure, Mr. Jackers!" she said.

"I knew it!" said the genial farmer. "It isn't a long walk for you, and the eggs are not especially heavy. Do you know Cliff House School?"

Lorna Manton nearly dropped the thing she was holding.

"What did you say?" she repeated faintly.

"Cliff House School," said the farmer, staring at her. "Maybe you've seen it in your walks round here? It's not a great distance."

Lorna had to look back at her work to hide the confusion she felt. Cliff House! Was it a trap? Was this to try her? No; it couldn't be!

Thursday afternoon, and none of the girls might be able to see her. But something would go wrong. She was sure of that now; something always did seem to happen!

She stood the float upright and went out into the farmyard. There stood the eggs. She picked them up listlessly. And then a voice spoke her name so suddenly that she all but dropped the basket!

"Lorna!"

She stared with a wild dismay at hearing the name that was not known on the farm. Five girlish figures were coming towards her across the yard.

For a moment Lorna stood quite still.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 150.

She was tempted to drop the basket and run as hard as she could. Then she saw red bobbed hair, and assurance returned to her.

"Bertha Breton and the others!" she gasped.

They came running across to her as she set the basket down.

"Hallo, Lo—"

"Ssssh!" Lorna muttered angrily. "Why are you so silly, Bertha? I told you I'm not Lorna here—I'm Mary!"

"There's no one about, is there?" ejaculated Bertha.

"No; I don't think so. But—" "Then don't scowl so when we've come to see you!" admonished Bertha, smiling again. "My word, Lorna—what a change in you! An old smock, and big brown boots at least two sizes too big! Ha, ha, ha! You look the part to the life!"

But Lorna was still far from smiling. "What are you doing here?" she exclaimed. "I thought you were all supposed to be at school, hard at work!"

Bertha Breton chuckled merrily.

"No; you're the only one working to-day! Dear me, quite a change of positions, isn't it? We're all out for what they call a ramble."

"All out?" gasped Lorna, looking more alarmed than ever. "And I nearly started with these eggs! Why, I might have met the whole crowd! Where are they?"

"Gazing into ponds, and collecting beetles and things—some Guide tommyrot," answered Bertha easily. "There's a Mrs. Hartley turned up to-day. She used to be called Miss Bellew, and was their mistress. Miss Primrose said that it was such a nice day that she could take them all out so that they could work for some silly badge to stick on their arms—you know the sort of thing."

"And you've come as well?" breathed Lorna.

"Yes. They could hardly leave us in. Edna Green and the other two were rather keen on it. Mrs. Hartley gave us a left-handed shake, if you ever heard of such a thing, and said it would do us good to come as well—might turn us into Guides! Ha, ha, ha! We're such splendid Guides that we've lost our way already!"

The others all grinned.

Lorna heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Purposely?" she said.

"Yes—if you put it like that!" chuckled Bertha. "Thought it would be a jolly good opportunity to have a chin-wag with you—come over to do our good turn, you know! To find you dressed up like this is great! How are you getting on?"

"Oh, famously!" said Lorna, quite at her ease again. "I suppose there's no fear of the others coming here to find you?"

"Oh, no; besides, we've got an excuse ready. If anyone wants to know why we're talking to you, we're asking the price of eggs—see? We'll take some in with us just to make it plausible."

"Of course!" nodded Lorna. She picked up the basket. "Well, I'll just put these out of the way, and then we can go in that barn over there and have a little talk. No one ever goes in there!"

"Good!"

Lorna darted off to hide the basket of eggs, and two minutes later was in the barn, where Bertha & Co. were already squatting comfortably on a pile of clean straw.

"That's right! Make yourselves at home," she said. "Tell me first what's happened at Cliff House? What did Miss Steel say? Do you think everything's going to be all right?"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 150.

Bertha delivered her report. There had been ructions at the school, she said. Mabel Lynn was still furious at being hoodwinked. The Form in general had wreaked their vengeance on the five of them over the flight of Lorna—there had been much ragging, ending with a pillow fight in which they got decidedly the worst of it. And Miss Steel had been very officious, too.

"Going to write to your parents," Bertha explained. "She quite believes you've gone home, but she says she never heard of such an ill-mannered affair before. She's waiting to have a few words with Aunt Tilly, too, but she doesn't guess who she was. Aunt Tilly disappeared without thanking her for her kindness!"

That made Lorna chuckle. "Nothing to worry about, as far as I can see, except that she's written to your pater," Bertha concluded, in quite a judicial way. "How you're going to get over that I don't know!"

## NEXT WEEK

# THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY

will consist of no less than eight pages. It will contain the opening chapters of a magnificent new serial :: :: entitled: :: ::

## "THE SIGNALMAN'S DAUGHTER!"

And numerous contributions by the girls of Cliff House :: :: School. :: ::

Lorna Manton smiled.

"I'll admit that I was in an awful hole when I ran away," she said. "But I think things are coming right, after all. I've written home and told them quite a lot of what I've been doing, and finished by saying that I'm on a farm, and think of sticking to it. I don't know what the pater will say to that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fortunately, as you know, the pater's got a lot of influence with our head-mistress. As long as those Cliff House girls never catch me, I think he'll make things so that I can return to Oakvale without too many questions being asked."

Bertha Breton softly clapped her hands.

"Well, you have got a headpiece!" she said admiringly. "Fancy fixing things up as well as that! Only the girls at Cliff House know what's happened, and I know they won't sneak. You're perfectly safe stopping here, for no one—My hat! What was that?"

She broke off, with wide eyes and parted lips, listening intently.

There was not a smile on a single face now!

"I—I heard something!" Bertha muttered. "I'm sure—Gracious! There it is again!"

They stood as still as six frightened mice, listening.

"So you've come at last, Mrs. Hartley?" boomed the genial voice of Mr. Jackers, the farmer.

"Yes; we have," answered a cheery, feminine voice. "We just want to have a look round the farm, if it isn't inconveniencing you. It will be so helpful to all the girls."

"Make yourselves quite at home!" Mr. Jackers answered. "You're always welcome here, Mrs. Hartley!"

"My hat!" said Bertha Breton hoarsely. As she listened, it sounded as though Mrs. Hartley was walking away with the farmer. And now other voices were coming nearer.

"The—the Cliff House girls!" stuttered Lorna Manton, horrified. "That Mrs. Hartley you spoke about, and all the girls! Oh, you idiots! They're here—here on the farm!"

Bertha Breton was trembling.

"You're right!" she muttered. "Oh, what an idiot I am! I know they were saying something about farming; but I didn't listen. My hat, hear that?"

A loud and somewhat reedy voice became suddenly audible:

"I tell you you'll see them in the barn!"

"Rubbish!"

"Then I'll jolly well prove it! You follow me into this barn here and I'll show you!"

Lorna Manton was on her feet.

"It's Bessie Bunter!" she gasped. "And listen—she means to come into the barn—here! Quickly, girls—the loft!"

Even as she spoke she had seized the rungs of the ladder, and was climbing up. The others were too scared to do anything but follow. The last of them reached the top just as the door began to open!

### Was It Imagination?

BESSIE BUNTER paused with her hand on the door of the barn, quite unconscious of the stir she had caused inside. She gazed very severely at the smiling faces of Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn.

"I hope that you don't think that I'm pulling your legs?" she said. "I jolly well saw those girls enter this barn! Coming?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed Babs and Mabs together.

"You don't jolly well believe it, I suppose?" asked Bessie.

"Of course not!"

Bessie Bunter walked determinedly into the barn.

Thump!

That was Bessie Bunter on the first step of the ladder.

Then she gazed upwards through her thick round glasses, as she heard something move slitheringly. And—

"Oh! Look out!" shrieked Bessie Bunter.

Something whizzed down, right past her head. It was only a small truss of hay!

"I told you they were there!" she yelled triumphantly. "I—"

Bessie Bunter nearly fell off the ladder with surprise.

She heard a bump, as though someone had fallen over, and there, in the aperture of the loft, there appeared the face of a girl.

Bessie did not see it for more than two seconds, but it was enough. Even as the



girl scrambled away, Bessie gave a shriek of excitement.

"Lorna Manton! I've seen you, Lorna! Come down here!"

Not a sound came from the top.

"I'll jolly well come after you!" declared Bessie Bunter. "I said I'd catch you!"

Thump! went Bessie's foot—just once. And then she yelled!

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

It was like a snowstorm of hay-trusses that descended on Bessie Bunter. They hit her arms and her chest and her head and her nose—most of all, they seemed to favour the nose.

"Help! Look out! You'll j-j-jolly well have me off this ladder! I'll come

"I've seen her!" panted Bessie. "I've—I've jolly well seen Lorna Manton!"

"What?"

There was an amazed gasp from everyone.

"Lorna Manton! She's here, on the farm!" shouted Bessie triumphantly. "She's up there in the loft, and we've been fighting like anything."

"Fighting?"

"Yes. She threw a lot of hay at me and knocked me off the ladder!"

"That sounds more like it!" said Clara.

"But Lorna—here!" Mabel Lynn cried, running to Bessie's side. "Surely it can't be possible, Bessie! You're trying to pull our legs now!"

"Oh, I'm not!" said Bessie indignantly. "I told you you'd have to let me

Babs joined her, and gazed round.

"She may be hiding somewhere," she said. "There's heaps of cover."

The others were joining them now. Babs and Mabs darted here and there, turning the trusses of hay over in case Lorna was hiding beneath any of the piles.

"What's this?"

It was that cry from Bessie Bunter that made them all turn. She was right at the end of the loft, digging frantically in a pile of loose hay.

"Something here, girls!" Bessie announced excitedly.

As one girl they went running down to that end of the structure.

Cre-e-eak!



## WHEN FRANCES HELPED!

By PEGGY PRESTON (Fourth Form.)

"**B**LOW Connie Jackson! Like her cheek, I think!"

Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell stood in the doorway of Study No. 9, in the Sixth Form passage, and looked at each other mutinously.

Study No. 9 is Connie Jackson's study. Connie had met the two cronies in the Fourth Form quarters, and had coolly ordered them to lay her table for tea. Seeing that Connie is no longer a monitress, and therefore has no power to fag Fourth-Formers, this was rather cool.

For the moment Marcia and Nancy had forgotten Connie's lack of power over them, and force of habit had taken them so far as the door—and then they remembered! They also remembered—Marcia did, at any rate—certain grievances that they had against the one-time monitress.

"Like her cheek, I think!" repeated Marcia vigorously. "Why, only to-day she insulted me for trying to help get back that brooch she lost!"

"I've been fed up with Connie ever since the Parliament business," said Nancy Bell. "And now she's the cheek to ask us to lay the table for her!" She paused thoughtfully for a moment. "Pity we can't play some little trick on her—something that won't get us into trouble, I mean—"

"I know!" Marcia said suddenly. "Let's take out every single thing in the cupboard, and lay it on the table! We can make the excuse that our ignorance is to blame!"

"He, he, he!"

Without thinking twice upon the matter, the pair went to Connie's cupboard, and in due course took out everything, from a bowl of raw rice to an empty pickle jar,

and laid the collection on the table. It was not a tea that would be likely to stimulate Connie's appetite!

Giggling spasmodically, the pair scuttled back to the door. Then they paused in alarm. A rather heavy footfall sounded from the passage, and Frances Barrett appeared before them.

Frances looked at them suspiciously.

"What are you doing in Constance's study?" she asked.

"Ahem! We—" Marcia glanced furtively at the "laid" table. She did not want that to be noticed yet. Frances would undoubtedly make them lay it afresh. "You know about Connie having lost a brooch, Frances?"

Frances looked keen. Connie's loss, as a matter of fact, had aroused her detective instinct. Frances considers herself an expert detective, if nobody else does. She nodded.

"Well, we've heard—we won't give the girl's name—but she confessed that she'd hidden the brooch amongst the soot up the chimney!" said Marcia mysteriously and untruthfully. "We were just going to search for it!"

"By Jove!" I mean, don't talk such rubbish!" said Frances hastily. "Run away to your own quarters, but don't let me catch you in here again!"

Marcia and Nancy, chuckling inwardly, ran away. But they knew Frances' game. They knew that Frances wanted to bag the honour of recovering the brooch herself!

The instant they had gone, Frances strode towards the fireplace. Her eyes were gleaming with triumph. She seized the fire shovel, and made a vigorous scrape with it behind the chimney.

"Ooooh!" she said then, and jumped back.

The remark and the jump were not without cause. A thick volume of soot swept down upon her, and rapidly commenced to fill the room.

Frances' face and clothes assumed a dusky appearance. In fact, the whole study in the region of the fireplace looked quite dusky!

But, of course, no brooch fell into the grate.

