

"NANCY BELL'S SECRET!"

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of the Girls of Cliff House, introducing **BESSIE BUNTER**, **NANCY BELL**, and **DULCIE MARSHALL**.

No. 147. Vol. 6.

Week Ending March 4th, 1922.

The School Friend

Every

2nd

Thursday.



BESSIE BUNTER LEAVES THE CLASS WITHOUT PERMISSION!

An incident from the magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House School, contained in this issue.

Also in this issue:

"JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!"

An Enthralling New School Serial, By JOY PHILLIPS.

Numerous Extracts from the

"CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY!"



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.—To all lovers of Mabel Lynn of the Fourth Form at Cliff House—and Mabs has a surprisingly large circle of admirers—next week's story will make a special appeal. For a girl who is so unobtrusive and unassuming in everything she does, who works as quietly and modestly as she works well, Mabs' popularity is really remarkable. Along with Barbara Redfern, Augusta Anstruther-Browne, and one or two others, she ranks as one of the best-liked girls in the Fourth Form. Compliments without number are passed upon her by readers week by week, and the only complaint ever made against her is to the effect that she does not play a sufficiently prominent part in the stories. Much cause for this objection will be removed next Thursday, for popular Mabel Lynn plays a prominent part in the magnificent new long, complete story of the girls of Cliff House entitled:

"AFRAID TO COME TO SCHOOL!"

By Hilda Richards.

It is an unusual title, and the story is of a distinctly unusual nature, too. The title naturally suggests to you that a new girl comes—or is about to come—to Cliff House. But this is only the merest inking of the truth. The fact is, the Fourth Form is added to by no fewer than eleven girls—girls obliged to leave their own school temporarily. For a misdeed on the part of one of these girls Mabel Lynn is given the blame. Mabs shows herself to be a girl of fine character, determining to leave no stone unturned in order to prove her innocence.

As a by-word, I might mention that Gwendoline Cook is in her element in this story. Gwen has ever maintained that Cliff House is haunted, and when mysterious lights are seen in the old tower, and a "figure" is also observed there—well, you can understand Gwen's joy and excitement!

There will, of course, be another magnificent long instalment of our popular serial,

"JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!"

By Joy Phillips.

in our next issue, and the further extracts from

"THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY!"

will please and interest you as much as ever. By the way, the following week's extracts will be of a kind entirely novel to the SCHOOL FRIEND, and after that—well, yet another important announcement is to be made regarding the "Cliff House Weekly."

BRIEF REPLIES.

(Owing to the fact that we go to press considerably in advance of publication, readers should bear in mind that letters cannot be answered on this page within six weeks from the date of receipt.)

Miss M. Hayson (Exeter).—You must be very keen on this paper to say that you would rather go without your breakfast than without the SCHOOL FRIEND! But I hope you will never be without either. I cannot say definitely, yet, when Ruth Preston and Ivy Lynn will come to Cliff House.

"A Weekly Reader" (Stamford Hill).—No; Peggy Blake will not come to Cliff House, having grown too accustomed to an outdoor life.

"Apple" (Tring).—I was very interested in your list of your favourite characters. No, I do not edit the paper you mention.

"Cornelia and Wilhelmina."—I am afraid I cannot see eye to eye with you in your criticisms. You must agree with me that, were the stories written within the limits you suggest, they would be very dull indeed.

Miss Rose Calverley (United States).—Thanks for your keen appreciation. I regret that at present I am unable to run a Correspondence Column in this paper.

"Annie" (Bolton).—I will endeavour to do as you suggest.

"The Three Wenches" (Cardiff).—A Jewish girl may be introduced into the stories later. Thanks for your good work in recommending the Companion Papers to all your friends.

"Boysie."—I cannot promise that boys will ever play a prominent part in the Cliff House stories.

Miss Edna Foster (Ryton).—The answer to your first question is, No. I regret that I cannot promise to introduce into the stories girls with the names you suggest, on account of the number of requests of the same nature that are made to me. Neither can I promise that a Correspondence Club will ever be run in connection with the SCHOOL FRIEND. No, Miss Richards is in no way related to the writer you mention.

"An Interested Reader" (Ryton).—The answer to your first question is, No. Sheba Stanton may be reintroduced into the stories later. Lady Hetty Hendon, Marcia Loftus, and Nancy Bell are three close friends.

"Topsy" (Cheltenham).—No; at your age, seventeen years, you are not by any means too old to read the SCHOOL FRIEND, as I have readers much older as well as younger than yourself.

"An Earnest Reader."—Pleased to hear that the SCHOOL FRIEND affords you so much pleasure each week.

"Bermudiana" (Bermuda).—I will see if, in the future, I cannot run a competition in the SCHOOL FRIEND suitable for distant readers to enter. Thanks for letting me know which characters are your favourites. The answer to your last question is, No.

Your Sincere Friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

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Nancy Bell's Secret!



A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of the Girls of Cliff House School, introducing Bessie Bunter and Nancy Bell of the Fourth Form, and Dulcie Marshall.

By HILDA RICHARDS.

Nancy Bell Sits Tight!

"D O, Nancy!"
 "Just make one lot!"
 Nancy Bell smiled idly from the depths of an easy chair in the Fourth Form Common-room at Cliff House School. It was rather a novel position for Nancy. She was not an object of interest as a rule. They usually allowed her to go her own way, and idle to her heart's content, very much as though she had not existed.

But there was a change on this Thursday evening. Barbara Redfern and the prominent Fourth-Formers who formed her chums were not amongst those who were urging Nancy. There were many, however, who had rather short memories and plenty of curiosity.

Nancy Bell had suddenly and unexpectedly risen to fame on the previous evening, when a telegram had come to tell her that she was the lucky girl who had won the competition promoted by the famous sweetmakers, Messrs Flavour & Favour, of Smalltown, Kent. They had offered a prize of the sum of twenty-five pounds for a new sweet; Nancy, to the amazement of everyone, had won that prize. It was really enough to excite the curiosity of anyone who knew Nancy, her absolute laziness, and the poorness of her cookery until now.

"Do make just one lot, Nancy!" urged Gwendoline Cook.

Nancy Bell grinned and settled herself more comfortably in the chair. It was a rather pleasing position. She was fond of popularity, but, as a rule, the mean actions for which she was famous made her the very reverse.

"Too much fag, Gwen!" drawled Nancy.

"Oh, rubbish!"

"You ought to do it, if you think anything of us, look you!" said Lucy Morgan, the Welsh girl. "Practically everyone in the Form went in for the competition—"

"Except me!" put in the dejected voice of Bessie Bunter, the fat girl.

Nancy Bell turned in her chair and chuckled.

"Yes, and you got up at night and gobbled all of yours up!" she said.

"I didn't!" said Bessie indignantly. "It disappeared, and so did my recipe! If I hadn't lost it, I'm certain that I'd have won the prize instead of you!"

"So am I!" struck in Barbara Redfern. "Bessie made a most wonderful sweet, and ever so many of us tasted it, and voted it simply ripping. It's amazing to me where it went!"

"Same here!" added Mabel Lynn, who shared Study No. 4 with Babs and

Bessie. "It's three days since some japer took it away, and we haven't found it yet. And it was a perfectly ripping sweet, too!"

"Bessie ate it herself!" repeated Nancy Bell, in a confident tone.

"Don't believe it!" said Clara Trevlyn, who was always outspoken. "Bessie had a special reason for wanting to win that prize, and she stuck to her cookery and let everything else slide, as you know. I think it was jolly lucky for you, Nancy, that Bessie lost that invention of hers just when she did!"

"Oh, Clara!" said Marjorie Hazeldene reprovingly. Marjorie hated rash statements and "scenes," and that sort of thing.

"I mean it!" said Clara. "We all know Bessie's reason. She had an accident on her bike in the village, and knocked over a barrow full of eggs belonging to old Gillis. It wasn't her fault, really—"

"Nancy says it was!" struck in Gwendoline Cook. "She was coming down the hill behind Bessie, and saw it happen."

"Well, don't drag all that up again!" said Nancy Bell, rather irritably. "It's all done with now!"

"Oh!" said Clara. "So you've changed your tune—eh? You wanted to convince all of us that Bessie was to blame, although the policeman said she wasn't! And now—"

"Let it drop!" said Nancy. Clara Trevlyn gave Nancy a very scornful look.

"You've just said it was Bessie's fault because you wanted to be spiteful and make her feel unhappy, I suppose?" she said. "Well, you did it all right. It was because Bessie felt that she was responsible for breaking fifteen pounds' worth of eggs that she wanted to win the prize!"

"What's all this got to do with me?" asked Nancy sulkily.

"Merely what I said before!" answered Clara bluntly. "Sweets don't take wings as a rule and fly away, except in the fairy stories. We know your past record, Nancy, and I say again that it was jolly lucky for you that Bessie's sweet disappeared and left you a clear field!"

There was a sensation in the Common-room at that; but Clara was always causing sensations.

"I say!" protested Gwendoline Cook. "You're surely not going to imply that Nancy Bell hid Bessie's sweet just so that she should win the prize herself?"

"I'm not implying anything!" answered Clara. "I just said that it was jolly lucky for Nancy, that's all!"

"We all know what you mean!" said Marcia Loftus, who was Nancy Bell's friend—especially since she received that telegram!

"Then think what you like!"

Gwen Cook laughed uneasily.

"Don't listen to everything that Clara says, Nancy," she said. "Clara's got another bee in her bonnet. Come on, now—just make another slab of your toffee, or whatever it was, so that we can all taste it! I had some of Bessie's invention. I'll jolly soon give a candid opinion as to which I like better, and most of us will. That will settle the whole thing!"

"Yes, make some more, Nancy!" said Katie Smith.

"Do! Be sporty!"

But Nancy Bell showed no inclination to "be sporty." She was grinning again, evidently flattered by the fuss that so many of them were making of her.

"Too much fag!" she said.

"Oh, come on!" urged Cissy Clare. "If you don't, some of the girls will think that you didn't like your own invention as well as Bessie's!"

"Considering that I wasn't even invited to taste hers!" chuckled Nancy.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 147.



The Girl Who is Admired.

Augusta Anstruther-Browne

Next Portrait:
 THE SHYEST GIRL IN
 THE FOURTH.

"Ha, ha, ha! I know why you're all so inquisitive, and saying such things! You didn't know that I could do anything when I really set myself to it! You didn't know that I was experimenting with some old recipes in Study No. 1! Well, now you're all jolly well going to wait, because I won't leave this warm fire to satisfy anyone's curiosity!"

And Nancy Bell stretched her legs and yawned, and then chuckled again, evidently vastly delighted with herself, and quite indifferent to the disappointment of Gwen Cook & Co.

Clara Trevlyn sniffed disdainfully. Bessie Bunter gave a different sort of sniff; it sounded rather tearful.

"I wish I could think of what my recipe was!" said Bessie mournfully.

"I wish you'd been able to think of it in time to go in for the competition," said Barbara Redfern. "I'm positive that it would have stood a jolly good chance of winning the first prize, whatever it was that Nancy sent in. And you did try hard, Bessie!"

"Got lines galore for neglecting prep, and not attending in class," nodded Mabel Lynn. "Why, I don't believe that they're all finished yet—are they?"

"All except a hundred or so," said Bessie gloomily. "But I'll finish those off. There's no object in me going on with my experiments now, is there?"

"Not very much, I'm afraid," said Babs; "except that it was such a ripping sweet that it's a shame that you should have forgotten how you made it!"

"It was the best thing that Bessie's ever made, and that's saying something!" opined Augusta Anstruther-Browne.

"I don't believe Nancy's sweet could have been nicer!" said Vivienne Leigh.

"And the pity of it is," sighed Peggy Preston, "that Bessie didn't go in for the competition. None of us would grumble at the award if she had entered, would we?"

Gwendoline Cook looked at Nancy Bell and at the cool and impudent smile on her face. She really looked too cool and impudent. Certainly Nancy felt nothing but triumph that Bessie had not entered.

"So you're not going to make some of your sweet for us to try, Nancy?" she asked.

"Not until I feel inclined to do so," said Nancy Bell, yawning again. "Got

too many other things to think about. It was an awful fag making it, too, and I don't mind if I don't touch any cooking for months!"

"Oh, wouldn't I, if I'd won!" cried Bessie Bunter. "I say, fancy a real cook talking like that, girls!"

"Doesn't sound very keen," commented Clara Trevlyn. "I should at least have expected—"

Tap, tap!

Clara evidently did not expect that tap on the door. She waited to see who the visitor might be. It was Boker, the page.

"Man brought a parcel from Court-field for Miss Bell," was his announcement.

Nancy looked up, smiling. "Oh, yes; that's right!" she nodded.

"I ordered some new curtains and cushions for the study, Annabel. You'll be able to clean and scour them to your heart's content! Just tell him to put them in Study No. 1, Boker!"

"Put them in the study, did the young lady say?" quavered an old voice from the passage, just before the door shut.

But Babs and Mabs had sprung to their feet, and were staring at each other. And Bessie Bunter was gazing towards the door, too, almost as though she had seen a ghost.

"Did you hear, Mabs?" breathed Babs. "Yes. The same voice we heard in the village, Babs! And—"

Bessie Bunter was at their side. "W-w-was it M-M Mr. Gig-gig- Gillis, Babs?" was her startled question.

"I believe so," said Babs. "But we'll see."

And all three of them whirled out of the Common-room just as a bent and tottering figure came out of the doorway of Study No. 1 in the passage. They saw a long white beard and shaking hands; they recognised him at once.

"Mr. Gillis?" said Babs.

The old man looked up with red-rimmed, faded eyes, and touched his forehead respectfully.

"That's me, miss."

Babs took one of the weather beaten, gnarled hands in her own.

"Are you getting on all right?" she said.

The old man blinked at her.

"Getting on? But I don't understand."

"We know who you are Mr. Gillis," Babs interrupted quickly. "Bessie, here, is the girl who had an accident with your barrow."

The old man had started to tremble. "All my own fault, miss," he quavered. "It do be the deafness that come on so acute at times."

"But Bessie's awfully sorry for all that happened, and we're all sorry," said Babs. "We don't like to think that you're suffering through that accident. Have you managed to find work? Are you in need at all? There isn't much we can do, but if there was any way in which we could help—"


There were tears in the old man's eyes. He replied in a husky, trembling voice:

"I be just on little odd, delivering jobs, miss," he said. "Things be none too bright, 'specially for we old uns. But maybe 'twill rain when the stores wants me no longer, then I'll have a job on the roads again. Ay, I'll manage somehow, missy—I'll manage. And thankee kindly for inquiring!"

Then he turned to poor Bessie, who had been standing, quite unable to say anything. Bessie still felt herself to be so guilty that it seemed to tie her tongue.

"I've not apologised to 'ee afore, missy," said the old man. "'Twas all my own fault as them eggs was smashed, and a rare shake-up I must have given

LUCKY



ESCAPES!

Some of the contributions
REDFERN (Editress),
recently offered to BARBARA
Cliff House Weekly.)

1.—A Series of Poems, by Angelica Jelly.
Angelica Jelly was very keen indeed on us publishing these. She said that, for a start, she intended to write one on every month in the year, bringing in all the things that happen during such a month. The idea was all right, but you'll realise what you've missed when I give you an extract of the one she wrote for April:

Swish, swish swish! The rain comes tumbling down;
Swish, swish swish!—its force enough to drown.
Then hey, presto! The sun is shining through;
You can almost see the good that it is bound to do.
April showers bring May flowers,
Hours and hours
Of sun and showers.

There was a lot more about April, but we couldn't stand any more at one sitting! Could you?

2.—What is Wrong with Commerce, by Frances Barrett.
This is the result of allowing Frances to get busy with a typewriter, and imagine that she is getting ready to inflict herself on some unfortunate commercial magnate as his secretary.

Little does the unwary gentleman destined to employ Frances know how completely and rapidly she will be able to ruin his business with her book-keeping! But she will! Everything that Frances "book-keeps" always turns out (on paper) to be a sheer financial failure. It's a way she has.

Well, the first of the series of articles that Frances offered us was really funny, although it wasn't intended. It told us what was wrong with the City, and how stupid all the men were, and she seemed to come to the final conclusion that what was wrong was that they hadn't got Frances to help them! Frances was offended when we turned her article down, but we dare not do anything else.

3.—Elsie Brane's Botany for Beginners.
This was of an "instructional" nature, but Elsie thought that she had managed to "liven it up" rather cleverly by introducing a few anecdotes.

One of those anecdotes described how her father slipped down a muddy bank, and sunk in soft clay nearly to his knees, and had to be hauled out with ropes. Another was an experience that happened to Elsie. She was collecting some very rare sort of wild grass, and had spread it all out on a newspaper, when a cow came up. Elsie tried to drive it away, but the creature simply ignored her, and ate up all the grass that she had spent hours collecting, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy it, even wagging her tail!

We told Elsie that we would publish the anecdotes without the botany part, but she wouldn't give permission for that!

4.—The Brave Parritt, by Bessie Bunter.
This, we were assured, was going to prove the most touching and moving serial story we had ever read. It did move us—but it moved us to laughter! The Brave Parritt was a funny old bird something like Polly, who hangs in Study No. 4, and he seemed to spend his life doing good turns. If he found a white man being ill-treated by blacks, he would go up and make a noise like a lion, putting the niggers to rout. He kept on doing all sorts of things like that. He did have some adventures, I can tell you!

Bessie sent this letter with her first instalment:

"I have written this story becoss I have such a good and reliable nollidge of parritts. The hearo is really supposed to be my Polley's uncle, that is why them seem alike. I can make this ripping story last for munths, as he is a most brave parritt, and can keep on getting into all sorts of fresh adventures. If you will get me excused from prep for the rest of the term, dear Barbarar, I will go on with riting this magnificent cereal at once."

We congratulated Bessie Bunter on her vivid imagination, but had to turn the story down!

'ee, too—ay, and a shock! But 'twas my own fault—all my own fault!"

He touched his forelock again, then went along the passage with a tottering step, that he tried, ever so bravely, to make as steady as possible.

"He—he doesn't b-b-blame me at all," said Bessie huskily. "And if I hadn't been so clumsy, as Nun-Nun-Nancy said—"

"It was an accident that no one could help, Bessie," put in Babs quietly. "You can't blame yourself any more than old Mr. Gillis can blame himself. But isn't he a brave old man? I only wish we could do something for him!"

"Perhaps we could take up a little collection!" breathed Mabs. "Strike now, while the iron's hot! I'm sure a lot of the girls might like to give just a shilling or so."

"That's the idea!" Babs responded. "We can at least do that! Come on!" So they went back to the Common-room instantly. And hardly before they were inside they were telling the others of the identity of the aged messenger from the stores.

The Unexpected Visitor!

"JOLLY good idea!"

"Topping! I'll give you two shillings!"

"Here's another shilling,

Babs!"

Barbara Redfern's eyes glowed. It was just like the girls to make such a ready response. They had hardly needed any explanation. If the old man, in spite of his seventy years, could make such efforts for himself, they would and could help him a little as well. That was the gist of what they said.

So Babs went on, and at last she was jingling the improvised collecting-box in front of Nancy Bell.

"Would you like to contribute, Nancy?"

Nancy gave her a scornful smile. "Contribute? Why?" she asked.

"Well, everyone else is doing so," said Babs, in surprise. "And in your case, considering—er—well, you can afford it, you know."

"Why should I help this old man?" said Nancy indifferently. "If he's past work, it'll only carry him on for a day or two. I call it misplaced charity."

