

A SPECIAL "BESSIE BUNTER" NUMBER!

No. 160. Vol. 7.

Week Ending June 3rd, 1922.

The School Friend

2^d



Given Free



COLOURED ART CARD.
No. 5.—BESSIE BUNTER.

BESSIE RISES TO THE OCCASION!

(An exciting incident from the magnificent long complete story of the Girls of Cliff House School, contained in this issue.)

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: TWO SPLENDID SERIALS OF SCHOOL LIFE AND MYSTERY.

YOUR EDITOR'S CORNER



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.—I think I might, without exaggeration, term the present number of the SCHOOL FRIEND, in which Bessie Bunter is the leading figure, a positive triumph for all concerned. Miss Richards has "got" this popular character to perfection, the "Cliff House Weekly" is a "scream" from start to finish, the coloured art card of Bessie is a wonderful piece of work on the part of Mr. Dodson, and, as to our two new serials, this week's instalments are more exciting than any of the past ones.

And now, if I were to ask you who is the gentlest and most ladylike member of the popular Fourth Form, with probably the mildest disposition of them all, whom would you choose? Without a doubt it would be

MARJORIE HAZELDENE.

Marjorie is, indeed, one of the very best liked of the Fourth-Formers, and I know you will welcome the

BEAUTIFUL COLOURED ART CARD

of her which will be presented with next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND. It will make a handsome addition to the five which you already possess, for Marjorie is indeed a pretty girl, with her "long-bobbed" hair, her soft blue eyes, and beautiful complexion.

It seems ever such a time now since Marjorie Hazeldene took the leading part in a long story, though she was very prominent in the series of stories featuring Grace Kelwyn, as well as those dealing with Miss Cantrey and the Fourth Form ballet. But in next Thursday's magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, entitled:

"MARJORIE HAZELDEN'S SACRIFICE!"

By Hilda Richards,

Marjorie takes the lead. We all know what a fine needlewoman Marjorie Hazeldene is,

and what an ever-obliging nature is hers. So when she undertakes to do some delicate crocheting for the headmistress, we naturally expect her to fulfil her task ably and well, and within the time she promises. Can we believe that Marjorie deliberately breaks her promise, and fails to get on with the work? The crocheting presents no real difficulty to Marjorie, and she could easily have finished it at once if— Well, for Marjorie to break such a promise given to the headmistress there must be a very important "if" somewhere. And there is! But what is it? What can possibly have become between Marjorie and her work to cause such an unprecedented action on her part? Suffice to say it is something that shows the gentle and sympathetic Marjorie in a finer light than any in which we have ever seen her—something that brings to the fore those generous, self-sacrificing, and bravely-modest qualities which we know her to possess.

Very different from the present Special Bessie Bunter Number of

THE "CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY"

will be next Thursday's

SPECIAL MARJORIE HAZELDENE NUMBER.

This, of course, is because Marjorie is such an entirely different character from the fat, stupid, but lovable Bessie. But next week's fine Special Number is just as characteristic of Marjorie as the present one is characteristic of Bessie. In the Special Marjorie Hazeldene Number you will learn the girls' opinions as to whether Marjorie is too ladylike; you will learn "why she is glad she is not captain," her first impressions of Cliff House, her attitude towards sports, how Clara Trevlyn and Dolly Jobling find her as their leader and study-mate, and "respects in which she is firm." All of these,

you will agree, are very interesting and informative, and serve to place the character of Marjorie Hazeldene before you in a clearer and clearer light. And there are other features as well, of equal interest.

As to our grand new serial,

"FRIENDSHIP FORBIDDEN!"

By Ida Melbourne,

this week's instalment must leave you with one great question in your minds: Will Dolores escape? Well, next week's enthralling instalment will be simply crammed with exciting incidents, and you must take care not to miss it.

There will also be another absorbing long instalment of

"THE SIGNALMAN'S DAUGHTER!"

By Gertrude Nelson,

This instalment will be particularly dramatic on account of the affair of the exam paper that was missing. What will be the result of its recovery? Will Olive Walters have to forfeit her scholarship, or will her innocence be proved? The latter at present does not seem improbable, but next Thursday's instalment of this grand and popular serial will be full of dramatic surprises.

Apart from next Thursday's beautiful card of Marjorie Hazeldene, there are

FOUR MORE BEAUTIFUL FREE ART CARDS

of your favourite characters to be presented. They are of Barbara Redfern, Dolly Jobling, Augusta Anstruther-Browne, and Phyllis Howell. The popular girl who is to follow Marjorie Hazeldene I will deal with next week.

Your Sincere Friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

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OUR FINE NEW SCHOOL AND MYSTERY SERIAL.



By
IDA MELBOURNE.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

DOLORES KALENZI, a dark-eyed, olive complexioned, and very attractive Eastern girl, who, by the orders of her aunt, is forbidden the friendship of
KITTY CRICHTON, PEARL HARDY & CO., the upright and light-hearted Fourth-Formers at Limmershaw High School.
YELMA KALENZI, the aunt of Dolores, who is really not at all an unkindly woman, but is under the strict orders of Dolores' uncle.

None of the happy freedom of the Limmershaw High School girls was allowed Dolores Kalenzi. Twice a day, at the finish of her lessons, her aunt called at the school to take her home, and on account of this the Eastern girl naturally became an object of ridicule amongst most of the High School girls. She was there to study—nothing more, said her aunt, and she was to make no friends with Kitty Crichton & Co.

Later, a mysterious chalked sign was noticed both by the Eastern people and by the Limmershaw girls on a certain tree in the woods. It caused Dolores' aunt great alarm, and she kept the Eastern schoolgirl in even closer captivity.

Pearl Hardy discovered an ancient piece of parchment between the leaves of an old book, which, if it were genuine, told where the treasure of a certain smuggling "Slippery Stokes" was hidden. The girls—Dolores, of course, was not allowed to accompany them—followed the trail to a concealed opening in the cliffs, and thence along a long, secret passage through the cliff. At the end of this the light from Kitty's torch fell upon an iron-bound box in the corner!

(Read on from here.)

When the Box was Opened!

"THE treasure!" cried Pearl Hardy, excitedly. "Oh, goodness!"

With Kitty by her side, Pearl hurried across the small, dark apartment, and shone her torch upon the iron-bound chest.

Pearl's eyes were shining with excitement, and the others, unable to control themselves, rushed into the room.

"The door," said Kitty. "Keep it open, someone, we don't want to be locked in here."

And so two of the party kept the heavy stone door open, while the others examined the box.

"No casks," said Pearl. "But, my word, I wonder what this box contains—jewels—dozens of fine things, perhaps."

"But would a smuggler have such things?" asked Kitty doubtfully.

"He may not have been a smuggler," admitted Pearl, "there is no proof that he was really. He may have been a— a pirate captain, and hidden his spoil here."

While they were talking, one of the girls was examining the chest.

"I say," she murmured suddenly.

"This chest—the dust has been removed recently. And—and it doesn't look so very old."

All eyes were turned upon it then; and there was a cursory examination of the chest's exterior.

What the girl had said was correct. The dust upon the box was not the dust of ages, and in places it had been disturbed recently.

"That's rather funny," said Kitty slowly. "I—I suppose no one has got in ahead of us by any chance."

"They'd hardly have left the case," said Pearl confidently. "Oh, anything may have happened! See if the lock's all right."

Kitty examined the lock and nodded. "Jolly safe lock," she said. "But—but it looks to me rather like a Yale."

