



J. C. Morton, photo.

Auckland.

"I simply adore him, and you too for his sake."

Ransome had made them feel that Bessie Randolph's presence among them was a proof of the principal's trust in their honour and common sense.

"A word to the wise is sufficient," said Miss Ransome, with one of her rare, winning smiles, for which the girls would cheerfully sacrifice far more than a little prejudice. "I know I can trust my No. 1 girls not to talk or encourage sentimental nonsense. Remember you are all school girls, and school girls I wish you to remain."

The girls understood, and although Alice Clarke, the short, fat girl, was somewhat inclined to listen to Bessie's sentimental confidences, "Jim," Mary Parton and Florence Goulburn promptly checked her treacherous inclinations.

Poor Bessie was a hopeless sentimentalist, and her plight was indeed pitiable when hints about broken hearts and cruel parents were met with scorn and laughter.

She ceased at length to speak of her blighted affections, and to "Jim's" unspeakable indignation, dared to fall in love with a photo-

graph of "Jim's" brother which adorned the mantelpiece.

"He has a beautiful face, Jim," she raved; "a lovely mouth, such perfectly chiselled lips, and his dear little moustache is simply divine!"

"Jim" merely grunted; but when Bessie took up the photograph and ecstatically kissed it, her feelings found vent in a few scathing words.

Taking the treasured picture out of Bessie's hands, and carefully wiping it with a clean handkerchief, she remarked: "I wish you were not so unclean in your habits, Bessie; it is very trying to one's feelings to have one's relations slobbered over in such a manner."

"Unclean! Slobbered over!" screamed "Baby." "Oh, Jim, you don't mean it! Why I simply adore him, and you, too, for his sake!"

And "Jim" found herself enveloped in Bessie's ample embrace. She wriggled uncomfortably, and managed to turn a disgusted face towards the three laughing spectators, while Bessie imprinted fervid kisses on the top of her cropped head and the tip of her right ear.