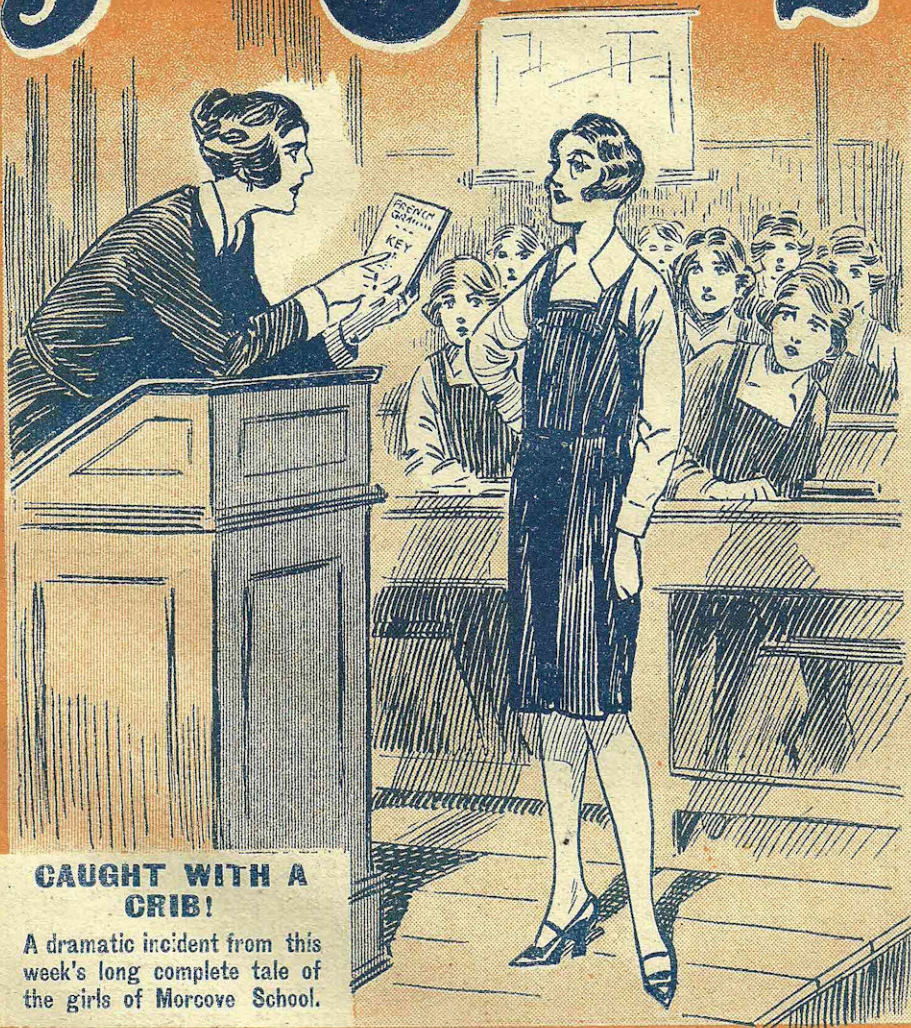


TWO GRAND NEW SERIALS ARE JUST COMMENCING!

The Schoolgirls' Gun 2nd



CAUGHT WITH A CRIB!

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

A FINE LONG COMPLETE TALE OF THE MOST POPULAR SCHOOLGIRLS IN FICTION.



THE COST OF FRIENDSHIP!

By
MARJORIE STANTON.

Jemima Carstairs is a girl you will like, despite the fact that she, apparently, prefers the friendship of Ursula Wade, the sneak of the Fourth Form at Morcove School, to the friendship of Betty Barton and Co. Why that is so you will read in this grand story.

Two Girls in Coventry.

"POSTCARD for Betty!"

Polly Linton, the madcap of the Fourth Form, jumped to the letter-rack, and took from it a postcard that was addressed to her chum, Betty Barton.

There was no letter for Polly herself that morning, but she considered that one for 'Betty' was the next best thing.

"Letter for me, deah geal?" asked Paula Creel. "Under the 'C's,' deah geal—"

"Not 'K's'?" asked Polly, who could not resist teasing her elegant chum. "K-r-e-l-e—"

Paula, of course, could never see when she was being teased, and she raised her eyebrows in considerable surprise.

"Bai Jove, no, deah geal! Cweel—C-r-e-e-l," she spelled.

And what a merry laugh came then from the other Fourth Formers who were gathered round the letter-rack at Morcove School. Paula was always making someone laugh.

"No letter for you, Paula," announced Ursula Wade. "Nothing under the 'C's,' except for Carstairs—Jemima Carstairs."

Paula looked at Ursula, and nodded her thanks for the information—nodded very curtly indeed, although in the ordinary way Paula was politeness personified.

And Ursula, of the close-set eyes and meanly thin mouth, bit her lip and turned away, with the letter for Jemima Carstairs clasped in her hand.

"She's taking Jemima's letters!" exclaimed Polly. "We don't trust Ursula with letters these days, you know."

"Bai Jove, wather not!" added Paula. "Not since she twied to open a lettah that wasn't hers!"

Ursula half turned, her face quite pale, but Madge Minden gave a short laugh.

"What does it matter?" she asked. "They're birds of a feather, aren't they?"

But Madge's voice died away as a girl came down the staircase into their view, a girl attired in a drill-dress that was cut just a little differently from the others. It had an Eton collar, and it was cut with a tailor-made air as masculine as a drill-dress ever could be.

Its owner's red-brown hair was waved, and it was shingled like a boy's, with a head-line that had been made for shingling. But what was so extraordinary about her appearance was a tortoise-shell monocle affixed in her right eye, and a long silk ribbon that hung artfully from it.

Beige stockings completed the outfit, although what Miss Somerfield, the headmistress, would be likely to say if she noticed such a thing they did not dare to think.

"Cheer-oh!" observed the newcomer. "Nice morning—all fresh and merry, with the birdies carolling!"

No one answered her, but she smiled pleasantly, and her grey eyes, with their black lashes, were very bright indeed.

"Oh, Ursula's got a letter for Jemima Carstairs!" announced Madge Minden, as though to Betty Barton.

Jemima, the newcomer, looked at Ursula, while Ursula gave a quick look back at Madge Minden, as though she had not wanted that particular piece of information imparted.

Then she handed the letter over to Jemima, who carelessly took it and read the address.

"From the guv'nor," she remarked. "Dear old guv'nor, always writing me words of hope and wisdom, you know."

It was a blue envelope, of a peculiar colour, and every eye there was centred on it. Jemima gave them all a cheery nod of the head.

"Top of the morning," she observed, "whatever the top of the morning is!"

The girls at the board turned deliberately away, although one or two of them smiled faintly.

Jemima did not appear to notice that strange conduct at all. She turned to Ursula Wade.

"How about a game of tennis?" she asked. "Seeing that, Spartan-like, I arose with the lark, I may as well carry on the most splendid and excellent work. Let us have exhibitions of the forehand drive à la Lenglen!"

And then they observed that she had under her left arm a racquet, a beautiful racquet by the look of it. There were quick glances exchanged. Jemima had not been long enough at Morcove for them to judge her abilities as a tennis player—or, indeed, as anything else.

She had come as a friend of Ursula Wade's, and she was standing by Ursula, which was quite enough for them.

Betty Barton, as captain of the Fourth, was expected to take the lead in the matter, and she pointedly ignored the smile that Jemima bestowed upon her.