The girls looked at one another perplexedly.

"A— a Yale?" said one, with a smile. "My goodness, an up-to-date pirate! Slippery Sam—or Stokes, whatever his name was—must have been ahead of his time. A Yale lock!"

She examined it, and saw that Kitty had been right. The lock was a Yale, or at any rate, on the Yale principle. Not at all the kind of lock one might expect to find upon an old smuggler's chest.

"Wait a bit," said Kitty thoughtfully.

"If someone has been tampering with

this they must have come along the passage. Did anyone see any footprints? Some of the ground was pretty soft."

There was a silence, followed by a shaking of heads.

Apparently no one had noticed footmarks.

"That's funny," observed Pearl. "No one could have come along without leaving some mark. The stiffness of that door didn't indicate that anyone had been here."

Kitty was frowning perplexedly, and Pearl was looking a trifle dejected.

Kitty Crichton flashed the torch round the small apartment, examining the walls and floor.

"It's certainly a queer place," she said slowly. "But I can't understand that Yale lock. I wonder—"

"Yes?" asked Pearl, as her chump pained.

"Well, I was just wondering whether some organisation of some sort—some criminal, perhaps, had found the treasure, and not spoken about it, but had used it as a hiding-place for stolen goods."

"My hat!"

The suggestion was exciting, and had possibilities.

"But what about the foot-marks? If that were so, there'd surely be foot-marks of some kind, Kitty."

"Yes, I suppose there would. Oh, well, not much use worrying our heads about it!"

She tried to move the box, and Pearl helped her. The box was not really large, but it was strongly bound in what they judged to be iron or steel; and it was very heavy.

"We'd better get this to the cliffs, anyway," Kitty decided. "With the rope we can let it down to the beach, can't we? And as it isn't so very bulky it won't be a difficult matter to get it back to the school."

"And then what?" Pearl asked. "We can't keep it; but I suppose there'd be no harm in examining it."

"I suppose not. It's treasure trove, and some of it belongs to us legally."

Then they took hold of the box, and moved towards the door with it. The two girls who were holding the door stepped back.

"Now—" Kitty broke off in the middle of her sentence, and looked in alarm towards the door, which was swinging to.

"Oh!" came an exclamation of fright from without.

They ran forward, and pushed the door wide open, and the two girls outside, white-faced, came into the room.

"What's the matter?" Kitty asked quickly.



"This—this footprint wasn't made by a girl!" Pearl Hardy exclaimed. "It's more a woman's foot—a worn-out shoe, too!"

"Oh, there's someone in the passage!" exclaimed the smaller of the two girls, her face blanched.

"Someone in the passage! Only one of the girls," said Kitty.

They placed the box on the floor, and Kitty, stepping through the doorway, flashed her torch along the passage.

"No one there," she said; "no—My goodness!"

She almost dropped the torch, but recovered it in time, and fixed its fading beam upon a deep imprint by the passage wall.

Pearl, flashing on her torch, picked up the mark and stepped forward, unafraid and confident.

"Hullo!" she said, then stooped. She turned her head, and there was a worried look in her eyes.

"This—this footprint wasn't made by a girl," she exclaimed. "It's more a woman's foot—a worn-out shoe, too."

Kitty hurried forward, and the others gathered round in a group.

"Perhaps this mark—this may be a foot-print of the people who hid the case there."

But one of the girls who had been guarding the door shook her head.

"No, no!" she cried nervously. "There was a woman in the passage—an old woman. I saw her."

"An old woman!" repeated Kitty. "What sort of woman? Did you see?"

"She was ragged. And— But I hadn't time to see more."

Kitty looked thoughtfully and anxiously at Pearl, who shrugged her shoulders.

"The sooner we're out the better," said Pearl. "No sense in waiting. We've found what we came for."

They went towards the doorway, and the girls who were there lifted the box through.

In turns they carried it along the passages. To do so was not at all easy, for they had to stoop to avoid banging their heads on the log-bound roof.

Kitty walked ahead, with the powerful torch belonging to Pearl flashing, to see whether the coast were clear, or whether strangers lurked ahead.

When Pearl was released from her turn of carrying she went ahead with her leader.

"Do you believe that about the woman?" she whispered. "I fancy that Lena imagined she saw something. She's awfully nervous."

But Kitty shook her head.

"She's nervous," she admitted, with a thoughtful frown. "But there is one of those footmarks—a woman's footmarks on top of those we made in coming."

"Oh!"

"Nothing to be alarmed about, of course. May have been someone just as curious as we. Someone may have seen the open rock door. A gipsy, perhaps."

"Oh, yes! But I'd better not say anything to the others. We don't want them to get panicky."

Kitty nodded, and Pearl fell back to take her turn again with the box.

There were enough of them to do the carrying without calling upon Kitty's aid—and she was useful in front. Her eyes were keen, and she was the acknowledged leader.

Now they had reached the larger rocky part, and could walk upright. Kitty called a halt, and with Pearl beside her went on ahead.

Suddenly she stopped, catching her breath in a gasp.

She pointed to the rock wall, with trembling finger.

But Pearl had seen it, as her expression showed. Her eyes, fascinated, were staring at the bright spot on the wall where the torch's beam ended.

On the wall was a chalked circle, roughly drawn, but unmistakable, and, in the circle, was a triangle.

"Oh!"

"My goodness!"

The two girls looked at one another quickly, and Kitty suspiciously swung her torch round. But there was no one to be seen.

She walked a pace or two ahead, but all was quiet. She stood quite still for a moment, leaning forward, straining her eyes ahead. Faintly from beyond came a metallic ring.

"The door!" she breathed. "Someone is closing it."

For a moment neither of them spoke, their faces strained with alarm.

"It's all right," said Kitty slowly. "The door opened easily from the inside. Tell the others to come forward."

Pearl went back and called the other girls, who came forward willingly. Not one of them liked waiting in the lonely passage.

Kitty slowly walked ahead, and presently she gave a faint cheer, as through the crack down the side of the doorway a beam of bright daylight showed.

"Listen!"

Kitty's voice was imperative.

"To what?" came an anxious chorus.

But Kitty did not reply for a moment. Then she laughed.

"Thought I heard an electric bell," she said. "Must have been my imagination."

She pushed hard at the door, but did not lean against it, knowing the danger of so doing. The door swung open, flooding the cave with brilliant dazzling light.

The open door gave the others heart, and they simply ran forward with the box.

"I'll get down and wait for it," said Kitty. "You fix it to the rope round the box."

Pearl followed her out on to the ledge, blinking dazedly in the bright light.

"What a relief to breathe fresh air!" she sighed. She looked at Kitty.

"You've come off second best," she smiled. "Your batband's gone!"

Kitty put her hand up to her hat.

"Oh, bother!" she exclaimed. "It was loose, I know. I remember now; I dropped it when we were looking at the box."

"Going back for it?" asked Pearl. But Kitty shook her head, and pointed out to sea.

"Tide's coming in," she said briefly. "We haven't any time to waste."

But the box had been brought out now, and the rope was being affixed. Kitty went along the ledge, and clambered down to the rocks and sand beneath.

"Heave down!" she called, and slowly the box was swung over the ledge.

She stared upwards, shielding her hands with her eyes. Pearl, in charge above, divided her attention between Kitty and the box.

But suddenly Pearl's eyes left the box, and she stared at Kitty. Kitty was waving her arm excitedly, pointing half-way down the rock.