Bessie Bunter, who was following Babs round much like a faithful watchdog, blinked at Nancy Bell.

Bessie, unfortunately, could not contribute because she was, as usual, in that state known as "hard-up"—painfully so, in fact. But Bessie's heart was with the collection. She would have added to it if she had been able.

"You're not going to give anything, Nancy?" she burst out.

Nancy stared.

"No, thanks! Try somewhere else!"

"And—and he's jolly well brought up your things from the stores!" gasped Bessie.

"Well, what of it? He's paid to do that, isn't he? If it wasn't for my order, he wouldn't have had the job—and been paid for it!"

Bessie Bunter went red. Bessie did not often look really fierce, although she imagined that she did, but on this occasion she certainly achieved it. And it was a startling outburst that came from her.

"Then I think you're a horrid cat, Nancy!" cried Bessie.

"What?" gasped Nancy.

"Here, you—you've jolly well won the twenty-five pounds!" hooted the fat girl. "If I'd won it, I was going to give him fifteen, so that he could start in business again! That's why I jolly



"HOW DO YOU GET YOUR BEST IDEAS?"

By PHILIPPA DERWENT (Fourth Form.)

I'VE been round asking another question, as you'll see. I got the idea myself through reading that a famous novelist thought of all his best ideas when washing. "I wonder if there are other cases like that?" I mused. "I'll go round and see!"

So I went, and the first girl I tackled was Clara Trevlyn.

"Ideas?" she said. "Oh, I usually get mine from what someone says. Sometimes I make a bright remark, and no one sees it; so I think it over, and wonder if I can dish it up in some other form so that everyone will see it. It's surprising how it helps. Often, of course, I don't have to do any thinking at all. You wouldn't, either, if you had Dolly Jobling in the study! She's always doing something!"

Marjorie Hazeldene told me that she keeps her eyes open for all the little things that happen, and jots them down in a notebook. She says that it's better than relying on brain waves.

Dolly Jobling said: "No notebooks for me, thanks! I started one once, and Bessie 'pirated' it, and wrote up all the ideas that I'd been collecting for a fortnight into one of her articles. It made a very funny article, but it didn't amuse me at the time. I just wait for something to hit me." (And, believe me, something usually does hit a girl like Dolly before long—if it's only the floor!)

"I just imagine things," said Katie Smith. "You know those reminiscences I write? Well, I feel sometimes that I would like to sit and write those all day long—they're never any trouble to me. When I'm walking along I see something, and I think: 'If only you could speak, what things you could tell!' That gives me the idea at once. Of course, I've got a rather good memory for things that have actually happened, because I couldn't do it without that!"

Phyllis Howell said:

"I don't get them from you, my dear, that's a certainty! You're always looking round yourself for something. You know that I just write up things that actually happen, and don't go in for many flights of fancy. My brain doesn't run that way, as a rule, and it's no good trying to force yourself to it!"

Bridget O'Toole had a long story to tell me. She said that there's a certain corridor in the school, and whenever she walks up and down entirely she's after getting an idea there. She said that most of them were never any good, but it didn't alter her opinion of the corridor at all!

Freda Foote said that everyone told her that she never had ideas in anything she wrote.

"I just take a subject and ramble on about it," she said. "That's the nearest I can tell you. If I do have ideas—and you won't find many people to agree that I do—I usually get them when I'm cleaning my boots. Something flies off and hits me right in the eye, dear!"

You can't take Freda too seriously. But I can believe Annabel, and Annabel had a rather similar confession to make.

She said that she thought of all her articles when she was on her hands and knees, scouring in Study No. 1. "Most likely it is the warm water," she said. Personally, I'm inclined to think that it's the soap!

Barbara Redfern said:

"How do I get my best ideas? Like this! Perhaps it's a Wednesday afternoon, and I want to go out, when I find that some more copy for the 'Cliff House Weekly' must be sent off. Clara Trevlyn, who's promised to write it, will be in detention. Someone else, who's half-way through an article, is out. Nothing seems to have happened at the school for weeks. It's a glorious day, and I want to go out myself. I ask two or three to write, but even Angelica Jelly refuses. The time drags on, and post-time is getting near. I'm in absolute despair, and then—then there comes an idea! Yes, it comes because it simply has to, and as often as not it's a good one!"

Bessie Bunter told me that she had a system of her own.

Sometimes, she said, she dreams her ideas, and I had to tell her that that was just how they read. Failing that, she said that she buries her head in her hands and thinks something out. "I get all sorts of clever ideas like that!" she said. "You ought to try it!" But I'm not going to try a system that gets ideas like Bessie's!

well wanted to win. And you won't do anything! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, you horrid, mean thing!"

Nancy Bell swung out of the chair.

"Don't you dare to talk to me like that, you fat duffer!" she cried.

Bessie Bunter's answer was startling. There was a cushion lying on the floor—one that had fallen from behind Nancy's back. Bessie picked it up, and it whirled in the air.

Whi-i-i-i-z!

"Yarooooooop!" came a stifled yell from Nancy Bell.

Bessie Bunter's aim had, for once, been amazingly good. The cushion had smitten Nancy well and truly!

"You—you—I'll make you sorry for that!" panted Nancy, seeing the grins everywhere. "You—you—"

"And I'll jolly well do it again!" said Bessie recklessly. "I'll give you another one to show you what I think of you!"

"Don't you dare!" cried Nancy, clinging to the cushion for all she was worth.

"I will!"

"I'll go for you in a minute!"

"I don't care!"

Clara Trevlyn hurried forward, a cheerful grin on her face.

"Break away, you two!" she exclaimed. "Now, Bessie, I'm surprised at you, fighting in the Common-room!"

"Well, she deserves to have her hair pulled!" panted Bessie. "I say, Clara, you hold her down, and I'll jolly well pull her hair for her! Fancy being so horridly mean!"

Bessie Bunter was so roused that, although she cut a distinctly humorous figure, no one liked to laugh. They knew the real feeling that prompted her unusual rashness.

"If Nancy doesn't want to give, she needn't!" said Clara, making the peace.

"After all, Gillis will probably be better off without her money!"

"Oh, really—"

"We don't want it, Bessie. Let her be mean if she wants to be. It's all we expect of Nancy Bell!"

Nancy sat upright in her chair, and smoothed her frock. She was still flushed, and breathing hard.

"I won't give a penny now!" she panted. "Trying to dun me, and you're all in it! I've won my twenty-five pounds prize fairly, and I'll spend it as I like, so there! Why should I be bullied into contributing towards the support of that stupid old man?"

"It would have been rather nice of you, that's all!" said Augusta Anstruther-Browne. "I don't think anyone wants you to contribute now."

"And I won't!" said Nancy, flinging herself back in her chair. "There! That's my answer to you, Barbara Redfern! I'll do what I like with my own money!"

what I like with my twenty-five pounds! I shall— Owooooo! Weooooop!"

Thump, thump!

It was Bessie Bunter again—with the cushion!

Bessie had crept up behind, and administered two bangs to Nancy with all her strength! And now Bessie seemed satisfied at last. She was round the other side of the table, smiling happily.

"Bessie! Y-y-you?" gasped Nancy, her face furious in expression.

"Serves you jolly well right for being mean!" said Bessie. "That shows you the sort of girl I am! He, he, he! You do look funny!"

Nancy jumped up and darted round the table. But Clara was ready. She escorted Nancy back to her seat, and Nancy had to go. Struggling against Clara was not of much avail.

"I'll hit her!" said Nancy, through her teeth.

"But not to-day," said Clara calmly.

the passage, and came to Miss Primrose's side.

"I don't want to cause any disturbance, Miss Primrose," she started to say. "If it is not quite convenient—"

"But it is!" laughed Miss Primrose. "We're always anxious to help anyone at Cliff House, and this is really such an interesting matter. Nancy Bell, please?"

Nancy started, and rose to her feet. She stared in amazement at the headmistress.

"Come here, Nancy!" Miss Primrose exclaimed genially. "Nancy, you have brought quite an unexpected honour on the school, and I am very pleased to know about it. I refer, of course, to your successful entry for the competition run by Messrs. Flavour & Favour."

"Oh—oh, yes!" said Nancy, forcing a smile.

"Now let me introduce you," said Miss Primrose. "Nancy, this is Miss Dulcie Marshall. She has come on behalf of Messrs. Flavour & Favour to talk to you about your prizewinning effort."

There was a silence so complete for the moment that a pin could have been heard to drop.

Amazing the Form!

"P LEASED to meet you!" said Dulcie Marshall cheerfully.

"Oh—er—charmed!" Nancy Bell answered, with a curious hesitation.

Miss Primrose, smiling benignly on both of them, did not notice it.

"I think it is a very clever thing for a schoolgirl to invent a sweet so highly praised by the prospective manufacturers," she said. "I have always been interested in cookery, as you know. I congratulate you, Nancy!"

"Er—h'm—ah! That's really what I've come to say myself, Nancy!" said Dulcie Marshall, making up for her hesitation by a series of beaming smiles. "I'm an awful one for sweets, you know—that's what makes me so fat! Oh, bother! It isn't what I intended to say at all! Oh dear! What a girl I am when I start!"

She gave Nancy's hand another squeeze, and beamed on the Fourth-Formers. They could not help beaming back, because Dulcie seemed just that jolly kind of girl.

"The—er—the fact of the matter is that I—er—feel that I'm wasting your time, and Miss Primrose's time, and all that," Dulcie went on. "But I'll try and explain. I'm not really to do with the toffee works, although my pater has shares, but I eat such an awful lot of their things that I'm sort of part of the firm, you know. Ha, ha, ha! I'm always visiting them, and that's why the manager asked me to come here and see you. I'm really concerned in making films—or, rather, my pater makes films called Shadowland Productions, and I interrupt him. I must tell the truth!"

Miss Primrose laughed, and the others laughed—all except Nancy Bell. Nancy was staring at Dulcie with a sort of fascination, as though she dreaded what was to come next.

"I don't suppose you understand me—you'd be a marvel if you did!" Dulcie rattled on cheerfully. "I'm really an awful one to come interviewing, because I say such a lot of stupid things all the time. But the fact of the matter is that I've come along to say that we'd like to film you making your new sweet, Nancy."

"Film me?" said Nancy, in a startled voice.

"Yes, that is the idea, Nancy," put in Miss Primrose blandly. "It's splendid of Miss Marshall to have come personally



NANCY'S STRANGE BEHAVIOUR! Nancy Bell seemed to be getting paler and more nervous. "You will really have to be quicker for the film, Nancy," said Miss Primrose gently.

"Have you got it yet?" asked Babs quietly.

"Got it? How do you mean?" said Nancy.

"What I say!" answered Babs. "What I'm going to say has nothing to do with what has just happened—I don't say it for that reason. As Form captain, Nancy, I'm supposed to see that no girl obtains credit at the shops. Have you paid for the things that have just come from the stores?"

Nancy Bell's eyes flashed.

"As Form captain, I'll tell you that I haven't!" she said. "Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"You'd be well advised not to run up any bills until you have the cheque, I think," said Babs.

"Why? Don't you think it will come?" countered Nancy.

"There might be a mistake, or some hitch. And in that case—"

"Hitch! Mistake!" Nancy interrupted. "What do you mean? How could there possibly be a hitch? I'll ask you to mind your own business, Barbara, and I'll mind mine! I'm going to do

"You keep your temper, Nancy. Have you finished the collection, Babs? Give the hat a shake in front of Marcia!"

But Marcia had turned away. Marcia was not a voluntary contributor!

"Quite a nice lot, girls!" said Baos, pouring the money on to the table.

"Nineteen and sixpence and a few odd coppers. I say, that's ripping of you, all of you! I'm sure it will be a fine help to old Mr. Gillis."

"Hurrah!" cheered Clara Trevlyn, and the cry was taken up.

"We can get Piper to take it across and see the old chap," Babs said.

"Piper's as honest as the day, and he'll do it like a shot."

"Rather!" said Clara. "And then— Oh!"

It was the second time that Clara had been interrupted. This time the door opened to reveal a most unexpected visitor. It was none other than Miss Primrose, the headmistress.

"Good-evening, my girls!" she said, then turned to someone in the passage. "Will you come in, please, Miss Marshall?"

A plump, jolly-faced girl appeared from

as she has done. The toffee people would like a film taken showing just how you came to invent the sweet that is going to make you famous, Nancy. You see? Miss Marshall will arrange everything, and will get all the necessary operators here. Some of you other girls must be in the film as well, just giving Nancy a hand—it will look so much jollier. There! Don't you feel that it is an honour, Nancy?"

"Y-y—yes, Miss Primrose," said Nancy Bell.

"Babs, you must be in it, of course, as Form captain," said Miss Primrose. "Come and be introduced. Mabs, Marjorie, Clara, Peggy, Augusta, Bessie—that's the way!"

Dulcie Marshall shook all their hands, and said she was charmed to meet them, and she literally meant it. And she gave Bessie such an admiring look, and such a special squeeze, that Bessie simply beamed with pleasure.

"There, there!" said the headmistress. "Now you all know each other. Well, girls, I will tell you the programme now; of course, it will be of special interest to Nancy. I want about a dozen of you to come to the model kitchen, and Miss Marshall will hold a sort of full-dress rehearsal, so that she will see what is wanted for the film. Nancy, I want you to prepare some of your sweet, so will you please bring all the ingredients if they are not in the model kitchen? Babs, just choose about a dozen girls, and then we'll make a start."

"I—I—" began Nancy Bell, staring at Miss Primrose.

"Yes, my dear?" asked the headmistress kindly.

"I—I—I'd rather be excused for this evening. I'm a bit out of practice, and—rather tired."

"Oh, Nancy—not after Miss Marshall has come here specially!" said Miss Primrose, with gentle reproof. "And you are to be the central figure, too! Come now, you must not be nervous. All ready, Babs?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose," said Babs.

"Very good. Then we will go to the model kitchen!"

"They didn't have such a sensible place at my school," observed Dulcie Marshall, with a large smile. "No wonder you girls can invent such lovely sweets! I wish the pater would send me back to school again!"

Nancy Bell was hanging back irresolutely in the doorway of the Common-room, but Miss Primrose had already gone on. And when Nancy became suddenly aware of the curious way in which she was being regarded, she moved after the others, and so came to the model kitchen.

Dulcie's eyes were already roaming appreciatively round the cookery-room. But she was placing the girls as well.

"With the camera pointed in through the window—yes, a group just there, I think," she would say. And they all saw at once that she understood what she was doing.

"Nancy, just here, please!" Dulcie said, suddenly. "Yes, that's all right. Now take what you want, and we'll start. Do you know, I'm simply dying to see how you make this wonderful sweet of yours—it's so delicious!"

And Dulcie, now, was not the only one excited! Not by any manner of means! They had been pressing Nancy to make some of her prize-winning confectionery earlier that evening, and she had refused. Now she was, in a manner, compelled. But why was she so nervous? Why did her arms tremble as she arranged her dishes, and fidgeted with the sugar, and absolutely failed to make a start?

And wasn't she rather pale?

"You can start, Nancy," said Miss Primrose.

Again Nancy fiddled, first with the sugar, then with other things she had grouped about her. She broke an egg into a basin, and poured some sugar on it, and started to beat. And all the time she seemed to be growing paler, and more nervous—they could all see it!

Five minutes passed—and lengthened into ten minutes.

And Nancy was doing nothing but fiddle about!

"You will really have to be quicker for the film, Nancy," said Miss Primrose gently.

Nancy turned suddenly, and flung out her arms helplessly. Her face had gone very red.

"Oh, Miss Primrose, I can't—I can't!" she gasped.

"Good gracious!" said the headmistress, while the girls simply stared at Nancy. "Why, not, my girl?"

and I'll get the recipe and bring that with me as well!" she exclaimed.

"Tuesday will be just in time for the film this is for, but it mustn't be later. After all, we've had a little rehearsal to-night, haven't we? I'm awfully sorry I've wasted so much of your time, but I'll be quicker on Tuesday, if I can."

"Very well, Miss Marshall. We shall be pleased to oblige you on Tuesday," said Miss Primrose smilingly.

"I am sorry that you have forgotten, Nancy, but, of course, it cannot be helped."

That was true enough, and so they started to disperse from the Model Kitchen. Nancy Bell was almost the first to go, and the others did not linger as Miss Primrose had dropped into a conversation with the plump girl.

Babs, Mabs, and Bessie went back to Study No. 4, strangely excited and confused by what they had seen. Why had Nancy been so obviously reluctant? Why had she failed at the last minute? They



TWO OF A KIND! "You're like me—you don't live on fresh air!" said Bessie Bunter. "You can't when you've got a good figure to keep up!" Dulcie Marshall grinned.

"I—I've forgotten how I—I made it," panted Nancy.

"Then fetch the recipe, my girl," said the headmistress.

"I—I can't!" said Nancy desperately.

"But why?"

"I—I haven't got a copy of it. I sent it away!" stammered Nancy.

"Good gracious!"

Dulcie Marshall broke the silence with an ejaculation of real disappointment.

"And I can't see how you make such ripping stuff?"

"I—I'm afraid not," said Nancy.

"You see, I—I was rather fed-up—and I sent it off in a hurry."

"You could work from the recipe?" asked Dulcie.

"If—if I had a copy here—"

"Oh, that's splendid, after all!" cried the plump visitor. "Miss Primrose, it's only postponing matters. You said I could come again on Tuesday, didn't you?"

"Certainly. It is our half-term holiday, Miss Marshall."

Dulcie nodded eagerly.

"Then I'll come with the camera-men,

were speculating on that when there came a soft tap at the study door, and a plump, smiling face peeped in.

"Hallo, you jolly girls!" said Dulcie Marshall. "May I come in?"

"Of course!" cried Babs, laughing.

"Thanks!" said Dulcie, entering with great rapidity. "Your Head said I could come up and speak to you, and told me the number of your study. I want to have a little chat about Tuesday. I say, what a jolly little den you've got here!"

"Do you like it?" said Babs, smiling.

"Rather!" Dulcie suddenly wagged an admonishing finger at Bessie Bunter. "But you're the one who ought to have invented a sweet, my fat cherub! I'll guarantee you're like me—you've eaten enough!"

"Bessie has invented one!" said Babs and Mabs together.

And then they told the full story to Dulcie's astonished ears, and described how Bessie had been put out of the running only at the last minute. Bessie,

who seemed really charmed and fascinated by Dulcie, added frequent comments.

"Well, that is real hard luck—I thought you ought to be able to cook!" said Dulcie. "I can, you know, after a fashion; but that's how I do everything. I say, girls, I hope you don't mind me loitering about in here for another twenty minutes, the car isn't coming back until then."

"We'll be delighted, I'm sure!" said Babs.

Bessie Bunter solemnly rose, went to the cupboard, took out a frying-pan, and flour, and milk, and eggs, and basins.

"What ever are you going to do, Bessie?" asked Babs.

"I'm going to cook Dulcie some supper—just to show that I can cook, you know!" said Bessie.

"Oh, you cherub!" exclaimed Dulcie. "Now, how ever did you guess that I had a sinking feeling?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed Babs and Mabs, for that was one of Bessie's own expressions!

"You're like me—you don't live on fresh air!" said Bessie indulgently. "When you've got a good figure to keep up—"

"Fat!" said Dulcie.

"Oh, not fat!" said Bessie, shaking her head.

"Yes; we're both fat!"

"Oh, really—"

"Comfortably fat!" amended Dulcie, grinning. "Plump, if you like that! But I can see you're a girl right after my own heart! Is it going to be pancakes?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I love pancakes!"