"Grooch! Dear me!" spluttered Frances. "I—I had completely overlooked this! Phrooh!"

"Frances Barrett! Good gracious!" Connie Jackson stood in the doorway, and peered disbelievingly through the cloud of soot. "What—whatever have you done?"

"Ahem! Grooh! Phew!" replied Frances, moving towards Connie and into clearer atmosphere. "This is—atishoo!—unfortunate! I have been given to understand that the brooch you lost has been concealed by the thief up the chimney!"

"What!" shrieked Connie. "Can't you see, you—you complete goose, that I am already wearing it?" Frances looked, and saw that the elusive brooch was indeed pinned to Connie's breast. "I found it in the table drawer! And you— Who told you this ridiculous story?"

"Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell!" gulped Frances, perceiving that once again her leg had been pulled. "Dear, dear—"

"Look at the study! Look at the tea-things!" cried Connie wildly. She took the opportunity to look at them herself as she spoke. "They're smothered with— My goodness!"

She saw for the first time what the "tea-things" consisted of!

"Those girls—the—the—the—" She was at a loss for adequate words. "Oh, wait till I get at them!"

And she simply flew through the doorway, leaving Frances with quite a blank expression upon her plain and sooty face.

I don't know what will happen to Marcia and Nancy when Connie gets at them. Up to the time of going to press, as the newspapers put it, Connie has not found them!

after you, if you don't stop! Oooooo! Ow!"

A larger one than ever smote Bessie Bunter's chin.

Bessie Bunter gave a gasp of indignation and wrath and whizzed backwards down the ladder.

Thud!

"Oooooo!" she groaned. "Now look what you've done for me! Knocked me off the ladder, and— Oh, help!"

A final throw struck Bessie's forehead and bowled her right over. She stayed for no more argument. Scrambling to her feet, she fled across the barn and streaked into the open.

"Babs! Mabs! Help!" yelled Bessie.

Babs and Mabs were the centre of a laughing group that had evidently been hearing about Bessie's intentions. They laughed more than ever as Bessie panted up.

find her, and I jolly well have! You follow me, and we'll capture her!"

"We'd better see into this!" said Babs briskly.

"Rather!"

But Mabel Lynn set them all the lead. She was already racing for the barn. The others followed her excitedly. Lorna Manton! They knew that Bessie sometimes made mistakes. But it was possible!

More than possible, it seemed, when they looked into the barn. There were scattered trusses of hay everywhere, just as Bessie had said.

Mabs gripped the ladder, and went rushing up it as hard as she could. Others came behind her, making the ladder shake as they clambered up.

"See anyone, Mabs?" cried Babs, as her chum reached the left.

"Not a sign, Babs!"

"My hat! What's that?" gasped Mabs.

"It's the floor! Oh, look out, girls!" cried Barbara Redfern. "It's giving way, and— Oh, my goodness!"

Crash!

It was the most startling disaster imaginable.

Before they could move, that portion of the floor had sagged, and then snapped right in the middle.

Eight of them shot through into the barn below!

Thud, thud, thud!

"Oh, help!"

But for the fact that they fell on a big pile of straw, some of them might have been seriously hurt.

"Oooooo! I say, rescue me!" moaned Bessie Bunter feebly. "I've fallen through! I'm sure I've hurt myself this

time! I'm on a lot of broken beams, I think—"

"You duffer!" gasped the voice of Clara Trevlyn. "It's me! You're sitting on me!"

"Oh, really! I—"

"Will you get off?"

Clara gave a convulsive struggle, and managed to dislodge Bessie. She sat up, gasping. Babs and Mabs were already on their feet.

"Look! It's only a bit of the floor that's given!" Babs exclaimed. "It's because we all went rushing down there when Bessie gave that silly shout—"

"I thought I'd found her!" protested Bessie. "I say, do you think we shall get any compensation for this?"

"Compensation? When we did it?" gasped Babs. "More likely we shall have to pay it! And there wasn't anyone up there, after all!"

Voices came from outside.

"But no girl could possibly be up there!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, really! I'm positive, Mr. Jackass—I mean, sir—"

"A Cliff House girl, is she?"

"Oh, no, sir!" spoke up Mabel Lynn excitedly. "She's left the school, and we don't really know where she is. She slightly resembles myself in looks."

Mrs. Jackers looked at her husband.

"Mary answers to that description, in a way," she said. "But she has gone out with the eggs, hasn't she, John?"

"Ay! More than a quarter of an hour ago," he answered, rather brusquely. "Besides, although she's helping us, she's a girl on a holiday with friends in Courtfield. And I'm certain that she knows nothing about Cliff House School, because she didn't seem to know where it was when I asked her to take the eggs over."

A moment later she saw her opportunity, and drew Bessie to one side.

"Bessie, you must have imagined it!" she said.

"But I tell you I didn't!" retorted Bessie. "Think I'd fall through the floor purposely?"

"You can't deny that you've been boasting that you'd catch Lorna Manton for us!" said Clara Trevlyn sharply.

"And I would have done if you'd jolly well been quick enough!" said Bessie indignantly. "I tell you I saw her as plain as anything!"

"Oh, rats!" said Clara.

It really did seem too hard to take the word of the imaginative Bessie now.

Five girls appeared, coming through the gate of the farmyard. The leader of them had red hair, and was instantly recognisable.

"Oh, Mrs. Hartley—we've found you at last!" Bertha Breton exclaimed gushingly. "And we've been looking everywhere! I don't know how we came to lose you as we did. It was only at Alma's suggestion that we came here!"

"As long as you are here now it is all right," smiled Mrs. Hartley unsuspectingly. "But you must keep with the others after this. Come along, girls!"

They started to follow her.

"You don't know who I've seen, Bertha!" said Bessie Bunter, determined not to be done.

"A ghost?" asked Bertha politely.

"Oh, really! You'll be surprised when I do tell you!" returned Bessie Bunter. "I've seen Lorna Manton!"

The five girls exchanged looks and burst into a peal of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! When she's away with her parents at the seaside again!" chuckled Bertha. "I had a letter from her, too, this morning! Bessie, what splendid glasses those must be to enable you to see about fifty miles!"

"I jolly well saw her here, hiding in the loft!" said Bessie indignantly.

Bertha gave her a pitying smile.

"Poor thing! You're always seeing something funny, aren't you?" she said commiseratingly. "I wonder what you'll see next!"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, come on, Bessie!" begged Babs. "You really must have imagined it, you know!" She lowered her voice. "In any case, it's no good speaking to those girls. They won't help us!"

Bertha & Co. did not hear that last remark. They had dropped behind again, and now they were chucking together. The joke seemed to be a very good one.

"Fancy us being able to get out so easily through that little door, and no one seeing us slide down the rope at the back!" Bertha chuckled. "My word, we have had some luck! Lorna's got away with the eggs, and they'll never guess anything now!"

"And the greatest joke of all," added Alma, "is that they don't even know that we've been here before! If Lorna hadn't had that slip so that Bessie saw her—"

"But no one's going to believe Bessie!" interrupted Bertha. "We'll see to that! I wonder if we can get her on some other wild-goose chase, just to make them positive that she made up her story?"

They pondered on that for a long while, not at all interested in what Mrs. Hartley was explaining to the Guides. And now they were drawing farther and farther from the farm buildings.

Marie Tate-Graham was the one who suddenly caught all their attention again by a single low cry of amazement.

"Look—look there!" she whispered.



**NOT WHAT BESSIE EXPECTED!** Bessie Bunter leapt forward and snatched at the battered hat that obscured the scarecrow's head. "Oh, I sus-sus-say!" the fat girl exclaimed. "It's—it's Mabel Lynn!"

"What has happened? Is anyone hurt?"

Farmer Jackers, his wife, and Mrs. Hartley appeared in the doorway.

"John! Oh, look!" gasped Mrs. Jackers. "The floor of the loft has fallen in! Deary me! Has anyone been hurt?"

Babs came forward, feeling rather awkward.

"I'm glad to say that no one's hurt, Mrs. Jackers," she said. "We—we are awfully sorry that this has happened. We had no idea—"

"The floor's been weak there for some time. I've been going to have it repaired," nodded the farmer. "But what were you doing up there at all?"

"Ahem! Bessie was positive that she saw someone up there—a girl we knew."

"And I did see Lorna Manton, too, Mr. Jackass!" cried Bessie.

"Jackers, please!"

"I—I mean Jackers, Mr. Jackass. That is—"

The farmer gave Bessie up!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 150.

"This girl, Mary—she has gone to Cliff House with eggs?" gasped Mabel Lynn.

"Why, we passed a girl with eggs when we were coming along!" muttered Dolly Jobling.

"Very likely!" nodded the farmer. "She went a quarter of an hour ago, as I say. You must have imagined seeing someone in the loft, Miss Bunter."

"But she jolly well pelted me, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Depend upon it, the hay fell down, and you thought you saw someone up there," said the farmer. "I must ask you not to go up into the loft again!"

He walked away, evidently rather huffy.

"What a pity that this has happened, Barbara!" said Mrs. Hartley, rather sadly. "You could not know that the floor was weak, but it will be far more expensive to repair now than it would have been. You had all better keep with me after this. I am very sorry that we have done any damage when the farmer is being so kind to us."

Babs flushed at the gentle reproof.



"In the shelter of that hedge—just between the two trees! Do you see?"

They all looked. The sight that met their gaze seemed to hold them rooted to the spot with amazement. Then Bertha gave a sudden sigh, and smiled.

"But we've seen!" she muttered. "My word, Marie—what a good thing that you looked back just now! If we— Why, I've got it! You listen to this!"

She whispered quickly, and the looks of consternation on the faces of her chums turned suddenly to smiles of delight.

### Too Clever!

"I SAY, Babs—"

"Ssssssh, Bessie!"

"But I've got an idea—"

"Then do keep it yourself!"

It was ten minutes later, and Bessie Bunter favoured Barbara Redfern with a blink that was both dignified and injured.

"Of course, if you're jealous—"

"Yes, we are, if you like to take it that way!" said Babs urgently. "But for goodness' sake, Bessie, listen to what Mrs. Hartley is saying!"

Bessie Bunter checked herself on the point of making some utterance, and endeavoured to look wiser and more mysterious than ever.

"What's the matter with her now?" whispered Clara to Babs.

"Can't say—she's got something else in her head, I expect!" returned Babs, in the same tones. "But we daren't tell her the scheme, Clara, dare we?"

"No—not a word!" said Clara emphatically. "She wouldn't mean to give it away, but she'd go and let it all out, I'm sure. Bessie simply can't keep a secret!"

"That's just what I feel myself," said Babs. "And if those others heard a word, I'm sure they'd manage to warn Lorna in some manner."

"Positive of it!"

Bessie Bunter saw them whispering, and was torn with a great inclination to tell them what was in her mind. But she refrained.

"They wouldn't believe that I saw Lorna in the loft!" she muttered. "I told them I would find the girl, and I jolly well will, too, and surprise them! What a bit of luck that I heard Bertha speaking!"

Bessie Bunter had not listened intentionally when she passed Bertha & Co. The few words that she had heard had been uttered loudly, so that they should reach her ears.

Bessie was not aware of the fact, however, that the great idea that was in her mind was not there through her own astuteness!

"This way now, girls!" said Mrs. Hartley suddenly. "We will just go along here and have a look at the pool where the sheep are dipped, and then return to the farm. Have you all seen enough?"

Bessie Bunter was not listening to that. Her eyes were on the field just beyond. In the centre of the field was a black object that waved spasmodically in the wind. That scarecrow had the whole of Bessie's attention.

"Bessie!" called Mrs. Hartley. "Come along. We are going back now!"

Bessie started out of her reverie.

"Oh, can't we go across that field, Mrs. Hartley?" she exclaimed.

"Not now, Bessie."

"But—but I—oh, what's the matter, Babs?"

Barbara Redfern was taking her arm in a very urgent manner.

"Come back with us!" she whispered.

"Not likely!" she said. "I've jolly well seen it if you haven't!"

"Seen what?" gasped Babs.

"I said I'd catch her, and I jolly well will, too!"

"But—oh, Bessie, come here! Come back!"

Bessie Bunter had amazed them all. She gave one triumphant yell and went rushing towards the gap in the hedge.

"Bessie, you silly noodle!"

"It's—"

But all their cries were too late now.

Bessie Bunter was through the hedge, and, heedless of the fact that it was a field of young wheat, was simply pelting as hard as she could towards the scarecrow that had held her attention!

"Whatever is the matter with Bessie?" cried Mrs. Hartley, starting forward. "Has—has she quite taken leave of her senses?"

for Mabs to don the hat again. But it was too late.

Slowly she divested herself of the long, old coat, and kicked off the huge boots. She replaced the disguise on the skeleton of the scarecrow whose place she had taken.