Leaning over, Pearl stared down the rock, and then gave a sharp exclamation.

For, crouching under the shelter of a neighbouring rock, was an old woman whose eyes glittered as the box descended.

Pearl stepped back, and accidentally knocked against the girl who held the rope. That girl loosed her hold, and down crashed the box.

"Look out!" called Pearl, in alarm. Down hurtled the box, spinning over and over. Just in time Kitty stepped out of the way.

Crash!

With a deafening report the box landed on a rock, and burst.

A second later the beach seemed on fire—jewels of all manner and description scintillated brilliantly, rolling over in the sand!

The Cabinet!

DOLORES KALENZI sighed. She rested her arms on the stone balcony outside her French windows and sighed again.

How beautiful the day was; and that strip of silvery sea, how temptingly it called to her!

Yet in this room she must remain; and not more than a mile or so away were Kitty, Pearl, and the others enjoying themselves, free—free as the air.

To remain here and look at that tantalising landscape was impossible. But what was there for her to do? She wanted to dance, to shout. If only she could play tennis or cricket—do something with other girls!

She wandered to the door of her room, and opened it quietly. Thank goodness at least that that was unlocked. She listened, but the only sound that came from below was the clink of china as Chileen washed up in the pantry.

There was not a sound of her aunt. Aunt Yelma usually did crochet work in the afternoon—probably she was thus engaged now. And her uncle? As she moved farther down the passage she could hear his snore.

Uncle was asleep, Aunt Yelma busily occupied, Chileen in the kitchen.

Dolores was not thinking of escape—not escape from the house; in her room was a ball—a tennis ball—with which she had often played in the garden.

She went back and found the ball in a drawer. Throwing it up, she caught it, and with it in her hand hurried from the room.

Downstairs there was a long, narrow corridor—an excellent ground for mock tennis. In the stick-rack downstairs was a small racquet she had used when very much younger.

On tip-toe she crept along between the tapestried wall and collected the racquet.

She was smiling now. Her uncle's snores were louder, and no sound came from her aunt. All was safe, the coast was clear.

Now she had reached the corridor, and was looking along it. But she did not immediately bang the ball down it. The corridor was forbidden ground. But why she did not know.

She had played there before, and on that occasion the ball had been confiscated because she had tried to move a cabinet behind which it had rolled.

Even now she could remember her aunt's rage, although the incident had happened years ago. The reason for the rage, was still a mystery. She had not been going to injure the cabinet.

With the racquet under her arm she walked thoughtfully along the passage to the cabinet, which still stood in its accustomed place.

Part-way along the corridor was an alcove, curtained so that the window and seat in it could not be seen. There Dolores paused, parting the curtain and taking one brief glimpse at the fields that could be seen through the window.

The old cabinet was only a few yards away, and Dolores went towards it. What a queer-looking thing it was! It was strong, but not valuable, surely? Why had her aunt been so angry?

She stood regarding the cabinet thoughtfully. Had this anything to do with the sign of the circle and triangle?

In her time she had read many books; many long hours had she spent reading,

and her imagination pictured many strange things.

Thoughtfully, Dolores ran her slim fingers along the edge of the cabinet. She tried the door in front, but it would not open, and a closer examination told her that the doors were faked. The line beside the handle, which should have been where the two doors met, was merely a deep cut in the wood, and it did not divide the front piece into two, as the handle might lead one to suppose.

A cabinet that did not open, with two doors painted on! How absurd!

Yet the cabinet was kept in good order, it was dusted, and on it stood a bowl of flowers.

"What a dear little bowl!" she thought. She stroked the flowers, and smelt them.

Then she lifted the bowl to examine it closer.

As she did so, there was a faint click, and an amazing thing happened. The cabinet seemed to disappear; the sides fell outwards.

But what alarmed Dolores more was the sound of an electric bell that buzzed and buzzed, a powerful bell that echoed.

She gazed at the flattened cabinet, and at the stone slab with its centrally placed iron ring.

Then, as she heard distant running footsteps, she placed the bowl of flowers on the ground, and darted to the alcove, hiding fearfully behind the curtain.

The bell had ceased its buzzing, but now she heard Chileen's voice, calling out anxiously, in the language she did not understand.

Dolores looked about her fearfully. She could hear her aunt's voice now.

Where could she hide? Suppose Aunt Yelma found her here! She flung up the window, then changed her mind.

The seat. Was there room under it? Down on her knees she went, and rolled under the wide seat, amongst the dust that had collected there.

How thankful she was, for the width of that seat!

Chileen was near now. She heard his angry exclamation and the voice of her aunt, as they came nearer, nearer.

They were opposite the alcove now.

She heard a crash of china, and knew instinctively that the flower-bowl had been broken, probably by Chileen in his hurry.

Very cautiously she leaned forward, and peered through the gap between the wall and curtain.

She could see her aunt distinctly. And Aunt Yelma was trembling in agitation. Chileen was standing back, speaking to her volubly.

Then he caught hold of the iron ring, and tugged at it. It took a good pull of his strong arms to raise the stone slab, and Dolores watched in fascination.

A stone slab in the floor with a ring to it. What could that mean? Now, in the floor there showed a black hole, into which Chileen looked a little nervously.

Aunt Yelma asked him something, and he shook his head. Then he ran off. A moment later he was returning, bearing an electric torch.

Dolores watched her aunt snatch it from him impatiently. A beam of light shot out, and the torch was directed to show its light through the hole in the floor.

Aunt Yelma seemed more than ever nervous, and Chileen was shaking his head with apparent nervousness.

What was it her aunt and Chileen expected to find? Why had that bell been arranged?

To Dolores it was all a mystery. And yet a mystery to which she knew her aunt held the solution.

Another talk in the strange language between Chileen and her aunt, then the dusky servant stepped forward awkwardly, and sat down beside the hole. He slipped his legs into it, and slowly disappeared from view.

Chileen—where was he going? Dolores' eyes grew round with amazement.

She heard a sharp exclamation, muffled, and obviously from Chileen in the dungeon that must be below.

Aunt Yelma turned suddenly white, and her hand went to her cheek. She looked round about her nervously. She repeated the very word that Chileen had said, repeated in alarm and querulously his statement.

Now Chileen's hands had appeared, and Aunt Yelma, on her knees, was helping him get up.

His head could be seen, and Dolores noted the look of alarm on his dusky face. His eyes rolled so that only the whites showed.

"Lencha!"

into the blackness as Chileen had done, keeping her hand on the stone edge.

But her feet dangled clear of the ground. She hesitated a minute, then dropped, rolling over on the stone floor.

Bruised a trifle, she did not move at first, but, recovering, she flashed the torch round the small stone room.

Empty! Nothing to be seen at all. The room was empty. She realised that fact with disappointment. But her torch, waving round the room, noted something else, an unevenness in the wall.

She crossed to it, and found that it was a huge slab the height of the room put in slantwise. This side a piece stuck out, the other side it was indented slightly. Struck by a sudden thought, she pushed at the end by which she stood. But it did not move.

She stopped, for now she heard footsteps ringing along the passage above.

Her aunt was returning. She must not find her here.



With a deafening crash, the box landed on a rock, and burst. A second later the beach seemed on fire—jewels of all manner and description scintillated brilliantly, rolling over in the sand!

He raised his hands in a hopeless manner, and that word Dolores repeated.