Instead of looking at Jemima, Betty looked at the postcard she had received, and her eyebrows shot up in amazement.

"Hallo, what—what's this?" she demanded.

"Looks like a view of somewhere—of Coventry," said Polly, who could see the picture side of the card.

"It is from Coventry—postmark's Coventry," added Betty Barton. "But who's it from?"

She looked at the postcard, which was addressed in a hand strange to her, and looked at the message it contained:

"Weather nice, although the atmosphere seems a little bit chilly. Still, there is ample hot water for one to get into. We are having a jolly old time—Spartan, perhaps, but there! Cheerio, and all that merry old rot!—Yours from the distant lands.—LITTLE US."

That was the message, and Betty Barton read it aloud. Instinctively, when she had finished, she looked across at Jemima Carstairs, but Jemima was polishing her monocle. Ursula was smiling faintly, but was obviously surprised.

"From Coventry!" exclaimed Polly Linton. "Oh!"

"Dear old Coventry!" sighed Jemima. "Charming spot!"

Betty Barton kept a serious face, and she looked from the card to her friends. Then abruptly she walked into the quadrangle, with Polly Linton and Paula Creel behind, and Madge running to catch them up.

"Well, did you ever?" gasped Betty. "The—the cheek!"

"The nerve!" said Polly Linton, and Polly was half inclined to grin. "Of course, we have sent Ursula and Jemima to Coventry, and it is chilly being in Coventry, and they have got into hot water."

"Yes, wather! I call it quite bwight," admitted Paula. "Pewhaps, Betty, they have been in Coventry long enough. I should wathah like to play a game of tennis with Jemima."

"No, you don't!" said Betty. "We sent Ursula to Coventry. That was the sentence of the Form, and if she's sentenced to silence, sentenced to be cut dead for the rest of the week, that's her own fault."

"Yes, and it was for a good reason," added Madge Minden. "When a girl takes to steaming open other girls' letters, something had to be done."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Polly. "Only—only I

wish Jemima hadn't stood by her. She doesn't seem Ursula's nasty, sneaky, spying sort at all. Yet she stood by her, although she must have known that she was guilty."

Madge Minden looked up.

"I wonder!" she remarked. "For it's rather queer, but the letter I saw Ursula opening was just the colour of the one Jemima received to-day. A queer state of affairs, if the letter she was busy spying into belonged to the only girl who believed she couldn't be capable of such a thing!"

Betty started.

"Gracious, how awful! And if Jemima knew, of course—"

"She wouldn't be in Coventry," added Polly. "I think she ought to be told, really, you know."

She looked at Betty, and then at Madge. But Madge shook her head, and Betty did not seem quite in agreement.

"She may be doing it out of obstinacy, and she can always cut Ursula if she wants to," she said.

Then Betty looked at the card from Coventry, and smiled faintly. How Jemima had managed to get someone in Coventry to send that they did not know, but she had managed it, and more than one girl was smiling that morning.

Jemima herself was looking quite pleased with life, and she stood next to Ursula in the hall, twiddling her racquet.

"The point is, the debate that has come up before the committee, my bright and charming Ursula, is whether to work or to play."

"To work!" said Ursula quickly. "You haven't done any yet, you know."

"What, no work?" exclaimed Jemima.

"No typing," Ursula corrected. "I'll help you, you know."

"Thank you! Your kindness touches me deeply," sighed Jemima. "But ought not Algernon to have a longer holiday?"

"Your typewriter, you mean," said Ursula, with a faint smile. "Oh, I don't know!"

Jemima twiddled her racquet, and then turned on her heel.

"We must be strong," she said weakly. "Lead me to Algernon, Ursula, and we will do a little work. The gov'nor will want that play typed before long, and who is to do it if I fail? I ask you, my dear—I just ask you! It all depends on me. I feel the weight on my shoulders, positively bowing me down. Come!"

Ursula went with the new girl up the stairs, giving her strange glances all the time.

"Aren't you going to read your letter?" she asked, as they entered the study which they shared.

"Letter?" said Jemima, seating herself in the armchair and arranging her frock. "Depends! Is it interesting? What does the gov'nor chat about? How many merry quips and wise saws are there, my loyal friend?"

And the grey eyes smiled upon Ursula, while the parted lips served to distract from the keenness of the eyes.

"How should I know?" demanded Ursula, and a pink flush came into her cheeks.

"Oh sorry! How careless of me!" said Jemima briskly. "Post has just arrived, of course. But you are one for getting things done! Zip, hustle, and finish—what?"

Ursula did not reply. The conversation was not, to her way of thinking, in a pleasant trend at all.

"If you opened the letter, you'd see what it contained," she pointed out. "Shall I get Algernon?"

She did not wait for the reply, but put the

typewriter, which Jemima always called "Alger-non," on to the table, while Jemima lazily watched her.

"Energy, that's what we want to rouse the troops!" said Jemima. "Plenty of zip and things like that, you know. While we old hands sit back in our armchair, with our old bones rattling, you youngsters hop about like birds on a twig. Merry, I call it—all merry and exceedingly bright!"

Ursula took off the cover of the typewriter, and frowned heavily.

"I wish you'd be serious sometimes," she remarked pettishly. "You talk as though you were on the stage all the time, instead of being a schoolgirl. Why can't you talk sensibly?"

"Hereditary," sighed Jemima—"just that. Wasn't born with brains. But you must give me a lesson, my dear Ursula, so that, in the natural course of time, I may be able to pour out those sparkling aphorisms that will one day make the world sit up and rub its eyes!"

"There's no need to be sarcastic!" flashed Ursula sharply. "I hate sarcasm!"

"I never knew," remarked Jemima, "anyone more eager to work than you are."

"I'm trying to help you, Jemima!" said Ursula curtly.

Jemima winced.

"Please," she implored, "call me 'Jimmy,' but not, I prithee, 'Jemima!'"

Ursula sat down at the typewriter, and fiddled about with it impatiently.

"Where is the play?" she asked.

"Play?" said Jemima in surprise.

"Yes, the play!" retorted Ursula. "Don't fool about, Jemima! I may as well tell you that my father asked me to see that you didn't slack. I wouldn't have told you, but I can't get you to work any other way."

Jemima nodded her head, and reset her monocle more to her liking.

"So?" she said.

"Yes!" Ursula rattled on, but it was easy to see that her eyes were furtive and restless, and that she was not telling the truth. "Your father wants you to do this work for him, and he's afraid that you won't do it to time. As our paters are such great friends, mine asked me to keep you up to scratch, you know. So, unless you want to get into trouble with your pater, you'd better look out. He wants this play shortly."

"Forgotten!" yawned Jemima. "Bad memory! Comes of working too hard—a strain on the heart, working like I do. But you read the letter, my dear. You certainly should know."

Ursula looked up.

"I did not!" she said. "You know I didn't! It's all lies that Madge says. I wasn't there; I wasn't steaming open anyone's letter, Jemima. You know that. You stood up for me. Goodness," she added, "you wouldn't get yourself sent to Coventry with me for nothing!"

"No," agreed Jemima, after thought; "there is something in that. And the conclusion, you say, is that you didn't open the letter. Well, I was never very bright at mathematics, you know. Perhaps you're right. Slip me the paper-knife, dear girl, and I will the letter unfold."

She took the paper-knife, and opened the letter. She read it through, and tossed the letter on to the table.

Then, yawning, she arose.

"Let's make it tennis," she suggested. "A healthy body is a healthy mind, Ursula, which means a better mind. By rights, you should be

exercising hard twenty-four hours a day. But let us go!"