And Dulcie did love those that Bessie cooked! She voted them the finest she had ever tasted, and Bessie simply glowed with pride. They were all sorry when Dulcie rose at last, and said she would have to go.

But Bessie did not put away the frying-pan.

There was a curious gleam in her eyes after Dulcie had gone.

"Aren't you going to do your prep, Bessie?" asked Babs.

Bessie Bunter shook her head.

"But there'll be an awful row if Miss Steel catches you, now the competition's over!"

"I don't care!" said Bessie. "I'm going to find out how I made that ripping sweet, Babs!"

"But, Bessie—another night, perhaps—"

Babs began. "I'm jolly well going to do it tonight!" said Bessie. "I've been thinking. There's that poor old chap in the village, Babs, delivering parcels—"

"We've got up a little collection, Bessie," said Babs.

"Yes; but that won't help him much!" said Bessie dismally. "You know I jolly well smashed all his eggs, in spite of what he says!"

"Bessie—"

"I've been thinking, too!" said Bessie. "That jolly girl who's just gone—she's got a lot of influence, you know, with Flavour & Favour's. She might get them to buy my sweet for fifteen pounds if I could find it out again!"

"My hat!" said Mabel Lynn. "Fancy you thinking of that!"

"Well, it's jolly likely, you know!" said Bessie eagerly. "You all said it was ripping, and deserved the first prize. They might award another one if they tasted it—in fact, I dare say Dulcie could get them to award another, just so that I could do something for that poor old man!"

Clatter, clatter! came the noise, as Bessie started to scour the frying-pan.

"Bessie, you musn't go and get into more scrapes with Miss Steel!" said Babs urgently.

Bessie Bunter sniffed.

"That cat Nancy wouldn't give anything for the poor old chap!" she said.

"But—"

"It wants someone to do it—and we can never raise fifteen pounds in the Form!" said the fat girl. "I'm sure I could find out how I made that ripping sweet, and I dare say they'd buy it, after all! I'm going to find out how I did it, anyway!"

And at that moment the frying-pan was jabbed on the fire, and its contents commenced to melt.

Bessie Bunter was at it again, and she was going to stick to it! Yes; Bessie required a lot of moving when once she



IF I WERE A BOY!

By CLARA TREVLYN
(Fourth Form.)

I'm always being accused of acting like a boy! I'm accused of having feet like one, and talking like one, and generally carrying on like my brother—only more so.

I wish sometimes that I really were a boy!

There wouldn't be people to say: "Oh, yes, she's a girl—she can wash up!" And "Why doesn't she dust the place a bit, instead of sitting round?" And when I came in from a hot game of tennis I should be able to sprawl about like my brother does, instead of having to make myself useful.

Wouldn't it be different in the class-room, too? There wouldn't be lines, lines, lines from the Bull. She'd just say: "Clara, hold out your hand!" and it would be all over in a few seconds. Better than grinding at horrid old impositions, anyway!

Then I shouldn't be worried with all the articles of feminine adornment that make Marjorie believe that every day I look more of a sight than ever. I could just wear an old suit every day, and I should be quite all right, and there would never be any fashions for me to be out of, and that sort of thing.

I shouldn't have to cook, and be told that I was boisterous when I smashed a basin through thumping too hard at some batter. And my chums—

But that's where the rub comes! That's just one of them, at any rate. I should have to give up my chums and go to another school, and— Well, I don't want to do that! I don't think I could even face the prospect!

Perhaps there's something in being a girl, after all!

got settled by the fire with cookery implements around her! Babs and Mabs both tried their eloquence, but they tried in vain.

And that was the scene that the Fourth-Formers found when they dropped in, one after another, to discuss the queer behaviour of Nancy Bell, who had now locked herself in Study No. 1. Bessie Bunter was cooking, regardless of what they said, regardless of prep—regardless of everything except the matter in hand!

Clara came to say that she thought Nancy's behaviour awfully funny, and felt sure that she must have destroyed Bessie's recipe so that her own should win. Flap and Phyllis, from No. 5, said that they thought that Nancy had looked really scared, and they wondered why. Others came with similar comments.

But Bessie heard none of those things.

She had abandoned herself once more to cookery—and she cooked! She intended to re-discover the sweet that she had made—and lost!

Could she succeed? That was a question that Bessie would have given much to answer!

Only One Thought in Her Mind!

BESSIE BUNTER was once more obsessed with cookery.

Barbara Redfern realised it when she woke in the dormitory that night. It was very still, but suddenly a muttering voice came to her ears. She knew the tone at once, and knew the speaker.

It was Bessie!

"Yes—try it with eggs this time, don't put quite a whole one! Oh, you duffer, you'll spoil it; you will, really!"

Babs smiled, and was aware, at the same time, that there was a lump in her throat. Poor old Bessie. She wasn't quite like other girls! She was fat, and she was vain, and she did some extraordinary things. But Bessie's heart was in the right place!

Ever since that disaster to the barrowful of eggs she had blamed herself. How bitterly disappointed she had been to have to miss the competition! Now, it seemed, the craze had come back to her since she had seen the possibility of selling her sweet after all. Yes, a craze, so that she could do a good turn to someone else. Bessie was not working for the money for herself!

"Yes, stir it up quickly! That's it! And I think I put a little essence of almonds in—just three spots, and then a stir!"

Babs could still hear the mumbling voice. What a different Bessie this was from the one they had once known! What a different girl from Nancy Bell, the girl upon fortune had smiled.

A queer prize-winner, too, was Nancy Bell. What mystery was it that hung about her? She had looked really really scared in the model kitchen!

But Babs was too tired to debate the matter in her mind, and she went off to sleep again with the sound of Bessie Bunter's muttering voice still in her ears. And so she missed the sound of one bed that creaked as a girl turned restlessly and uneasily in her sleep.

Nancy Bell!

It wasn't proving a comfortable night for Nancy Bell, either! She had so much on her mind; that evening she had had such a shock! Fancy a representative turning up and wanting to see her make the sweet! The memory of that ordeal haunted her in her dreams. Her mind could run on nothing else!

Babs dreamed more than usual that night, both Bessie and Nancy being curiously concerned in her dreams. She woke almost as soon as rising-bell sounded on the following morning, and sat up abruptly. It was not altogether surprising that she glanced first at Bessie's bed.

"My word!" gasped Babs. "Girls, have any of you seen Bessie?"

No one had. And then Babs stared at the empty bed again, and understood. Bessie had got up early an almost unheard of thing for Bessie! And she could have no other motive than to go on with her cookery experiments!

"Talk about the age of miracles!" said Clara Trevlyn, in wonderment. "Fancy not having to rouse Fatima this morning! Why, I sha'n't know how to spend my time!"

But there was one girl for the energetic Clara to take in hand. Nancy Bell was tossing restlessly in her sleep when everyone else had started to dress. Clara, not being fond of slackers, gave her a gentle but effective tap with a pillow.

"Ow!" gasped Nancy, starting up in bed. "What's the matter?"

"Time to get out!" said Clara cheerfully. "Bessie's been up and doing for hours!"

"Oh, bother Bessie Bunter!" said Nancy sulkily. "Why can't you let me sleep? What do I care about her?"

"I expect Bessie's trying to find out how she made her sweet," said Clara.

"Well, what does that matter to me?" retorted Nancy. "I don't care what she's doing! Leave me alone, and don't let me have so much of your foolery!"

"Very nice temper this morning!" smiled Clara. "Look out that you don't get out the wrong side, or you will be sweet! Been dreaming about Dulcie Marshall?"

"What do you mean?" cried Nancy fiercely. "What are you hinting at, Clara?"

There was a strange silence in the dormitory. All eyes were on Nancy, who had cut such an amazing figure the night before.

"You were jolly disappointing as a cook last night!" said Clara.

"Well, why should I make my sweet again if I don't want to?" countered Nancy. "Like their horrid cheek—sending that fat girl to make a film! I've made the sweet and won the prize, and that ought to be enough for them! I ought to have refused at the start. Pity I didn't!"

"But you couldn't make it!"

"Couldn't?" said Nancy. She seemed to bite her lip. "Oh, yes, I could have done, if I'd wanted to. I haven't got such a memory as that! But I don't like being pestered with these people. I'm not like you and your crowd—

anxious for fame, eager to act in any silly film! I've a jolly good mind to refuse when they come again on Tuesday!"

"I don't think, somehow, that you will," said Clara.

Nancy Bell pulled herself out of bed, aware at last of the attention on her. Her voice was easier when she spoke.

"Oh, I'll make it, I suppose!" she drawled. "I suppose I shall have to. But I regard the whole business as a lot of stupid nonsense!"

And Nancy Bell refused to say more. She started dressing, and some of the attention moved from her. But there was no doubt that Nancy had succeeded in puzzling the Form, and causing not a little speculation.

Babs herself was thinking more about Bessie than about Nancy. She dressed as quickly as possible, and ran down to study No. 4, with Mabs at her side. And there, cooking with the aid of a spirit-stove, they found Bessie, just as they had expected.

"Bessie, you shouldn't!" was Babs' reproving ejaculation.

Bessie Bunter stirred a simmering pan, and gave them a mournful blink.

"It's no good, anyway," she said dismally. "I woke up this morning, and—and I really thought I remembered how I made my lovely cream. But I can't get it; it's no good!"

"Poor old Bessie!"

It was almost difficult to urge Bessie down to breakfast that morning, and that in itself was a worrying sign. Bessie did not need much urging as a rule. She certainly ate heartily when she was down, but it was only a break. As soon as the

meal was over Bessie was back in Study No. 4.

"It's no good trying to stop her," Mabs said, when she was talking it over with her chum. "Bessie wants to get her sweet again, and I don't see why she shouldn't. Oh, what a pity she ever lost it!"

"Yes, for a girl like Nancy Bell to win!" sighed Babs.

And then they stared, for Nancy Bell had passed just at the end of the corridor, deep in a conversation with Marcia Loftus. And Nancy seemed so anxious and worried that neither of them could help but notice it.

"What ever is worrying her so, Babs?" breathed Mabs, staring after the retreating figures. "You saw, I'm sure. Is it



MY ADVICE TO PLUMP GIRLS!

By BESSIE BUNTER
(Fourth Form.)

My dear Plump Gurls.—I know that there are a few gurls like me, who have reely good figgers. Becose there are so few of us, people are liable to be jellus and say rather unkind things, and some of them even call us fat, althow we are not fat at all, are we?

You know, my dear plump gurls, I should really like to meet all of you one day—or perhaps a hundrid at a time. Wouldn't we have a lovely outing of it! We could save up for some time so that we all had a snack whenever we wanted it, becose that is one of the greatest drawbacks in having a good figger—thin people don't understand how often you require a little nurrishment. We'd all sit down to a ripping little tea, and there wouldn't be anyone to criticcise, and I'm sure that none of us would make pigs of ourselves.

Well, my dear plump gurls, I'm afrade that it is impossible to arrange such an outing, but I am riting these few words of advice insted. I expect that some of you are called fat at your schools—I have been through all that sort of tuing myself. Don't take any notise—just put it down to jellusy, and they will forget about it in time.

Plump gurls are not miserable like thin ones, and all of you ought to become form captins, and school captins, and be the life and sole of the school. I always consider that I am thin, but I do not boast about it, becose it just comes nacherally to me.

I hope that you will all remember this messidge the next time that someone tries to be unplesent and says that you have a fat figger, and ought to take exercises to reduce it. Don't you take anything of the sort, becose they only want to see you lose your good looks. If you're as proud of your figger as I am, you will just laugh at them!

Good-bye, my dear plump gurls!
Your loving friend, Bessie Bunter.

possible that Nancy doesn't want us to see her make her sweet?"

Babs shook her head slowly.

"I don't know, Mabs. But I believe that there may be something in what Clara said—that Nancy knows about Bessie's sweet disappearing. Perhaps they were very similar, and Nancy was afraid of a rival."

Mabs gritted her teeth.

"Babs, I don't like to think of that!" she muttered. "If I felt that Nancy had played Bessie such a mean and horrid trick—oh, I don't know what I should want to do to her!"

"Nor do I, Mabs." Babs suddenly looked more cheerful. "But, after all, Dulcie's coming again on Tuesday. We'll see if there is any mystery then. Dulcie's going to bring the original recipe, so Nancy won't have any possible

excuse. If it were a fluke, we'll soon know."

Cookery lesson came first on that Friday morning. Bessie Bunter was slack in putting in an attendance, but easy-going Miss Plummy said nothing. She announced that they were to make small cakes, and gave out the materials.

"There will be a little surprise for the best ones, too!" Miss Plummy added, with a mysterious smile. "You know how to go on, girls, so get busy. I don't think the winner will be disappointed!"

The started off eagerly. Bessie Bunter was up the far end of the room, amongst the girls who needed little assistance. Miss Plummy confined her attention, at first, to those who were always backward—Annabel Hichens, Cissy Clare, and several others. She glanced very curiously at the clumsy efforts that Nancy Bell was making, and so did others. To watch Nancy now made it more amazing than ever to think that she had won a cookery prize!

Bessie Bunter, finding herself on her own, went to the cupboard. She gazed inside on sugar, eggs, and essences. A quick glance over her shoulder showed that she was unobserved, and the temptation became too much for the fat girl.

She gathered up an armful of bottles and went back to her bench.

Pat, pat, pat! And then: "Goodness gracious! Bessie, what ever are you doing?" cried Miss Plummy's amazed voice.

She hurried across the model kitchen, and all eyes turned on Bessie at last. The girls gasped. Bessie wasn't attempting to make cakes. The old, familiar experiments were in progress again.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bessie.

Miss Plummy surveyed her in greater amazement than ever.

"You—you are not attempting to do what I said!" she cried. "Bessie, have you taken leave of your senses? What is the meaning of this?"

"I—I—"

"You are making sweets, unless I am mistaken."

"Y-y-yes. The—the fact is—"

"Why have you disobeyed my orders?" said Miss Plummy angrily.

Bessie Bunter blinked guiltily. She had disobeyed orders. There could be no possible doubt about that. She hadn't even attempted to carry them out. It was rather difficult to explain. Bessie hadn't thought of the possibility of having to explain when she started.

"I—I know how to make cakes, Miss Plummy," she stammered.

"Goodness gracious! You seem to forget that this is a class lesson!" cried the mistress.

"Rather—I mean, n n-not at all," said Bessie. "I—I've been trying to find out how I—I made a ripping sweet, so that you could have a piece, Miss Plummy. I was going—I sus-sus-say! What are you gg-going to do with that wooden sis-sis-spoon?"

Miss Plummy was holding a wooden spoon in her hand in a distinctly aggressive manner.

"You are an amazingly disobedient girl, Bessie!" cried the mistress.

"Remove those things instantly, and start cake-making!"

"But—but I—"

Crack!

"Yaroooh!" shrieked Bessie, sucking her fat hand.

She had found out at last the purpose of the wooden spoon.

"Now, will you take those things away, Bessie?"

"I—I—"

Crack, crack!

"Ow, wow, wow!" yelled Bessie.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 147.



OUR LATEST ADVENTURE!

An Exploit of Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear, of the Second Form. By the First-Named.

I AM sure that Pip will become a lady explorer when she grows up! She is always wanting to make discoveries. Every time she sees a road stretching away she wants to know where it leads. Of course, Teddy Bear and I go along with her to see where it leads, partly to keep her company, and partly because we want to know where it leads, too. And as often as not we finish up by getting lost.

Well, we went out for a walk the other day, just after an April shower. Suddenly Pip gave an excited cry. "Look! A rainbow! Oh, girls, I can see where it ends!"

"In Farmer Wakes' meadow!" shouted Teddy Bear and I, in one breath. And then we held our breath, we were so excited. We could see the end of the rainbow clearly. It was resting right in the middle of Farmer Wakes' meadow! We had never felt so surprised in all our lives.

"And Miss Scott said that rainbows never touch the earth at all!" I exclaimed indignantly. And we all agreed that Miss Scott had something to learn yet, even though she was a mistress.

"I'll tell you what, girls!" exclaimed Pip. "Let's rush upon that rainbow before it escapes! My word, what a feather in our caps if we can capture it somehow, and bring it back to Cliff House with us!"

"Hurrah!" It was a ripping, exciting scheme of Pip's. Nobody at Cliff House had ever captured a rainbow before!

Away we dashed down the lane to Farmer Wakes' meadow, and started climbing over the gate. Even as we did so we noticed that the rainbow had moved away from us! It must have run at the same speed as ourselves, for it was just as far from us as before!

"Be quick, or we'll be too late to catch it!" I gasped, leading the way across the wet grass.

But the rainbow was running, too! Right up to the top of Black Pike we followed it, and then we had a view of it. It was a long way off now, and the end that had been in Farmer Wakes' meadow was now a few yards in the sea!

"We'll get it yet, girls!" panted Pip. "See! There's a boat down there on the shore! We'll row out for it!"

"Hurrah!" we gasped breathlessly. And down the hill we tore. It was the most exciting adventure we had ever had!

As we expected, that rainbow no sooner caught sight of us pursuing than it retreated further into the sea. But it had overlooked one thing. We had a boat, and the rainbow hadn't! I don't know how it managed to move across the tumbling sea without a boat, but it did. But we all felt sure that it could not keep it up for long!

Pip and Teddy Bear jumped into the boat, whilst I pushed off and jumped in, too. It was a big, roomy sort of rowing-boat, and Pip seized one oar, and I seized the other, and Teddy Bear steered. And off we sailed after the rainbow!

But the rainbow was retreating as fast as ever, and we kept on rowing until the coast line began to look quite distant. And then we met with a sad surprise. The rainbow suddenly got thinner and thinner, and disappeared! We were too late, after all!

The only thing now was to turn back. But as we turned Pip lost her oar, and in trying to fish it out we lost mine, too! And there we had to sit in that tossing boat ever, ever so long! It began to get dark long before we thought it would. We thought we were lost for ever. I must admit we all started crying.

And then we saw a dim light come up from somewhere, and start going past us. We screamed. The light stopped after a bit, and then started coming slowly towards us. And then we saw that it was a fishing-boat, and a fisherman leaned over and dragged us on board, and asked us all sorts of questions.

I can't remember that we told him anything sensible, but he must have been very clever for a fisherman, for somehow he guessed that something was wrong, and took us back to the shore. So we were able to get back to Cliff House that night.

Before we reached the school, however, we made one resolve, and we pulled Pip's hair until she agreed to it. And that was—never again will we follow a rainbow to see where it ends!

"You jolly well hurt me then! Oh dear! I—I'll put them away!"

"Be quick, Bessie!"

"But if I could just finish this, and try—"

Crack!

"Oooooo!"

Miss Plummy was not in the mood for trifling. She was not a mistress to give lines, as a rule, but her method of dealing with Bessie seemed far more effective. The gentle persuasion of a wooden spoon on Bessie's fat knuckles proved too much. Bessie Bunter rolled off with her incomplete experiment in an indignant but convinced frame of mind.

"No, Bessie, I shall not speak again!" said Miss Plummy crossly. "I never heard of such disobedience before. I shall keep this spoon in my hand, and watch you. And you will not be allowed to win my little prize now!"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—NO. 147.

Bessie might have gone back to her experiment if she had had the chance. But there was no chance. Miss Plummy's eye was on her all the time.

Cookery lesson finished at interval time without Bessie having found another opportunity to experiment. The little cakes made by Marjorie Hazeldene were awarded the prize, and the prize proved to be a splendid piece of fruit-cake of Miss Plummy's own make. Bessie Bunter gave it a very gloomy blink as it was passed to the delighted Marjorie.