"Lencha!" she said softly. "Gone!" Obviously something was missing, something had gone. But what? Chileen was speaking in the foreign language, and Aunt Yelma was nodding quickly.

They were moving—and Dolores realised with a sinking feeling—towards her.

Hurriedly she ducked back again under the seat.

Her aunt now stood in the alcove, parting the curtains. Dolores could see her feet and those of Chileen.

"Lencha!" exclaimed her aunt again; and Dolores knew that they had noted the open window.

There was rapid conversation again, and the two moved off, leaving the cabinet dismantled and the torch behind them.

Dolores listened carefully until their footsteps had died away, then she crept to the still open hole in the floor and peeped down. She picked up the torch and flashed it in the opening. But she saw nothing.

A sudden spirit of adventure seized her, and, looking round to make sure that her aunt was not near, she dropped

Dolores moved along the slab, and pushed hard at the far end of it.

To her delight it swung round, pivoted so that it stood at right angles to the wall. Beyond was utter blackness. She stared at it with indrawn breath.

The footsteps above were nearer now. She looked round in alarm. She flashed the torch through the opening, and saw a sort of tunnel ahead.

Almost as the footsteps seemed to be on the roof above she darted through that black cavity, and, by an effort, pushed the slab in place. She leaned on it until it lay quite flat. The torch flashed upon it, and revealed a rusted iron ring.

Placing her ear to the slab, she listened, and heard her aunt's and Chileen's voices sounding strangely metallic as they vibrated through the rock.

Dolores smiled, and flashed the torch behind to where the tunnel led on into darkness.

Then she turned, waving her hand lightly at the house she was now leaving behind, and went carefully forward by the light of the torch, exploring for freedom!

Freedom or Imprisonment?

"MY hat!"
"Diamonds!"
In the deepest amazement the Limmershaw girls stared at the precious stones that lay scattered on the sand.

There were stones of all sorts, glittering temptingly. Pearl and Kitty stared at them dumbfounded, and the others were equally at a loss to know what to say.

From the rock above the old woman peered down at the stones, her presence almost forgotten by the excited girls.

She leaned forward, and Kitty, looking up at her, cried out a warning.

"Oh, look out—that rock!"

The woman stopped, tried to recover as she saw that the rock on which she was standing was loose and slipping.

But too late!

There was a grating sound, a shriek, and the rock tumbled down, slipping the woman's feet from under her.

She clutched frantically in air for support, and Kitty ran along the beach.

But the woman stood no chance. She was slipping, slipping, inch by inch. Suddenly her grip loosened, and over the edge of the rock she went, hurtling down in somersaults to the sand and rock below.

She reached the sand with an ominous thud, and there was a silence on the beach. Even the birds seemed to have stopped their whining and screaming, but only to break forth again a moment later with reinforced vigour.

"Oh!"

Kitty ran to the fallen figure, and picked up the limp form in her arms.

The woman had fallen on sand, missing a jagged piece of rock by the merest fraction of an inch.

But she made no movement, and Kitty laid her back on the sand.

"She's alive," she said, in husky reply to Pearl's question, "but stunned."

Pearl Hardy, breathless from her sudden clamber from the rock and sprint to the scene of the accident, nodded.

"Oh, thank goodness!" she murmured. "What a silly place to—to have stood."

She turned, and saw with relief that all her party were now on the sand.

"What shall we do?" she asked Kitty anxiously.

The captain of the Fourth pointed to their boats.

"Take her in the boat. I'll see if any bones are broken before we move her. If there are we had better leave her with someone in charge. But the tide is coming in."

She stooped over the woman, and was thankful then for her Guide training and knowledge of first-aid.

"No bones broken," she pronounced to the anxious girls, who had gathered in a group. "You see, Pearl."

And Pearl, in her turn, examined the woman. Her verdict coincided with Kitty's.

"She's breathing," she said. "Perhaps she is only stunned. It may be concussion."

Kitty looked about her anxiously. Several of the girls had gathered the stones together and put them into the box.

To the others Kitty called,

"Bring the boat up—the nearer one!" she ordered. "Put the box in the other one, then help lift this woman into the boat."

The orders were quickly obeyed, and the nearer of the two dinghies brought forward.

Into it, with consummate care, the woman was placed, a pillow being made

for her head with some soft cloth haver-sacks.

With the box in the other boat, they made their way slowly to the shore.

It was a saddening end to an expedition that had been so exciting; but it was fortunate that they had been present when the accident occurred. With the tide up, the woman's plight would have been perilous.

Pearl, leaning over the woman, placed a hand on her heart.

"Beating all right," she said. "Now her pulse."

Pearl rolled back the sleeve, and then gave an exclamation.

"My hat! The sign!"

"The what?" asked Kitty, ceasing to pull.

"The sign—on this woman's arm—the circle and triangle. She was in the cave, then, and made that sign!"

She looked at Kitty, and Kitty looked back at her blankly. Pearl shrugged her shoulders, and Kitty, frowning at the land that drew steadily nearer, pulled hard and evenly.

"Better take her to the Cottage Hospital," said Kitty; "they'll look after her there. Say we found her on the beach—saw her fall."

And, while Kitty in charge of one party sent word to the Cottage Hospital, Pearl waited with the woman on the shore.

"Well," said Pearl to the girl beside her, "there's the jolly old smugglers' cave, and there's the treasure. Fancy smugglers being there a hundred years ago!"

"Yes. Wonderful, isn't it?" the other agreed. She craned her head forward. "Looks as though there's someone there now," she said; "but it's so far off. Thought I saw something black and white."

The distance was far too great for anything to be distinguished definitely, but the girl had keen eyes—keener than Pearl's, evidently; for Pearl could see nothing but the bare rock of the cliff.

Yet the girl had not been mistaken; there was someone on the rock.

Dolores Kalenzi, staring with wide-open eyes that blinked at the bright sun, looked down at the sea.

After the darkness of the passage and cavern the light was blinding.

She stretched out her hands to the sea, and sighed. Free! Free for a moment! All the nervousness that had possessed her during that long walk through the dark tunnel had gone, and now she saw only the breaking waves and the gorgeous sky.

How wonderful it all was!

For some minutes she stood there, regarding all the beauty, lost in contemplation of it.

Then, when the picture of it was imprinted on her brain, and she seemed to know every portion of it by heart, she turned to gaze at the rock.

Below was a strip of sand. Ah, if she could get down there, and run about as she pleased! How jolly the sand seemed!

She was standing on the rocky ledge, and now she walked along it, assuring herself first of all that she had left the door of the cave open.

Very carefully she climbed down, and it seemed to take ages, although in reality but a few seconds elapsed before she stood safely on the sand below.

She looked about her; then, raising her skirt, ran towards the waves. But common-sense bade her take off her stockings and shoes, which she did in an amazing short space of time.

How she danced, with her bare feet and legs in the waves! Laughing delightedly, she ran back from the waves

that came breaking in with increasing size and speed, only to go forward as they receded.

Just for a second she paused, but only to reflect on the new and remarkable freedom.

Oh, if only her aunt and Chileen would not be about so often, then perhaps she could get this freedom often, and learn to swim. How wonderful that would be!

Hardly realising it, inch by inch, she was forced back—back by the incoming tide.

Not until she trod on her wet shoes did she realise that the tide was coming in. Even then she imagined at first that her shoes must have slipped forward. But all doubt fled from her mind when she saw that the thin strip of sand that had been against the cliff was now swamped.

Looking round, she realised the water level was rising.