Ursula pouted.

"You never want to sit in the study!" she protested. "You're always roaming about. Anyone would think my company wasn't good enough for you. You know our paters want us to be friends."

Jemima, in the doorway, turned.

She reached out suddenly, and took Ursula's limp hand in hers. Very serious Jemima looked, although a keener observer than Ursula might have observed a queer mockery in the eyes.

"Friends we are—united standing and united sitting down," she said seriously and heavily. "'Never the twain shall part,' as Dr. Johnson, or some other johnny, justly remarked."

But she went out of the study, all the same, and wandered down the corridor, leaving Ursula to her thoughts, which were none too pleasant.



PAULA THE MYSTERIOUS. Paula closed the door mysteriously, and put her back to it, while Jemima surveyed her with growing interest. "Hallo!" she exclaimed. "Are you a hounded convict, or just the mysterious visitor?"

"I'm afraid," she muttered, "she suspects. And yet, she's such a complete idiot, she couldn't. But I wish to goodness she'd start copying that plot of her father's! How can I tell daddy all about it if she doesn't?"

And Ursula bit her lip vexatiously. Then, looking towards the closed door, she picked up the letter that Jemima had thrown down, half hesitating as she did so.

The blue notepaper recalled the previous letter of Jemima's—a letter which she had thought she could steam open so carefully, read, and then reseal.

All would have been well, she recollected, had not Madge Minden seen her. Even then, luckily, Madge had not known whose letter it was. And only Jemima, of all the Form, had refused to believe it

of her—Jemima, the one girl whose faith and trust she wanted—wanted most urgently, the better to betray her.

Now she feasted her eyes upon the letter.

Captain Carstairs was a brilliant playwright, the playwright of the day, and Jemima was his confidential secretary.

The playwright's neat, graceful handwriting filled the page, and Ursula read it quickly.

"My great friend, Wade, is helping me," she read, "and his help I value more than any man's, not so much for the actual assistance he is able to give, but more because he is so loyal a friend to me.

"I am sure, my dear Jemima, that you have found his daughter an equally reliable friend. She must be a fine girl by all accounts. Wade thinks highly of her, and he is a shrewd man, able to choose his friends with discretion, and willing to stand by them to the bitter end. I would trust him with my life, Jemima. He is incapable of a mean action, and I want you to be loyal to his daughter. I am sure you will do this for me—stand by his daughter in any difficulty or danger, as I am sure he would stand by me, as he has stood by me in the past. She has enemies in the school—jealous girls, I hear, who might, in spite, poison your mind against her. But do not listen to scandal. Heed only your own instincts and the knowledge I can give you of the father. She is the daughter of a man. Now, as to the play, I require that typed, as you know, and please do not let it stray about, as there is someone, Wade says, who would like to get an advance copy of it. There is no actual hurry, and I would like your opinion of it."

A few more lines, and then the signature. Then—

Then Ursula's hand which held the letter quivered like a leaf in the wind, and the letter slipped from her fingers, as a scarlet flush came into her cheeks.

For, on the last page, in a girlish hand, had been hastily scrawled in pencil:

"Curiosity killed the merry old pussy-cat! Verb. sap!"

Paula's Peace Effort.

PAULA CREELE looked very thoughtful indeed, and moreover, she looked worried. Paula's aristocratic brow seldom wore a frown, for Paula's was a restful disposition, and her attitude at the moment was every bit as restful as her disposition.

Paula was very fond of the armchair in Study No. 12, and she lounged in it now, blinking into the fire very thoughtfully indeed. Yet she was worried.

"Pewwaps," she murmured to herself. "I weally ought to. But pewwaps, on the other hand, I ought not."

Usually, when she was confronted by some problem, Paula did the easiest thing, and handed over the solution of it to Betty. It saved Paula any amount of worry, and in the long run it was probably the most advisable course.

At present she was not inclined to confide in Betty Barton. Betty had been in and out of the study, and so had Polly, but of her worry, or the cause of it, Paula had said nothing at all.

That in itself was strange, but it was stranger still when Paula roused herself from her armchair, and, with an air of great determination, stood in

front of the fireplace and shook her dress. That Paula should rouse herself when there was no apparent reason was remarkable; but, then, Paula was behaving queerly indeed.

She brushed some specks of dust from her dress, arranged her hair to her liking, and then strode to the door.

To the right and left she looked down the corridor, which was deserted. Betty and Polly were in Madge Minder's study, chatting, and most of the girls were busy with their preparation.

On tiptoe, in a most mysterious manner, Paula went down the corridor, to halt when she had reached the door of the study which Ursula Wade shared with Jemima Carstairs.

Then Paula looked guiltily up the corridor and guiltily down. Next she tapped slightly on the panel of the door.

Ursula Wade, she knew, was not in the study, for she had heard Ursula tell Jemima on the staircase some minutes before that she had to go down to the village post-office on a commission for a monitress.

Jemima was therefore alone, and it was Jemima whom Paula wanted to see.

When Jemima called out, the aristocrat of the Fourth turned the door-knob and peeped into the study, looking very ill-at-ease and uncertain, but smiling in her charming way.

There, however, Paula hesitated, for Jemima sat at the table, with a small portable typewriter before her, and the table littered with papers of all sorts. There was a neat wad of closely-written paper, bound between thick brown-paper sheets, and there was typing paper in any amount.

Jemima was looking somewhat harassed, and she affixed her monocle and eyed Paula.

"Cheerio!" said Paula. "Just looked in on you—"

"Ah," said Jemima, "so I see. Jolly nice of you, I must say!"

"Ahem!"

Paula looked over her shoulder into the dusky corridor, then closed the door quietly; and put her back to it, while Jemima surveyed her with growing interest.

"Fearful monsters after you?" she asked sympathetically. "Are you the hounded convict in Act III., or just the mysterious visitor in Act I.?"

"Bai Jove," murmured Paula, "I—ahem!—er—just—er—dropped in, you know—haw—haw—"

"Haw—haw," agreed Jemima amicably. "Just so. Frightfully charming of you. And how do you like Coventry?" she asked, waving her hand round the small study in an all-embracing view. "Too dark to see the stars, though if you wait a few hours you may be able to stand on the bridge at midnight, as did Mr. Tennyson—or was it Lord Wordsworth?"

"I wathah fancy it was Longfellow," said Paula, slightly puzzled. "But I fail to see the connection, deah geal."

Jemima smiled.

"I didn't think you would," she said. "But make yourself at home! No one shall say that Coventry isn't hospitable. Plenty of chairs, you know! How's everything looking at Moreove, what? Everyone still nipping along? Sweet dress you're wearing," she added.

"Oh, my dwess—yes, there," flushed Paula, for it was a pretty dress into which she had changed to make the evening time more pleasant for herself. It was a little habit of Paula's to slip into a pretty dress when she could.

"Come to show it to me?" asked Jemima. "I like it immensely. Hardly Spartan, of course, but

quite all right. One must be business-like, really. What is life but the jolly old slog, hour in, hour out?"

"Yes, wathah. As a mattah of fact," explained Paula hurriedly, feeling that if she did not say something soon the opportunity would be lost. "I'm an ambassador, deah geal."

Jemima nodded her head, as though that made everything perfectly clear.

"Oh, well, that explains it," she said. "That clears it all up. If you'd said that at first, now! Well, well! Fancy your being an ambassador! Frightfully exciting, what?"