"Goodness me! Surely you aren't trampling down my young corn?" cried a voice.

By the worst possible luck Mr. Jackers appeared just at the moment when Mabs and Bessie were returning across the

"Oh, run-rur-really——" said Bessie helplessly.

Mr. Jackers turned to Mrs. Hartley.

"Surely you do not encourage them to play games——"

"I had no idea at all, Mr. Jackers, that anything was happening," said the guide captain awkwardly. "I don't think that very much damage has been done, but I am sorry that this has occurred."

"Oh, just annoying for the moment,



**LORNA IN A NEW LIGHT!** Lorna Manton waved her arms and shouted. The furious bull answered from the fallen Mabs, and made straight for the girl in the smock!

Babs looked too utterly dismayed to make any reply.

"She—she must have seen for herself!" gasped Clara, eyeing the running figure of the fat girl. "Oh, the— the noodle!"

"Got you!"

Across the field floated that triumphant cry from Bessie.

And then—they all saw the scarecrow move!

"Got you at last! You can't escape me this time!"

The scarecrow moved away from its post!

At the same moment Bessie Bunter leapt forward and snatched at the battered hat that obscured its head. It came away, revealing the head of a girl! "Goodness gracious! It is Mabel Lynn!" gasped the guide captain.

It did not surprise the girls; it only dismayed them. All of them knew it already!

"Oh, I sus-sus-say!" they heard Bessie Bunter's astonished voice exclaim. "It's—it's Mabs!"

"Mabel Lynn!" called Mrs. Hartley. Bessie Bunter was gesticulating now

that's all," apologised the farmer readily. "If it wasn't a game I don't mind. Just a little joke between these two?"

He smiled and walked away, but the Cliff House guide captain was looking quite cross.

"Mabel, whatever made you do such a stupid thing?" she exclaimed.

"I—I wanted to hide," confessed Mabs awkwardly. "That girl that Bessie thought she saw here earlier—I was hoping——"

She broke off confusedly as she heard Bertha Breton & Co. sniggering amongst themselves.

"Who is this girl, Mabel?" asked Mrs. Hartley.

"She—she——" Mabs hesitated, not knowing what to say.

"It is really rather annoying for this to have happened, especially after that accident in the barn," said Mrs. Hartley, with a touch of sternness. "I hope you will all keep together after this, please. I really cannot imagine, Mabel, why you should be doing such an extraordinary thing to try and see if there is any strange girl here. Personally, I am

quite convinced that Bessie must have been mistaken. But let us move on."

Clara Trevlyn drew Bessie Bunter back.

"You silly chump!"

"I didn't know!" said Bessie dismally. "You didn't tell me, either! I thought I'd jolly well caught Lorna Manton!"

"Why didn't you come back when we called you?" exclaimed Babs. "Here Mabs was going to hide over there, and it's right against the footpath that anyone would use returning from Cliff House!"

"Yes; and I got there without being suspected by Bertha & Co." went on Mabs.

"Oh, you didn't!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"As—as a matter of fact I—I got a bit of a hint from them," Bessie had to admit. "I heard them saying that they'd seen the scarecrow move, and—and I did a bit of deduction. I—I thought it was Lorna, and—and they hadn't guessed it, you know. You ought to have told me that it was Mabs, knowing how well I can keep a secret!"

Mabs turned—to face the calmly-smiling Bertha Breton.

"So you saw me?" she asked.

"Saw you?" asked Bertha blandly. "How do you mean? Saw you make a fool of yourself?"

"You put that idea into Bessie's head so that I shouldn't be able to wait there for Lorna!"

"Wait for Lorna—when she's miles away!" scoffed Bertha. "My dear kid, I may have dropped a word to Bessie when I saw you creeping about in such an idiotic manner. I didn't want you to do it without having a bit of fun!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" tittered the rest of the Co.

Babs and Mabs turned disgustedly away.

A brilliant scheme like that, one they had kept an absolute secret, ruined by Bertha's cunning and Bessie's overzeal!

"They seem so calm about it!" whispered Peggy Preston. "Do you really think Lorna can be here?"

"I don't know what to think," Babs had to admit. "We've only got Bessie's word, and—well, Bessie's so excitable to-day that they may have imagined it. It was awfully dark in the barn, wasn't it?"

"It was," said Peggy. "And, in that case, it means that Bertha was simply pulling our legs just now by sending Bessie after Mabs, and can regard it as a jolly good score!"

Mrs. Hartley turned at that moment.

"Hurry up, please, girls!" she said. "I don't want any more straggling!"

They went on, knowing that the guide captain's eye was watchfully upon them. It had been a disastrous day all round, and not a very creditable one for the guides in any way.

What were they to think about it all?

Mabs still clung doggedly to the hope that Bessie might be right—that she might really have made no mistake. It was that hope that had impelled her to slip away from the others and hide in the fields. But there were few besides Mabs now who were willing still to take Bessie's word.

There were several items of interest to be seen in the farmyard. Mabs tried to attend to everything that was said, but she found it difficult.

She was aware that their guide captain was watching her, that she was disappointed in her. There was no further opportunity given to any of them to explore any of the possible hiding-places.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 150.

that might shelter the girl they sought—if she was to be found there.

"I think we had better be returning to the school now," said Mrs. Hartley at length. "We have stayed long enough. No, Bessie, you cannot stay here to tea. After what has happened, I cannot give that permission to any girl."

Bertha Breton & Co. followed Babs and Mabs as they left, after thanking the farmer and apologising for what had happened to displease him.

"Pity you didn't find Lorna Manton!" tittered Alma Wright. "I was hoping you would. I owe her twopence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go away!" said Mabs angrily. "I'm sure you know what's happened, and I don't believe that Lorna is very far away from here, either!"

"Well, let's know when you find her," said Bertha, as she dropped back. "We shall be so interested!"

They lagged further and further behind as the others walked back towards the school. The leading girls had turned a corner, when a sudden low whistle came from behind the hedge. Bertha & Co. stopped instantly.

"All out of sight?" called a soft voice.

"Quite!" responded Bertha.

Lorna Manton appeared in a gap in the hedge, and smiled at them.

"I've been hanging about for some time, wondering if it was safe," she said. "What's happened? Do they still think I'm here?"

Bertha gave her report.

"You have left us in rather a hole," she finished. "Fortunately, we managed to get out of it. I don't think that many of them are ready to believe Bessie Bunter's story now."

Lorna nearly went into hysterics as she heard about the scarecrow.

"What a good thing you managed to make Mabs look such a fool!" she said.

"Ha, ha, ha! And I've had jolly good luck myself as well. That sleepy old porter took the eggs and didn't give me a second glance. Hurrah! I chortle and cheer. Hear me? I'll wriggle out of it and get back to Oakville with all of you, after all. If only I hadn't been such a chump as to trip over in the loft—"

"It'll be all right, as it happens," said Bertha confidently. "Even Mabel Lynn now half believes that the silly fat duffer imagined seeing you! But don't go and do anything like it again!"

"Trust me! Ha, ha, ha! This is going to be a great stunt, after all!" chuckled Lorna. "Better not keep you, my chickens, or they'll be wondering what's happened. I'll let you know when I hear from the pater. He's going to send it care of the post-office."

She bade them an exceedingly cheery good-bye, and started to make her way back to the farm. Mr. Jackers met her in the farmyard.

"Back at last, sir!" said Lorna cheerfully. "It was a bit of a job getting there, but I came back quicker."

The farmer was gazing at her thoughtfully.

"Some of the Cliff House girls have been here, and they did seem to think they saw a young lady like yourself in the barn a while back, Mary," he said. "They seemed rather anxious to see you. I suppose you—"

"I've heard about that, sir!" laughed Lorna. "I met a party of them just along the road, and, of course, they guessed that I came from here."

"Met some of them, did you?" ejaculated the farmer.

"Yes. They told me about one of them dressing up as a scarecrow, too!

They do have some jokes at that Cliff House. I wish I was there at school!"

The farmer smiled.

"Well, as you've seen them," he said, "there can't be any doubt about it at all, and that fat young lady must have been mistaken. Still, who would expect her to be anything else when she's so easily taken in?"

"Oh, the girl they call Bessie?" asked Lorna. She laughed. "She does seem a caution, but means quite well, I believe."

"You would have a good word for her. That's you all over!" commented the farmer.

Lorna felt rather guilty at that, but she was patting herself on the back at the same time. Farmer Jackers couldn't suspect anything now. She had got out of that tight corner beautifully, and now she was safer than ever.

The kindness of the old folk at tea-time certainly proved that they had forgotten any suspicions they might have been entertaining. The easy manner of their temporary helper charmed them, and they were willing to do anything for "Mary."

And that night Lorna Manton curled herself up in the cosy little bed in the room allotted to her, feeling absolutely safe and secure at last. The Cliff House girls had visited the farm, but they had been hoodwinked after all. She could stay here now as long as it was necessary for her to hide!

What luck, when she had known such troubles and anxieties! She felt certain that her father would shield her; certain, too, that Mabs would never catch her now, for the Guides were not likely to visit the farm very quickly after such an afternoon of disasters! Running away from Cliff House, desperate as it seemed at the time, was the very best idea she had thought of!

And Lorna Manton went to sleep with a smile on her face, feeling perfectly secure at last!

## Two and Two Together!

MABEL LYNN was very depressed on the Friday that followed the adventures at the farm.

She had not had a good start that morning. Miss Primrose had sent for her to say that although Lady Barling was prepared to forget the affair of the Friarale Bazaar, she was still convinced that Mabs had had a hand in the jape at Courtfield. Her father would have to pay the bill for the damage to the cup—there was no way out of it!

She must suffer instead of Lorna Manton, after all! If only they could meet—yes, she felt certain then that she could force the girl to admit the truth. But would she ever meet her now?

The general conversation in the Form did not help her that day. Practically everyone, having "slept on it," was convinced that Bessie's word was not reliable. It was not possible, they said, that Lorna could really be at the farm, especially as it was now known that Mrs. Hartley had paid a visit on the last evening, just to find out if there could be any mystery that was worrying the girls.

Surely Mrs. Hartley would have smelt a rat if a girl like Lorna had been hiding there?

And then, at dinner time, there was a further surprise for everyone. Bertha passed a letter round the Form that was in the handwriting of Lorna Manton, describing just what she had been doing on the afternoon of the previous day!

It was so realistically written that hardly anyone could doubt that Lorna had not been through the adventures that she described.



Bessie Bunter's positive belief that she had seen Lorna found still less favour after that. Only Mabs really held to the hope that Bessie might not have been mistaken.

"I admit that she may be there, Mabs," Babs said. "But on the other hand, it does seem rather improbable. In any case, how are we going to catch her now?"

"Mrs. Hartley might take us over to the farm," speculated Mabs.

"No, dear; hardly fair to ask her after what has happened, you know," said Babs, shaking her head. "I'd like to go again myself, but I can't see how."

"If Lorna is hiding there, and I miss any chance of catching her, I shall never forgive myself," said Mabs.

"I know just how you feel, Mabs, dear," said Babs softly. "And if there is any way of coming on her by surprise I'm game. But I can't think how we're to do it. If she's really there, and we asked to go over to the farm again, Bertha & Co. would find out, and would be sure to warn her."

"That's just what I feel," said Mabs dejectedly. "She has friends in the school, and can get to know everything. If we went over there on Saturday afternoon we shouldn't see her, I suppose—she'd know how to keep out of our way!"

Classes that afternoon found Mabs a perfect dunce. She was bitterly disappointed at the way everything went wrong.

"Mabel Lynn, you had better attend!" Miss Steel warned her. "If you do not, I warn you that you may find yourself in detention to-morrow, and I believe that a paper-chase is being arranged."

A paper-chase! Mabs had not heard of it before, but it did not interest her particularly then. But she took more interest in the lesson after that. Detention would certainly ruin any chances that she had left. The Oakvale House girls might be going very soon now.

"Hear what Miss Steel said about to-morrow, Mabs?" asked Babs, when they met in Study No. 4 for tea.

"Paper-chase?"

"Yes. There's a notice about it now—Stella Stone is organising it. It's one of those compulsory ones. Everyone has got to attend except Bertha & Co., who are excused."

"My hat!" said Mabs aghast. "I hadn't thought of it in that light before. Is the route mapped out?"

Babs nodded.

"Right away from the school for miles, I think, Mabs. Stella does not say exactly we're to run, of course. But think what a chance it gives Bertha & Co.!"

"Yes. On Saturday afternoon, too!" breathed Mabs. "They'll go off on their own, and if they want to meet Lorna Manton—why, it'll be the easiest thing in the world for them!"