For a moment she was stricken with alarm, and, picking up her shoes and stockings, she ran along through the moist sand, the water every now and then splashing up to her knees.

She did not mind that, however. Her slippery, wet feet could not make much foothold in the grooves of the rocks. But she had no fear then, and was soon on the ledge again.

There, awed, she watched the big waves rolling in, swirling and thudding round the rocky crags.

The sun was still hot, and she placed her shoes and stockings to dry while she lay down basking in it.

Lost in the absorbing beauty of her surroundings, she forgot the rapidity of the rising tide.

But, looking over as she lay flat, she saw it nearer and nearer to the ledge.

Then she realised quickly that it might swamp the ledge, and not only the ledge, but the cave also. What then? Suppose the cave were level? Suppose even the tunnel went down hill a little? Before she had half finished her journey back, she might be wading through two feet or more of water—up to her neck, perhaps!

Hastily she pulled on her stockings and adjusted her shoes. Torch in hand, she went into the dark cave, shutting the massive door behind her.

Flashing her torch, she walked as fast as she could along the dismal tunnel.

Presently the torch's light picked up the iron-ringed door.

Outside the door she waited, listening. But there was no sound from within. Her aunt and Chileen were not there. Her secret could remain a secret! There could be more stolen outings.

Quietly as she could, she opened that massive door by pulling on the iron ring.

The door opened, and she flashed her torch round the interior.

Empty! Again she breathed relief.

She closed the stone door carefully, then listened again. But there was no sound.

Dolores gave a soft chuckle, and flashed her torch to the roof. She moved the torch quickly, lighting up the whole roof by degrees.

Her chuckle died away.

For in the roof was no opening. The slab had been put in place, and even by standing on tiptoe she was more than a foot from the roof.

She was a prisoner!

(Here is an unfortunate predicament! Poor Dolores' brief taste of freedom seems likely to be her last, for what else can she do but to call out to her aunt for release? Then once more good-bye to freedom! However, there may be another way, and if there is next week's instalment of this thrilling story will tell you.)

Bessie Bunter's Task!



A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale
of the girls of Cliff House School, intro-
ducing Bessie Bunter and Muriel Wills.
By HILDA RICHARDS.

Bessie Bunter's Resolve!

BESSIE BUNTER!"
"Don't bother me!"
"But your preparation, my dear—"
"I'm fed-up with prep!" said Bessie Bunter. "It's no good working in this silly school. No one ever appreciates it! Everyone's so jealous that a girl never has a chance. I'm quite happy as I am!"

And Bessie Bunter looked it as she reclined in a cosy and accommodating armchair in the Fourth Form Common-room. Bessie appreciated that chair, particularly on this evening when she was in the throes of one of her "fed-up" moods, and rather discontented with the world in general, and Cliff House School in particular.

It really wasn't Bessie's fault that she had had bad marks in class that day; it was the fault of the lessons, which were harder than usual. Bessie was not brilliant when the questions were easy, although she considered, even in her less boastful moments, that she was "much above the average." It was rather fortunate for the fat girl's peace of mind that she considered herself clever when, in reality, she was quite the reverse, because it wasn't Bessie's fault that she was the reverse.

"You'll have Miss Steel after you if you don't finish your prep!" said Barbara Redfern patiently. It fell to Babs' lot, as Bessie's Study-mate in No. 4, to do quite a lot of that sort of urging.

Bessie Bunter opened her eyes and looked at Babs through her thick, round glasses. There was a greenish shade in her eyes which Bessie herself called "blue"—"a pretty and rather uncommon sort of blue," was one of her own descriptions.

"I wish you wouldn't lecture me!" said Bessie peevishly. "There's nothing in the cupboard for me to cook, and there isn't a decent fire anywhere either. I'm going to have a nap!"

"But think of the honour of the Form, Bessie. You getting bad marks, you know!" urged Babs, trying a new line.

"Blow the Form!" said Bessie. "I won't move out of this chair until supper time!"

The Common-room door opened after a preliminary tap.

Boker, the school page, appeared inside and flourished a letter.

"Miss Bunter, please!"

Contrary to her prophecy, Bessie Bunter was out of her chair like a shot!

"Oh, I say! Thanks, awfully, Boker!" gasped Bessie, gazing at the envelope.

"Hooray! It's a letter from Aunt Rebecca, girls! That means another remittance, I'm sure! Good old auntie!"

Bessie was very brisk indeed, now! She tore open the letter with one sweep of a fat thumb and extracted the contents. These she examined very carefully indeed, evidently in search of something more important than the written lines. She shook the envelope over the table, and then turned it inside out.

"Oh, bother!" said Bessie indignantly.

"Has auntie forgotten to put the postal order in?" asked Clara Trevlyn, amused.

"Yes. Just like Aunt Rebecca!" said Bessie morosely. "I've often asked her to have a course of Memory Training, too!"

"Perhaps she didn't intend to send one, Bessie," suggested Babs smiling. "It wouldn't be a bad idea for you to read the letter."

Bessie Bunter gave a sniff that was not particularly affectionate and took up the letter. Bessie was fond of her Aunt Rebecca in her own way; but there was no doubt that a postal-order stimulated that fondness.

The girls who were watching Bessie Bunter's face were greatly amused by what they saw. Bessie was always like that with a letter. She grinned at one line and looked very serious at another, and rolled her head judiciously on one side for a third.

But even for Bessie this letter created a record.

After her preliminary grins Bessie suddenly looked very serious. She raised her brows and blinked at the letters, and then held it tighter. She gave a series of gasps, such as "Phew!" "Oh, I say!" and "Oh, my goodness!" She frowned and stared and pulled faces, and having read the letter once, turned back and read it all through again, a very unusual thing for Bessie to do. And, having done that, Bessie dropped the letter on the table and stared vacantly round the Common-room.

"Not bad news, is it, Bessie?" said Babs rather anxiously.

Bessie did not seem to hear until the question had been twice repeated.

"I don't know whether it is or not," she said.

"Eh? But how can that be?"

"It's an awful responsibility!" said Bessie absently.

"What is it?"

"And I've been chosen for it. But, of course, that's quite natural! Aunt Rebecca wouldn't choose any of you girls!"

"Choose?"

"To be completely in my charge!" mused Bessie. "To be like a mother to the poor little thing, to guide her weak and faltering footprints—I mean footsteps!"

"What ever are you talking about?" cried Babs, getting quite anxious.

Bessie Bunter came back to earth again, as it were, and gave Babs a severe and searching blink.

"I don't suppose you'd understand, Barbara," she said, "never having had such a responsibility!"

"Well, whatever has Aunt Rebecca asked you to do?" Babs cried. "Swim the Channel?"

"It's more serious than that!" said Bessie.

"Well, whatever is it?"

"Some girls might shirk it—I won't mention names!" said Bessie in a forbearing tone. "Clara's one of them, for instance. But I'm not that sort. Aunt Rebecca knows what a sense of responsibility I've got. Night and day I shall be there, to help her, and comfort her, and guide her, and see that nothing happens—"

"Bessie Bunter!" came a perfect shriek from everyone.

"There's no need to shout like that. It won't put me off!" said Bessie indignantly.

"Well, what are you babbling about?" cried Clara Trevlyn. "You're standing and looking as though all the cares in the world had suddenly dropped on you! What are you trying to tell us?"

"It's about Muriel Wills," said Bessie impressively.

"And who on earth is Muriel Wills?" said Clara.