"I mean," said Paula, "I have come with—ah—an—that is, a mission."

"Oh, I see! Haven't just dropped from the clouds," smiled Jemima. "Must be cheery business dropping from the clouds. So airy, what? So you've come with a mission. Sort of missionary work, reforming the heathen, plucking brands from the burning, what? Well, pluck away!"

Paula shifted uncomfortably in the chair she had taken, and went rather red.

"Pway don't think I have come to pweach, deah geal," she said. "It isn't that at all. I have come to clear up a lot of misunderstanding, you know. It is wathah a delicate task; that's why I didn't say anything to the othahs. It needs a great deal of diplomacy, you know, and tact, and, you know, deah geal—"

"Oh, I know!" said Jemima readily. "All the usual old stuff—tact, judgment, diplomacy! Well, well, rip on! Let's hear the dear old worst, so that we can breathe again."

Paula blinked slightly and stroked her chin.

"Pway don't think, deah geal, that ewevyone is thinking ill of you. As a mattah of fact, I wathah like you."

Jemima leaned back in her chair, and her grey eyes simply danced with merriment, although the monocle prevented the gleam of the right eye from being seen, and the mouth was so steady that Paula thought her perfectly serious.

"Now, that is what I call really kind," sighed Jemima. "I say, how do you like my shoes?" She pushed out a dainty foot. "Hard out, of course, for one must have clean cuts these days."

"Weally, bai Jove," said Paula faintly. "G-good gwacious, deah geal, I think they are vewy nice shoes. But I didn't come to say that weally. I came to—well, I wondah if you quite appreciate the situation? I feah you have made a vewy gwreat mistake. It is vewy loyal of you to stand by Ursula, but you don't know her as we do."

Jemima's eyes narrowed rather, and she nodded her head somewhat curtly.

"Say on," she urged. "Do tell me about Ursula. You don't like my little friend, despite her pretty, winning ways. Don't you like her hair?"

"Yes, her hair's all wight," said Paula, rather puzzled. "But I wasn't thinking of that. As you are a new girl, you will have to find your level, and it depends a good deal on the friends one makes. We would like to be friends, of course, and we don't like having to send you to Coventry."

"You didn't. I sent myself," pointed out Jemima. "One must stand by a friend, of course. Where would the world go if one didn't, I mean?"

Paula's eyes opened.

"Yes, deah geal. But Ursula, you know—as a friend, I mean," she added haltingly. "Pway don't think I've come to wun her down behind her back!"

"The very idea!" exclaimed Jemima. "Why,

you've said nothing but in her favour! You've just chatted away brightly all the same, praising her up, and so on, and not to mention, of course, so forth."

Paula pushed back a stray wisp of hair and frowned.

"But I haven't come to pwise her," she protested.

"Don't say you have come to bury her," remonstrated Jemima flippantly. "Tut, tut, no! I come to bury Cæsar, not to daze him, as Shakespeare very cleverly wrote. I'm glad you like my friend Ursula. It's awfully nice of you."

"But—but I don't," said Paula, in distress. "I weally dislike her. Eweryone does. One cannot like a cheat or a spy!" she said warmly. "It isn't done, you know. I am suah you would not approve of her if you knew."

Jemima sighed and leaned back well into her chair. Then she dived her hands into the pockets of her blue coat.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that Ursula is a friend of mine. Pathetic, isn't it? But there it is. Can't hear anything against her—sorry! Love me, love my dog, you know—I mean my friend!"

There was no note of flippancy in her tone now, and Paula looked at her in considerable astonishment. She marvelled that a girl with that gracefully-shaped oval face and well-cut features could possibly have anything in common with mean-faced Ursula Wade. She wondered that those grey eyes, apparently so keen, could not pierce the rather obvious camouflage of Ursula's sly nafare.

"But weally," she repeated feebly, "you will cut yourself adwift from the Form, deah geal! It is either Ursula or the Form, you know, and most of us would weally like to be friends. Of course," she added hastily, "no one knows I've come. It's just a friendsly cause. I am giving you the benefit of my expewience, deah geal, and I hope you will be pweared to accept advice."

"Of course," said Jemima. "If I can't make any good use of it myself, I'll pass it on willingly. Keeps things down, doesn't it? So nice of you to look in, though. I really do appreciate it. Any time you like a merry chat, just call in, won't you?"

And she shuffled the papers again.

Paula, not feeling that the interview had been quite a success, rose to her feet.

"I hope you aren't offended, deah geal."

"Offended!" smiled Jemima. "Why ever should I be? I'm delighted. I've made my bed, as the prophets say, and so I must toss about sleeplessly on it, and wish it weren't so lumpy. I'd prefer something a little downier, shall we say? But a stiff upper lip, what? For it's the grit that wins through."

"Yes, wathah! However, I wathah fancy—"

Jemima clicked the keys of her typewriter in business-like manner, and Paula went to the door, hesitated, smiled wanly, and departed with just a charming smile and wave of her hand from Jemima to speed her on the way.

But Jemima's smile vanished as the door closed, and her hands dropped from the machine.

"I'm a prize ass—that's what I am," she told herself. "Just the complete merry duffer from the moment the band started playing. Oh, dear, these gu'nors!"

And she spoiled a wave in her hair by running her fingers through it just before she made a Spartan-like decision to click the keys and really get to work.

Then for a while the monocle hung unheeded from the end of the cord, and the grey eyes were



THE EARLY BIRD! "What's the idea of your rousing me at this time?" demanded Ursula. "There's another half-hour to rising time yet." "I've got up to work," answered Jemima. "Aren't you going to help me?"

perfectly serious as the slim fingers hurried over the keys, rattling off the words at an astonishing pace, pausing only to look at the manuscript or to turn up a fresh line.

For once the poser was not posing, but the Fourth Form could not see her then; and even Ursula, who returned to the study a little later, was not given a chance, for no sooner did her footsteps sound in the corridor than the manuscript was whisked out of sight, and a fresh blank sheet placed in the machine.

"Busy?" said Ursula, her small, restless eyes searching the table.

"Thinking," sighed Jemima. "And I have reached the astounding conclusion that it is feeble to do to-day what can conveniently be put off until to-morrow. So au revoir, Algernon, my child."

Slam went the cover on the machine, and into his corner went "Algernon," leaving his mistress to yawn in bored manner, and to listen to Ursula's entreaty to work while there was time.

"You simply must!" Ursula urged in exasperation. "I never did know anyone so lazy as you, Jemima—never! If only you'd wake up some-times—if only—Why—"

Ursula stepped forward, touched the new girl on the shoulder, and then drew back, biting her lip with annoyance.

Jemima had fallen asleep!

Trying to Reform the Sneak.

"A EISE! Arise!"

Ursula Wade shifted in bed and blinked open her eyes. It was not yet daylight, and for all that she knew to the contrary it might be only a little past midnight.

But there was a dim figure in the darkness beside her and a soft voice was addressing her.

"Who—who is it?" she asked, hardly awake.

"Your fairy godmother," said the soft voice. "If you happen to have a pumpkin, or something jolly like that about you, I'll raise a carriage-and-pair in no time!"

"Jemima!" said Ursula, in surprise.

"Please," implored the voice, "how often must I repeat—Jimmy!"

"Well, Jimmy!" said Ursula shortly. "What's the idea of your rousing me at this time?" She looked at her watch. "There's another half-hour to rising-time yet!"