Bessie Bunter came in, bearing the tea-pot.

"Heard about the silly old paper-chase, Mabs?" she asked. "No chance for me to go and catch Lorna Manton for you now, as I promised, although I'm positive that she was on that farm. What do you think Clara has just been saying? She says I couldn't possibly have seen anyone, because the farmer proved that his girl helper wasn't on the farm at the time—gone away with the eggs, you know!"

"Did he?" said Mabs in a curious tone, and then was suddenly silent.

—There was a new thought in her brain! Just a chance, but it opened up all sorts of possibilities. She could

hardly wait for tea to finish so that she could beckon Babs into the passage and whisper to her.

"I don't want to tell Bessie in case she lets the cat out of the bag," Mabs whispered. "It's only a chance, but there might be something in it. Let's go down and see Piper about those eggs that came yesterday! It's the one thing we haven't tried!"

"But—"

Mabs was already hurrying for the stairs!

They crossed the quadrangle together, and found Piper in his lodge. He listened respectfully to their questions.

"Did I take particular notice of the young person as brought the eggs?" he repeated. "To tell the truth, miss, I didn't. She had a hat pulled down over her face; that's all I saw."

There was an exultant expression in Barbara's eyes as well.

"That's quite true, Mabs," she said, in the same breathless tones. "I'd never thought of tackling it before in that way. That convinced us, more than anything else—and Dolly mentioning that she had seen a girl with eggs. But that girl, from the way she was walking, would have been here by three."

"Yes; so it can't be the same girl! That's where they all blundered," said Mabs breathlessly. "Babs, we'll keep this to ourselves."

They returned to the school, neither of them guessing what further surprise was to await them.

Boker met them just inside the door. "Excuse me, Miss Redfern," he said. "This little bracelet was found in the model kitchen this afternoon, just after



## CYCLING TIPS!

By Freda Foote.

(FOURTH FORM.)

Now that the lanes are a foot deep in mud, and it is raining hard, with a prospect of turning into snow, and the very thought of cycling makes one's blood turn cold, I take this august opportunity of presenting cyclists of all kinds and climes with these Cycling Tips!

Beginners are advised not to be afraid if their bicycle wheels seem mutinous in the coming season. The wheels are especially made to perform revolutions!

Which suggests a riddle. Why are historians like bike wheels? Because they describe— Oh, guess the last word!

"Scorching Selina" writes: "I am confronted by a baffling mystery. I can find no hole, nor even escape of air in my back tyre, yet, much as I pump it up, it fails to inflate. Can you give me the solution?" You will find the solution in your puncture outfit, Selina!

Violet Cutter observes: "The whole school is aware by now that Frances Barrett has brought home my bicycle in a deplorable condition. There is scarcely a part of it in working order. What am I to do with the machine?" Humbly beg the first kind-looking old-iron collector to take it away, and tip him liberally, first of all, by way of inducement!

I recommend Elizabeth G. Bunter to have her back tyre of solid rubber this season. She spent most of last season riding on the rims!

Frances Barrett inquires: "Which part of the machine, exactly, is the crank?" The part that pedals, Frances, when you're on it!

"Top-speed Topsy" asks: "What should one do when one's gear wheel is out of gear?" I'm afraid I shall have to think out an adequate reply to that!

Impossible! A bicycle cannot experience emotion! And yet our bicycles are arrayed in the bike-shed in tiers (bike sheddin' tears)!

Important Tip.—When two cyclists are approaching, and one happens to be Frances Barrett, the other should instantly dismount and vault the nearest hedge!

Mabel Lynn squeezed her chum's arm in sudden elation.

"Could you say what time she got here, Piper?" she asked.

"Yes, I can—to the minute," Piper answered. "I was just setting my watch right by the church clock, Miss Lynn, and it was exactly half-past three."

"Thanks, awfully, Piper!" said Mabs, a strange quiver in her voice.

She gripped her chum's arm tighter than ever as they hurried away.

"Half-past three, Babs!" whispered Mabs. "Remember what time we reached the farm? It was a quarter to, and Bessie raised that alarm immediately. The farmer said that his helper had started then, but she could not have walked across here after that, even though carrying a basket of eggs, and got here by half-past!"

you'd finished cookery. Do you know if it belongs to anyone in the Fourth Form?"

Babs took the bracelet in her hand and looked at it. It was a cheap little article, not worth more than a few shillings. But Babs felt instantly that she had seen it somewhere before.

"Why, of—"

And there she suddenly broke off from her excited yell, looking almost guiltily at the amazed face of Boker.

"You recognise it, miss?" he said.

"Yes, yes," stammered Babs lamely. "Yes, I know the girl who owns this, Boker. I'll see that she has it."

"Very good, miss," said Boker. "I'll leave it to you."

Babs and Mabs looked at each other as the page went away. They both seemed bursting to say something. And it came

at last, in two whispers that said the same thrilling name:

"Lorna Manton!"

"What! You guessed it, too?" breathed Babs.

"Yes," said Mabs rapidly. "Just when you were looking at it. It was a keepsake, so she said; she wore it when she was masquerading as Aunt Tilly. It isn't worth anything much, but I'd know it anywhere!"

Mabs was trembling with a new excitement.

"What does it mean, Mabs? What can it mean?"

"She can never have been into the school and dropped it in the model kitchen!" muttered Mabs.

A sudden depression seemed to descend on Babs at those words.

"No, of course not," she said. "Why, it's possible that she gave it to Bertha, or one of the others."

"No!" Mabs nearly yelled at that moment.

"Goodness! What's the matter?" gasped Babs.

Mabel Lynn's voice vibrated as she answered.

"We used eggs this afternoon, and they had to be new-laid. They were in a basket—probably the very eggs from Mr. Jackers' farm. You remember we heard something drop, and Bessie thought it was the works out of her watch. Nothing was found. It must have been that bracelet, Babs, and it must have been in the basket with the eggs."

Babs absolutely hugged her chum.

"Yes; I'm sure that's the right explanation Mabs!" she echoed. "Bessie Bunter was right, after all. Lorna Manton must be there!"

"Absolutely must!"

They gazed at one another then in a sort of speechless excitement that lasted several moments.

"What a good thing that you thought of coming down and asking Piper about the eggs!" burst out Babs at last. "But for that we might have thought that Bertha, or one of the others, had dropped it."

"Yes," Mabs returned. Her eyes were shining. "Oh, Babs, I must confess that even I have thought that Bessie must be mistaken. But these two things—why, they're proof! We know now that Lorna must be there, in spite of having thrown dust in the eyes of everyone!"

"Yes."

"And, Babs, I'll get that girl even yet!" Mabs went on, more breathlessly than ever. "There must be some way. Could we do it to-morrow in any way? Bertha & Co. will be going to see her—they'll be certain to do that—and they'll think that, as the whole Form is running, the coast will be clear. Supposing we ask to be excused?"

"No; they'd smell a rat; they would. Oh, Mabs, I've got just the very idea!" Babs ejaculated softly. "Listen! What's to prevent us going for the paper-chase, and going to Mr. Jackers' farm as well?"

"Is it possible? Can you see a way?" gasped Mabs.

"Yes. It's the first run of the season, and the hares are usually chosen by ballot, because none of us are in form. Supposing we go to Stella Stone and volunteer? We'll be chosen in a flash!"

"Yes."

"Then we'll tell Stella that we'd like to alter the course a bit, so that we can return through Jackers' farm. He always allows us, you know, when we want to; it makes it a better run. Stella's a good sort. She'll agree, and

keep it an absolutely dead secret, too. And we can leave Bertha & Co. believing that we're coming absolutely nowhere near the place."

"Let's go up at once!" gasped Mabs. They rushed off without another moment's delay. They saw Stella, who was in a very cheerful mood. And five minutes later Babs and Mabs returned to Study No. 4, wearing the happiest smiles that anyone had seen for days!

### A Desperate Position!

"OFF!" Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn set out through the gates Cliff House School as the hares in the Saturday afternoon paper-chase.

They had found it a very simple matter to carry through their scheme so far, and only Stella Stone was aware of what they proposed to do. When they had turned the first corner and started to scatter the paper trail they exchanged a glance, and both smiled broadly.

"It's a perfectly splendid wheeze of yours, Babs!" Mabs exclaimed. "And how well it's going to work, too, if only we can have some luck at last! Bertha & Co. have gone off already!"

"And we can guess where!" smiled Babs. "All those parcels they carried weren't empty! If they weren't things that Lorna required from her luggage I'm Dutch!"

"But I don't think we aroused their suspicions at all!" commented Mabs. "We'll give them good time to get over there and be properly off their guard. With luck, one of us ought to drop on them then!"

"And that's to be your part, Mabs!" Babs answered. "If we do get pressed too hard you're to run on and leave me to lead them on a false trail!"

"If you insist!" smiled Babs. "But we'll give them a jolly good run first!"

They saved their breath after that, and ran on.

It may have been the effect of the few runs they had already had together, or possibly the exciting prospect that they had before them. Whatever the cause, however, Babs and Mabs were truly in great form that day. They got their second wind very quickly, and after that they seemed to speed over the miles with an ease that made the run one that they were long to remember.

Through Friardale they went, then swerved to the right. This, of course, was away from Pegg, near where Mr. Jackers' farm was situated. Their object in that was twofold. No one could accuse them of not giving the hounds a good run, and it would also put Bertha & Co. quite at their ease—until they arrived!

The paper trail fluttered here and there, leaving the "scent" for those following.

A mile farther on they made a detour to lay a false trail. Even when they joined each other again, however, there was no sign of the pursuing hounds.

"We'll do it comfortably now, I'm sure, Mabs," said Babs. "If you can get to the top of this hill without seeing them, it's always good business. It'll be easy running now for a mile or two."

They went steadily running on along the dry, winding lanes until at last a cross-roads was reached. And it was here that they smiled again as they swerved to the left and took a new course.

"The change that Stella allowed us to make!" commented Babs. "Hurrah! Now its full speed for Jackers' Farm, even though it is still a jolly long way off!"

Mabs turned as she was scattering the trail.

"I think I can see them coming through the spinney in that hollow," she said. "Just a nice, comfortable distance, I think. With this lead, we shall hold them until we reach the farm, I'm sure, and by then they won't be too far away if we want assistance!"

Another mile was accomplished without either of them speaking a word. They passed some houses and drew near to the Courtfield road at last. When that was crossed they would not have much farther to go.

"Oh!"

That one little cry of pain, and Mabs was suddenly conscious that her chum was no longer at her side. She stopped short and turned. Behind her Babs limped a few steps, then stopped, a twisted smile on her face.

"Whatever's the matter, dear?" panted Mabs.

"Foot!" said Babs glumly. "I put it in a rut. I've twisted my ankle rather badly. It'll be better in a moment, but I can't run."

Mabs was instantly at her side, holding her.

"No, no, Mabs," said Babs quickly.

"Hear that? It's a yell from Clara—she's seen us. You must run on—it's the bargain we struck. I'll wait here, and they can capture me. I shall be quite all right if I sit on this stile. Remember Lorna Manton!"

"You're quite sure you'll be all right, dear?" Mabs persisted. "It's awful bad luck—"

"Never mind that, Mabs—you run on! You promised you would!"

"All right, Babs!"

It was another hail along the lane that decided her. The pursuers were drawing near at last. Mabs did not want to be captured now!

Seeing that her chum could limp to the stile, she turned and darted on along the lane, and crossed the Courtfield road. Then she was in a side-path that led on in the direction of Pegg, running alone. It wasn't very much farther now!

There were no shouts from the pursuers now. They had lost sight of her again. Mabs ran her hardest. She wanted as much time as possible before the others should arrive.

And they would be running hard, too, now that they guessed where the chase was to lead!

Mabs could see the farmhouse at last! She swung into a cart-track and headed for the buildings. At the other side of the farmyard was a lane that led straight back to the school, and always afforded good running. But would she need to use that lane?

Nearer and nearer—and at first Mabs was conscious of a sudden disappointment that was growing on her. Was it in vain, after all? Her heart suddenly pounded with excitement. No; it wasn't in vain!

There, in the farmyard right in front of her, a smock-clad figure had suddenly appeared!

For a second, time seemed to stop absolutely still. Mabs had the extraordinary feeling that she was hardly moving. Afterwards, she could remember every tiny little incident that happened.

She saw that smock-clad girl stop quite still. She knew, instinctively, the feelings of terror that must suddenly have swept through her. A wooden dairy implement dropped unheeded from her hand. She snatched a frightened glance around that seemed to take in everything. And then the girl turned and darted out of sight!



It was all so quick that Mabs seemed to have drawn hardly any nearer at all. But she knew at last! She was sure!

It was Lorna Manton whom she had seen!