"She's a new girl who's coming here," said Bessie, and gave the table a sudden bang with her fist. "Aunt Rebecca has put her in my charge! I've got to look after her, and—and I will!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Clara.

Bessie whirled on her with quite a theatrical gesture.

"You sha'n't jolly well bully her, Clara!" she exclaimed.

"Bully?" gasped Clara. "Why, I—"

"I won't allow anyone to touch her, so there!"

"But no one wants to, you goose!"

"Well, you won't get the chance," said Bessie. "Not when she's in my charge! It's an awful responsibility to be in charge of a girl like this, but I'm just the sort of girl for the job! Aunt Rebecca knew that, of course, when she

said that I was never to let her out of my sight!"

"Aunt Rebecca's said all that about a new girl coming here, Bessie?" gasped Babs. "Are you sure?"

"I'll jolly well read the letter if you don't believe!" said Bessie indignantly. "I expect you're going to be jealous! This is what she says: 'Muriel Willis is coming in a day or two, and will be in the Second Form. She is a nice little girl, and I am very fond of her, so I want you to promise that you will just keep an eye on her, and show her the ropes until she feels quite at home.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded Clara.
"If you think you can bully her just because she's small, you sha'n't!" cried Bessie.

"Ha, ha, ha! You perfect duffer!" pealed Clara. "Why, Aunt Rebecca doesn't say anything like what you've been telling us. She only asks you to keep an eye on her."

"I didn't read that part, perhaps," said Bessie hurriedly. "But I will. You listen to this! 'Knowing what a strong and courageous and absolutely fearless girl you are, Bessie, I shall rely upon you to protect little Muriel from—from any wicked persons who come to kidnap her—'"

"You're making it up!" scoffed Clara. "Let me see that part!"

"No fear!" said Bessie. "I—I mean, it's all here. And it goes on to say, 'I know you will always protect her, and show her the ropes, until she feels quite at home; and if you are kind to her I shall increase your pocket-money—I mean, recommend you for a medal—'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bessie was interrupted by a perfect shriek of laughter. The genuine part, and the part that Bessie was "making up" were obvious.

"You're jealous!" yelled Bessie Bunter, thrusting the letter into its envelope. "It's a jolly serious responsibility, and you won't find me letting anyone bully my poor little friend. So there! I'm going to speak to those Second Form kids now, and tell them to smarten things up for when Muriel comes!"

"But, Bessie—"
"It's no good arguing! You won't make me swerve from my resolution!" declared Bessie. "I'm going down now. You can be jealous if you like; it won't make any difference to me."

Bang! went the Common-room door, and Bessie Bunter had gone.

The girls exchanged glances. Undoubtedly Bessie had taken the letter in a far more serious spirit than intended. Undoubtedly, too, she was very much in earnest. But there was a very funny side to it, and from the sound that came from the Common-room the girls seemed to be seeing it.

Saved from Connie!

TAD!
Bessie Bunter entered the Second Form Common-room with her fat little nose tilted in a most dignified manner.

A cheerful-looking youngster, with black, bobbed hair and dark brown eyes, looked up, saw Bessie, and burst into a smothered peal of laughter.

"Oh, I say! Isn't she a funny-looking girl?" she whispered to one of the three girls sitting with her.

"Hessh! That's old Bessie!" whispered Pip, otherwise Priscilla Pacey, the girl addressed. "We always pull her leg when she comes down here, don't we?"

"Oh, rather!" said Bunny and Teddy

Bear, the other members of the famous Second Form trio:

"Hallo, youngsters!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter, in a distinctly patronising manner. "I've come down on a very important matter. I want you to give me all your attention. Ahem! This place isn't looking very tidy."

"It's like your cheek to come and tell us!" said Pip.

"I want you to be more respectful to me, please!" said Bessie, in a dignified tone. "You're only children. You don't understand how serious it is to have a responsibility, to have to guard someone. Ahem! There's a new girl coming here."

"Go hon!" said Bunny & Co., and their companion tittered.

"Blest if I can see anything to grin about!" said Bessie indignantly. "I suppose you think that you'll be spiteful to her and bully her? You won't when I'm about!"

"Bully?" repeated Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear all together. Their tone might have sounded ominous, if Bessie had been listening for such a thing.

"Very likely," said the fat girl. "Still, I'm down on that sort of thing myself. I want you to smarten up this room, and be on your best behaviour. And you must be very careful—"

"Oh, I say! Look at the door, Bessie!" interjected Bunny.

Bessie, being inveterately curious, looked, a very foolish thing to do when Bunny told anyone to do it. A hand reached out at the same moment and seized her cable-like plait, and pulled hard!

"Yaroooh!" yelled Bessie, wheeling round. "Who pulled my hair?"

She saw three perfectly grave and serious faces, the faces of Bunny & Co. The fourth face was not serious. Bessie saw twitching lips and pink cheeks that were rapidly growing redder.

"I believe you did it!" she said, pointing. "I haven't seen you here before, but—"

"Look at that picture falling down!" yelled Pip.

Bessie Bunter had a second look round. The famous pictorial again flashed into view, and was duly pulled.

"Tug, tug!"

"Yow-wow-wow!" shrieked Bessie Bunter, holding both hands to her hair. "You'll jolly well pull it out by the roots!" Her eyes settled on the black-haired girl, who was not quite crimson with bottled mirth. "You did that! I'll jolly well teach you!"

Bessie's plump hands descended on the Second-Former's shoulders. Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear grabbed her at once.

"No bullying!"

"Oh, really—"

"Sit her on the floor!" cried Bunny. Bump!

Bessie Bunter sat on the floor and yelled, which was not at all a dignified position for a girl who had come down to "lay down the law" to the members of the Second Form.

"Owl Ooooh!" gasped Bessie, in a bottled voice. "You're at the bottom of it!" She scrambled up to make a fresh rush at the girl, who was shaking with mirth. "I'll jolly well make you sorry for this! What's your name?"

"Mu-Mu-Muriel Willis," said the girl feebly.

"Wha-a-a-at?"

If the new girl had fired a gun at Bessie Bunter the fat girl could not have looked more surprised. Her hands fell to her sides. She tried to grin and smooth her frock and pat her hair and adjust her glasses all at the same moment. Bessie had the uncomfortable feeling that

her introduction to her "ward" had not been exactly as impressive as it might have been.

"Er—oh, dear me!" gasped Bessie. "I—I'm pleased to meet you, Muriel! I—I didn't know you were even here. Ahem! I'm Bessie Bunter. I'm going to protect you, you know. I know you didn't pull my hair!"

Muriel, evidently a high-spirited but very good-hearted youngster, jumped up and gave Bessie's plump cheek a kiss.

"Pleased to meet you!" she said. Then: "And, I say, I think you're awfully funny! I wish you'd say some more funny things!"

"Funny!" gasped Bessie indignantly.

"Oh, dear, no! I wasn't trying to be funny then. These little cats were pulling my hair, and pretending you did it. They're not going to teach you that sort of trick if I know anything about it. I'm going to protect you!"

"Protect me?" said Muriel, in a dazed voice.

"Yes. Didn't Aunt Rebecca tell you that you'd be under my care when you came here?"

"I know Miss Rebecca Bunter," said Muriel Willis. "But—but surely you're—you're not her niece?"

"Rather!" said Bessie, beaming. "Didn't expect to see such a well-built and influential girl—eh? Especially as aunt's so skinny herself. Oh, really, you three! You might have some manners!"

Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear were squealing with ill-suppressed mirth.

"You're going to look after me, Bessie?" said Muriel, still in a dazed voice.

"That's right!" said Bessie. "Whenever you're in danger you've just got to call for me, and I shall come rushing to your side to protect you! I'm that sort of girl, you know! You come with me now, and I'll show you round the school. You'll find that I'm as brave as a lion—although, of course, I'm not a boastful sort of girl. You come this way!"

Bessie Bunter took hold of the new girl's arm in quite a motherly way, and led her to the door.

"I say, Bessie—" began Bunny.

Bessie Bunter turned and gave the three Second-Formers a very severe and dignified look.

"Henceforward, Muriel is under my charge and will come to no harm!" said the fat girl, in a lofty voice. "I shall be like a mother to her! I may even forbid her to speak to you three—for her own sake, of course!"

Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear shrieked with merriment. Bessie would have stayed to argue, but even Bessie saw that it was impossible. She led Muriel hurriedly into the passage and closed the door.

"I'm most influential, you know, Muriel," she said confidently. "You're really awfully lucky to have me to look after you! Whenever—"

Bessie Bunter broke off as Connie Jackson of the Sixth Form came along the passage. Connie had lately been reinstated as a monitress, and was once more her usual bumptious self. Her eyes settled on Muriel.

"Ah! So you're the new girl?" said Connie. "I've been looking for you. I want you in my study to do a little dusting, and you may as well make a good beginning. Come with me at once, Muriel Willis!"

"I—I—I— I sus-sus-say!" gasped Bessie, going very red.

"Am I supposed to do dusting here, Bessie?" exclaimed Muriel.

"You'll come with me at once! I am a monitress!" said Connie sharply. "I allow no argument! This way, please!" Bessie Bunter's knees shook. It was

rather unfortunate that her courage should have been tested so early—and especially by ill-tempered Connie. It was even more slighting for her very presence to be ignored, as Connie was ignoring it.

"Come this way!" said Connie, and took Muriel's arm in a sharp grip.

Bessie Bunter's courage boiled up as Connie turned her back. Connie did not look half so fierce from the back as she did from the front. Besides, what was the good of being in charge of a girl if you couldn't save her from a bullying monitress who was exceeding her power in "fagging" a new girl so soon? With quite remarkable recklessness Bessie Bunter grabbed a handful of Connie Jackson's hair and held her back.

"Oh!" shrieked Connie, sounding as surprised as though a caterpillar had turned and bitten her. "Wha-a-a-at? You—you dare to touch me like that, Bessie?"

"T-t-t-ain't jolly well right!" chattered Bessie, torn between boldness and fright. "Mum-mum-my friend Mu-Mu-Muriel—"

"I'll teach you!" said Connie. She released Muriel, and seized Bessie Bunter by her shoulders.

"Goodness gracious! What are you doing, Constance Jackson?" cried Miss Steel's voice.

Connie Jackson released Bessie abruptly, and looked guiltily at the Fourth Form mistress.

"She—she was insolent—"

"Connie's been j-j-jolly well trying to fag my l-l-little friend, Miss Steel!" burst out Bessie.

"Your friend?" said Miss Steel. "Dear me! Why, it is the little new girl, Muriel. Surely, Constance, you had not called on her to work in your study?"

"Only—only for a few minutes," faltered Connie.

"Absolutely against the school rules!" said Miss Steel angrily. "And you attempted to protect this little girl, Bessie? I am most gratified to see you take such a thoughtful interest in any girl, Bessie—especially a youngster new to the school. Constance, I am heartily ashamed to have found you attempting to bully Bessie, and I hope I shall never have to speak about such a thing again. Bessie, those lines I gave you this morning are forgiven! I am very pleased to see this change in you!"

And Miss Steel walked away as quickly as she had appeared.

"So you think it's something to grin about, Bessie Bunter?" muttered Connie Jackson.

"Grin?" gasped Bessie. "Oh dear, no! J-j-just a little joke I thought about—"

"You'll have a better one to think about soon!" said Connie savagely. "You—protecting a new girl! Because she's got more money than sense, I expect! I'll make you sorry for your falsehoods before you're much older!"

And Connie walked away, leaving Bessie feeling cold with apprehension.

"I say, Bessie!" said Muriel, in quite a changed voice. "I—I think it was awfully nice for you to save me from that girl!"

"Nice?" gasped Bessie, pulling herself together. "Oh dear! It's num-nun-nothing to me, you know. I—I'm always having rows with the mum-mum-monitresses. Still, you come along, and I'll introduce you to my friends!"

"Beware!"

EVERYONE at Cliff House knew of the great joke at bed-time that night. They had seen the new girl, Muriel Wills, and they had seen her "chaperon," Bessie Bunter. Thanks to Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell, full details had been supplied to every Form.

Groups had gathered to watch Bessie, leading Muriel by the hand, at every corner. Those who were artistic had tried to commit to paper the lofty tilt of Bessie Bunter's nose. Those who were not artistic had merely chuckled.

There couldn't be a shadow of doubt that Bessie was taking the whole business with the utmost gravity.

Even at bed-time Bessie Bunter was absent from the Fourth Form dormitory, causing quite a considerable amount of speculation amongst her chums, who seemed, for the time being, in danger of being "frozen out."



HELPING MURIEL! Babs' best writing pad was there, and Mabel Lynn's fountain pen, and there was a sploodge of ink on the table where Bessie had over-filled the ink-well. "What on earth—!" gasped Barbara Redfern.

"Have you seen Bessie?" asked Babs, of her chum, Mabel. "The last I saw of her was when she was buzzing round in a state of great excitement, looking for Muriel after supper to know whether she had had enough to eat."

"She went and complained to cook after that that the Second-Formers weren't fed properly—no, cheese for them!" grinned Clara.

"And then she was asking matron for a hot-water bottle for Muriel's bed!" chuckled Dolly Jobling. "I heard what the matron said about girls who suggested that she'd think of putting anyone into damp sheets!"

"Did Bessie like it?" asked Phyllis Howell.

"No," said Dolly, with a reminiscent smile. "She went up the stairs rather hurriedly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish she'd buck up, anyway!" said Babs, beginning to look slightly worried. "Aunt Rebecca should have thought what she was saying before she sent such a letter. Really—"

Crash!

"Oooooer!" came a reedy and indignant shout from the passage. "Don't you dare to touch me again!"

"Sounds as though the gentle Fatima is on the way at last!" chuckled Clara Trevlyn. "Here she is! Hail, smiling Bessie!"

But Bessie was not smiling. She entered the dormitory looking red, and ruffled, and with an unusual number of feathers adhering to her dress. Babs asked where she had been.

"They're very ignorant in the Second Form!" said Bessie peevishly. "It really isn't a nice Form for a new girl to be put in at all. That horrid little Pip has been jolly well going for me with a pillow!"

"Have you been to their dorm?" asked Clara.

"Of course!" said Bessie indignantly. "I went to tuck Muriel up. And just because I borrowed Pip's pillow so that

Muriel could have two they all went for me. I didn't snatch it, either!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the Fourth-Formers. They understood the feathers and Bessie's ruffled appearance.

"That's it—cackle!" sniffed Bessie. "You're getting quite as jealous as you used to be. Just because you've never been trusted to look after a young girl, too!"