"Twenty-nine minutes and two-thirds, to be really accurate," said Jemima. "A most horrid, sticky morning, too! Cold as anything, it is. I positively hated getting out of bed. No hot water, no slippers nicely warmed by a loving nurse. Really, what are schools coming to? I positively shall have to become a second Dickens, and show things up!"

Ursula sat up in bed and shivered.

"I wish you wouldn't stand there talking nonsense!" she exclaimed peevishly. "You haven't got up, surely, just to say all that rubbish?"

Jemima smiled.

"No. I've got up to work. Always rise with the lark if you want to work, you know. Best time there is, really. Guv'nor says it's burning the candle at both ends. But I tried it years ago, and it's impossible. The bottom end simply won't keep alight. Of course, one can hold the silly thing sideways. But I mean, who would? What would there be left in life if one carried one's candles sideways along the corridors, what?"

Ursula snuggled down sulkily in her bed.

"Not going to help me work?" asked Jemima. "Please yourself!"

Then Ursula sat up as Jemima started to walk away.

"Wait a minute!" she said shortly. "I'll get up. But I can't see why you couldn't have worked last night, or why not some other time."

"My temperament," smiled Jemima. "The artistic temperament, you know."

Ursula, shivering, got out of bed in no pleasant temper, and sleepily dressed herself in haste. A very hurried, slovenly wash she had, while Jemima watched.

"The merry old cat's lick?" said Jemima affably. "Well, each to his taste, you know. I broke the ice this morning, but then I'm hard nuts all through. Come of Spartan army stock."

But for all that amusement there was contempt, and Ursula noticed it.

"I'm not going to freeze myself!" she grumbled. "I can wash later. I'm ready."

And Jemima led the way across the dormitory, stumbling once, and finding her balance by resting her hand on the face of some sleeper; but she scurried away, and Ursula, still grumbling, followed her down the stairs.

It was still dark when they reached the Fourth Form corridor, and in their study were the ashes of the previous night's fire.

Anything, but a cheery little room it seemed then, and Jemima herself halted, somewhat depressed.

"Have a heart," she urged. "Now to work—"

Ursula picked up the typewriter and put it on the table. She was "up" now, and it was the "getting up" that was the greatest part of the ordeal. At last she would be able to see something of the play which her friend had kept so carefully

hidden away, and the price of getting up early was a small one to pay.

The strange thing was that she should have been called to help.

"Typewriter?" said Jemima, raising her brows as Ursula poised the machine over the table. "Shall we need it?"

Ursula put the machine down.

"Well, I suppose so," she said sarcastically, for her temper had not yet reached the full. "You're not going to transcribe by hand?"

"Why not?" said Jemima. "It isn't a French typewriter, and typing French is really too awfully much like work."

She took a French grammar from the shelf, and followed it with a primer. They went on the table, and Ursula Wade simply gaped at them.

"What are they for?" she demanded, and she had an uneasy, angry feeling that she was being tricked.

"Work," said Jemima laconically, and affixed her monocle, which had slipped to the end of the ribbon. "Work, my dear. I'm going to save you the perfectly awful fag of having to look into that bright little book you keep in your desk."

Ursula's feelings were almost too deep for the mere expression of words.

"You—you've brought me down to watch you swot French!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, no; so that you may swot," said Jemima. "I shall direct operations. My powerful brain will supervise while you work. I shall pace the room like a lion—stamp, stamp!—that sort of thing! And you'll be learning French, so that when you get to the Form-room mademoiselle will think that she is back in Paris."

Ursula stared.

"You will become the shining light of the Form," said Jemima enthusiastically. "Girls will be hushed in wonderment; girls will gather in groups and point you out to one another. 'Look,' they will say, 'there goes Ursula Wade, the girl who speaks French as though born to it!'"

"You—you dummy!" said Ursula, exasperated beyond endurance, and her face went deathly pale. "You dragged me out of bed for this tomfoolery!"

"Oh, not tomfoolery!" retorted Jemima. "This is going to be the beginning of a great career, my dear Ursula! I shall not say that it was I who laid the foundation. I shall sink back into oblivion while you will march on, nothing standing in your way, and win prize after prize after prize! Taking all the jolly old cups and medals. Purloining, as it might perhaps be, the fairy from the Christmas-tree!"

"You perfect imbecile!" stormed Ursula, and she stamped her foot in fury. "I thought you meant me to help you with the play, and you've brought me on a wild-goose chase!"

Jemima sat in the chair.

"Now, get to work!" she said soothingly. "If you need assistance, I am here to give it to you. But I want to see you become the most popular girl in the Form, and I'm ready to help you all I can. All the good advice I am given I will hand on to you, untouched and unsullied—not in any part used. And you, Ursula, will become so popular that girls will even speak to you! Think of that!"

Ursula bit her lip and clenched her hands hard. She wanted to rave with temper, but she knew that it would not pay in the long run. A short-sighted policy it would be to quarrel with Jemima, and she thought of her father's inevitable anger should such a thing happen.

"All right," she said sullenly, with surprising change of front. "I'll swot French, though goodness knows what it can possibly matter!"

"Merely saving you trouble. A swot in time saves lines," remarked Jemima.

"Oh, dry up!" retorted Ursula sulkily. "I suppose I may as well swot now I'm up. But I shan't do it again. If this is your idea of a joke—"

"It isn't. I'm in dead earnest. Really fiery, and all that sort of thing," said Jemima sadly. "Now, get down to it, my dear, and don't mutter aloud, because I shall probably doze off. I've lost an hour of beauty sleep which I can really ill afford."

Jemima settled herself comfortably in the chair and yawned, while Ursula scowled at the book before her. She did not intend to read a line that was printed there, and every now and then she cast a look of hatred at Jemima, only to get in return a benign and friendly glance.

"Just think—no opening the desk inch by inch and peering in," went on Jemima. "No fearful labour like that. Just a question of jabbing the pen in the ink and scrawling away!"

It was not a thought that cheered Ursula Wade, and her heart was black with hatred.

"You may think it funny, but I don't!" she said. "I can't understand you, Jemima. I don't pretend I can."

"Don't bother," yawned Jemima sleepily. "Life's much too short. We'll play a rousing game of tennis later. We'll lead the open-air, manly life for a while, my very dear Ursula, and we'll hook about at hockey—if that is the correct expression. We'll reform. We'll resign from the Imperial Society of International Cheats and Paul Prys."

Ursula's teeth were clenched hard, and it was



GENTLE SARCASM! "What's wrong with our company?" demanded Grace Garfield. "Well, I get horribly hoarse if I talk for a long time," answered Jemima. "Suppose I write it all down and let you have the first volume shortly?"

well that she did not raise her eyes from the book. They would not have been pleasant to see.

"Side by side," murmured Jemima sleepily, "hand in hand, we shall go through life together, my very sweet, beloved Ursula, through thick and thin, and that kind of rot."

"Oh, do be quiet!" snapped Ursula. "How can I possibly read with you babbling away?"

So Jemima kept quiet, and improved what she called the "shining hour" by reading a Latin grammar with apparently an air of absorption.

But her mind was not on the subject of Latin at all. She was thinking of Ursula Wade, and wondering what she could make of her; wondering, with faint hope, if a leopard could change its spots; if one could pluck a brand from the burning without getting burnt oneself.

She doubted it—doubted it most sincerely; and there was excellent reason for her doubt. Ursula Wade was a very tough nut to crack!

Cora Has an Idea.

URSULA WADE was the first to leave the breakfast-table that morning, and she was the first girl into lessons. It was French first lesson, and mademoiselle had already taken her place at the desk.