Now she tore on with a desperate last spurt. It had been a hard and gruelling run, but Lorna should not trick her as she had done so often before!

Into the cobbled farmyard she panted, and there stood still for a moment, wondering what to do next. There was no sign of Lorna now. Surely she could not have gone far in those brief seconds? Something suddenly caught Mabs' eye. It was the door of one of the tarred outhouses, one that opened inwards. Now, even as Mabs looked at it, it was swinging slowly shut!

Lorna must have gone in there!

Not for a second did Mabs hesitate. She was bounding across the yard and pushing at the open door.

Inside the building she was dazed for a second by the unusual darkness. She stood near to the door, peering this way and that for a sight of some crouching figure.

Suddenly the gloom of the place increased. Mabs whirled instantly, aware that the door was swinging shut. She made a snatch to grip it. Even as she did so, she had a momentary vision of a figure outside. The door moved and banged shut. She heard the rattle of a bolt—clank!

"My goodness!" panted Mabs. Understanding swept over her in a dazzling flash. "Lorna! She's tricked me again! But—"

In the very act of raising her hands to beat upon the panels of the door she stopped. A chilly feeling seemed to be creeping slowly down her spine. She knew that her heart was fluttering.

What was that she heard?

Standing by the door, still with upraised arm, Mabs listened.

She heard a rustling sound, the stamp of a hoof, and then stertorous breathing! What was it? What ever did it mean?

The complete closing of the door had temporarily blinded her again. Only very slowly was she able to make out the details of her prison as she looked around.

It was just an ordinary outhouse. She could see that. But slowly the tumult of her blood began to subside as she saw that, after all, it contained no other occupant. Perhaps—

Sniff! Rustle, rustle!

Her heart leapt again, then seemed to stop quite still for a second. She had looked in the direction of the sound. This was not a complete prison, after all! There was a narrow opening at the far end of the wall that led—somewhere else!

Unable even to think of raising an alarm now until she knew everything, Mabs stood, with tightened hands, thinking desperately. A resolution came to her. She must see what it was—she must!

Slowly, strangely fearful, she crept across the floor. She hesitated near that opening, listening yet again to the sounds that reached her ears. There was some animal there. What was it?

Mustering all her courage, she took a peep at last.

She drew back, trembling, a cold perspiration on her brow. A savage stamping and snuffing made her draw instinctively from the opening and cower against the wall. In that never-to-be-forgotten moment she had seen the huge head of an unchained bull! That was her companion in the next shed!

A bull—loose!

No, even Lorna Manton could not

have known that! It was an accident. She had been shut in here through ignorance. But what was going to happen? Would the bull scent her presence? What could she do?

She tried to think. Would Lorna find out what she had done, and come to release her? It was only a faint chance. Should she shout for help? No; that would apprise the bull of her presence at once! How could she escape from this terrible predicament?

There seemed no way. Nothing offered her any means of climbing out of the animal's reach. She gazed this way and that, then, with frightened eyes, at the opening between the two

with her fingers, and work it from its socket in the ground? She tried. Yes, it would move. With infinite labour she was working it upwards.

And as she did that, Mabs seemed to hear that stertorous breathing louder than ever, and she seemed to feel, as though she could see, that the bull knew of her presence at last, and was wriggling his huge body through the opening from his own compartment!

### A Guilty Girl's Gallantry!

IN the dairy, on the other side of the yard, Lorna Manton was facing five very dismayed girls.

"It was Mabel Lynn! She turned up here again, when you said that they would all be miles away!" she muttered. "I've locked her in the shed, but—but—"

Bertha Breton glanced apprehensively round as Lorna broke off.

"They've tricked us this time—oh, I can't deny it!" she said anxiously. "But why is Mabel here? She was one of the hares. If she has come, all—all the others—"

"I shall have the whole crowd nosing round here?" breathed Lorna, aghast.

"Yes, of course," said Bertha. "Oh, you always seem to do the wrong thing, Lorna! You're fresh; you could easily have outdistanced her if you had run! Now— Oh, what's the use of her being locked up here, where someone will find her?"

"And she'll start banging in a minute!" shivered Marie Tate-Graham. "I wonder she doesn't now. If you think—"

"Sssssh! What's that?" muttered Lorna.

They all stared through the little window that looked into the farmyard. Running figures were rapidly drawing nearer. Phyllis Howell and Flap Derwent seemed to be leading. Clara Trevlyn, Marjorie Hazeldene, and Dolly Jobling followed. Yes, even the inquisitive Bessie, who must have cut off ever so many corners to have kept up with the others, appeared!

"There's a car, too!" said Lorna, in a worse fright than ever.

"My hat! So there is!" whispered Bertha. "I can see Miss Primrose in it, and there's Barbara Redfern, as well! But Barbara was a hare. Why is she there? I'm sure I don't know the driver!"

Lorna gave a hoarse cry, and began to tremble.

"But I do, Bertha! It's that woman who caught me at the baby show when I was wearing her coat—Lady Barling!"

"Good gracious, so it is! She must have been taking Miss Primrose for a spin in the car, and they picked up Babs, who had dropped out for some reason, and then decided to follow the runners home. But—"

Lorna Manton was trembling in every limb.

"It gets worse and worse!" she quivered. "Miss Primrose, Lady Barling, all those others! Oh, why did I lock Mabel Lynn in there? They're sure to find her as soon as she knocks or shouts out! And they'll believe her now! What else can they do?"

The foremost runners were right in the yard by now. They were searching everywhere for the paper-trail.

"Will they go straight through, do you think?" speculated Bertha.

Lorna Manton gazed through the window with hunted eyes.

"Oh, if only they would!" she muttered. "If—"

Crash!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 150.



## MY EARLIEST MEMORIES!

Gathered from many sources.

FRANCES BARRETT (Sixth Form).—I remember being complimented at the age of three of some acting I did. Everyone said I should be an actress. (And Frances still acts as well as she did—at the age of three!—Ed.)

PIPER (the Porter).—I must 'ave been very young at the time, but I distinctly remembers the spanking what I got for burning my mother with an 'ot teapsoon.

DOLLY JOBLING.—Falling over at the age of four, and father tripping over me.

MRS. JONES (Tuckshop-keeper).—Playing with large stones on the beach at Brighton, aged between four and five. (Now Auntie Jones plays with something similar—rock cakes!—Ed.)

BLUEBELL CLANCY (Upper Third).—Filling father's pipe with pepper when I was four years old.

CLARA TREVLYN.—Sliding down the stairs in a tea-tray at the age of five. I was very sorry for it when I reached the bottom—that's why I remember.

LUCY MORGAN.—Being chased by a goose and getting pecked. I was awfully scared, and couldn't have been quite four at the time, look you.

BESSIE BUNTER.—Pouring a tin of treacle into father's best boots. I was very young at the time—about two, I expect—but I remember that father was very angry with me.

PEGGY PRESTON.—I was just turned four when a servant had to be dismissed at home for dishonesty. I happened to be hiding in the room, and they didn't know I was there, but it upset me for days, and I thought father awfully cruel. I have learnt since how lenient he really was.

MARJORIE HAZELDENE.—Trying to sew the tablecloth to the carpet, by means of cotton on a pin, at the age of four.

LADY HETTY HENDON.—Acting, at the age of three, in such a manner that everyone said: "Just like a titled lady born to it!"

compartments. Was it large enough for the animal to come through? Yes, she thought so.

Again she heard that stertorous breathing, and the stamping hoofs of the fierce and discontented animal. She must escape somehow—she must! Something seemed to tell her that the animal knew of her presence at last.

Mabs could think only of the door. She tried it, hoping against hope that it was not bolted, after all. The top gave, but the bottom did not. She dropped to her knees. Under the door there was a small space. Yes, she could see the shadow of the bolt that held her prisoner.

Despair drove her to a sudden action. Perhaps she could just grasp the bolt

It was the thud of a heavy door. "Oh, look!" breathed Bertha. "It's Mabel Lynn—she's out! And—"

A bellowing roar from a furious animal came to their ears. And on that instant Lorna Manton gave a scream, and her face went as white as chalk.

"The bull!" she muttered. "It was there! Oh, I'd forgotten it—I had really—"

They clutched at her as she fell back in a sort of terrified swoon, and supported her on her swaying feet.

"Lorna!"

"For goodness' sake—"

"Look! There it is!" panted Lorna, staring again through the window, with fascinated eyes. "It's got out! Oh, what ever will happen?"

That fierce bull was free in the farmyard!

Shrieks from the runners betokened that they had seen it. It stood outside the shed, with lowered head and lashing tail, bellowing fury. Right by the car in which Miss Primrose, Lady Barling, and Barbara Redfern were seated.

One desperate second in which everyone feared that the infuriated animal would charge heedlessly. Then it gave another bellow and stamped to one side, as though frightened. The huge animal swerved right away from the car and went tearing out of the farmyard by the way they had entered.

Mr. Jackers came running out of the house.

"What has happened? What is the matter, please? I heard—"

Then at last his eyes fell on Mabel Lynn, standing white-faced just by the open door of the shed. He ran and looked inside.

"Good gracious!" was his horrified cry. "The bull's escaped?"

Mabs nodded her head.

"And you—you have done this!" cried the farmer. "Do you deny that you opened that door?"

"I—I—I had to!" muttered Mabs.

But Mr. Jackers, after that brief accusation, had rushed away. Now, with a stout stick in his hand, he was bellowing for help.

"George! Joe! Henry! The bull's loose!"

He went tearing on towards the men who were appearing.

"There it is! I see it! Round it up!"

Drive it towards me! I'll catch the fellow!"

Miss Primrose jumped up in the car.

"Girls, please keep quite calm!" she cried. "From here I can watch what happens. There is no danger at present. I am sure the bull will soon be caught again. Bless my soul! Is that you, Bessie Bunter?"

A fat and frightened face appeared round the doorway of the farmhouse. The muzzle of a huge blunderbus waved in the air.

"Y-y-yes, Miss Pip-Pip-Primrose."

"What ever are you doing?"

"I—I'll shoot the old bib-bib-bull!" quavered Bessie Bunter. "If the f-farmer will just hold him still so that I can take pip-pip-proper aim—"

"Bessie, return that weapon instantly!" thundered Miss Primrose. "Good gracious, girl, you might do someone a serious injury! At once!"

"Oh, really! If someone would just tell me which is the tut-tut-trigger—"

"Bessie, I shall not order you again!"

And Bessie Bunter, the amateur bull-shooter, disappeared.

Miss Primrose turned her eyes back to Mabel Lynn, who was still standing, white and unnerved, outside the shed.

"Mabel, what madness is this of yours?" she cried. "You admit opening the door of that shed. Surely you must have known what you were likely to do? Were you endeavouring to hide here?"

Mabs licked her pale lips.

"I—I was imprisoned there by—by accident, Miss Primrose," she muttered.

"Miss Primrose, we might have been gored by that savage animal!" cried Lady Barling. "Surely you will not believe any more of this girl's falsehoods?"

"You must have some idea who this girl was, Mabel?" said Miss Primrose.

"I—I think that it—it was—"

"Perhaps she will say it was the girl for whom she was mistaken in Court-field?" said Lady Barling, with haughty sarcasm.

"It was the very same girl," Mabs answered.

Lady Barling looked absolutely flabbergasted.

"Merciful goodness! Miss Primrose, surely you cannot even listen to such—"

"Look out!"

The loud cry was scarcely necessary.

They all heard the sudden bellow, the sound of trampling hoofs.

"The bull is coming back, girls!" cried Miss Primrose. "Run, all of you! Over that fence! You will be safe there!"

Thud, thud, thud! came rapidly nearer.

"We must leave the car and make for the safety of the house!" cried Miss Primrose. "Merciful goodness! Mabel Lynn, come here with me!"

That last horrified cry came from Miss Primrose as she stood in the doorway of the farmhouse.

Everyone seemed to have forgotten Mabs. And Mabs, still with that fright on her, had acted in the most bewildered manner possible. She had turned, and was running for the distant fence behind which the others were sheltering.

At the very moment that the maddened animal came in sight again.

"Mabel! Mabel Lynn! Oh, my dear girl! Merciful goodness!"

Mabs had fallen!

Miss Primrose gave a hoarse cry and started into the yard. At the same moment Babs limped past her. Shouts came from the fence. Clara and Flap were climbing heedlessly.

"Mabs! Oh, Mabs!"

The bull had seen her. He was pounding forward. And Mabs still stayed where she had fallen. She must be hurt.

Too terrified even to think of her own safety, Babs tried to limp to her chum's assistance. Several girls were tearing down from the end of the farmyard. But they would all be too late—too late!

Crash!