"My cakes rose better than Marjorie's, too!" she complained to Babs, when they went into the quadrangle for the interval.

"I know," said Babs quietly. "You would have won, Bessie, but you really shouldn't have been so inattentive. You can't be angry with Miss Plummy."

"Oh, I don't bear her a grudge!" said Bessie, rubbing her knuckles reminiscently. "I dare say Marjorie will like

the silly old cake—eh? But I wish I could remember my recipe!"

And Bessie Bunter was still obsessed with that thought when she returned to the school for Miss Steel's lesson. Her mind was still running on the recipe, in spite of the efforts of Babs and Mabs to get her to think of something else.

Miss Steel started her history instruction as she meant to go on.

Bessie Bunter commenced the lesson evidently as she meant to go on—which was not in an attentive and suitable frame of mind at all! She stared at the windows, and she stared round the class, and then she fiddled with her text-book. Bessie hardly realised that there was a lesson in progress as she turned the back cover of her book.

Miss Steel was talking, but Bessie did not hear. The book was open right at the end, past all the reading matter. But there was something—some scrawly writing. Bessie Bunter's eyes fell on it, and it seemed to rivet her attention.

She remembered writing it, of course!

During the experiments in Study No. 4 she had jotted down her efforts in any odd space—particularly in her text-books.

Here—in black and white—before her eyes, was a recipe containing mention of ingredients she had forgotten using. It gave quantities, too!

A recipe! Was it the one? Bessie Bunter suddenly trembled! After all her efforts—after all her failures! Here in her history-book was the recipe—the one she probably sought!

"Goodness gracious! Bessie, what are you doing?" cried Miss Steel's amazed voice. "Come here instantly!"

And then everyone stared at Bessie.

She had suddenly jumped up, still gripping that book in her hand. Single-minded, Bessie had come to a resolve that even left Miss Steel out of her consideration. She was rushing for the door.

"Bessie! Come here instantly!" thundered Miss Steel.

Bessie just gasped over her shoulder: "My recipe, Miss Steel!" and then opened the door. Miss Steel sprang forward. But she was too late. The door closed with a swift click.

Bessie Bunter had bolted from the lesson!

Miss Steel remained staring, with a brow like thunder.

"Goodness gracious! Has the girl lost her reason?" she gasped.

Barbara Redfern had half-risen in her seat. Babs could guess, and Babs was very worried. Fancy Bessie doing such a thing!

"I—I think I know what's worrying her, Miss Steel!" she exclaimed. "Shall I fetch her back?"

"No," said the mistress, in a curious voice. "Dear me, no! I will wait for her to come back of her own accord after this! The lesson will proceed!"

But it was a very difficult lesson in which to be interested after that! Miss Steel knew where the thoughts of all the girls were. They were with Bessie—wondering what she was doing.

Bessie, who had deserted from the lesson without explanation!

Babs hardly knew what to do with herself. What would happen to Bessie, for such an unprecedented act of recklessness? And had she really discovered anything in that history-book?

Twenty minutes went past, and then—

Tap, tap!

"Come in!" called Miss Steel.

Bessie Bunter entered. She looked subdued, disappointed, and scared. Evidently the fat girl now realised what she had done.

"Come here, Elizabeth Bunter!" said Miss Steel, in a tone of thunder.

"Oh! Oh dear!" gasped Bessie. "I

say, I—I'm awfully sorry, Miss Steel! I thought I'd found my recipe—the one I've lost, you know. But it wasn't it at all, and—Ow! That hurts! Oooer!" Miss Steel held her shoulder in a hard grip.

"That is all the excuse you have to offer, Elizabeth Bunter?" she exclaimed. "I have a very good mind to take you to the headmistress and demand an exemplary caning. As it is, I am going to cane you myself. Hold out your hand!"

"Mum-mum-my hand?" chattered Bessie.

"At once!"

"I—I'm awfully sorry, Miss Sis-Steel, really——"

"Hold out your hand, Bessie!"

"I—I've got a sis-sis-sudden attack of rheumatism!" she stammered. "I—I can't raise my hand at all! Ow! Oooooer! That doesn't half hurt!"

Miss Steel held Bessie's hand for her, in spite of the struggles that were very good for a girl suffering from rheumatism.

The mistress' disengaged hand wielded the cane.

Swish!

"Oooow! Yoop!" groaned Bessie Bunter dismally.

"Now the other hand, my girl!"

Bessie dismally held out the other hand, and howled in a manner that far more than justified the stroke.

"Now go to your place, girl!" thundered the mistress. "If there is ever any repetition of this willfulness and stupidity you will be very sorry!"

Bessie Bunter went to her place and sucked her fat hands. Bessie Bunter had found the ordeal a very painful one, indeed. But even more distressing was the memory of the failure that she had just had in Study No. 4, the same old finish, the same inability to make that sweet!

It seemed no good at all. She had risen early. Miss Plumny had been going for her. Miss Steel had caned her. She was dejected and miserable. It seemed that luck was determined to be unkind to Bessie Bunter, no matter how she tried!

Behind a Locked Door!

"IS Piper back yet?"

It was the evening of that same day when Mabel Lynn joined her chum, Barbara Redfern, in the quadrangle, to ask that question.

Preparation was finished, even in Study No. 4. Bessie Bunter had had no desire to study, and had said so. But Babs and Mabs, mindful of the caning, and the possible wrath-to-come of Miss Steel, had insisted that she should make some attempt. So Bessie had done it reluctantly.

"No sign of Piper yet," said Babs, in answer to her chum's question. "But I don't think that he started for Court-field until about tea-time. He had to wait for an order from Miss Primrose. He hasn't had a lot of time to get back yet."

"Bessie's cooking again," said Mabs. "Again?" breathed Babs. She sighed. "Poor old Bessie! How hard she's trying!"

"Yes; she really believes that if she finds out her sweet she'll be able to sell it," said Mabs. "But she's had so many tries, and now she keeps on doing the same thing over and over again, thinking it's something fresh."

Babs nodded.

"I know, dear," she said. "And, somehow—— Oh, I hate to think it! But I've got the idea that Bessie won't

discover her sweet again, however much she tries. What a pity that we can do nothing to help her!"

Mabs said nothing, for the same thoughts were in her own mind. They were both standing silently, busy with their thoughts, when a figure loomed between the gates. They recognised it at once.

"Piper!" said Babs and Mabs together.

Then they went hurrying forward, and the school porter, recognising them, touched his cap.

"I've seen Gillis, Miss Redfern," he said.

"Have you really, Piper?" said Babs.

"That's splendid of you! Is he all right? Has he still got work?"

The porter shook his head.

"No; it's bad news I've got for you, miss," he said. "I only just caught him in time in his lodgings. They discharged him from the stores this morning."

"Discharged him?" breathed Babs.

"Yes, miss. Too old for all the jobs

they wanted him to do, and too slow,

so they said. I've never seen a man

more grateful in all my life'n what he

was when I give 'im that pound note that you sent across. 'E'd nearly decided to give up."

"Give up?" said Babs and Mabs together.

"That's right, miss," nodded Piper.

"'E was feeling down and out. There's no work for the old 'uns like old Gillis. If I 'adn't turned up when I did 'e was going to the workhouse."

"Good gracious!" said Babs, aghast.

"Driven to the workhouse! Is there no one who will help a poor old man so down on his luck?"

Piper coughed.

"Well, they says as it only 'elps for the time being, miss," he said. "I took 'im a few scraps from the kitchen and an old coat myself. 'E was very grateful for everything, but 'e'll be 'ard-up again in another week. It wants a lot of money to start 'im in 'is little egg business again."

Babs nodded gravely.

"I know," she said. "She turned impulsively to the porter. "Piper, it's awfully good of you to have given him some of your own things, and we won't forget it! I call it jolly kind of you. Now, I



THIRD FORM PRANKS!

By BARBARA REDFERN.

Their Latest: At the Post Office.

THE young lady at the post-office undoubtedly is, as Doris declares, a very bad-tempered young lady. I can quite believe my young sister of the Third when she states that the assistant deliberately kept some of the Third-Formers waiting for a needless time. She has done the same thing to me, as a matter of fact. It is her way of showing her independence. And I can understand the Third-Formers "getting their own back" in their own peculiar manner.

"A halfpenny stamp, miss, at the double!" commenced Madge Stevens, the Third Form "captain" imperiously, when the young lady at last deigned to attend to them. She glared, and her glare intensified when Madge grandly flung a ten-shilling note on to the counter.

"Ugh! Nothing smaller than that?" she snapped.

"One moment, miss, and I will see what can be done!" returned Madge briskly.

whilst the Third-Formers all grinned broadly. Madge took back the note, folded it twice, and tossed it back again on to the counter.

"Now it's smaller, miss!" she remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the rest.

The young lady did not join in. According to Doris, she has no sense of humour.

Her expression became quite savage.

"You young minxes! Do you think I am here to have my time wasted by you?"

And she went on, and said many things in the same strain.

Madge amiably took back the note again, and placed a cardboard half-crown upon the counter. The young lady grunted, took a sheet of stamps from her drawer, detached a halfpenny one, and practically flung it at Madge. Then she picked up the "half-crown." Her face became quite black!

"Cardboard!" she roared. "You—you little——"

Madge chuckled, and hurriedly replaced the half-crown with a genuine one. The angry young lady examined it critically, and then made a pretence of looking into her till.

"I am out of change!" she said, her face brightening at the thought of disappointing her tormentors, after all. "Give me back the stamp!"

Madge promptly flicked the stamp across, and it fluttered to the floor behind the counter, the young lady making wild and erratic attempts to snatch it in its swerving flight. She glared at the cheerful Madge as if about to swallow her.

"And now, clear out!" she exclaimed furiously. "You are a hundred times more trouble than you're worth!"

Madge held up a majestic hand.

"One moment, young woman!"

And, with a lofty gesture, she fished out a ha'penny, and placed it on the counter.

The young lady snapped her teeth in savage annoyance, and bobbed down behind the counter to retrieve the fallen stamp. In an instant Madge had taken back the halfpenny, and replaced it with the half-crown. Up bobbed the young lady again, flung back the halfpenny stamp as before, and then glared with positive ferocity!

"That—that half-crown again?" she stuttered. "Where is that ha'penny you put on the counter, you young minx?"

Madge's face assumed quite an idiotic expression of inquiry.

"Very well!" hissed the young lady. "I'll change the half-crown just to get rid of you!"

And she flounced open the till, causing a great rattle of coins. Even as she did so, Madge, with a wink at her chums, adroitly changed the half-crown for a farthing!

The young lady counted out two and fivepence-halfpenny in change, and slammed it down on the counter in front of Madge. Madge removed her hand from the coin, and the exasperated young lady picked up—the farthing!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the hilarious party of Third-Formers.

It was too much for the young lady. With one roar of extreme anger she rushed from behind her counter, and swooped upon her tormentors. But the Third-Formers were just too smart for her, and, like a party of ecstatic mice, they scampered from the post-office!

want you to promise not to say anything about this to Bessie Bunter. Will you?"

"Ay, miss; I'll promise that!" said Piper readily. "I know you young ladies would like to help the poor old chap if only you could."

"We may be able to," said Babs.

She repeated the statement as she was going into the school with her chum.

"But what can we do, dear?" said Mabel helplessly.

Babs gripped her arm.

"Have you forgotten that benefit concert we were thinking of, Mabs?"

Mabs started.

"To tell the truth, I had," she said.

"But there is something in the idea, I know. Yes, we could give the concert in Friardale, and supply a lot of turns ourselves. Then there are plenty of people in the village who would help as well. A benefit concert is just the right way to help anyone down on their luck like old Gillis, isn't it?"

"Of course!" said Babs. "I think it

couldn't think of leaving my cooking for any rehearsals, you know!"

Babs stared at Mabs, and Mabs stared at Babs, when they had closed the door.

"Bessie's not keen on a concert!" gasped Babs.

"It's the limit!" said Mabs. "Absolutely got cookery on the brain! My goodness! Let's go and sound the others, anyway!"

They found the others far more tractable.

Those who had contributed to the little collection for old Mr. Gillis were sorry to hear the report that Piper had brought back. They waxed quite enthusiastic over the idea of a benefit concert to be held in the village, and especially enthusiastic at the mention of a little play that they could give.

"Just the ticket!" said Clara Trevlyn. "And 'Rosalind's Fortune' is the thing we know best!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Marjorie Hazeldene. "It's a gorgeous little play!"



AND SHE THE PRIZEWINNER! Nancy Bell made to tear away the tin of blackened lumps that Clara Trevlyn put upon the table. Long before she could do so, however, the girls had seen the poor result of her sweet-making!

might be easily possible to do something, and raise fifteen pounds. But we mustn't tell Bessie what Piper told us, must we?"

"Bessie? Good gracious, no!" said Mabs. "If poor old Bessie only guessed that he's so nearly come to the workhouse she wouldn't be able to sleep at all! She's madly keen to do something to help him now!"

"That's just it," said Babs. "With her still believing that she's responsible for his ruin—no, Bessie certainly mustn't know anything about his real circumstances. We must give her a chance to take part in the concert, of course."

They hurried to Study No. 4. Bessie Bunter was cooking, as they expected. But Bessie was still able to surprise them.

When Mabs said that they were proposing to organise a concert in the village, the fat girl hardly raised her head.

"I'll do a turn if you want it, Mabs," said Bessie off-handedly. "But I

"Rather!"

Mabs smiled to see the enthusiasm with which everyone was taking up the idea.

"Well, there's no time like the present, girls!" she exclaimed. "Why not have a rehearsal in the music-room now, and all keep our old parts?"

"Jolly good idea!" said Clara Trevlyn. "Kim on, girls! We'll make a start now, as Mabs suggests!"

Dolly Jobling smiled.

"Just a minute, girls!" she said. "Don't forget that Nancy Bell had a part last time. Going to ask her?"

"Bother Nancy Bell!" said a chorus.

"Good thing Nancy isn't here to hear that!" chuckled Mabel Lynn. "But Katie Smith can do her part a jolly sight better—can't you, Katie? Come on! Annabel, drop that knitting; you're in this, you know!"

"I did want to finish father's bed-socks to-night," sighed homely Annabel.

"Don't you think it could wait?"

"No!" said a chorus.

So Annabel, who did not usually join in the Fourth Form pursuits, abandoned her knitting with great reluctance, and

accompanied the others who were already hurrying for the music-room.

Mabs was still hunting in the cupboard when the last girl arrived and closed the door.

"I can't find the parts anywhere!" she said, over her shoulder. "Does anyone know where they are?"

Annabel gave a gasp.

"I—I believe I've still got them in the study, Mabel," she said.

Mabs stared at her.

"You have, Annabel?"

"Yes. Don't you remember that I said that I would put brown-paper covers on all of them, and stitch the copies, to keep them clean and tidy?" said Annabel. "I'm sure I've got that play in Study No. 1. If you wait here I'll get them."

"Right-ho, Annabel!"

There were several grins exchanged when Annabel had gone. Annabel was like that. She loved brown-papers covers and neatness, but especially the brown-paper covers. They were a special hobby with Annabel. She was always covering something.

"Long time gone!" commented Clara, after several minutes had passed.

"Yes," said Babs, and they went on waiting. But more minutes passed, and still Annabel failed to return.

"Better go down and see where she is," said Clara, at length. "It's quite likely she's gone back to finish those giddy bed-socks! Let's see what she's doing!"

Clara led the way, and the others, tired of waiting for Annabel, followed. They came on her standing outside Study No. 1, a look of annoyance and exasperation on her face.

"Hallo!" said Clara. "What's the matter, Annabel? Are you standing in some glue, or something?"

"I'm locked out of my own study!" said the country girl indignantly. "I can't get the parts! They won't let me in!"

"Oh, they won't, won't they?" said Clara. "I'll see what I can do!"

Clara did so. She stepped to the door and banged loudly.

Thump, thump! Thumpity-thump!

"Well? Who's that?" called the sulky voice of Marcia Loftus.

Clara explained, with considerable vigour, who she was and what she wanted. It was really unnecessary to explain whom she was.

"Well, you can't come in!" answered Marcia's voice.

Bang, bang, bang! went Clara.

"You can't come, you've been told!" came a shrill cry from Nancy Bell.

"We're busy! You'll have to wait now until we've finished; you're not going to interrupt us!"

"My hat!" said Clara.

There was a mystified silence in the passage. The girls exchanged glances. And while they were standing there sounds came from inside Study No. 1.

"Whew!" said Dolly Jobling. "It sounds as though they're cooking!"

Everyone listened tensely.

"Yes, they are!" nodded Babs.

"Cooking!" breathed Clara. "Nancy Bell cooking! My hat! What was that?"

"That" was a regular clatter, like the spilling of cookery implements. And it was followed by a cry from Marcia, and an indignant outburst from Nancy Bell.

"Having a nice jolly time together!" commented Clara. "Well, we're not going to wait their pleasure, anyway! What right have they to be locked in the study? Why must they cook in secret?"

Bang, bang, bang!
 "Will you go away?" came a shrill cry from Nancy Bell. "I've said I'm not going to open the door!"
 "What are you doing in there?" retorted Clara. "We want to come in for our play! Are you cooking?"
 "Find out!"
 Thump, thump, thump!
 "Go away!" yelled Marcia and Nancy together.

The girls stared. Both voices sounded as though their owners were perfectly furious about something. And Clara had really given them no cause for feeling as deeply as that about anything!
 "Doesn't sound as though the experiments were going well!" commented Mabel Lynn. "I think—"

She was interrupted by a wild yell that came from inside Study No. 1.

"Look out! It's over!"
 Something clanked, and then there was a roaring sound. A chair was overturned and the roaring grew louder. Marcia and Nancy shrieked together.

"Whatever's the matter in there?" cried Clara. "Open the door, you duffers!"

"Don't!" panted Nancy Bell's voice. But Marcia Loftus did. The key turned in the lock and the door whirled open. The girls stared into a smoky and smutted room wherein Nancy Bell was shrinking back from a blazing tin that stood in the hearth, roaring and spluttering!

"Fire!" gasped Clara.
 Babs was one of the first to get over the shock that it gave to all of them. She sprang into the study and, with the poker, ramed the tin back under the bars. At the same moment Mabel Lynn jumped on the hearthrug that was beginning to burn, and Clara Trevlyn tore the blazing mantel-border down and hurled it into the grate.

"Nearly a blaze that time!" panted Babs, heaping ashes into the guttering tin. "What ever have you two duffers been doing?"

Marcia and Nancy were looking white and frightened, and still making no effort to speak. It was Clara who suddenly discovered something on the table.

"My hat! Look at that!"
 Nancy leapt forward to grab at the tin that Clara had discovered. But in the nick of time Clara jerked it away. Nancy clung to her arm, panting.

"Give it to me! It's mine!" she hissed. "You sha'n't see it—I didn't intend that! Give it to me!"

Clara shook herself free of Nancy's hold and waved the tin.

"Girls, just look at this! It's what Nancy's been making—some of Nancy's cookery!"

And, saying that, Clara placed the tin back on the table, but so that everyone could see this time. Long before Nancy tore it away they had seen its contents. The blackened little lumps were certainly supposed to be sweets, but even at her worst Dolly Jobling had never perpetrated anything like that!

Clara laughed as the crimson-faced Nancy hid the tin behind her back.