Ursula said "Good morning," and then went straight to the desk that Jemima would shortly occupy.

When she was quite sure that the French mistress's attention was directed elsewhere, she opened the lid of Jemima's desk and extracted therefrom the French crib—a crib that gave the translation of the very work upon which they were engaged. Ursula often went raking in the second-hand bookshops in Barncombe Town to pick up such treasures, and this crib had stood her in excellent stead, although it did nothing to prevent her, on occasion, from making the most appalling howlers.

That book was in Jemima's desk, and whilst it remained there it could not possibly serve Ursula any useful purpose.

In a second, however she had captured it, and was just putting it into her own desk when someone else entered the Form-room.

"Jolly morning," observed a pleasant voice to the French mistress. "Ce matin va—er—bien, n'est pas?"

"Ah, oui," said the French mistress, looking up.

"Makes one feel all nippy, what?" continued Jemima, glancing quickly at Ursula, whose face wore a look of unmistakable shiftness and guilt.

"Nippy! Qu'est-ce que c'est?" demanded the French mistress, startled. "Nippy! I know not nippy."

"Skippy," explained Jemima kindly. "All of a jump and skips, you know. Quite like spring. Voilà!" And she did a sort of Highland fling. "Bit like that, you know. Fire in the jolly old veins, all sparkling and tingling!"

"So!" said the French mistress, still more surprised. "Indeed?"

"Verily in faith, and likewise just so," nodded Jemima. "But I perceive a friend of my bosom; the much-beloved and shortly to become popular Ursula is the early bird, preparing to catch the verbs, what?"

And Jemima, with a kindly smile at her French mistress, strolled across and sat at her own desk beside Ursula.

"And what has the child been doing?" she asked chattily.

She opened her desk, surveyed it, and smiled.

"I'll trouble you for the crib," she said. "One

must be stern. One has, you know, to be exceedingly cruel in order that one may be kind, what?"

"Crib? What crib?" asked Ursula.

Betty Barton and Polly entered the door at that moment, so Jemima said nothing at all, but she smiled sadly at Ursula and shook her head.

"You had better be thankful that you have a firm hand to guide your faltering little steps," she said. "I'm going to prevent your getting into the soup. Never forget that the hand that holds the ladle rules the list."

Ursula did not listen; she turned impatiently to survey Cora Grandways, who passed her by. Cora, she knew, would for two pins have done precisely what she had done. Cora cheated, and Cora, when it served her particular purpose, would not have minded peering into correspondence intended for the eyes of others.

But Ursula was in Coventry, and Cora, according to programme, ignored her entirely—if giving a triumphant, mocking glance meant ignoring.

Ursula, looking at Cora, did not notice that Jemima opened her desk, gently leaning forward at a moment when the French mistress was engaged in conversation with Trixie Hope.

Every member of the Fourth was in the room now, and there was a faint buzz of talk and hurried whispering.

Quite easily, therefore, Jemima managed to prise up the lid of Ursula's desk, put her hand inside, and take out the crib.

It was the only way of removing temptation, and, considering that Ursula had spent over an hour with a French grammar and primer that morning, she should have been able to dispense with the crib.

The very worst of ill luck was therefore that Trixie Hope's conversation with the French mistress finished at the precise moment that Ursula Wade, hearing the faint tap of her desk lid, wheeled upon Jemima.

Angrily and fiercely Ursula clutched at the book, and it fell to the floor.

Very quickly Jemima picked up the book and slipped it into her desk.

But too late!

Almost every eye in the Form was upon her, and the French mistress was surveying her crossly.

"You, girl—you, Jemima, will bring me here the book!" she said.

"Book?" murmured Jemima.

"Yes, zat book! It was a reading-book—a book to read when you should be at ze work. A novel, peutetre?"

"A French book, mademoiselle," smiled Jemima.

There was a hush in the Form then, and a peculiar tension. Ursula looked blankly at her desk save when, for a fleeting moment, she cast a dark look of hatred at Jemima.

It was Jemima's fault, this, she reasoned, and now there would be trouble.

Unless—unless Jemima could get out of the mess in some way. And there really was no telling quite what Jemima could or could not do when pressed.

"It ees a French book, oui?" said mademoiselle. "Bring it here at once!"

Jemima sadly opened her desk. There was a splendid array of books there, and she could have chosen any one of them. But she did not for a moment hesitate. She took the crib and marched out with it.

"Voilà!" she smiled.

Mademoiselle took it, amidst a perfect gasp. She looked at it, and her lips tightened.

"So!" she exclaimed. "A very nice book to 'ave!"

"Oh, quite!" smiled Jemima. "Shows strength of mind worth to keep in one's desk, you know. Strong temptation—magnificent effort of will, and all that tosh. Every day and in every way I get stronger and stronger. You got the idea?"

"Ze idea to cheat—yes!" said mademoiselle, with asperity. "You hold ze tongue, mon enfant! Zis is a serious maittaire! Ver' serious!"

Jemima thought it was, too; she was convinced it was. Ursula, leaning back in her seat, breathed again.

"You were going to use this?" asked the mistress, waving the book.

Jemima shook her head sadly.

"Oh, no! I couldn't," she said. "Foolish of me, perhaps. But I just couldn't!"

"You not tell me ze truth!"

Jemima looked really pained.

"Now that, I protest, is unfair," she pleaded. "What I have said happens to be the truth."

"Zen why have you zis book?"

"To keep away temptation," smiled Jemima. "I admit it sounds just a little bit thin when you say it yourself over and over again. But, then, words do sound silly. Take 'judge,' for instance. Just say that to yourself twenty times—"

"I will not say eet twenty times!" shrieked the French mistress, in such anger that no one dared smile. "You go to mock me—to make ze fun! You will go-wiz ze note to Miss Somerfield—at once!"

The French mistress hastily wrote a short note, and more than one girl looked at Ursula Wade. It was Ursula's book, as they all knew, and Ursula might at least own up to it.

But Ursula was not likely to own up, and Jemima did not even look at her.

"Ze note," said mademoiselle. "I 'ave remem-ber it so you do not tear it up!"

"My dear mademoiselle," rebuked Jemima, "really I must protest at this most unbecoming suspicion!"

Mademoiselle, however, merely pointed to the door, and Jemima went.

She was gone some minutes, and when she returned she did not look half so unconcerned, although she wore a charming smile. Her eyes seemed more grey than usual, and they were exceedingly troubled.

Back to her place she went and sat down, without a glance at anyone.

Mademoiselle did not give her a look, and not once during the lesson did she address one word to the girl. She ignored her completely.

Thus the lesson continued until the mistress clapped her book with finality, and left the Form to themselves until Miss Massingham appeared to take charge.

That interval was just what the Form needed. A babble of talk there was at once, while Jemima looked at her desk.

"What happened?" asked Ursula.

"Happened?" said Jemima. "Oh, about that book! Just a little chat we had. Miss Somerfield exceeded the bounds of a friendly chat somewhat. She seemed what one might call annoyed. At times she came near to being offensive."

She yawned.

That Miss Somerfield had said some cutting things, that she had spoken in contempt, they all knew; and they all knew, too, that Jemima was hurt, and smarting under the lecture.

"Well, you're a duffer!" said Polly Linton sharply. "Why didn't you let Ursula own up?"

"I saw she was itching to," said Jemima, with a whimsical smile. "I noticed her straining, as it were, at the leash, held back by the strong bond of friendship."