The dairy door was thrown back upon its hinges. Into the yard there raced the figure of a smock-clad girl. She waved her arms and shouted, then stood stock still and shouted again. She stood not five feet from where Mabs was at last dragging herself up again.

And the bull saw her!

"Oh, do look out!" came a shout of frenzied warning.

The girl waved and shouted again. The bull answered her cry with a fresh bellow of fury. With lowered head he came pounding across the cobbled yard, straight at her.

Hearts seemed to stand still.

Clatter, clatter, clatter! And then— In the nick of time the girl leapt to one side, just as the towering shape flashed by her!

Mabs was on her feet now. Babs, still limping, was assisting her to the shelter of the abandoned motor-car. But there was still peril.

Yes, the bull, knowing that he had been tricked, had turned.

A louder bellow than ever, and now he came charging back again!

The girl was waving her hands, attracting the attention of the bull again. Now she took a short run. At the door of the black shed, whose door had swung shut again, she stopped. The girl turned, facing the bull, and stood there!

Thud, thud, thud!

Every heart seemed to stop beating for the two or three seconds that elapsed. The huge bulk hurtled forward. It was within a yard or two of the shed. Now—

Crash!

But again the girl had leapt—just in time.

The furious charge had sent the door crashing open. The bull was in its shed again. And now the smocked girl acted more quickly than ever. She stepped in after the dazed animal, seized the door, and jerked it shut. The bolt shot into its place—clank!

It was all over. The bull was a prisoner again. And leaning against the shed was a white-faced girl who now trembled in every limb—who seemed to have gone utterly limp.

They went running towards her from every place in which they had taken shelter. Babs limped, with Mabs, breathless and shaken, but not seriously hurt, at her side. Miss Primrose was actually running.

"Well done! Oh, bravely done!" she was crying. "To think—Good gracious! It is Lorna Manton!"

Now, as they looked, they saw it was indeed Lorna Manton who leant there, quivering.

"Lorna!" said Miss Primrose breathlessly. "You here! When we believed that you were miles away—"

Lorna hung her head.

"Miles away!" Miss Primrose repeated. "After you left the school in such an unprecedented manner! Why are you on this farm at all, Lorna Manton?"

Caught at last! Lorna, who had

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# SIX ON AN ISLAND!



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## The Lost Boat!

"Of all the duffers—"  
"Of all the geese—"  
"Why wasn't it tied?"  
"I thought it was!"  
"Tinkee we stay here long time now!"  
The five remarks might have been far more intelligible if they had been uttered separately. But they fitted the occasion. Undoubtedly the general effect conveyed the feeling of dismay that gripped the five girls on the island.

An island in the river may not be particularly useful, but provides a romantic background for picnic teas.

If permission to have tea on such an island is the prerogative of only one person, it is still more romantic to take tea there, providing you are not that one person. Always supposing, of course, that you have a boat should a hurried departure become necessary.

That was the trouble of the five Fourth Form girls from Danesford Hall Academy for the daughters of gentlemen.

The blunt and simple truth was that they had lost their boat.

It was really a most disappointing start for what had promised to be quite a pleasant little adventure. It would not have been allowed to happen if they could have foreseen such a disaster. But it was too late for regrets now. They stood on the bank in a dismal row and watched the boat drifting gently away downstream, dragging its mooring-line, like Mary's little lamb, behind it.

"Lilian Stanley!" said Gerald Thomas, in an offended voice. "I thought you said that you could tie knots!"

"I did," admitted Lilian.

"Well, then—"

"Apparently it wasn't a half-hitch at all. I thought it looked a bit queer, but—"

"Did you ever," exclaimed Molly and Dolly Lambert in one breath.

Molly and Dolly thought alike, and did many other things alike because they provided one of the most perfect examples of how alike twins really can be.

To decide which was Dolly and which was Molly was beyond most people.

"Tinkee we have tea, anyway!"

It was the practical voice of Yang Li Wen, the little Chinese girl who completed the party, that brought them back to material things again.

"Tea!" said Gertie Thomas scornfully.

"Have tea. Plenty glub in hamper—no lose hamper!" clicked the Chinese girl. "No waste good glub 'cause silly boatee drift away. Soon getee back 'gain."

"Yes, but how long are we going to be stuck here?" protested Gertie.

Lilian Stanley brightened up.

"I'm sorry it's happened," she said. "Still, it's a ripping day, and there are heaps of people on the river—someone's bound to see us."

"All depends who sees us," said Dolly Lambert. "Don't forget that Miss Potter, our respected headmistress, has rented this island for the season and won't allow anyone else on it."

"And I'm supposed to be in detention for the Griffin!" added Molly.

"We can keep out of sight amongst the bushes, and—and—Lilian could not help smiling as she added—"and the boat won't give us away now, anyway!"

"H'm!" said Gertie Thomas.

"Me gettee out glub for nice tea," suggested Yang Li Wen, padding away to get the tea hamper.

Gertie Thomas stood and watched the fast receding boat with a mournful expression on her face.

"That's gone, anyway," she said. "I suppose we've got to make the best of it, and keep under cover until we can get help. Fortunately, the dear Miss Potter is in London, and won't want her precious island to-day, and the Griffin—"

"The Griffin thinks I'm in detention!" chuckled Molly Lambert.

"It's a good thing you can see the joke," said Gertie.

"Well, it is a joke. She told me to stay in the detention-room for two hours, and said that she'd come up to see that I didn't go out. Then she put on her hat and coat and crept out of the side gate—I saw her go. That's the horrid sort of thing that the Griffin does when she's supposed to remain in the school herself."

"Just like the Griffin!"

"And it was unfair of her to put me in detention at all!" said Molly. "But it's just like the Griffin! Everyone in the class said it was absolutely unfair of her. But if only she could see me now!"

"I hope she doesn't," said Gertie. "Lilian, you're responsible for this happening. Do be a good girl and just have a careful look round to see if there's any boat about that could help us."

"Certainly."

Lilian returned to report that no assistance was in sight.

"You didn't see dear Miss Griffin parading about on the bank, reading from the original Latin, I suppose?" asked Gertie.

"Not a sign of her."

"It's just as well," said Gertie.

"Tea's leady!" came a cry in the piping little voice of Yang Li Wen.

They found that Yang Li Wen had been very busy during her short absence.

She had prepared tea in a shady dell entirely surrounded by bushes, except for one or two "peep-holes" that could be used if necessary.

The kettle was boiling, and Yang Li Wen was just pouring the water into the teapot. Bread-and-butter was cut, and fancy cakes tastefully arranged on cardboard plates. In addition to being a jolly little companion, the energetic Chinese girl was most useful when picnicking.

"Sittee down on ground and eatee bread-and-buttel," said Yang Li Wen, stirring the teapot vigorously.

"Bread-and-butter."

"Bread-and-buttel," said Yang Li Wen with great difficulty.

"No—bread-and-butter! Say that!"

"No savvy," said the Chinese girl innocently.

"Yes, you do! Say bread-and-butter!"

"No savvy!"

Dolly and Molly Lambert chuckled, and Gertie gave up the attempt. When Yang Li Wen said "No savvy," it was the finish of any argument. Yang Li Wen did not savvy when she did not want to savvy. At other times she was remarkably quick at picking up things.

It was a glorious afternoon, and tea, under such circumstances, was delightful. The five girls from Danesford Hall found that they could bear even the loss of their boat with great fortitude.

They chatted on all subjects, but most of all on the subject of Miss Griffin, who was second in command at Danesford Hall. The ways of the "Griffin," as she was generally called out of class, were not endearing ways.

It was certainly not her fault that her ears did not burn that afternoon.

"Oh, well, I expect the Griffin's far away now, at any rate," sighed Gertie Thomas at length. "Let's—"

"Listen!" said Dolly Lambert suddenly.

They listened, and to their ears came a familiar clop, clop, clop! that surely only meant one thing.

"A boat!" breathed Lilian Stanley.

Gertie was on her feet and peering through one of the spy-holes. She stood for two seconds, and then wheeled round. Her usually serious expression was replaced by one of excitement.

"A boat it is—but it's empty!"

"What? You can't mean it!"

"Yes!" She brushed the bushes aside and stepped through. "An empty boat drifting down! I say, what luck!"

"There's someone's parasol in it!" said Dolly Lambert.

"But not the someone!" chuckled Molly.

"Here goes! We're going to grab this one whilst we have the chance!"

The boat was drifting along within a foot or two of the island, caught only in the eddy of the main stream. An overhanging branch gave Molly a good hold. She leant out and just grasped the mooring-line. In another moment she was pulling the boat into the bank and tying it.

"My word!" breathed Gertie Thomas.

"That parasol—just look again! Don't you recognise the pattern? There's only one like that!"

"The Griffin's!" said Molly Lambert, in an almost awed voice.

"Yes!"

"She—she's lost her boat, the same as we did!" chuckled Dolly. "Ha, ha, ha! Well, that's really funny! Of course, she must be on the bank somewhere, and she'll be able to walk home. This will just do us splendidly—a bit of a tight squeeze, but we sha'n't mind that!"

"Just a minute!" said Gertie Thomas.

"What's the matter, dear?"

"If the Griffin's lost her boat she may be wandering along the bank looking for it," said Gertie. "I don't see her from here. Let's go to the other end of the island and have a look."

"Yes, we'd better make sure that she isn't too near," agreed Dolly.

Greatly heartened by the knowledge that there was a boat securely tied to the island, the girls started to walk across to the other side. Their troubles seemed at an end. Once away from the island Molly could make her escape; and then they could soon explain to the mistress in a satisfactory way if they should meet her.

"The Griffin doesn't often go on the river alone—I suppose I ought to consider myself lucky that I haven't been seen!" commented Molly Lambert. "Still, who could have stayed in school on such a lovely day when the Griffin herself was going out?"

"A miss is as good as a mile!" said Gertie, as they walked across the island.

"Me tinkee—"

"Gracious! Did you hear something then—like a snort?" demanded Gertie, in a whisper.

"Where?"

"Just beyond that bush!"

"If you're trying to scare us—"

"No; I really thought I heard something!" said Gertie. "Don't make a noise, girls. It may be nothing, but we'd better look. It might—"

Gertie Thomas' voice tailed off abruptly as



she parted the bushes and stared through. A positively scared expression came to the faces of Dolly and Molly Lambert. With one impulse, the five Danesford Hall girls bobbed back out of sight.

"My goodness!" breathed Gertie Thomas.

#### Miss Griffin in Charge!

"MY goodness!"  
"Did you see it?"  
Gertie Thomas held her hand to her heart, with a comical look of dismay on her face.

"The Griffin—awake on the island!" she breathed.

"The Griffin!" Molly Lambert nodded. "But are you sure she was asleep?"

"Yes! We'll have another peep to make sure!"

It was not such a surprise to them this time. They were prepared for it. The five of them gazed through the bushes at the recumbent figure of Miss Griffin, chief assistant at Danesford Hall.

Miss Griffin was asleep—there was no possible doubt about that. Every now and then she gave a little snort.

But Miss Griffin on the island with them! Miss Griffin, the very mistress who would make such a lot of trouble about it!

"This needs a conference!" said Gertie, in a low voice.

"My word, I should think so!" said the twins together.

Moving very silently indeed, the five girls went across to the other side of the island.

"Now, where are we?" said Gertie.

"In the soup!" said Molly emphatically.

"Say something helpful, please! Fancy the Griffin being here of all places! It's a wonder to me that she didn't hear our voices!"

"Perhaps she does know we're here!" said Molly.

Gertie shook her head.

"She wouldn't go to sleep before she'd made enough noise for ten thousand!"

"She was grinning in her sleep!"

"The Griffin always does grin—she does all sorts of horrid things like that! She dreams of new schemes for being unpleasant, that's all!"

"The thing," said Lillian Stanley, "is, what are we going to do now?"

"That's bright of you!" said Gertie, with some sarcasm. "It's a good thing you've thought of that!"

"Don't be sarky!" protested Molly. "You're a leader, Gertie. I'll call you 'Carrots' to the end of time if you don't get us out of this pickle somehow!"

The threat was not without its effect on auburn-haired Gertie.

"We've got to get away," she said.

"Granted! Are we going to take the Griffin's boat?"

"It's that or swimming—and I don't fancy swimming myself!" said Gertie. "But we can't go back to the boathouse with it."

"It would serve the Griffin jolly well right to be left here!" said Dolly Lambert. "After all, she let her boat drift away, the same as we lost ours."

"Yes, but it went away while she was asleep—she'd never believe that we hadn't helped ourselves to it. Someone would be bound to recognise that it was her boat, and then the fat would be in the fire!"

"H'm!"

"I say," said Molly, in an awed voice, "wouldn't it have been dreadful if I hadn't saved the boat, and we'd all been left helpless on the island together?"