"Girls, Nancy's been cooking—and that's the result!" she exclaimed. "That accounts for the locked door! That's what they didn't want us to see!"

"Is it any business of yours what we've been doing in here?" cried Marcia Loftus in a blustering voice.

"Not now we've put out the fire for you, perhaps!" said Clara sarcastically. "That's just a detail!"

"I know, girls!" ejaculated Mabel

Lynn. "Nancy's been trying to make her sweet again!"

"I haven't!" said Nancy hoarsely, but the very denial lent strength to Mabel's suspicion.

"Yes, that's it, of course!" cried Katie Smith. "And she told us this morning, in the dormitory, that she knew how to make it—that she had not forgotten!"

"You don't know what you're talking about!" said Nancy furiously.

"It's funny that you couldn't make the sweet last night, and now we find you doing this sort of thing—practising in secret!" said Clara bluntly.

"What do you mean? What are you trying to imply?" cried Nancy.

"I consider you're a jolly queer girl to have won a first prize for cookery, that's all!" said Clara.

"Hear, hear!"
 Nancy Bell was turning very pale indeed now.

"Go out of here—the whole crowd of you!" she said, with quivering lips.

I'm simply longing to see how you can make a sweet that is worth a twenty-five pound prize!"

She closed the door without waiting for a reply, and Marcia and Nancy were left alone at last. Marcia went and turned the key in the lock. Nancy drew one deep, shuddering breath, and then dropped to a chair. She was trembling violently.

The Mystery of Nancy!

NANCY BELL was not herself again that evening.

It became a matter for general comment in the Form. Barbara Redfern, who had been rather startled at Clara's reckless words, saw it, and was sorry that they had not had a longer interview with Nancy.

And yet, what was the matter with her? That was what was puzzling everyone. Were they to believe that Nancy really did know something about the



DULCIE MARSHALL ARRIVES! "Hurrah! It's Dulcie!" was the cry of the waiting girls.

"I won't have you coming and saying this sort of thing! You'll be trying to pretend next that I won my prize through some mistake!"

"And I shouldn't be surprised at that!" said Clara.

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie Hazeldene, who was more cautious.

"I mean it!" said Clara. "Here's Nancy, supposed to have invented a wonderful sweet. We see those awful little things in a tin, and another tin on fire! Is that how a cook ought to go on?"

"Let's take our play and get out of it, Clara!" urged Marjorie. "You really shouldn't say a thing like that! Nancy's had an accident, and all cooks can blunder at times! Here are the parts we want!"

But Clara was not to be denied. She gave Nancy a very curious smile as she paused, at last, at the doorway.

"You may be fearfully clever, Nancy—far more clever than we thought!" Clara said. "But I'll tell you this! After this performance, I'm simply longing for Tuesday afternoon! Yes,

strange disappearance of Bessie Bunter's sweet?"

Everyone was watching Nancy at supper-time, and in the dormitory. They looked at her on the Saturday morning, too, and could not believe that she had known anything like peaceful slumber. Nancy Bell seemed to have something on her mind.

There were class lessons at Cliff House on Saturday mornings on account of the Wednesday half-holiday. The first was model drawing, taken by Miss Primrose herself, and the second was nature study.

Although Nancy was usually a dunce in class, she had never proved quite so dense as she seemed to be that morning. And again there was wonder! Why, what was the matter with her?

Fortunately for Nancy, all the attention was not focussed on her. Bessie Bunter was not a shining light on this morning, either. Too much concentration on cookery had dulled Bessie's none too brilliant mind, so far as lessons were concerned.

Bessie's absent-mindedness worried THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 147.

Babs far more than the strangeness of Nancy Bell.

"It's a practice hockey match this afternoon, Mabs," Babs said to her chum during the last lesson. "We're going to drag Bessie away from her cookery, and make her play. What do you say?"

"We really ought to!" Mabs answered, and they settled it at that.

Lessons were never popular on Saturday. The last one, with Miss Bullivant, came to an end at last, and there was a joyful rush from the classroom.

Dolly Jobling was just ahead of Babs as she left the room. Dolly did not always use her eyes as she should have done, so it was not altogether surprising that she did not see the parcel lying in the passage just outside.

"Oooh!" gasped Dolly.

Crash!

And there was Dolly Jobling rolling on the floor, just as she had done many times before at Cliff House.

Babs hastened forward.

"Hurt, Dolly?"

"Ow! Oooh! Not much," Dolly gasped, scrambling to her feet. "Just bumped my knees a bit, I think. But what a stupid place to leave a parcel, right outside the Form-room!"

"Who's it for?" asked Clara's voice. "It must have come this morning, and Piper— My hat! It's for Nancy Bell!"

"What of it?" asked a sullen voice, and Clara looked up to see that Nancy was standing at her side.

"More cushions and rugs, I suppose?" said Clara. "Going to make yourself nice and comfy in Study No. 1?"

"That's my concern!" answered Nancy tartly. She looked up at Babs, who was still standing close to the spot. "Am I to have another lecture on the wickedness of ordering things that I haven't paid for?"

"I think you're very silly, Nancy," said Babs quietly. "Especially as you haven't got the cheque."

"And as no one's seen you make your precious sweet, either!" added Clara Trevlyn.

"You mind your own business, Clara!" cried Nancy furiously. "I'll mind mine, too! I've had enough insinuations from you!"

With that Nancy walked off, leaving the others staring.

"That was a giddy outburst!" said Clara. "Wonder what it was that made Nancy fire up like that?"

"You said no one had seen her make her sweet!" said Dolly.

"H'm! It's quite true, anyway," said Clara. "I wonder why Nancy should be so indignant, especially after what we saw last night? Strikes me that Nancy knows more than she's told us. Roll on, Tuesday!"

Babs and Mabs felt as puzzled as anyone, but the matter of Bessie Bunter drove Nancy from the central place in their thoughts. Bessie was beginning to look pale, and was certainly not herself. She was going to attend the hockey, whether she wanted to or not!

And Bessie did, after many protests on her part.

"Not to-day. I don't want to play, really," said Bessie. "I—I want to go on with my cookery. I had some more ideas in class this morning, you know."

"We'd guess as much as that, Bessie," nodded Babs. "It's a wonder that you didn't pick up a hundred or two lines for not attending. But you're coming out with us, and going to get a little colour in your cheeks."

It was a queer position, having to press

Bessie to play hockey. As a rule, she usually firmly believed that she was kept out of the Fourth Form team through jealousy of her play. Phyllis Howell commented on it as she saw Bessie's fat figure ahead of her when they were walking to the field.

"Fancy Bessie having to be dragged down here!" she said. "First time I've known her want any urging! I wonder who she'll clump with her stick to-day?"



IS SCHOOL WORTH WHILE?

Fourth Form Opinions obtained by PHILIPPA DERWENT.

BARBARA REDFERN.—School is certainly "worth while." To say the least of it, it brings out one's character—a thing that could hardly accrue from private instruction. And then, as regards the mere mastication of knowledge, most of the knowledge itself is bound to prove useful in after-life, and the habit of learning is an even greater asset.

BESSIE BUNTER.—School would be very well worth while, Flap—with improvements! Diet is not given sufficient attention—as regards quantity, I mean, not quality—and petty jealousy as to who is the best sports girl in the Form, and who has the best figure, ought to be suppressed. Far too much time is given to lessons, but I must admit that I have learnt a great deal—especially in the art of spelling. You might think I'm pulling your leg, Flap, but when I came to Cliff House I was not a good speller. I used to spell the word "accident" as "aksident," and now, of course, I know that the word is spelt "axident!"

FREDA FOOTE.—While a humorist can employ her wit, school will always be worth while—for her!

PHYLLIS HOWELL.—Cliff House, at all events, is worth while! It teaches us the greatest motto of all: "Play the game!"

ANNABEL HICHENS.—Is school worth while, indeed! When girls are encouraged to go tearing about a hockey-field, scoring runs and tries until they are red in the face and out of breath, and domestic work—a woman's work, mark you all—is totally neglected! School will never be worth while until girls are taught that a woman's place is in the home!

PEGGY PRESTON.—Worth while, Flap! Why, for us it's the most gorgeous mixture of work and pleasure we could possibly wish for!

VIVIENNE LEIGH.—There was a time when I didn't think so, but I do now—with all my heart!

MARJORIE HAZELDENE.—I don't think you'll get many negative answers to this question, Flap! I believe even Marcia and Nancy will be really sorry when the time comes for them to leave Cliff House!

KATIE SMITH.—Yes, school's worth while. It's the greatest adventure out!

MARCIA LOFTUS.—Some schools may be, but Cliff House certainly isn't—so far as I'm concerned!

NANCY BELL.—No, it isn't! The hours are all wrong, for one thing. Rising-bell should go at least two hours later. Lessons shouldn't occupy a quarter of the time they do. Preparation should be abolished. So should sport in all its silly forms.

Mabel Lynn chuckled.

"Not me. I know her of old!" she said. "But she does need some exercise, Phyllis!"

"Oh, rather!" agreed Phyllis, readily enough. "Poor old Bessie's quite worried me lately with her experiments. Look here, Mabs, I'll pass the word round, and we'll really give Bessie an interest in the game to-day—eh? Give her plenty of passes, you know, and slacken our defence a bit! Then she might really score a goal—the first one of her life!"

"The first one for her own side, anyway!" chuckled Mabs, who had a long memory. "Yes, that's a topping idea, Phyllis! It'll buck Bessie up no end to think she's really done something! My word, I'd love to hear her boasting in her old style! I don't like her moping about as she does!"

The word went round quickly, and everyone soon knew the scheme.

The Fourth were fond enough of the fat, but not proficient, Bessie to think that it was a very fine scheme indeed. Babs and Phyllis picked up sides, and Babs picked on Bessie at once, just as though she was a player really to be desired in her team! What should have been even more amazing to Bessie was the fact that she was given the position of centre-forward—a position with possibilities.

But Bessie wore a gloomy frown, in spite of it all!

"Buck up, Bessie! We really want to see you play!" Babs whispered, as they prepared for the first bully-off. "It's a bully between you and Phyllis. Off you go!"

Phyllis took up her position opposite Bessie, and they tapped sticks.

After they had touched three times, Phyllis took a mighty hit, missed the ball, and—fell over!

It left Bessie with an absolutely clear start!

"Go on, Bessie!" came yells from her own side and opponents as well.

"Eh?" said Bessie Bunter absently.

"Hit the ball, you noodle!" yelled Clara.

"Oh, really——"

"Phyllis will be up in a minute!" shrieked Dolly Jobling, who had thoroughly entered into the spirit of the thing.

Bessie Bunter blinked, and gave the ball just a gentle pat.

It was really too much for the Fourth-Formers. Phyllis, who was staying on the ground quite unnecessarily, rose to her feet and rushed for the ball. The others rushed as well, and the game started with Bessie Bunter blinking round and still ignorant of the wonderful chance she had missed!

"You're a duffer, Bessie!" said Babs, in her ear. "Why didn't you get away with the ball? You might have scored then!"

"Might have scored?" said Bessie, in surprise.

"Yes! Don't you dare to let us down again like that!" said Babs, and went on.

"I say, Babs!"

But Babs was not staying to conduct an argument with her centre-forward.

It was quite ten minutes before Bessie seemed properly to realise that she was playing a game of hockey. Dolly Jobling, who was getting quite desperate, "woke her up" at last by taking the ball from her very stick. After Bessie had threatened reprisals with her hockey-stick, and the game had been stopped to finish the argument, she really did seem to take more interest in the play.

But Bessie made nothing of the chances given to her before the interval. It was amazing how frequently the ball rolled right to Bessie Bunter's feet; but it was still more amazing how frequently she missed it, or trod on it, or did not even see it!

"She'll be better in the second half, girls," Babs whispered. "Bessie's really a hard case to-day, but I think she's waking up. If only she scored, you know, I believe she'd get quite enthusiastic!"

"Then she shall score all right!" said Clara; and there was a chuckle.

Clara was the opposing back, and

should certainly not have been making such statements!

Play was resumed—for Bessie Bunter's benefit!

Phyllis Howell missed the ball in amazing fashion whenever Bessie approached, or even passed it right to the stick of her fat rival. But a quarter of an hour passed, and a goal was scored against Babs' side, and Bessie did not seem very much brisker.

"Now's your chance, Bessie," whispered Babs, as they prepared for the bully-off again. "Two goals from you, and we'll win! Let's see what you can do!"

"All right, Babs!" said Bessie, quite cheerfully. "You leave it to me! I'll see that you're all right! Only two goals?"

And the change seemed to come then. Bessie Bunter got the ball, Phyllis missing it badly. Dolly Jobling, an opposing half-back, ran right past her, and Gwen Cook and Katie Smith, two more rivals, collided. There was a clear path between Bessie Bunter and goal, save for Clara, who didn't even seem to be watching the game.

"Shoot, Bessie!" yelled Babs. "Now's your chance!" cried Mabs. "Rush it, Bessie! Up the field!" "Hurrah!"

"Bessie's going to score! Go it, Bessie!"

There was nothing to stop Bessie. Clara, floundering about with her stick, knew that Bessie was going to find it the easiest thing in the world to pass her. She saw Bessie run forward, and then—

"My hat!" ejaculated Clara. There was an audible gasp from every player.

With nothing to stop her, with a clear run for goal ahead, Bessie Bunter had dropped her stick and was running off the field.

"Bessie!" "You noodle!" cried Mabel Lynn. "Bessie Bunter!" shrieked the players in unison.

"I've just thought of my recipe!" called Bessie over her shoulder.

And then she ran on towards the school, showing greater speed than she had shown during any part of the match.

The Fourth-Formers stood in a speechless crowd and watched Bessie Bunter. She was really hopeless—absolutely hopeless! They had arranged for Bessie to score, and she couldn't have had a better opportunity. But, instead of scoring, Bessie Bunter was running calmly from the field to do more cookey.

Bessie Bunter was, fortunately, ignorant of the sensation she had caused. She had not been a bit interested in the hockey match. Her mind had been in Study No. 4 all the time.

So she went straight into the school, and hurried up the stairs. Bessie was quite cheerfully unconcerned as to what the end of the match might be. Just another effort with the fresh ingredients of which she had thought. It really seemed the right thing this time. And—

In the doorway of Study No. 4 Bessie Bunter pulled up dead. As she did so, a girl who had been bending over the table suddenly straightened up, looked at Bessie, and a guilty flush came to her face.

"Nun-Nun-Nancy Bell!" gasped Bessie Bunter.

Nancy looked at her, and appeared to pull herself together.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" she said. "I thought you were going to pretend to play hockey?"

Bessie Bunter stared. There were open books on the table,

and she recognised them as her own. Each one seemed to be open at the back cover—just where she had become in the habit of jotting her cookery notes! A suspicion flooded Bessie's mind.

"You're jolly well trying to find out my recipe!" hooted Bessie Bunter.

Nancy Bell slammed the books together with one sweep of her arm, and whirled round.

"What did you say?" "I saw what you were doing!" said Bessie recklessly.

"Don't you dare to say that sort of

Oooooo! That hurts, Nancy! Oh, my arm! Oooooo!"

"Going to change your opinion now?" hissed Nancy.

"I tell you— Oh, lemme alone! You—you eat, Nancy!"

"Be quiet!"

Bessie Bunter gave a wild struggle to free herself, and slipped. She fell against Nancy, and Nancy fell against the table. Crash!

"Oh, you duffer!" Running steps sounded in the passage, and the door burst open. Babs and



HOW TO BE A GOOD JAPER!

By FRED A. FOOTE (Fourth Form).
(Who can seldom be taken seriously!—Ed. C.H.W.)

JAPING keeps you alive, and keeps other people alive. Think how cheerful and lively it makes you to be a japer! I can soon prove this point by proving the reverse. Have a look at Miss Bullivant. She never works a jape. You never see her waiting outside Miss Primrose's study to jump a jack-in-the-box at her, and then toddle off chuckling! No, life is too serious for the Bull, and that's what makes her what she is to-day. Miss Bullivant is an example of what no japing makes you!

Supposing she decided to indulge in a jape! Supposing she came up to the Common-room, and pelted us with a few cushions, or dressed Mademoiselle Lupin in some of her funny old clothes, and made her walk round the school! I'm sure her face would become broader and sunnier, and she'd look years younger!

From this you all ought to see how necessary it is to be a japer. Now I will explain how to be a good japer.

First, always see that your joke goes off well. It is a very bad thing to carefully prepare a booby trap, and then hang about outside the door, and let the very girls for whom you have prepared it push you through the door, and bring it down on yourself. It's annoying, and it's an awful waste of time. It is what I call a bad jape. But Bessie Bunter has done it—more than once!

Another thing is, never tell people what you're going to do. There are ways and means of doing this, I know. Some people don't put it into so many words, but they grin and give the game away. Angelica Jelly is one of these.

She came to my study only the other afternoon, carrying a tea-tray loaded with all sorts of seemingly good things, and said that Grace Woodfield had sent it down for me. I suspected something from her grin, so I gently stamped on Angelica's foot. She shrieked, and gave the tray such a joggle that she upset all the hot water, and it swam about all over the tray and ungunned the tea-service! Yes, it was that familiar Fifth Form joke crockery that is only held together with gum. Angelica went back again with it all in pieces.

There is another mistake that a good japer will never make, and that is to work the jape on the wrong person. A certain young lady I know intended to jape Miss Bland, of the Fifth, and watched her leave the school one particular evening. She then went to her study, and proceeded to turn the furniture all about. Having put in two or three most energetic minutes, she looked round, and found that a very scandalised Miss Bullivant was watching her!

Yes, she'd mistaken the study, and gone to that belonging to the Bull, instead! It isn't at all a good jape to go and do that sort of thing, so I advise you to cut it right out!

Having studied the perils and pitfalls, you will probably now wish me to give you a little advice as to the sort of thing you can do. Well, that's a more difficult matter, of course. It really depends on how much nerve you've got, and whether you think you're going to be caught. If you are, be careful not to get too deeply involved in anything. The alarm clock under the table is always safe, unless someone takes it for a "ticking spider," and won't stay in the house.

There are many things still waiting to be done at Cliff House. Piper could be captured, and hoisted on to the roof of his lodge. The hands could be taken off the face of the clock, or the clock face painted with eyes, nose, and mouth.

Then there is the garden roller. That used to form the subject of many japes at one time. Placed up against the door of Piper's lodge, he can't escape without climbing out of the window, and it makes him awfully cross. Placed outside the tuckshop door, it won't allow anyone inside to escape. And when Bessie found it outside once, and wanted to go in—my word, she did just pull!

So now, japers, put your thinking-caps on! Just one last word of advice, however. Don't you dare to jape me, or you'll be sorry!

thing to me!" cried Nancy, but her face was redder than ever.

"I will! I jolly well saw you!" retorted Bessie. "I'll jolly well tell everyone, too, and— Oh! Ooooh! Leggo my arm!"

Nancy Bell held the fat girl's arm in a cruel grip.

"Don't you dare to start telling any falsehoods about me!" she exclaimed. "Understand? I just came in to look up a book that I haven't got. It's for my evening prep. Now do you understand?"

"You were jolly well looking at my recipes!" yelled Bessie defiantly. "I believe you wanted to find out— Ow!

Mabs, followed by most of the hockey players, came into the study, to find the table overturned and Nancy and Bessie still wrestling together.

"Good gracious! What ever's happened?" cried Babs. "Bessie, what's the matter? Nancy, what are you doing in here?"

"She was trying to find out my recipe!" panted Bessie.