"Well, it was your own silly fault!" flushed Ursula. "You could have taken her another book! You could have told her an untruth, couldn't you?"

Jemima shook her head.

"Silly of me," she admitted. "To my shame, I could not. Don't blame me. It's merely my ancestry, you know. Heredity is powerful. Most unmodern and foolish, but there it is. I blush for shame. You must give me lessons. First steps in Feeble Fibs, or something like that," she suggested playfully.

"Oh, you're too silly to live!" said Ursula.

Jemima shrugged her shoulders.

"Your gratitude overwhelms and embarrasses me," she said quietly, and there was a faint titter from the girls.

"That's right—sneer at me!" said Ursula sulkily. "If you had left the book alone, all would have been well."

Then Betty Barton broke in.

"I think," said Betty deliberately, "that you're the most hateful girl I know, Ursula, and I'm glad we sent you to Coventry! Jemima saved you. She knew that the book was seen, and she could have left it with you."

"Yes, and I'd have handled things better!" retorted Ursula.

"Yes, by lying!" returned Betty, with a contemptuous curl of the lip. "Jemima is a duffer to take the blame, but perhaps now she'll realise the sort of girl you are. It's taken a long time to open her eyes."

Jemima turned and smiled at Betty.

"Thank you," she said sweetly. "But I quite sympathise with my friend Ursula. Not having the disadvantages of a long line of stupidly honest ancestors, she naturally does not sympathise with my weaknesses."

"My goodness!" said Polly, in surprise and disgust. "You mean you approve of her sneaking, lying ways? You mean you'd like to have the nerve to do the same?"

Jemima adjusted her monocle, and looked in the direction of Polly Linton.

"What a deep insight into my nature!" she said admiringly. "What a penetrating intuition you have! And you are so bright with it—so, shall we say, chippy!"

"Well, do you?" asked Polly doggedly, going rather red. "That's what we want to know. We may as well learn here and now how we stand with you, Jemima—"

"Jimmy, please!"

"Well, Jimmy," said Polly, trying not to grin.

"I'm standing by Ursula," said Jemima. "And from past experience there is plenty of standing room for those who want it. For sheer loyalty and unswerving affection, give me the dear old Ursula thing ever time. She may not be quite honest—nor perhaps the soul and spirit, shall we say, of honour. But you can't have everything, can you?"

Betty Barton frowned at Polly, who was framing a retort, and Betty brought the uncomfortable talk to a quick conclusion.

"Very well, Jemima," she said. "Our ways divide, that's all. There are some things one can't condone, and Ursula's one of them. If you can tolerate her, there must be something—well, queer about you."

"There is!" agreed Jemima. "I've notice it myself, my dear Betty."

Betty looked at the oval, well-shaped face, at the wonderful hair and the queer grey eyes.

"I can't make you out at all," she confessed. "But you've got to learn your lesson. It's Ursula or us!"

"Ursula," sighed Jemima, without hesitation. "I always was what you might call a connoisseur, you know."

Betty nodded her head abruptly, and Cora Grandways sniggered and looked at Jemima admiringly. A girl who could tell Betty off—a girl who could go against the captain of the Form—was just the sort of girl with whom Cora felt she could be friends.

Miss Massingham came in a moment later, so talk ceased. But Cora Grandways whispered to Grace Garfield, and Grace Garfield whispered to Ella Ellgood, and they nodded their heads.

Some mystery was to the fore there, some scheming, and when lessons ended these girls remained behind.

"Well," said Cora Grandways when the door closed upon the last of the others to leave, "what do you think? Shall we break the spell?"

Cora was smiling, and her eyes gleamed mischievously.

"Rather fun to," admitted Grace Garfield. "I don't see why Betty Barton should queen it so! There are three of us here, and Jemima and Ursula would make five. They can't very well send five of us to Coventry, and, any way, they seldom exchange a word with us."

"We don't want their words," said Cora Grandways, with a shrug. "We can start a set of our own, a little clique, and it strikes me Jemima will be a useful girl to know. She's got resource, and she's deep."

"Very deep," agreed Grace Garfield. "No doubt about that."

"Right!" said Cora, making her decision. "We may as well strike while the iron is hot. We'll just ignore what Betty and her friends say. They're only a set of prigs, and we'll make a really smart set, with Jemima as leader. She's the sort of girl I like."

Cora Grandways, well pleased with herself, swaggered out of the Form-room, with her cronies in tow. Cora looked upon herself as someone to be admired. She had money, and she had no scruples, and she dearly wanted an ally of her own type. Grace Garfield was too sullen, Ella Ellgood too weak, while Ursula was merely a hanger-on.

Confidently, then, Cora went along to the Fourth Form corridor, giving Betty an insolent nod in passing.

In full view of several groups of girls, she went to Jemima's study, tapped on the door and entered with her friends.

Jemima was sitting on the window-sill, staring out, frowning, and Ursula was sitting sulkily in the armchair.

"Hallo!" said Cora.

"Cheer!" said Grace Garfield, while Ella contented herself with a smile.

Ursula looked up in amazement, while Jemima wheeled from the window.

"What ho!" said Jemima. "I thought I felt a draught."

"Just us," explained Cora, and she perched herself on the edge of the table. Cora believed in getting to the root of things at once, and she tossed back her dark hair and looked straight at Jemima.

"We've come with a suggestion," she said. "We all noticed how you ticked off Queen Betty, and I liked it."

"Thank you," said Jemima wonderingly. "How nice of you to come and say that!"

"Well, we didn't come just for that," Cora laughed. "We came just to say that we're with you. This silly Coventry is ended as far as we're concerned. We want you to join our little clique, and we'll get on splendidly together. You won't find us prigs like Betty."

"Rather not," said Grace.

"We don't mind a harmless lie now and again, either," added Cora, with a smile.

"No?" asked Jemima. "That's the spirit, of course. Roll out the merry lies! I take it you do not love Betty?"

"Love her! Great goodness!"

They exchanged glances, and laughed at the very idea.

"We hate her," said Cora simply. "And we can make a fine clique, and spoil things for her completely. We'll make ourselves nuisances to her. We can have little smoking parties, perhaps, and possibly creep out to a dance or two. It would be splendid fun! What do you say?"

Jemima put her hand behind her head and yawned.

"I'm not fond of smoking," she said. "One must be tough, and work, you know. Myself, I like dancing all right, but I'm afraid of the dark, for one thing. Besides, it would be breaking rules, which is horrible."

Cora Grandways looked at her dazedly.

"Of course, you're joking?"

"I—joking?" said Jemima. "I never joke! Too strenuous a life for me, you know. Possibly I might creep out to a dance in congenial company, but—and one must be candid—I'm afraid I should not find your company exceedingly bright. Not scintillating and sparkling, you know. I want someone gay and merry, like Ursula, with me all the time."

"What's wrong with our company?" demanded Grace Garfield sullenly.

"Well, it's nearly dinner-time," pointed out Jemima. "And if I talk for a long time I get so horribly hoarse. However, I may write it down for you, and let you have the first volume shortly. Also, I don't like your faces!"

"What?"

"Sorry to be candid," smiled Jemima. "But the governor is a nat for candour, and that sort of nonsense. I don't say you can help your faces, but there you are! I'd have to look at them, or wear smoked glasses, which don't suit me."

"Are you fooling?" said Cora dangerously.