"Too awful to think about!" said Gertie. "But that isn't the point. While the Griffin's sleeping we've got to do something. Now—"

"Pullee old Gliffin's nose!" suggested Yang Li Wen eagerly.

"Don't be absurd!" said Gertie.

"Tinkee bettel idea now. Gettee old cork, burnee in split-stove, then paintee whispers on Gliffin's face, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the twins.

"You'd better go and do it!" said Gertie. "I'm afraid we haven't got the time to jape the Griffin now. I think—oh, dear! Listen to that!"

In the tense hush that fell on them they listened.

The crackle of breaking twigs came from the other side of the island.

"My word, the Griffin's awake!" gasped Lillian.

"Yes, awake! She'll miss her boat in a moment, and then start dashing round!" muttered Gertie. "There's only one thing to do. All in the boat except Molly."

"Except me?" gasped Molly. "Wh-wh-what do you mean?"

"The Griffin's bound to see us now before we can get out of sight!"

"Y-y-yess! But—"

"Well, your detention's over by now, but you haven't had time to get down here," said Gertie. "If she sees you and Dolly in the boat she'll guess at once. Hide on the island, and cover up the tea-basket—see? We'll come and pick up the Griffin as soon as she yells to us, and take her off. She won't have time to look round and find you. Then we'll come back as soon as we can and pick up you and the tea-basket!"

Dolly gripped her twin-sister's hand.

"Yes, it's the best thing, Molly!"

"Oh, all—right!"

Gertie Thomas led the rush for the boat. They tumbled in as quickly as they could, with the exception of Molly. Molly made herself very scarce in the best cover that she could.

"Gracious, my boat has gone!"

That gasp in Miss Griffin's voice was plainly audible as they pushed off from the shore.

"Not gone, but going!" muttered Gertie. "It'll be gone by the time that you see us, my darling Griffin!"

Lilian and Dolly had grasped the sculls, and were pulling well. The boat got nicely under way. Gertie took the tiller-lines, and manoeuvred for the position in which she considered they should be discovered.

There was not much time for manoeuvring. Within the minute the bushes on the island were suddenly parted, and Miss Griffin appeared. Her hair was somewhat disordered, and she looked agitated—not, perhaps, without reason.

"Stop!"

Gertie Thomas looked up from her steering with the most innocent expression possible.

"My word, girls, there's Miss Griffin!" she ejaculated. "Good-afternoon, Miss Griffin! Is there anything that we can do for you?"

"Yes—come to the shore immediately!" cried the Danesford Hall mistress. "I have lost my boat—I am stranded here! Pick me up at once, please!"

"Certainly, Miss Griffin!"

Gertie Thomas turned the boat's nose, and

it was pulled for the island. Gertie's expression was just as surprised and just as sympathetic as it should have been. Miss Griffin could not see Lillian and Dolly, which was fortunate.

"My boat!" cried the mistress, as they approached.

"Your boat, Miss Griffin?" asked Gertie, in surprise.

"Yes—that is my parasol!" An odd note came into the mistress's voice. "How do you come to be in my boat?"

"We found it drifting, Miss Griffin," said Gertie. Which was perfectly true, as it happened.

"Drifting? But—but I tied it securely—"

"Miss Griffin, you surely do not think that we should swim to this island to take your boat?" said Gertie, with great severity.

"Miss Potter's island, too—the one on which we are forbidden to set foot!"

"Ah! Oh, no, I do not think that!" said the Griffin.

Gertie eased the boat to a convenient landing place—the one from which they had set out a couple of minutes previously.

"A little closer—I cannot get in like that," said Miss Griffin, dancing nervously on the brink.

Miss Griffin at last grasped the gunwale of the boat. She drew it to her, and then made a scrambling jump. The boat rocked alarmingly.

"Oh! Ah! Steady the boat, Gertrude!" gasped Miss Griffin. "Dear me, some of you are too clumsy to be allowed in boats at all. I will take this seat in the stern, Gertrude. You can go forward and pull an oar. Yang Li Wen can pull another—there are four of them. I will do the steering. Her eyes settled on Dolly Lambert. "Goodness gracious, Molly! Did I not put you in detention?"

"My sister Molly, Miss Griffin," said Dolly politely. "Poor Molly! At the present moment she may be in the realms of classics, conjugating Latin verbs—"

"Gliffo!" said Yang Li Wen, and she seemed to chuckle.

"What was that?" cried Miss Griffin.

"Gliffo, glifflare—"

"Girl! What are you talking about?"

Gertie Thomas felt quite cold. Yang Li Wen had a queer idea of humour. Gertie



"There! A green hat! I knew I'd seen one!" said Miss Griffin triumphantly.  
"Oh, Miss Griffin!" exclaimed Gertie Thomas, in a pained voice.

had earlier turned the name Griffin into a Latin verb, that meant "to make oneself unpleasant," purely as a joke amongst themselves. She had not thought that Yang Li Wen had been even listening at the time.

"Yang Li Wen, repeat what you were saying! There is no word 'griffo' that I know."

"No savvy!"

"Repeat what you were saying at once!"

"No savvy!"

Yang Li Wen, realising her slip, was "taking cover." Her face was perfectly impassive. The mistress stared very searchingly indeed. But it was a hopeless task to stare at Yang Li Wen.

"Pull those oars, please!" said Miss Griffin, changing the subject. "I wish to get back quickly. Pull! And again—pull! Pull!"

The girls pulled.

"Not hard enough!" said the mistress unpleasantly. "You can do better than that! Pull! And again—pull!"

Miss Griffin was "in command" now, and feeling very safe and very comfortable in the stern of the boat.

Considering that she was supposed to have been rescued from a rather unpleasant position, it was not nice of her to become autocratic and domineering so quickly. But that was a way that Miss Griffin had. Especially with Fourth Form girls did Miss Griffin like to lay down the law. Possession of the boat was nine points of the law.

"Keep that pace up!" she said, as the boat began to move through the water.

Gertie glanced over her shoulder suddenly. "We're going in towards the island, Miss Griffin!" she exclaimed.

"Pardon me, I am steering!" said the mistress, with elaborate sarcasm. "If you attend to the pulling we shall get on well."

They pulled, and the boat zigzagged. It went from side to side alarmingly.

Miss Griffin did not handle the tiller lines with distinction.

"Look out, Miss Griffin!" gasped Dolly Lambert. "That old stump—"

"I have seen the old stump!" said the mistress with great calm. "We only need one captain in the boat. I can manage well, thank you!"

"But—"

"Kindly attend to your own work, and I will attend to mine!"

Crash!

Bump, bump!

The boat had hit the stump with alarming force!

"Dear me!" gasped Miss Griffin agitatedly. "I pulled the wrong line, but—"

Crce-ek!

"Back-water quickly! We are grounding! Pull, Gertie! No, you, Dolly! All together; Back-water!"

Miss Griffin's plump face was pale with alarm.

The girls did their best to get the boat back into the stream.

"We're making water!" gasped Lillian Stanley.

"Wh-a-at?" stammered Miss Griffin.

"A plank has been shifted. I can see the water bubbling through, and—"

Miss Griffin shrieked.

"Help! Help! We are sinking!"

"Pull into the island quickly girls!" exclaimed Gertie Thomas. "Dolly, pull your oar! Lillian, back-water!"

"Quick, quick! We are sinking!"

Miss Griffin shrieked again, and rose to her feet.

The boat swayed alarmingly.

"Miss Griffin, please sit down!" cried Gertie.

"But the boat—filling—I can't swim! I—oh, help!"

Splash!

"Help!"

The disaster was complete, thanks entirely to Miss Griffin.

Her excitement had been a little too much for the water-logged boat. One gunwale had gone under water, and stayed there! The boat was settling down gently beside the island.

Gertie Thomas was the girl of action. She leapt into the water that was fortunately only up to her knees, and gave the others a helping hand. They splashed ashore one by one.

Five of them, all wet up to their knees, stood on the island and gazed at their wrecked boat.

"Goodness gracious! What—what a narrow escape!" gasped Miss Griffin. "My—my feelings just then! Ah! Dear me!"

But the feelings of Miss Griffin at that moment were nothing to the feelings of the others!

Molly and their picnic hamper were still on the island—somewhere!

The boat trip had taken them from bad— to worse!

### The Green Hat!

"Oh dear!"

The face of Miss Gwendia Griffin was grey and mournful.

"I am wet! I have lost the boat! It will have to be got up by the boatman now! And there is my parasol drifting away! Oh dear!"

"Gertie Thomas savee life!" clicked Yang Li Wen.

"In a few inches of water!" gasped Miss Griffin. "Nonsense! Lillian, if you had not given that stupid alarm—"

"We warned you about the stump, Miss Griffin!" answered the girls, in a chorus.

"Warned, indeed—when it was too late!" said the mistress sourly. "Those stupid lines—I am sure they were crossed. Otherwise, how I came to pull the wrong one is a mystery! If I had my way I would not allow you girls to take out boats at all!"

"You swayed the boat, and made it go over, Miss Griffin!" protested Gertie Thomas.

"Silence! Do not argue!"

"But—"

"It was entirely your bad management of the boat that led up to everything! I will not argue about the matter at all! Dear me, what ever are we to do now?"

Gertie Thomas could make no suggestion.

If she had uttered the things that were in her mind it would have eased her feelings, but not those of Miss Griffin.

Undoubtedly Miss Griffin would not have been pleased by the idea of being rolled on the bank and heartily pummeled, which was the only desire in Gertie's mind at that moment.

"I suppose we shall have to stop here!" said Miss Griffin, stamping her wet feet discontentedly.

"Unless we swim," Gertie could not help saying.

"Gertrude! Really— Goodness gracious, what was that?"

Miss Griffin paused, and stood listening very intently.

It certainly did sound as though someone had sneezed—on the island!

"I believe there is someone else here!" cried the mistress.

"Oh, surely you are mistaken!" Gertie exclaimed.

"Girl, I distinctly heard some sound—"

"But how could anyone get here? We've seen no boat!"

It was quite a good way of putting things, but Miss Griffin had a suspicious mind—a very suspicious mind. Gertie's conundrum did not shake her belief that she had heard someone sneeze.

"There is someone! I am sure I did not imagine it!" said the mistress, in a hard voice.

"This is Miss Potter's island. She allows no one but the school mistresses to be here."

"We all go and standee in water!" clicked Yang Li Wen.

"Yang Li Wen! Are you being impertinent?"

"No savvy impertinent!"

"Are you making facetious remarks?"

"No savvy facetious lemaiks!"

"Yang Li Wen—"

"No savvy what you talkee 'bout, Miss Griffin!"

Miss Griffin's eyes gleamed as she turned from the Chinese girl in despair.

"I am going to investigate this!" she said. "Wait here for me, girls!"

"But Miss Griffin—"

"Yes?"

"There can't be anyone—"

"Nonsense! I shall see a sneeze!"

"Oh, dear! I shall we come with you in case it is a savage rascal—"

"A—a what, Gertrude?" gasped Miss Griffin. "Surely there is no reason why such a person should visit the island?"

"He might come to steal the birds' eggs, Miss Griffin—"

"Pah! Nonsense! Wait for me here!" Miss Griffin strode away on her tour of the island.

The prospect for Molly Lambert, who was hiding somewhere, did not look very rosy.

"Does Molly know we're back on this horrid place?" groaned Dolly.

"Must do!" said Gertie. "There's one blessing—her two hours' detention is up!"

"Yes, but she hasn't had-time to get here, presuming that she stayed to do it. Besides, how can she explain being on the island with a boat?"

"And the Griffin will find the picnic basket if she finds Molly. She'll make a thorough search!" whispered Lillian Stanley.

"Let's yell to warn her!" said Gertie.

She raised her voice at once, and cried after the retreating figure.

"Do you want us to come and help you search the island, Miss Griffin?"

"Not 'Stay there'" was the sharp response. "It's warned Molly, anyway," said Gertie.

"If only she was wearing a green hat, instead of a pink one like yours, Dolly, the Griffin wouldn't know her from you if she met her!"

"She hasn't got her legs wet like I have!"

"No; but—"

Gertie Thomas broke off. She heard the snapping of a twig—quite enough to make any of them very attentive!

"Stop! Come back! I have seen you!" cried Miss Griffin's excited voice.

There was a rustle amongst the bushes.

Molly Lambert appeared breathlessly before them!

"She's seen me!" was her startled gasp.

"Really? Are you sure—"

"My hat, at least!" panted Molly. "And it's pink—"

"Change hats, you two!" exclaimed Gertie. They changed—almost instantly.

"Now hide, Molly!" Gertie ordered. "Dolly, you go and meet the Griffin!"

Dolly was ready instantly.