"I wasn't!" cried Nancy. "It's a falsehood, and I won't stand it, so there! I just came in for a book!"

"Let's hear the whole story," said Babs quietly.

So Bessie told her story, and Nancy added her version. While they were

doing it Mabs righted the table and picked up the books. She listened patiently to Nancy until she had finished. "It sounds a pretty tale, Babs," said Mabel, "but the curious thing is that Nancy's had just about every book that Bessie possesses — and only Bessie's books!"

"Whew!" whistled Clara. "What have you got to say to that, Nancy?"

Nancy, her face scarlet, struggled to get to the door.

"I—I won't trouble to say anything!"

wildly. "And it's like your cheek to make such horrid insinuations. I'm going to my own study, and I'll defy you to stop me! Think what you jolly well like!"


Nancy tore herself free and fled across the passage. In Study No. 4 there was a complete and bewildered silence. Clara broke it at last.

"So that's Nancy's latest!" she said. "I'm positive now that she knows something. What is it? Girls, we'll find out on Tuesday, when she has to make her sweet before the camera! I don't believe

even though they were alone, Nancy Bell spoke in a voice that was really little more than a whisper, so anxious did she seem that her words should not carry beyond the study.

"To-morrow's Tuesday!" Nancy Bell muttered, and gave a shiver. "They'll be coming to-morrow with that camera, and—with the recipe. Oh, Marcia, what ever am I to do?"

Marcia Loftus gave a little shrug. She did not look frightened, like Nancy. Other people's worries did not worry Marcia as a rule.



GRAND CONCERT

Held at Mid-Term, Easter Term, 1922, in the Great Hall at Cliff House School. In the Chair: MISS PENELOPE PRIMROSE.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overture The Sixth Form Orchestra. 2. Conjuring Miss Frances Barrett (Sixth). (Assisted by Herbert Boker.) 3. Song, "Old-Fashioned Town" Miss Peggy Preston. 4. Recitation, "The Water Mill" Miss Steel. 5. Pianoforte Recital, "Rubenstein's Melody in F" 6. Song, "Où se Noïgh on Nointey-Noïne!" Miss Marjorie Hazeldene. 7. Song, "Roast Beef of Old England" Miss Angelica Jely. 8. Selection Miss Bessie Bunter. 9. Paper Manipulation The Orchestra. 10. Short Sketch, "We Three!" Miss Madge Stevens. Misses Beatrice Barlow, J. Pacey, and T. Beare (Second). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recitation, "Gentleman of France" Miss Mabel Lynn. 2. Song, "Sweet and Low" Miss Bullivant. 3. Patter Recitation (Selected) Miss Freda Foote. 4. Song, "The Nightingale" Miss Vivienne Leigh. 5. Recitation, "The Watcher" Miss Barbara Redfern. 6. Song, "I Sell Sweet Lavender" Miss Grace Woodfield (Fifth). 7. Ventriloquism Miss Flora Cann (Fifth). 8. Play in French, "L'Oiseau" The Upper Third Form. 9. Recitation, "The Street Watchman's Story" (By Special Request) Miss Mabel Lynn. 10. Song, "Down in Somerset" Miss Stella Stone.
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INTERVAL.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Chorus Songs Led by the Third Form Chorus. 12. Extra Anon. 13. Extra Anon. 14. The School Song Sixth Form Orchestra. 	<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Short Address by Miss Primrose.</p>
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Commentary for those who were not present.

The concert was a huge success, in spite of the unfortunate start made by the second turn. Frances got going with her conjuring quite well, but became flustered. She then had the supreme disaster to trip up Boker, her assistant, and upset her table of "apparatus" into the orchestra, and the curtain came down very hurriedly.

Peggy, Miss Steel, and Marjorie, who followed, were excellently received. No one seemed to know exactly what Angelica was doing, but she did it with great spirit, and was applauded for trying. Bessie sang about "Roast Beef" with furious earnestness, and although she forgot nearly all the words, managed to repeat the title in every other line, and made up the rest. Her impromptu patter that started: "Of course, I like a bit of chicken sometimes," and went on through a full dietary, sent the audience into shrieks, although not as Bessie intended! The orchestra was very good, Madge Stevens proved to be quite clever at tearing paper, and the Second-Formers were excellent.

Mabel Lynn had the honour of being the only girl to give two turns, but well deserved her applause. Miss Bullivant was neither sweet nor low, but she tried, and meant well. The French play sent quite a lot of people to sleep, but was vigorously applauded by those members of the Upper Third who were not acting. Vivienne was sweet, and Flora made a lot of fun with her dummy. It was surprising what a jolly turn No. 11 proved to be, and the Two Blossoms were thoroughly in their element. 12 and 13 provided several excellent turns by girls who only decided at the last minute to sing or recite.

Generally, it was an excellent evening, with plenty of fun, both intentional and unintentional. We only hope that all succeeding Mid-Term concerts will be as consistently good.

she panted. "If—if you believe that stupid fat girl before me—well, you—you can! I won't even trouble to answer her falsehoods now—"

"Just a minute!" said Clara, holding her arm. "I think it would be just as well for you to explain, Nancy! On Thursday you didn't know how to make your sweet, and said you'd forgotten the recipe. Last night you had that fire, after experimenting. Don't you think you'd better tell us what it all means?"

Nancy Bell shrank away from Clara, her eyes burning.

"It—it doesn't mean anything! There's nothing to explain!" she said

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 147.

that Nancy will be able to do it—there! I believe that there's some trick!"

That statement carried along the passage, and it carried into Study No. 1. And Nancy Bell, sitting inside, heard every word—and trembled afresh! If only they had seen her then, they might have been sure!

A Guilty Conscience!

IT was Monday evening at last, and Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell sat in Study No. 1, talking. Annabel Hichens was out, rehearsing the playlet with the others in the music-room, and they were both glad of that. But

"It's going to be your own fault if anything comes out, Nancy," she said.

"My own fault? How do you mean?" quavered Nancy.

"Well, you did it with your eyes open," said Marcia. "You ought to have thought of this before, when you took Bessie Bunter's sweet, and her recipe, and sent it in as your own—"

"Sssh! Oh, don't! Not so loud!" whispered Nancy, in an agony of alarm. "You—you might easily have done the same thing if you'd been tempted as I was! How—how did I know that they'd sent that fat girl Dulcie along to take a film of me making the horrid sweet?"

"Well, they did!" said Marcia.

Nancy Bell wrung her hands.

"I know!" she said, through her teeth. "Goodness knows how I faced them at all on Thursday. And, since then, with all of them giving me such suspicious looks, I don't know how I've pretended that I've nothing to be afraid of!"

"I don't know that you have," answered Marcia. "I'm sure everyone in the Form suspects you."

"Not of what I've really done!" Nancy panted, gripping Marcia's arm. "Oh, Marcia, you can't say that anyone has guessed the truth!"

"Clara seems to be pretty near to it!" said Marcia. "Of course, she's only been making guesses. But a lot of them listen to her!"

Nancy Bell shivered.

"There's one thing," Marcia went on. "Bessie Bunter hasn't managed to remember how she made her precious sweet, and she's got more lines than ever for inattention in class to-day. It would have been rather awkward for you if she had got hold of her recipe again!"

"It would!" nodded Nancy wretchedly. "But it doesn't help me much, even though she does seem to have given up trying this evening. I'll be caught just the same to-morrow—bound to be!"

"Why?" said Marcia. "You might be lucky."

"Lucky! When they're going to bring the recipe in Bessie's writing? Someone will be bound to see it, and then they'll guess everything. Oh, if only I'd found out how to make the horrid sweet! If I could have found out the recipe I could have told that girl Dulcie to keep the other one out of sight, and if I made it with different colours they might not have guessed what I was making!"

"They would when they tasted it!" said Marcia.

"Think I shouldn't have had an accident and spoil it all before it could be tasted?" retorted Nancy. Then she groaned. "But it's no good. I tried to remember what Bessie had written the other evening—"

"And a precious fine muddle you made of it!" Marcia interjected. "Nearly set the study on fire!"

"It was your fault—you got scared when they banged on the door!"

"I didn't! You lost your nerve and upset the tin!"

"That's not right! You know you grabbed me!"

"Because you were trembling so!"

"Well, don't let us argue about it, for

goodness' sake!" muttered Nancy, suddenly giving in. "I made a fool of myself, I know, and they all suspect me over it. And then, on Saturday, Bessie caught me looking through her books—"

"Like an idiot!" said Marcia.

"How did I know she'd come in?" countered Nancy, with nervous anger. "I thought she was still playing hockey, instead of leaving the game as she did. She guessed what I was after, and they haven't given me a chance to look at the books since. And now—I'm going to be caught to-morrow!"

She was nearly in tears as she looked up at Marcia.

"Can't you think of anything, Marcia?" she said.

Marcia Loftus tapped her foot on the carpet.

"It's up to you to think of something, Nancy," she said. "After all, it doesn't concern me very much!"

"You were going to share in the cheque when I got it!" Nancy reminded her. "I said I'd take you out, and get things that you want in the study. If I'm found out, they'll guess that you knew as well."

Marcia frowned.

"Can't you go out to-morrow, and let that fat girl turn up with her camera and find you're missing?" she said. "Barbara & Co. would guess that you aren't face her, but that wouldn't matter."

Nancy shook her head miserably.

"Someone would stop me if I tried to leave the school," she said. "Besides, Miss Primrose would want to know where I was. Bessie might say something, and it would all come out. Oh, Miss Primrose must never know. I couldn't risk that!"

Marcia could make no other suggestions. Minutes ticked by, each one seeming to leave Nancy more dejected. She could stand it no longer. With a nod to Marcia she rose suddenly, and went out into the passage.

To come face to face with Clara!

"Hallo!" said Clara, quite cheerfully. "Made me some of your new sweet yet, Nancy?"

"I've told you I'm not going to!" said Nancy, with assumed indifference.

"But you will to-morrow!" chuckled Clara. "Ha, ha, ha! I'm longing to see what happens to-morrow afternoon, Nancy!"

Nancy Bell passed on, but only, as it were, from the frying-pan to the fire. She met Babs and Mabs.

"Ready for to-morrow, Nancy?" asked Mabel Lynn.

Nancy glared at her.

"Everyone knows you're hiding something," Mabs went on. "Don't you think it would be just as well if you told us the truth, and said why you couldn't make your sweet? Who made it for you?"

"No one!" said Nancy abruptly, and went on.

But she was feeling so worried that she was sure that they must know now that she had something on her mind. Walking did not relieve her anxiety. She returned to Study No. 1, and dropped into a chair again. Already she hated the cushions that she had bought so recklessly, in anticipation of that £25 cheque that had not reached her. She hated the whole conspiracy, now that it was too late!

But what was she to do?

Marcia Loftus was still silent and pre-occupied. Marcia couldn't, or wouldn't, help her. Perhaps Marcia felt that it was all up!

She was going to be caught, after all! She felt it! She seemed to know it! They would find out that she had schemed to cheat Bessie out of her prize.

And that night Nancy felt that she could hardly sleep at all. She seemed actually to have felt their curious eyes on her when she was turning in. They were all thinking of their half-term holiday on the morrow, and what it was to bring forth. Snatches of conversation had reached her ears, and she had known that it was all about the forthcoming

long before anyone else was ready. Luck seemed to aid her at last. She saw the postman, hurriedly scrawled a slip, and handed it to him. The obliging fellow took it willingly, and then Nancy returned to the school—and met Marcia.

"What's the matter? What have you done?" Marcia cried, staring at Nancy's radiant face.



ANGELICA'S NEW SHOES!

By PEGGY PRESTON.

IT was the end of the first day of Angelica wearing her new shoes—a pair of creaking ones that got on the nerves of the whole school—and the Fifth-Former had retired to her study. The tight, creaking shoes hurt her feet more than she would have cared to admit, and she took them off, and sank back in her armchair in great relief.

As she did so, two figures crept up to the half-open door, and peered within. They were Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell, and Marcia carried an open clasp-knife in her hand.

"See! There are the shoes, Nancy!" said Marcia, deliberately speaking loud enough for Angelica to hear. "There isn't the slightest doubt about that emerald being concealed in the heel of one of them!"

Angelica had been about to spring up angrily; but, quite naturally, the last words kept her rooted to her chair.

"Are you sure that shopkeeper is right?" began Nancy, evidently acting an arranged part.

"Of course he's right!" retorted Marcia. "When the foreigner asked about those shoes, the shopkeeper distinctly told him he had sold them to Miss Jelly, of Cliff House School. That foreigner was in a regular rage, I can tell you! That's why he let out the secret—a precious emerald is hidden in the heel of one of those shoes."

With that the pair of cunning jaspers commenced to creep cautiously into the study. Then, as though for the first time, they caught sight of Angelica in the armchair, and stopped. Angelica sprang out of her chair, her eyes glittering with excitement.

"Stop! I've heard every word you've said, you two!" she cried imperiously. "Give me that knife, Marcia Loftus!"

"But—" began Marcia, in seeming defiance.

"Give me that knife!" shouted Angelica.

Marcia slowly parted with the knife, and the Fifth-Former seized it triumphantly. A moment later, and she had seized one of her new shoes, and, after vainly twisting the heel for a few seconds, commenced to saw at it recklessly with the clasp-knife.

It needed five minutes strenuous exertion before Angelica had cut through sufficiently to tear off the heel. At last she succeeded. But the heel left no cavity. In fact, it looked pretty solid all through! Nevertheless, Angelica laboriously cut through the thick leather, and divided the heel into two portions. But not the slightest sign of an emerald was there to be seen.

Marcia and Nancy looked on and gloated.

"Must be the other one!" muttered Angelica feverishly, hardly aware, in her excitement, of the presence of the two Fourth-Formers.

The Fifth Form hobbyist proceeded to serve her second new shoe in exactly the same way. She started violently when her failure became obvious. The second heel no more contained an emerald than had the first. Angelica looked queerly at the now grinning jaspers.

"Are—are you sure that—that foreign—"

Angelica! You stupid girl!" Stella Stone appeared on the threshold. "Why on earth have you ruined your new shoes in this manner?"

Angelica looked really dazed as her endeavours were summed up in this blunt manner. An alarming suspicion of the true state of affairs was dawning upon her.

"These—these girls—they said there was an emerald hidden in the heel of one of my shoes!" she faltered.

Stella gazed sternly at the pair of Fourth-Formers. Both had turned a sickly white now. In their shallow way they had only considered the "jape"—not the consequences. Least of all had they expected Stella Stone to arrive on the scene in this fashion!

"This, I presume, is a most spiteful prank of yours upon Angelica!" said Stella steadily.

"Mum-mum-my goodness!" stuttered Angelica at this point. "I—I've been japed—tricked!"

"Marcia and Nancy, you will come with me to Miss Steel!" said Stella. "This matter is too serious for me to deal with!"

And the two sorry jaspers almost crawled out of the study after the school captain, Angelica watching them go with a most extraordinary expression on her face.

Marcia and Nancy were in for it!

"You will replace Angelica's shoes, and you will remain within gates for the rest of the week!" were Miss Steel's words—among others.

And the three most miserable girls at Cliff House just at present are Marcia Loftus, Nancy Bell, and Angelica Jasmine Farren Jelly.

visit of the film people—to photograph her making the sweet that she had never made!

Again and again she woke during that long night. Dawn came, and then rising bell. She started to dress, hopelessly, almost ready to tell all. And then, at last, came the idea!

Breathless, Nancy hurried downstairs

Nancy touched her lips to enjoin caution.

"I've had the idea—at last!" she whispered exultantly. "Oh, Marcia, I wonder I didn't think of it before! I've sent a wire!"

"A wire? What, a telegram?" said Marcia.

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Nancy nearly burst out laughing with her relief.

"Yes! Oh, it's so easy, after all! I wonder I didn't think of it sooner!" she whispered. "Listen! I've sent a wire to Flavour & Favour's, and I've told them not to come! That girl Dulcie said that it wouldn't be any good taking the film after to-day!"

"Whew!" whistled Marcia.

"See the idea? Catch on?" said Nancy. "I've told them in the wire that I've got to go and see a relative who's ill. That doesn't matter. No one here will even know that I've wired, putting them off! And now I needn't fear anything—I can pretend to be just as eager as anyone to see them come! Ha, ha, ha!"

Marcia squeezed Nancy's hand, and gazed at her admiringly.

"Nancy," she said, "it's just the wheeze! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Marcia Loftus laughed as well. It seemed an excellent scheme—one that was going to enable Nancy to win, after all!

Bluffing the Form!

TUESDAY morning—and Bessie Bunter was cooking again!

The sight did not give any satisfaction to either Barbara Redfern or Mabel Lynn when they reached Study No. 4 after breakfast and discovered Bessie back at her old occupation on this day—the half-term holiday.

"Bessie, give it a rest for this morning, dear!" said Babs. "You're trying to do too much. You'll make yourself ill if you don't stop this never-ending cookery. Come out for a walk!"

Bessie Bunter shook her head.

"Dulcie Marshall's coming this afternoon," she said.

"Yes, we know that, Bessie," said Babs.

"If I could invent my sweet again, I could get her to taste it," said Bessie Bunter moodily. "I'm sure she'd love it and tell the manager of the sweet manufacturers that he ought to buy it for fifteen pounds. Then I could pay that poor old man for all the eggs I broke."

"There's no need for that now, Bessie," said Babs quietly. "We're going to get up our concert at the end of the week—probably on Saturday—so everything will soon be all right."

"I don't suppose you'll raise fifteen pounds," said Bessie, shaking her head. "Anyway, I sha'n't have done it myself. And the poor old chap's been thinking of going into the workhouse!"

"Who ever told you that?" said Babs and Mabs in one breath.

"It's true, anyway," said Bessie. "Oh dear! I wish I could remember what I did to make that lovely sweet! I must find out somehow by this afternoon!"

Babs and Mabs felt that it was hopeless to try and drag Bessie out now. They were gazing at the fat girl, and gazing at each other, when Clara Trevlyn peeped into the study.

"I want you two!" she said.

So Babs and Mabs went out into the passage, where quite a crowd of Fourth-Formers were collected.

"It's about Nancy Bell!" said Clara swiftly. "We all think that things have gone far enough—too far, if anything! There's some mystery about Nancy—something that's scaring her. What is it?"

"She seems afraid of meeting Dulcie again!" said Babs.

"Exactly!" nodded Clara. "Why? It's a funny thing that she doesn't know how to make her sweet! It's still funnier that Bessie's sweet and recipe have both disappeared! See what I mean?"

Babs gasped.

"You're never going to suggest—"

"Yes, I am—to Nancy," said Clara grimly. "I'm going to see her now, and with luck we'll make her speak the truth. Will you all back me up?"

In a flutter of sudden excitement, Babs and Mabs said they would. The others had already promised.

So Clara Trevlyn, greatly excited, led the search for Nancy Bell. It really seemed that they had hit upon the truth at last! Whispered speculations that had not been voiced before passed from lip to lip as they hurried in search of Nancy.

They could not find Nancy downstairs, and no one seemed to have seen her.

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"Afraid to Come to School!"



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That only increased Clara's keenness. She returned, at the head of her followers, to the Fourth Form passage.

There, quite suddenly, she came face to face with the girl she sought.

"My hat!" gasped Clara, and stopped dead.

Nancy Bell was not alone. Marcia Loftus was with her. Each of them carried a tray, and piled on those trays were packets, and jars, and bottles, and tins. The sight seemed almost to petrify Clara.

"Hallo! Here's Clara!" exclaimed Nancy, a broad smile on her face.