"Deadly serious," smiled Jemima. "You are much too advanced for me. You'd find me stale and stodgy, and all sorts of things. Just skip along and make nuisances of yourselves without me. I don't mind smiling at you now and then, and giving the chcery word—"

"You idiot!" burst out Cora. "We don't want you, you stuck-up dummy! You're just a mass of affectation and conceit!"

"That's why you wanted me with you?" asked Jemima. "Doesn't seem or sound reasonable to me!"

"Oh, go your own way!" snapped Cora, and she swung to the door, her face scarlet and an unpleasant feeling inside.

Hurriedly Grace and Ella effaced themselves from Jemima's sight, leaving that girl smiling queerly and regarded in stupefaction by Ursula.

Outside, Grace and Cora paused.

"She's mad!" said Cora.

"Quite mad!"

"I hate her!" said Ella Ellgood. "Nasty, un-

pleasant thing! Let her keep in Coventry if she wants to, although what she sees in Ursula—"

"Oh, well, birds of a feather!" said Cora, and they left it at that.

Meanwhile, Jemima looked at Ursula.

"What a millstone you are!" she observed thoughtfully.

"Oh!" said Ursula.

"Yes. Can't be helped, though!" sighed Jemima. "I only hope I shall keep your valued friendship long enough—"

"For what?"

"To learn to love you, dear thing," said Jemima sweetly.

But it was not what she meant, and she left Ursula wondering and puzzling.

"Long enough to find out what particular shady game you have on board, and what particular part in it your precious father plays," she thought to herself. "The gov'nor is too loyal to kick; any-one could take him in, and this is where Jemima uses her wits to save the family! End of Act I.

Polly swung round, and gave a withering glance at Jemima. The girl absolutely refused to be sent to Coventry. Any other girl would not even have dared to enter the Common-room, knowing that others were there, much less venture a remark.

So, instead of speaking, Polly merely shrugged her shoulders and moved out of the way.

"Thanks 'ever so much!" beamed Jemima.

"Your old-fashioned courtesy is so charming! It is so rare nowadays that one comes across the dear old spirit of courtesy. But, then, times have changed, have they not? We are too jolly old Spartans nowadays. I often wonder if the dear old Spartans had much time for courtesy. What do you think?"

Whatever Polly thought she kept to herself. She even walked away in the middle of Jemima's remarks. But that did not worry Jemima.

She took her time over picking the books she required, and then, with two or three books under her arm, she turned and made for the door.



SHE CHOSE THE SNEAK! "I can't make you out!" said Betty. "But you've got to make your choice. It's Ursula or the rest of the Form." "Then it shall be Ursula," answered Jemima, without hesitating.

now! Act II., opening daddy's eyes. Ah, me! What a life!"

And Jemima leaned back her head against the window and closed her eyes sleepily, glad in-lead that Act I. had ended no worse than it had.

But she could not truthfully say that she was pleased with the way things had turned out. It hurt her pride to see how the other girls of the Form avoided her when, later on, she left the study and walked down to the Common-room.

There was a library in the Common-room, and Jemima had come to the conclusion that she might as well put in the rest of the evening with a book, seeing that there was none but Ursula to talk to her, and Ursula was the last person on earth to whom she wanted to talk just then!

Polly Linton was by the big bookcase as Jemima went up to it.

"Seuse me, dear girl!" said Jemima affably. "I must improve my jolly old mind, you know. Nothing like reading to improve the mind. You should really try it."

"So long!" she nodded to Polly Linton, who turned in her direction at that moment.

Then she was gone, while Polly Linton, almost bursting with indignation, turned to Betty and Madge.

"Did you ever?" she gasped. "The—the cheek of it!"

But Jemima was not worrying about that. In her own study, which Ursula had now left, she sat quietly for a moment or two, ruminating.

"Poor old gov'nor!" she muttered. "If you only knew what your darling little daughter is undergoing for your sake!"

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Jemima's loyalty to Ursula Wade has cost her dear—but Jemima does not mind that. She is not quite so simple as Ursula imagines, and she is playing her part well. You should tell your friends about Jemima, and urge them to read our stories of her adventures. Next week's tale is entitled "Her True Colours!"



Your Editors' Chat.

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

MY DEAR READERS,

THIS week you have the second story of our magnificent new series of tales of the Morcove School girls. Don't you think Jemima is a lovable, although curious, girl? In next week's long complete story, which is entitled;

"HER TRUE COLOURS!"

By Marjorie Stanton,

you will read further of what happened to her because of her loyalty to Ursula Wade. It must puzzle the Fourth-Formers a great deal to account for her friendship with the sneak of the Form, for she is obviously not the same type of girl. Ursula is not the kind of girl to stand by another girl and take her punishment rather than give away her friend. And yet that is what Jemima is doing—for the sake of an unworthy girl like Ursula! You will find that next week's story is even more interesting and enthralling than this week's, and that is very high praise, indeed, is it not?

"CASTAWAYS OF MYSTERY ISLAND!"

By Gertrude Nelson.

No doubt you have often longed to live a Crusoe-like existence on a South Sea island—so long, of course, as you were assured of being rescued in the end. But there is no such assurance for Ruth Hargreaves and the rest of the little band who have been cast away on Mystery Island. And what makes it even worse for Ruth is the fact that her distant cousin's undying enmity and hatred. Because she wishes to become Aunt Caroline's heiress, Rosa will never cease to strive to discredit Ruth in Miss Maddock's eyes. There are wonderful developments in next week's instalment, which you must not miss.

"IN MOTHER'S PLACE!"

By Mildred Gordon.

It seems as though Emily Davis' relations are determined to prevent her carrying out her promise to her mother. But Emily has told her young sister and brother that she will not leave them, but will continue to carry on the shop, although it is hard work indeed. But can she do so? Or will she find the uphill fight too much

for her? I am sure you are all anxious to read next week's instalment and discover that for yourselves.

"PARTNERS!"

By Ada Crundall.

The special complete tale which will be published next week is by a writer who has already contributed many fine stories to our pages. This tale tells of two sisters, both of whom are very fine musicians. Then something happens which seems as though it might part these two girls who have been friends for so long. One sister is loyal; the other is weaker. The story revolves around the chance which came to one sister, and how her loyalty brought happiness to both. It is a story which you are certain to enjoy.

By the way, I hope that you will not forget to write to me and tell me what you think of our new stories. As you know, I am always ready to hear from my readers, whether they are newcomers to our little "family circle," or whether they are old friends of mine, who have read *THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN* for years. Your letters help me a great deal, for they tell me exactly what kind of stories you like, and I am thus able to pass on your comments to our band of authors, who always strive to give my readers the very best of stories, and stories of the type they appreciate. So, when you have time, drop me a letter, and enclose a stamped envelope, addressed to yourself. Then I can write you a letter, and tell you what I think of any suggestions you may send me for the improvement of our little paper.

It think the majority of my readers are keen followers of the cinema, and therefore they are sure to be interested in the magnificent free gift which is being presented this week with our splendid companion journal, "The Schoolgirls' Weekly." This free gift is a fine cinema album, which is crammed with photographs of your favourite film stars, making an especial point of showing the various modes of hair-dressing favoured by them. You are sure to fall in love with this splendid album, and you will be well advised to make sure of obtaining one by placing an order now with your newsagent for a copy of this week's issue of "The Schoolgirls' Weekly." Next week our companion paper will present a beautiful "Sunset Card," and the following week a "Red Heart Puzzle." You will be very disappointed if you do not receive these gifts, especially when your lucky friends show to you those which they have obtained!

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

ANSWERS

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