She ran through the bushes, calling as she went:

"Did you call to me, Miss Griffin?"

Miss Griffin, looking rather breathless, confronted her. She saw the pink hat on Dolly's hat, and stared.

"You are Molly Lambert!"

"Molly!" gasped Dolly. "No, I'm not, Miss Griffin! I'm Dolly!"

"Dolly wears a green hat—she did in the boat!" exclaimed Miss Griffin. "This is a trick—"

"But how can it be a trick, Miss Griffin?" exclaimed Dolly, with gentle triumph. "I'm Dolly. I was in the boat with you. See, my shoes and stockings are wet!"

Miss Griffin made strange noises.

"The island is so small—we meet so quickly," went on Dolly, in a gentle voice. "Under the circumstances—"

"Ah! Oh!" Miss Griffin looked absolutely bewildered. "If you are Dolly, why did you not stop with the others. Why were you bobbing about amongst the bushes?"

"Such an important matter, Miss Griffin—our excitement, you know, being so young and thoughtless—"

"I could feel sure, too, that you were wearing a green hat in the boat!"

Gertie Thomas joined them.

"Miss Griffin, the shock of the disaster has upset you," she said, in quite a motherly voice.

"Nonsense! A green hat, I am sure—"

"Green water—that's what you're thinking of, Miss Griffin," purred Gertie. "People often imagine that they've seen a lot of green things after a river disaster—hats, and coats, and trees, and—"

"Please do not talk such nonsense, Gertrude!"

"But you know—"

"We will return to the other end of the island, and see if a boat is now in sight," said Miss Griffin.

They returned. Molly was not likely to give herself away again—they felt certain of that. They parted the bushes, and came to the water's edge. And there, as they looked—

It was really too startling for words!

A green hat was floating along on the stream.

"There! There! See that?" cried the Griffin triumphantly.

Gertie Thomas caught her breath. To cope with such a situation it needed all of Gertie's customary seriousness, and a little bit more!



"See what, Miss Griffin?" she asked, in a very calm voice. "There! A green hat! I knew I'd seen one!" cried the Griffin triumphantly.

"Oh, Miss Griffin!" exclaimed Gertie, in a pained voice. Miss Griffin stared at her.

"What do you mean?"  
"A green hat—after being so positive about it before!" said Gertie gently. "I don't think you'd better look at the river again—  
not until you've rested a little."

"Goodness gracious! What do you mean?"  
Gertie Thomas tugged gently at the mistress' sleeve.

"You might see two green hats—or five, or ten—"  
"Gertrude!"

"You know that you think you saw a green hat before—in the boat—"

"Yes, I did!" Miss Griffin nearly shouted. "Do you think I have taken leave of my senses, girl? Look! Look there! Can't you see a green hat yourself?"

"I can't see one," said Gertie, keeping her eyes from it. "You are not looking in the right direction!"

"But where should I look? If there is no green hat to be seen—"

"There is! There! There! There!"  
Miss Griffin danced with her excitement, and pointed to the river.

But the others were taking their cue from Gertie. They moved away from Miss Griffin, and looked uneasily in the other direction. And the green hat bobbed, and slowly sank beneath the surface.

"It has disappeared!" said the Griffin, in a strange tone. "Thank goodness that you cannot see it now!" said Gertie, smiling.

"What? What is that? You pretend that I imagined it—"  
"A boat!" cried Lillian Stanley.

"My word—yes!" echoed Gertie Thomas. "A boat, coming towards us! Miss Griffin, don't be alarmed! This one really is painted green!"

"Gug-gug-Gertrude!" spluttered Miss Griffin.  
"And it's my sister Molly in it!" cried Dolly, in a voice of quite genuine amazement.

The boat moved towards them, carrying one hatless girl. It really was Molly Lambert who was rowing so calmly along. The very girl whom Miss Griffiths had quite unreasonably placed in detention!

If Miss Griffin had not been there there would have been a most amazed chorus at the sight. They had fondly imagined Molly to be still on the island. How she came to be in a boat they could not guess. But as Miss Griffin was there they said nothing at all, leaving all the amazement to the mistress.

"Girl!"  
Molly looked up innocently at the cry.

"Good afternoon, Miss Griffin!"  
"Bring that boat here—at once!"

Molly turned the boat's head towards the island. She pulled rapidly in, and landed as Dolly Lambert seized the painter, and held the boat.

"Molly Lambert," said the Griffin, in a terrible voice. "Where is your hat?"

"My hat? Which one, Miss Griffin?" asked Molly sweetly.  
"Your green one!"

"Oh, Miss Griffin!" protested Gertie. "Surely you cannot see another—"

"Silence!" cried the mistress. "Do you deny, Molly, that you have, or have had, a green hat this term?"

"Certainly, Miss Griffin! The matron can tell you that I've never had a green hat. Dolly used to have one, but I wouldn't like to say where it is now."

"I shall certainly ask the Matron that question!" said the mistress, in a stifled voice. "Why are you without a hat now? I do not believe that you have stayed in detention as I ordered this afternoon!"

"Oh, Miss Griffin!" said Molly. "Fancy saying that! And you never came up to hear me say my irregular Latin verbs, as you said you would!"

Miss Griffin went very red indeed. She felt that her leg was being pulled, but she simply did not know what to say in answer!

"I—I believe you know perfectly well what has been happening on this island, Molly Lambert!" she exclaimed, at length.

"Why, I expect you've been entertaining my chums to tea!" said Molly innocently.

"Entertaining! Enter— Ah! Oh! Make way for all of us in that boat, please—at once!" cried Miss Griffin. "I will not stand any more of this! All of you get in—at once!"

"Oh, Dolly!" exclaimed Molly. "You've got wet stockings! What ever have you been doing? Have you been paddling? I think— Oh, sorry, Miss Griffin! I didn't see your wet skirt!"

"Enough!" said Miss Griffin furiously. "Gertrude, take the tiller-lines! You others can row for the boathouse at once! I will go into this island this afternoon. I believe you have all been on this island this afternoon."

"You not know that if you sleep!" clicked Yang Li Wen.  
Miss Griffin sat bolt upright.

"What? What was that?" she cried. "Yang Li Wen, how do you know that I have been asleep on the island, if you have not been there yourself?"

Yang Li Wen saw that she had "put her foot in it." But Gertie Thomas' quick glance was quite unnecessary. Her yellow face became absolutely impassive. Her slanting eyes narrowed to mere slits.

"Honourable lady, please repeat for poor Yang Li Wen!" she clicked.

Miss Griffin repeated, with additions.  
"No savvy!"

"Yang Li Wen! Do not tell me—"  
"No savvy what you mean!"

"You spoke about my being asleep on the island, girl!"  
"No savvy!" said Yang Li Wen sadly. "Li' Chinese girl no savvy what honourable lady takee 'bout. Solly, but no savvy, Miss Griffin!"

"Gertrude," said Miss Griffin, nearly in despair, "you heard that girl speak of my being asleep—"

"Yang Li Wen says a lot of funny things at times, Miss Griffin," said Gertie gently. "She doesn't really understand the language properly. She may not know the meaning of 'asleep.'"

Miss Griffin sat back in her seat, and uttered not another word. Undoubtedly there was a mystery, but Miss Griffin was not likely to solve it now! She maintained that silence until they reached the boathouse. Then, without one word of thanks, Miss Griffin clambered from the boat, and went!

Molly Lambert explained, when the five chums were alone at the boathouse at last.

"The boatman captured our runaway boat, guessed what had happened, and brought it back," she said. "It's the only bit of luck we've had all day, but it was just in time. I saw him just after Dolly and I changed hats, beckoned to him, and got in. I threw the old green hat into the water, thinking it would sink, rowed the boatman ashore, and then came back, as you saw. But for the hat—"

"I don't regret that now!" smiled Gertie Thomas. "The Griffin can make a pretty good guess at what we've been doing this afternoon, but she can never be sure, and I'm sure she had a real scare over that hat. I say, let's row back to the island now, and get the picnic basket!"

"Rather!"  
They rowed calmly and cheerfully back in the cool of the evening, and again and again the sound of happy, girlish chuckles echoed across the still waters of the river.

THE END.

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# Your Editor's Corner.



Write to me as often as you like and let me know what you think of "The School Friend." All readers who write me, and enclose a stamped envelope, may be sure of receiving a prompt reply by post. All letters should be addressed: The Editor, "The School Friend," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

My Dear Readers.—How many of you would like a French girl to be introduced into the stories? All of you, I am sure! And this forms but one of the many excellent reasons why you will like next Thursday's magnificent long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, entitled:

**"THE LITTLE STOWAWAY!"**  
by Hilda Richards.

The title suggests something very new in "School Friend" stories, and, indeed, it is. As a little stowaway on board a ship crossing from France to England, Suzanne will claim your pity at once. All her efforts are concentrated on removing a stigma from her name, and in shadowing a certain two people on board the same ship she takes the part of a stowaway, and is seen by no one.

But for the foundering of the vessel off the Kent shores, Barbara Redfern & Co. would have played no part in the drama. As it is, they play a very big part indeed. A girl alone on foreign soil, with no home to shelter her, and with such a difficult though admirable project as Suzanne's, could never be ignored by Babs & Co. Greatly you will admire them for the assistance they give the little stowaway, and greatly will you admire Suzanne for her grit and determination.

**GREAT NEW ATTRACTIONS**

at which I hinted in our last issue. As

promised, next Thursday's issue of the "School Friend" will be even brighter and better than any that have previously appeared.

**"THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY"**

will be published in an entirely new form. It will consist of no less than

**EIGHT PAGES,**

and will be simply teeming with novel and welcome features. First and foremost, Four Whole-Pages of the Fourth-Formers' proud little journal will be occupied by the first instalment of an enthralling new Serial, entitled:

**"THE SIGNALMAN'S DAUGHTER!"**  
by Gertrude Nelson.

This story strikes quite a new note, and I am positive it will meet with the approval of all of you.

The shorter features of the "Cliff House Weekly," written by the Fourth-Formers themselves, are of the most bright and entertaining description.

**"PIPER'S HAT"**  
by Dolly Jobling

is one laugh from start to finish.

**"DIFFERENT WAYS OF SHOWING THE SIGHTS!"**

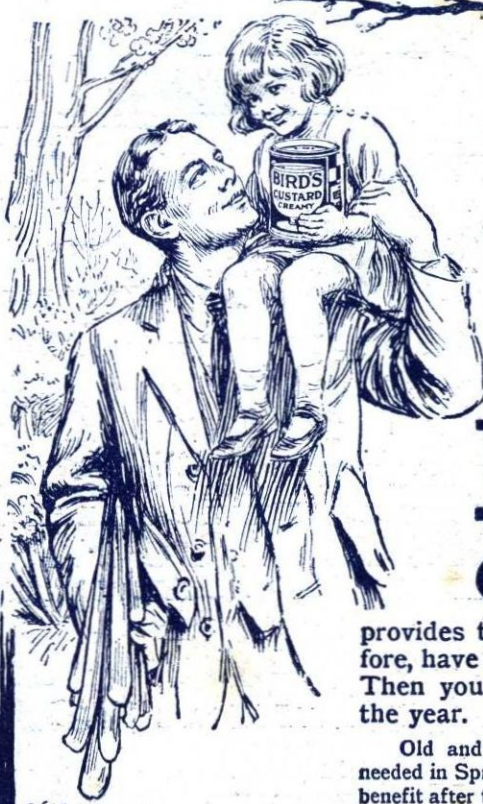
is an amusing and interesting article from the pen of Philippa Derwent. "Games as they Ought to be Played!" gives Annabel Hichens' candid views on the subject, and they will not impress you quite in the way the old-fashioned girl intends! Whilst "Some of Our Toys" is a typical contribution from the joint pens of Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear of the Second Form.

**"TURNING THE TABLES!"**

is an amusing little story by Marjorie Hazledene, dealing with Marcia Loftus, Bessie Bunter, and Bessie Bunter's ventriloquism! As to the others, there is "The Fifth Form Ventriloquist!" a few verses by Katie Smith dealing with—well, who would you imagine is the Fifth Form ventriloquist? There are still more which will prove of great interest to you, and, in addition to all these, you will be pleased to know, Barbara Redfern's much-liked Editorial will make its reappearance.

Spread this great news broadcast among all your friends, for I want you all to begin reading the new "Cliff House Weekly" right from the first number.

Your Sincere Friend,  
YOUR EDITOR.



## Always together!

*"Never take Rhubarb alone. Always with Bird's Custard."*

Stewed Rhubarb alone tempts nobody; it is too sharp for the palate, too crude for the digestion. But Rhubarb with Bird's Custard is an irresistibly attractive dish.

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