"Looking for me, Clara?"

"Yes," said Clara, with a return of her grimness. "We want to have a few words with you, Nancy."

"Sorry I can't stay just now!" said Nancy. "We're off to prepare the model kitchen for this afternoon."

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Clara.

"We're going to get everything ready so that there's no delay this afternoon," Marcia explained. "Miss Primrose has lent us the key. We're just off to make all preparations for making some of

Nancy's sweet. Do you mind moving to one side? These trays are rather heavy!"

But Clara Trevlyn was not quite done.

"This is rather a change in you, Nancy!" she said. "Up till now you've seemed afraid of to-day. You've tried to make your sweet, and failed, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed Marcia and Nancy together.

"Where's the joke?" said Clara, with sudden irritability.

"I've been pulling your legs, and you never guessed it!" chuckled Nancy Bell, as though vastly amused. "You thought I'd forgotten how to make my sweet! You've been saying how keen you are for this afternoon to come! Well, you're not going to be disappointed—you shall see me make my new toffee all right! Now do you mind moving?"

Clara Trevlyn moved.

The others parted, and allowed the grinning couple to pass, without uttering a word.

"Oh dear! She—she said toffee!" said Dolly, breaking the silence at last.

"Eh?" said Clara. "What do you mean by toffee?"

"You're wrong, Clara—absolutely wrong!" said Dolly, shaking her head. "You know what you said about Nancy's sweet, and what you really thought it was. Well, Bessie's sweet wasn't toffee at all; it was a cream! If Nancy's going to make toffee, it must be something different."

"Um!" said Clara, as though utterly at a loss for words.

"They were laughing, and so excited, too," said Phyllis Howell. "I'm sure it wasn't put on this time. Nancy didn't look a bit scared, did she?"

"Not a bit!"

"We'll see this afternoon," said Clara doggedly.

But Clara's amazing theory of the morning had received a blow from which it did not look as though it would recover. Some, who were used to the wiles of Nancy, went down to the model kitchen, but only to receive further confirmation. Marcia and Nancy were weighing up sugar and other ingredients as hard as they could. The place was absolutely set for the experiment.

That sight really convinced the Fourth-Formers that Nancy Bell had nothing further to fear. They were puzzled, but they couldn't make head or tail of it. In the end, most of them went for a walk, leaving Marcia and Nancy to their quite unexpected and unaccustomed labours in the model kitchen.

They returned at dinner-time, to find the most dejected Bessie Bunter they had ever encountered. Bessie Bunter looked as though she had been weeping during their absence.

"Haven't you had any luck, Bessie?" said Babs, in great concern.

"Nothing at all!" said Bessie, with a sniff. "I've burnt my fingers, and I—I've used up all the things in the cupboard, and—I can't get it at all! Oh dear! I—I know I'll never find it out now, Babs! I—I'll never win that fifteen pounds!"

Nancy Bell chuckled as she came past just at that moment.

"I'll show you how to cook this afternoon, Bessie!" she said. "I'll show you how to win prizes! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really—"

But Nancy had gone on, leaving the Fourth-Formers more puzzled than ever. She was actually rejoicing over Bessie! Nancy was rubbing it in now. No girl who had anything to fear could act like that!

Little did any of them dream of the telegram which Nancy had sent. They did not know of the cancelled visit, and

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the gigantic bluff that Nancy was working on them. Nancy was, indeed, excelling herself in cunning to-day.

And Nancy intended to keep it up. After dinner she was one of the first to go out into the quadrangle to "wait for Dulcie to come."

"I'd never have believed that a girl could change so quickly," said Mabel Lynn, still amazed. "What ever can account for the change? Why is she so excited?"

Babs shrugged her shoulders. "She must have found out her recipe again, and be sure of herself," she said. "As for her excitement—well, Dulcie will probably bring the twenty-five pound cheque with her. That's enough to excite Nancy, or anyone else!"

Babs, Mabs, and a crowd of the others, went to the quadrangle to wait for Dulcie Marshall as well. Their keenness was damped, but they wanted to see the engaging Dulcie again, for all that. But they couldn't be happy with Bessie Bunter in such a dejected frame of mind.

"I'll never make my sweet now," Bessie told them over and over again. "Oh dear! Won't Dulcie be disappointed with me!"

Half an hour passed whilst the girls walked up and down, chatting together, and then—

"Sounds like a car!" said Clara suddenly. "Listen! Yes, it is! My word! Hurrah! It's Dulcie, at last!"

A car had appeared. It came in through the gates, and as it did so a plump girl rose and waved a podgy and excited hand. Two men, with tripods and big cinema cameras, were to be seen as well.

"Hallo, girls! I'm here!" cried Dulcie's excited voice. "Did you think I was never coming?"

The voice reached one girl, who was standing in the quadrangle as one rooted to the spot. It was just like the echo of words heard in some horribly unreal, dazing dream. That girl was Nancy Bell.

"She—she's come!" muttered Marcia Loftus in Nancy's ear.

Nancy's face went paler than ever. She stared at the crowd of girls rushing to greet the cheery Dulcie. She saw the two men lumbering their cameras from the car. The perspiration gathered on her brow in cold beads, and she began to tremble violently.

"My—my g-g-goodness!" was the

hoarse cry that came from between her quivering lips.

"I thought you said you wired!" muttered Marcia, in a sort of snarl.

"I—I did!" Nancy choked. "I—I couldn't have sent it to the right place, or else they must have started before it got there. Now she's here! Oh, oh, Marcia, wh-wh-what ever am I to do?"

"I'm going to get away!" muttered Marcia; and with that she turned and hurried off, leaving Nancy alone.

Nancy Bell shook with the fear that gripped her. Her great bluff had collapsed! After she had stifled the whispers of suspicion in the Form—after she had considered herself safe, Dulcie was here to see her make the sweet, and she couldn't make it without looking at the recipe that someone would be bound to recognise.

"Come on, Dulcie!" she heard Barbara's voice exclaiming.

And then Nancy completely lost her nerve. She was still unnoticed in the excitement of welcoming the film-party. She turned and ran towards the school building. When once inside she tore up the stairs madly—anywhere to get away from the ordeal that awaited her.

Her aimless run took her to the dormitory. She darted inside, and dropped on to her bed. In another moment she had risen again, kicking off her shoes. Fully dressed, she scrambled down under the clothes, and waited.

Would they find her there? Would anyone look in the dormitory? The ten minutes that passed was an hour of agony for her. And then—footsteps outside the plate! The door opened, and Babs and Mabs looked inside.

"Why, there she is!" cried Babs. Nancy stared at them with frightened eyes. What falsehoods could she tell now to put them off the track?

"I—I'm ill, Barbara," she muttered. "It's a sort of fever—just come on. If—if Dulcie comes, tell her I'm awfully sorry—"

"Dulcie's here!" said Babs. "And I believe you know it, too! You look all right. Why have you bolted off like this? We've been looking for you everywhere!"

"My hat!" said Mabs, coming to the bedside at that moment. "Here's a precious fine patient! She's fully dressed!"

And with that Mabs pulled the bed-clothes down, and they both saw that what Mabs said was true.

"I—I'll catch a—a chill—" Nancy panted.

"Get up!" said Babs scornfully. "Your forehead isn't hot, and you look quite all right! I don't believe you expected that Dulcie was coming, Nancy! But you're coming down to meet her now, whether you're ill or not!"

"I won't!" said Nancy defiantly. "Right—ho! We'll help you!" returned Babs.

"Don't you dare— Oh! Stop pulling! You'll have me out!" And that is just what they did! Nancy Bell found herself on the floor, with Babs and Mabs on each side of her. She struggled, but quite uselessly. And suddenly seeing the futility of further resistance, she put on her shoes and went with them.

But not with any of the keenness she had been showing that morning!

"Found her?" cried Dulcie Marshall's cheery voice. "That's splendid! Good-afternoon, Nancy! We've got the cameras fixed up, and all's ready. Jolly good of you to get all your dishes and ingredients out—saves lots of time!

This is just the right place for you to stand to get the full light!"

Nancy Bell entered the model kitchen. The girls who were to watch the progress of her experiment with keen and excited expressions—for the benefit of the film, of course!—were in position. Nancy felt all their eyes on her as she entered. She dared not look up at them.

"And the recipe, Nancy. I've got that, too!" said Dulcie Marshall blandly. "Here it—"

Nancy waved her back in a last desperate effort to save herself.

"No, thanks! No! I don't want it. I remember now!"

"But it must just lay here on the table, anyway, my dear!" said Dulcie. "You see, we show a close-up of it on the film, and then they'll know what you've got on the table beside you." She unfolded a paper she held in her hand. "Here it is!"

Nancy Bell took the paper, and it crumpled in her nervous clutch.

"Ooooooh!"

It was a perfect yell that came from Bessie Bunter.

"Bessie!" gasped Babs. "What ever's the matter?"

"My recipe!" shrieked Bessie Bunter. "Wha-a-at?"

"Where, Bessie?"

"What do you mean?"

Bessie made a wild spring at Nancy Bell.

"That's my recipe she's holding! I know those blots on the back of it. I upset the ink! Give it to me, Nancy! Gimme my recipe!"

Nancy Bell darted for the door.

Bessie Bunter seized a handful of her bobbed hair and tugged back.

"Yaroooooh!"

Nancy shrieked, and as she staggered back the paper fluttered from her hand. Bessie Bunter flung herself on it, with one gasp. In another moment Nancy Bell was on the floor as well, fighting to get it. But there was help for Bessie now! Clara and several others dragged Nancy back, and a very dusty and bedraggled Bessie Bunter rose, but still gripped a paper in her hand.

"My recipe! It is! Look, girls, you can all see it!" Bessie panted. "Nancy's had it all the time! She's been cheating! Nancy's jolly well tried to get my prize!"

She fluttered the paper aloft, and they gaped as they saw it.

There could be no possible doubt about that writing!

It was Bessie Bunter's recipe that they all saw. It was Bessie's recipe that had been brought to the "prizewinner"—Nancy Bell!

Bravo, Bessie!

NANCY BELL had made a full confession at last!

She attempted to hedge at first, but her guilt was so completely proved by what had happened that she saw the futility of trying to shelter behind falsehoods any longer.

So she told the truth. It amazed the Fourth-Formers. The camera-men looked awkwardly away. Dulcie stared like one bewildered at such a confession. Only Bessie Bunter was different from everyone else. She held her recipe in both hands, a huge smile on her fat face. She muttered "Yes, fancy me not remembering that!" and "Of course, that's just what I couldn't think of!" And Dulcie

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and the cameras and even Nancy seemed to be completely forgotten by the fat girl in her first joy over the recovered paper. "I—I didn't intend to let it go so far!" Nancy gulped, after trying to excuse herself in every possible way. "But I didn't have a chance to draw back. I—I've been awfully worried, I can tell you!"

Dulcie Marshall stared at her, her blue eyes wide with scorn and contempt.

"My goodness!" she said. "You are a horrid cat, aren't you, Nancy! Fancy helping yourself to someone else's things like that!"

Nancy blinked at her.

"You know," went on Dulcie, in her irrepressible way, "if I wasn't such a perfect lady I should jolly well jump on you and try to pull all your hair out! I should, really! What an awful hole you've gone and got us all in. Babs, what ever are we going to do with her?"

"Don't ask me, Dulcie," said Babs, through her teeth. "To think we never guessed it! Oh, I feel too mad for anything! Nancy, there aren't any words for you! You jolly well deserve to be expelled for such a horrid trick!"

"I—I'm sorry!" muttered Nancy, looking at the floor. "I can't say more than that now, can I?"

"We'll send you to Coventry for a week, anyway!" said Babs. "After cheating Bessie, and then letting her worry so much—"

"I say, I don't mind now, Babs!" said Bessie, her face one huge grin.

"Eh?" gasped Babs.

"I've got my recipe back, you know!" chuckled Bessie, still gloating over the slip of paper. "Five ounces of butter, you know, and I only put three and a half. Makes all the difference! I don't mind now I know how to make my sweet again!"

Dulcie Marshall could not help smiling. "That's the right spirit, anyway," she said. "Come here, my dear, catty Nancy! I still want to jump on you, you know! Say that you surrender all claim to the first prize."

Nancy said it.

"Now apologise to Bessie Bunter, and humbly beg her pardon!" commanded the self-possessed visitor.

Nancy apologised to Bessie, and humbly begged her pardon. Dulcie Marshall rubbed her hands.

"Oh, what wouldn't I give to take a film and flash those words on the screen!" she exclaimed. "It would make it so much more exciting, too! I only wish I dared! You've said all you want to, Nancy?"

Nancy nodded humbly. She could not trust herself to reply in words.

"Then I think we've done with you, and I hope they do send you to Coventry!" said Dulcie. "Now I'm going for you myself!" She suddenly gripped Nancy's shoulders, and made a perfectly dreadful grimace at her. "I'm going to bite you! G-r-r-r-r!"

And Nancy took fright. She really believed that Dulcie meant it.

"Help!"

With that wild yell Nancy bolted for the door. They heard her slip in the passage, and sprawl. And then Dulcie closed the door, and went into a peal of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! That settles with Miss Nancy!" said Dulcie. "Well, girls, I don't suppose you'll mind it being dropped at that?"

Babs had to smile.

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"It's a wretched business," she said. "Just what I think," said Dulcie. "The sweet people—Flavour & Favour, you know—wouldn't like to think that their competition had had any serious results. It is nothing less than stealing, but I dare say Nancy was badly tempted, and she's been found out. All's well that ends well! I can soon explain to Miss Primrose that a mistake has been made, and the prize is going to be awarded to Bessie. I can do that!"

"Will you really, Dulcie?" said Babs delightedly.

"And I—I gig-gig-get the pip-pip-prize?" stammered Bessie Bunter.

"If you can make the sweet and that's your recipe!" chuckled the plump visitor.

"If I can make it!" gasped Bessie. "Oh, you just watch me!"

Dulcie laid a hand on her shoulder. "No; just a minute!" she exclaimed.

"Get the cameras ready, please! We'll take the film now, with Bessie in the leading role. There's only one important instruction I have to give you," Dulcie finished, in a very serious voice.

"What's that?" said Bessie.

"Make double quantities!" grinned Dulcie.

"Double?" said Bessie. "Not likely! I'm going to make four times as much as I did before, and then we'll all have a good bit!"

And, without any further delay, Bessie Bunter set to work to prepare her wonderful sweet. And the cameras clicked away, and recorded it all!

There was a tea-party that day of such a size that it had to be held in the Fourth Form Common-room. With the exceptions of Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell, every girl in the Fourth attended it. And Dulcie Marshall, looking merrier than ever, sat at the head of the table and beamed on them all, but mostly on Bessie Bunter, who sat at her right hand.

And not without reason!

Special permission having been obtained, Bessie Bunter had spent the afternoon in the model kitchen. She had certainly had assistants, but all the credit was due to her. They were Bessie's cakes that adorned the table, and her jam-sponges, and the pancakes and sausage-rolls that had already gone, had all been made by Bessie Bunter. It had been an absolute field-day for the fat girl of the Fourth!

What a lot everyone seemed to have to say, too! They were talking about the successful filming, and what a really enthusiastic cook Bessie had looked. But most of all they seemed to be talking about the sweet that Bessie had at last repeated in such a successful manner. There had been a generous proportion for everyone, and everyone had thoroughly enjoyed it.

But now the tea was coming to an end at last, and they called on Dulcie for a speech with such persistence that at last she rose with a beaming grin.

"You won't get much of a speech from me so you needn't expect it!" she announced cheerfully. "Of course, I can't go without thanking you for the jolly good time you've given me this afternoon. I haven't enjoyed myself so much for months! And now—well, I don't see why we shouldn't make a little ceremony of this—eh, girls?"

"Rather!" they chorused, guessing what Dulcie meant.

The plump visitor fished in her bag and produced a tinted slip of paper. She

coughed in an exaggerated effort to clear her throat, and beamed on Bessie. "Here you are, my cherub!" she exclaimed. "With the compliments of Flavour & Favour, Ltd.—and you jolly well deserve it, too! Here's the cheque for twenty-five pounds. I've altered the name, and it'll be made quite all right with the bank!"

She passed the slip of paper into Bessie's trembling hand.

"Hurrah!" yelled Babs, and they all caught up the cry.

"Good old Bessie!"

"The winner, after all—and deserves it!"

"Bravo! Hurrah!"

And Bessie Bunter blushed, and looked positively ill at ease at such an ovation.

"Just another sec, my dears!" implored Dulcie. "I haven't got much more to say. I think it's jolly decent of Bessie to have been trying to win this prize so that she could give some money to that old chap you've told me about. But it isn't going to be necessary, after all. I've spoken to my pater since I saw you last, and he says he'll be only too pleased to give him a job in our studios as an odd man, and perhaps to do a bit of acting. Much better than tramping round the lanes buying eggs, too!"

"You're going to give him a job?" gasped Bessie.

"Rather!" said Dulcie. "He'll be in the dry, and he'll get much better pay than he got on his egg round. It will be permanent, too. So there's no need for you to try and compensate him for his accident, Bessie, and—if you try, I'll jolly well tell the bank not to pay that cheque, so there!"

"Good for you, Dulcie!"

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!" they cheered again.

Bessie Bunter blinked at the slip of paper disbelievingly. Twenty-five pounds, and it was all to be her own! She needn't pay any of it away—it wouldn't be necessary! And she had twenty-five pounds to spend—an incredible amount that was really and truly her very own!

"It—it's awfully good of you, Dulcie!" she gasped. "It's ripping of you to offer the old chap a job! And I'll have all this money—eh? I know, Babs—I know what I'll do with it first!"

"We'll see you don't waste it!" laughed Babs.

"Certainly not!" said Bessie. "I'm going to buy all those new curtains and cushions from Nancy Bell—she won't be able to pay for them now. You won't be able to say then that I've never done anything for No. 4. He, he, he!"

Dulcie rattled her teacup.

"Still got a little left!" she exclaimed. "Come on, girls! We'll drink Bessie's health, and wish her luck with her twenty-five pounds—eh? To Bessie!"

They did. And then they roared with laughter to see that Bessie, in her confusion, was drinking her own health as well! But they really couldn't blame her; she was always doing something like that!

THE END.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND will contain "Afraid to Come to School!"—a magnificent new, long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, by Hilda Richards—a splendid instalment of "Joan Haviland's Silence!" and numerous extracts from the "Cliff House Weekly." Order your copy at once!)

A Magnificent Story of the Girls of Greyhurst School!



JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!

By JOY PHILLIPS

(Author of "The Girl Who Chose Richest!")



THE LEADING CHARACTERS.

JOAN HAVILAND, a poor scholarship girl, who formerly lived in Brick Row, in a London suburb.

RUBY HAVILAND, her sister, whose sudden accession to riches completely spoiled her.

ELSIE DAINTON, the friend of Joan.

HILDA HEATHCOTE, an excellent girl, and captain of the Fifth Form at Greyhurst School.

SYBIL SARDONE, **CLARICE CHOANE**, **OLIVE COURTNEY**, and **PHYLLIS FRANKLIN**, four "cronies," who formed a "set" at Greyhurst, and were bitterly opposed to Hilda Heathcote and her friends.

Joan and Ruby Haviland arrived at Greyhurst School separately—Joan with Elsie Dainton, Ruby with Sybil Sardone. Ruby had previously pressed Joan to keep silent as to their relationship.

From the first Sybil Sardone & Co. were down on Joan, though Hilda Heathcote and her chums befriended the scholarship girl. It was on account of this that Hilda became accused by her enemies of favouritism, and lost many of her friends.

In gallantly stopping a runaway horse, Hilda Heathcote met with an accident, and was taken to the sanatorium. The headmistress decreed that the Fifth Form must have a temporary captain until Hilda recovered. Elsie Dainton and Sybil Sardone were finally nominated as rival candidates for the captaincy. Joyce Carroll acted as canvasser for Elsie's party, but found that not a few girls were in a mind to vote Sybil Sardone's party to power—"just for a change." A keen contest was certain.

(Now read on.)

A Sister's Pleading.

MEANWHILE, in the study occupied by Sybil Sardone and Ruby Haviland, across the passage, hopes of a glorious triumph for the "swell set" were running high.

Sybil herself, in a very extravagant frock, put on for the first time only an hour ago, was lolling along her favourite couch. Ruby was sitting very quiet in a corner by the door. Olive Courtney and Phyllis Franklin were tipping backwards in easy-chairs on either side of the fire.

"Really, it is splendid!" Clarice Choane declared, as she suddenly rejoined her bosom friends after a stealthy bit of canvassing. "Two more converts, Syb darling!"

"Two?" burst out Phyllis quite excitedly. "Then doesn't that make a win for us certain? Here, let us go into it!"

Seizing pencil and a scrap of paper, she stepped to the table and jotted down name after name, with Clarice to assist her memory.

It was a list of all the girls who were

now pledged to vote for Sybil—and the list totalled thirteen.

"Then we've won—yes!" Phyllis predicted, dashing down the pencil. "Sybil darling—My word, how calmly you do take things, lying there like that! You are going to win, do you hear?"

"I hear, Phyl," drawled Sybil. "No need to get excited."

All the same, she suddenly got off the couch, drawing herself erect, with a glint of rapture, if not excitement, in her handsome eyes.

"Thirteen votes!" she commented, glancing at the list. "So I shall get in by a majority of one—just one!"

She laughed, trying to disguise her uneasiness.

"It doesn't allow much of a margin, does it, girls?"

"For what?" returned Clarice lightly. "These are promised votes. Quite likely there are other girls who mean to vote for you, although they haven't said so. I know this, the Form is not hanging together like it was!"

"Oo, noo," agreed Olive, in the high Society tone. "It only needed Hilda's letting goo the reins for lots of geals to feel like—"

"Kicking over the traces—eh?" Sybil took her friend up, with that wide grin. "Well, they can go ahead how they like, once I am captain. But—one vote! Only one more than the Dainton girl is going to get!"

She turned upon Ruby.

"Do you hear, Ruby dear? It only needs your voting for the Dainton girl instead of for me, at the last moment, and I shall be beaten!"

"Just as if Ruby would!" exclaimed Phyllis, laughing.

"I don't know so much," Sybil said, keeping her teasing yet fascinating eyes upon Ruby. "You were not too anxious to second me at the meeting, were you, Ruby darling?"

"I—I was nervous, Sybil! As a—a new girl—"

"Well, perhaps! But don't let nervousness make you put a cross against the wrong name presently!" smiled Sybil. "By the way, the voting papers ought to have been cyclostyled off by now."

Ruby Haviland jumped up as this was said, clapping a hand upon the door-knob.

"I—I'll go and see if they are done, shall I?" she offered eagerly. "Miss Trotter gives them out, I think you said?"

"That's right. So, if you will, thanks!" Sybil nodded in her regal way.

Ruby went out quickly, shutting the door behind her. A few moments she stood there, almost gasping for breath, as if being in the room with Sybil and the rest had been a painful ordeal.

Even when she walked on towards the stairs she was obviously strung up—and did ever a pretty face look more miserable than hers?

At the end of the passage she halted, and looked back. A haunted look was in her eyes, and haunted she felt!

All that Sybil Sardone had said in that flippant, teasing tone, about voting for Elsie Dainton after all—it had left Ruby frightened.

Not for the first time she felt that Sybil had some uncanny power of reading one's very mind.

So often the girl made some jesting remark, grinning her wide grin the while, and it would be a remark bearing upon something which she—Ruby—was just then thinking.

It had been like that only a few moments ago. At the very instant when she was thinking could she secretly vote for Elsie Dainton, there had come that bantering remark from Sybil, coupled with a smile that seemed to say:

"Vote for her—if you dare!"

The harassed girl made another effort to pull herself together. Fiercely she told herself that it must be quite safe to vote in secret for Elsie Dainton if one wanted to. And, oh, how much she wanted to do that!

Yes, she, Ruby Haviland, all along the follower of Sybil Sardone, and still fascinated as she was by that girl, she wanted to vote for Elsie Dainton!

In her heart of hearts she knew what a bad thing it was going to be for the Form and the school if Sybil won the vote!

All very well for Sybil to be the daring leader of her own particular sect, but—but—

"Hallo, Ruby!"

That was a little cry from Joan, as she and her sister suddenly came face to face at the end of the corridor.

The elder sister would have passed on, after making only a confused response, but Joan caught her by the arm.

"Wait, Ruby!" she entreated in a whisper. "Now that I've met you like this, with no one else on hand! Oh, Ruby, let me ask you! Will you—will you—"

"Will I what?"

And Joan answered imploringly: "Will you vote for Cousin Elsie?"

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"I Vote for —"

IN a tone of earnest supplication came that cry from Joan Haviland:

"Ruby dear, will you—will you vote for cousin Elsie?"

To Ruby it seemed a most strange, fateful thing that at the very moment when she was secretly feeling the impulse to vote for her cousin, Joan should have suddenly confronted her with this appeal. The girl who had followed her own wilful, selfish course all this time was suddenly conscious of having reached a crisis in her young life.

Her beautiful face betrayed a great agitation, and in a flash her sister divined the inward struggle that was raging.

"It is a strange thing, Ruby," Joan exclaimed, speaking softly, "that this election for Form captain is to be a fight between Sybil Sardone and our cousin Elsie. Have you thought how strange it is?"

Had she not! Had it ever been out of her mind for a single moment since that moment when the rival candidates were adopted! What a strange, fateful thing that the struggle was to be one between Sybil and Elsie!

"Oh, Ruby, how I hope you will grant me this favour!" Joan faltered imploringly. "I—I do not want to say harsh, bitter things about Sybil and her set. I shall never be happy whilst you, my sister, are friends with them. But that is not what I want to say now. We don't want to squabble, we who love each other so!"

Ruby still said nothing, and a little gleam of hope came into Joan's anxious face.

"Think what the position is, Ruby! Cousin Elsie is a girl who stands for all that poor Hilda Heathcote stood for when she was captain. More than that, cousin Elsie is the girl whom Hilda, now laid aside as she is, wants to see returned as our captain. And remember, Ruby, it is up to all of us to think of Hilda's wishes. Least of all ought you and I to go against her!"

"You mean—"

"Where should I have been this evening if Hilda had not done that brave deed yesterday?" Joan exclaimed. "I would have been killed, Ruby! And I am your sister, the sister I know you still love, in spite of the—the way we have been keeping at a distance."

Again Ruby was silent.

Only too well she saw how right and true were Joan's pleas for the vote to be given to cousin Elsie—to Elsie, who was practically the nominee of the girl who had saved Joan's life!

"So will you, then—will you vote for her, Ruby? Only say 'Yes,' and I—Oh, Ruby darling, if I have ever done or borne anything for your sake—and I think I have borne much—I shall feel fully repaid. Let Elsie have your vote—"

"But"—Ruby wetted her dry lips—"Sybil Sardone is my friend! I share her study; I am in her 'set.' How can I vote for her rival? The ballot is secret, I know, but—"

She made a pause.

"Sometimes, Joan, these things leak out afterwards. Sybil may find out that I voted for her rival, and then—oh, how furious she will be!"

"What can I say?" sighed Joan, in great distress. "You don't like me to speak scornfully of Sybil. If I appeal to you to be done with Sybil, you will only think me unfair!"

"How could I be done with her now, even if I wanted to be?" Ruby suddenly exclaimed miserably. "Your friends would never be friendly to me, even if—"

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"Oh, they would, Ruby—they would! If that is how you feel—a sudden longing, at last, to get away from the Sardone set—then do it, Ruby! Do it! Come over to our side—my side! I am your sister—"

"The school does not know we are sisters. That is the wretched part about it all!" Ruby wailed. "The secret we have kept all along, Joan—how can it be given away now? I shall be the scorn of the school!"

"No! I will plead for you! I—"

"It is no use talking like that. If part is known, all must be known. You'll be all right, Joan. You were only a party to the secret to please me. Everybody will admire you as much as they will despise me. I know they will!"

Now it was Joan's turn to be helplessly silent.

She could not deny that it was going to be a terrible "show up" for her sister if the relationship was disclosed. It was a secret that had only been kept for Ruby's own selfish sake, that she might not be "disgraced" in the eyes of her swell friends by having a scholarship girl as sister, and a mother who worked for her living.

"The secret must be kept, Joan; it must be kept!" Ruby burst out, in a tone that told how thoroughly sick she was of her miserable plight. "But as for the election, I—yes, I do want to vote for Elsie!"

"You do? Oh, then—"

"Hush! Not so loud!" Ruby whispered, with a timid glance around. "If I vote for Elsie, that must be a secret, too! I will do it, Joan. Before you spoke to me about it I had seen that I really owed my vote to cousin Elsie."

"She was your good, true friend in the past, Ruby. She would have been as much your friend to-day as she is mine if—"

"It is not that," broke in Ruby irritably. "I am thinking of what Hilda Heathcote did—how she saved your life, Joan. As you say, it would be making an ill-return to her if I—if I—"

"If you vote for Sybil Sardone, Ruby, then Sybil may get the captaincy; and that will simply break Hilda's heart!"

Ruby was turning very pale once more. It agitated her terribly to know that the one vote—her vote—might turn the scale one way or the other.

"I must go," she broke out sadly.

"But, Joan—"

"You will, dear? You promise?"

"I? Yes, I promise! Elsie shall have my vote!"

Joan shot a glance around. Not a soul was in sight. She darted at Ruby, and flung both arms about her neck.

"Thank you, Ruby. Oh, thank you! Now we know that Elsie is safe for the captaincy! Joyce's prediction will come true! Elsie is to be captain after all!"

And she scampered away, wondering how she was going to account for her wonderful happiness, without telling all Elsie's supporters that the odd vote had been secured!

Ruby went on down the stairs, and got some of the cyclostyled voting papers from the Form mistress. Then she returned to the study which she shared with Sybil Sardone.

"Ha, ha! At last!" was Sybil's cry, as Ruby entered with the papers. "Take your voting paper, Clarice dear! And you, Olive, and you, Phyllis!"

"Does Ruby take round the rest to the girls whose votes are pledged to us?" asked Clarice.

"Ooo, noo, surely not!" said Olive. "I think Sybil herself, as the candidate, should take them round!"

"Hear, hear!" agreed Phyllis Franklin. "Your last chance, Sybil, to put in a word for yourself!"

"Ha, ha, ha! All right! I'm game!" Sybil laughed lightly. "I don't think I could have trusted Ruby, anyhow! She might not have proved such a good canvasser for me, after all!"

Again that teasing thrust, the half-mocking smile, as if Sybil knew that Ruby, in her heart of hearts, did not want the "swell" set's leader to lead the whole Form!

Ruby's eyes fell away before Sybil's. She sat down at the table in an embarrassed manner.

Sybil went out, taking the papers with her, and then Clarice drifted to the door, giving a lead to Olive and Phyllis.

"No harm in voting right away," Clarice remarked. "My ballot paper will be in the box before five minutes are out!"

"Ditto, mine," said Phyllis. "What about you, Ruby?"

"I? Yes, I am going to vote at once," Ruby answered, still sitting at the table. "The sooner the better, as you say."

"Long live our noble captain, Sybil Sardone! Ha, ha, ha!" Clarice cheered flippantly, passing from the room. "Hurrah, for the new regime! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the door closed with a careless slam, causing the flippant laughter to die away upon Ruby's ears.

She was alone now. But she knew that it would hardly be a minute ere Sybil came back. Before that girl returned, the ballot paper—Ruby's own paper—must be filled up in Elsie's favour!

She drew it towards her on the writing-pad, and dipped a pen in the inkpot.

Then she stared at the typewritten words:

"I, a member of the Fifth Form, and therefore entitled to one vote in this election, give the said vote in favour of Signed"

The dotted blanks held her gaze for a long, long time.

Here, in the very room which she shared with the girl who wanted to be captain of the Form, she was to cast her vote in favour of the rival candidate! And that vote would probably settle everything; it would make Elsie Dainton captain!

She took another dip at the inkpot, and then began to write, her hand shaking violently.

"I, Ruby Haviland—"

She raised her eyes to the door. Could she lock it? No, that would be far too risky—just the thing to cause suspicion! She must complete the ballot paper quickly, and get away with it.

"In favour of Elsie Dainton.—Signed, Ruby Haviland."

There, it was done!

She jumped to her feet, rubbed some blotting-paper over the form, and then started to fold it.

Now for an envelope, and—

The study-door suddenly opened quietly, disclosing Sybil Sardone.

"Hallo, so you have already voted, Ruby?"

"I? Yes, I—"

"Sure you have spelt my name all right?"

"Oh, Sybil—"

Sybil suddenly left off smiling. She shut the door, and walked straight to the table.

"Let me see that voting paper, Ruby!"

"No!" Ruby gasped, falling back a step. "You—you have no right! The ballot is secret."

"Secret? Rubbish! It is secret if you want it to be secret, of course! But when you want all the world to know whom you are voting for, what does secrecy matter? Let me see it!"

"I can't, Sybil!"

"And why can't you? I know—I guessed it was coming!" Sybil whispered fiercely. "You have voted for my rival!"

"Sybil—"

"You double-faced, sly minx! Pretending to be my friend, and yet wanting Elsie Dainton to beat me at the poll! But she won't beat me, Ruby—I can tell you that!" Sybil blazed out. "You are going to destroy that paper, and vote for me!"

"I shall not!" Ruby panted, suddenly fortified by a courage she had never known before.

"You will vote for me," said Sybil Sardone, with deadly calmness, "or the whole school shall know that you are Joan Haviland's sister!"

Sybil Sardone's Threat!

RUBY dropped back into a chair as if she had been dealt a blow.

Never in her life had she been so staggered.

The secret she had been guarding so closely all along—it was really no secret at all!

Sybil knew it—Sybil!

"Yes," that girl said, enjoying the dazed expression of Ruby's white face; "I know all about it, my dear! You are Joan Haviland's sister, which means that you also are a daughter of that woman down in the village!"

"Don't you dare—" Ruby started up to gasp wildly; but Sybil cut her short.

"Don't dare do what?" she sneered. "Say a word against your precious mother—is that what you were going to forbid my doing? You are a fine one to stand up for your mother, Ruby Haviland! A bit late in the day, isn't it?"

There was a pause. Sybil saw the ballot-paper lying upon the table. She picked it up.

"Of course, Ruby," she broke out, shrugging, "I quite understand why you have kept the relationship a secret. I guessed the reason, directly I found out—"

"When—when did you find out?" Ruby gasped.

"Oh, not so very long ago!" was the airy reply. "That night you went up to the dormitory to have a quiet talk with Joan. You thought you were safe, and—"

"I remember fearing that someone had been listening!"

"I was the someone," nodded Sybil. "Ha, ha, ha! And so I discovered that you were Joan's sister, and that you would rather do anything than have me and my chums know that you were saddled with such poor relations!"

Ruby swept a hand across her forehead. She was trying to compose her chaotic mind; but the effort was beyond her.

"It was, I admit, a shock to me," Sybil went on. "But I got over it. After all, I said to myself, so long as nobody else knew, I needn't drop you! And I didn't want to drop you, Ruby. From the very first hour when we became friends, there has always been something about you that I rather liked."

"I wish we never had become friends!" cried Ruby. "Oh, how I wish, now, that I had never met you!"

"I don't suppose we shall be friends,

after this—not the friends we were, certainly," said Sybil. "I don't think I would ever have dropped you just because I knew you were related to these common people. One can't help one's relations! And it pleased me to have you hanging around me," Sybil finished, with that sudden, caressing look of hers.

But in a moment she was looking fierce again.

"Now it is all different, however!" she went on harshly. "I have found you voting for Elsie Dainton—"

"She is my cousin! She—"

"She is my rival, that is what you had to remember!" was the prompt retort. "You want to vote for her; you want to go over to her side! Well, go! But you are not going to give this vote—no!"

"I shall vote for her!" Ruby protested desperately. "If you tear up that vote, then I'll get another ballot-paper, and vote for Elsie still!"

"You will not!" insisted Sybil. "Your vote is needed to get me the captaincy; and get it I mean to, somehow! You will vote for me, unless you want me to denounce you to the whole school!"

downstairs to put their votes in the ballot-box.

And suddenly, mingling with the hurly-burly in the passage, there came the music of Joyce Carroll's violin—just the same slow, soft melody that had been audible that night when she, Ruby, and her sister had that fateful talk in the dormitory. The slow music to the drama of their strange school-life!

Sybil Sardone fell to humming a tune, as if to show how quite at ease she felt. Stepping to the big mirror that vanity had put in a prominent place in this study, she gave a few caressing touches to her hair.

She caught sight of Ruby looking at her from behind. Their eyes met in the looking-glass, and Sybil smiled that dazzling, mocking smile of hers.

As for Ruby, she suddenly strode across to the door. She turned back and picked up the voting-paper, and then gave another long stare at the shallow girl whom she had idolised.

The scales were falling from Ruby's eyes at last. Just as she was beginning to see herself as, say, Elsie Dainton saw her, so she was seeing Sybil in the same light that all the school saw that girl.



"Let me see that voting paper, Ruby!" said Sybil Sardone. "No!" Ruby gasped. "You—you have no right! The ballot is a secret!"

Ruby put a hand before her eyes. She was shrinking and wincing, feeling that the crushing blow was coming upon her mercilessly—the catastrophe she had feared.

"Vote for me," Sybil said quietly, "and I will keep the secret, and you can just drift away to the other side, by-and-by. I sha'n't mind. I shall be captain then! But if you refuse to vote for me, then—I am very sorry, and all that, don't you know; but I simply must pay you out!"

She tossed the completed ballot-paper at Ruby.

"Take it! Put it in the box downstairs, if you like. But if you still have a scrap of regard for your own happiness at Greyhurst School, I would strongly advise you to use another paper! I would strongly advise you to think again before voting for Elsie Dainton!"

Again there was a dramatic pause inside the room.

Ruby heard a few girls go by in the corridor. They were talking about the election—were even now on their way

How could she ever have made this girl her idol? That was what Ruby wondered now.

What a fatal mistake it had been!

Friend? Why, Sybil was the worst enemy she had ever had!

"Oh, you are going?" Sybil flashed about to smile sweetly. "Very well. When the result of the election is made known, at nine o'clock, I shall know how you have voted. And then—well, perhaps the school will have to know who you really are." It rests entirely with yourself, Ruby."

That unhappy girl did not answer.

She went from this study that was the home of snobbery, flippancy, and disloyalty to all the ideals of the school. Would she ever return to that study again? She supposed she would have to. But if she did, it would not be as Sybil's admirer and friend, nor yet as a member of the "set"!

(And now, after this revelation, for whom will Ruby cast her deciding vote? There will be another instalment of this enthralling serial next Thursday. Order your copy of the SCHOOL FRIEND now.)

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 147.

Pale and Weak

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