Bessie Bunter turned in the dark, owing to her late appearance in the dormitory, and her temper did not improve when she trod on a hairbrush that Dolly Jobling had rather carelessly dropped beside her bed. Possibly through fatigue she was, in spite of threats to the contrary, as late as ever in rising the following morning. But when Bessie did awake there was no holding her!

Clara Trevlyn was displaced by a swift rush that swept her away from the wash-stand just when she had poured out her washing water. Dolly Jobling's clothes, having become mixed with Bessie's, went

whizzing to the other end of the dormitory. Peggy Preston's hairbrush only escaped doing duty on Bessie's boots through Peggy's own promptitude.

They were very glad indeed to see Bessie leave the dormitory at last to see whether Muriel Wills was awake and well.

"It's jolly good of Bessie, anyway," said Babs, with a tolerant smile. "When you come to think of it, she's never felt any responsibility before. I know Bessie's making herself an awful nuisance, but she means jolly well."

"And isn't thinking about the extra pocket-money from Aunt Rebecca at all!" sneered Marcia Loftus.

"Oh, that isn't the only thought in Bessie's mind!" said Babs sharply.

"Of course not!" said Marcia. "Another honour for famous Study No. 4.—Thoughtful Little Bessie! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie Bunter was not seen again until breakfast-time.

When she was seen it was in the dining-room, and Bessie was in the midst of another scrimmage with the members of the Second Form. Ina Tinn, who was watching the fray from a distance with considerable amusement, explained.

"It's bloaters for breakfast," said "Sardines" of the Second. "Bessie got to our table first, and she's been trying to find the biggest one for Muriel! She took the one given to Bunny, and Bunny didn't like it!"

The appearance of the duty mistress fortunately quelled the disturbance, but Bessie was in a very discontented frame of mind when she arrived at her own table.

"I won't have those kids interfering with everything I do!" she said, in a very serious voice. "Stands to reason that if I'm going to see that Muriel gets a good figure like mine she's got to have enough grub. She'll be as skinny as all of them if I don't look out!"

Babs was wise enough not to debate the point, and watched Bessie sail away after breakfast. She chatted with Mabs for a few minutes, and then went to Study No. 4 to complete preparation that was not quite finished. They opened the door to receive a considerable shock.

The table had been cleared of their things—utterly!

Books that had been left open at special places had been closed and stacked none too tidily on the floor. There was a splotch of ink where Bessie had been refilling the inkwell and caused it to "swim over." Barbara's best writing-pad was there, and Mabel Lynn's fountain-pen, and Muriel Wills seemed to be concocting a letter with the aid of a very thoughtful and worried-looking Bessie.

"What the dickens—" gasped Babs. Muriel looked up nervously.

"I hope you girls don't mind me being here?" she said.

"Oh, that's quite all right," said Bessie. "You write your letter, Muriel. Never mind about Babs and Mabs!"

"But—oh, my pen!" gasped Mabs. "You'll smash the nib, Bessie, jabbing it on the table like that!"

"Silly thing won't write, anyway," said Bessie. "It's out of order, and I'm trying to put it right. Anyway, you mustn't interrupt! Muriel and I have got to be busy. She's forgotten a most important thing."

"And that?" said Babs dazedly.

"Writing to Aunt Rebecca to tell her that I'm looking after her," said Bessie very seriously. "Poor aunt will be awfully worried. You carry on writing that letter so that it catches the post, Muriel, and just mention my remittance tactfully."

Babs and Mabs began to gather up

their books and steer for the Common-room, which seemed the only thing to be done!

"How do you spell 'request,' Bessie?" asked Muriel. "Is it r—e—q—u—e—s—t?"

"That's good enough for a Second Form kid," said Bessie. "But I hope you're not going to be a bad speller, Muriel! I shall have to give you a few lessons."

"Lessons?" gasped Muriel.

"Oh, I don't mind a little thing like that—work's never any trouble to me. I always—Hallo, Clara! What do you want?"

Clara gazed into the study.

"My giddy hat!" she said.

"Clara!" cried Bessie Bunter. "None of that here!"

"None of what?" said Clara.

Bessie gave her a fierce and forbidding frown.

"Your slang expressions!" said Bessie. "Can't stand it myself. I'm jolly well going to see that Muriel doesn't learn that sort of thing from you! Muriel, don't you listen to Clara when she speaks! She's far too slangy!"

"You—you—you—" spluttered Clara, going very red.

"Don't listen, Muriel!" said Bessie firmly.

Clara Trevlyn disappeared abruptly.

"I—I'm taking up an awful lot of your time!" gurgled Muriel, unable entirely to suppress her mirth.

"Oh, I enjoy it, I'm sure!" said Bessie heroically. "I've got such a sense of responsibility. Have you put that bit about my remittance? Like this, you know: 'And now, dear Auntie Rebecca, I am glad to say that Bessie is quite well, and has been reading in the paper that a lot of remittances get lost in the post.' See? That's what you call being tactful! I'm always that; and, of course, a girl like myself has to keep up her figure!"

Muriel escaped just before school-time. She found Bunny & Co. in the Second Form Common-room. Muriel's description of Bessie's attention was explosive, and punctuated by much laughter.

"She's so funny that I didn't know where to look!" Muriel confided. "I wish I hadn't wanted to laugh so much because I'm sure she's trying to be jolly kind to me!"

"She shouldn't try and boss Second-Formers," said Bunny, aged nine, shaking her head with the gravity of ninety. "Besides, Marcia Loftus is spreading a yarn that she's doing it all to get more money out of her aunt."

"Well, Bessie must want it, being so awfully fat!" said Muriel.

"I believe you like her!" said Bunny, a twinkle in her eye.

"I do," confessed Muriel. "But she's so awfully funny! I want to laugh whenever I see her. And she does say such queer things! I'm sure I'm going to have a jolly time here with her looking after me like this!"

"Yes," said Bunny. Then: "Ahem! We—we've been talking over a little scheme while you've been out. It seems a shame that Bessie should put herself out for so much trouble over nothing. It would be far more exciting if something happened."

"If what?" said Muriel excitedly.

Bunny told her, and sent her into shrieks of laughter.

"But would it be quite fair?" the new girl demurred.

"Oh, rather!" said Bunny. "We're always pulling Bessie's leg. She really likes you to take a bit of notice of her, you know!"

Bessie Bunter was blissfully unaware of that conversation. She was dwelling on other matters. Miss Steel found her

more inattentive than usual in class. Miss Bullivant stood her in the corner with a book on her head. But even there in those uninspiring surroundings Bessie dwelt upon her great "responsibility."

"Anything might happen to Muriel, I'm sure—anything!" she murmured to herself at dinner-time. "I'll just pop up to Study No. 4 to get a clean handkerchief, and then I'll see Muriel gets a good dinner."

She went into Study No. 4 and stared at a large piece of paper on the table. It was printed in huge and straggling characters and addressed to her. Bessie read it with goggling eyes.

"Bessie Bunter! Beware! It is no good you protecting Muriel Wills, because we are after her, and will have her just the same.

"(Sined)

"THREE DETERMINED RASCALS."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bessie, rubbing her eyes. "Three determined rascals! I knew it all the time! I jolly well knew they'd try and kidnap Muriel! That's why she's been put in my charge, I'm sure!"

She looked anxiously under the table, in case one of the determined rascals was hiding there, and seemed far more courageous when none of the persons in question were to be seen.

"I knew there'd be something like this!" Bessie declared in a hoarse whisper. "But now they'll jolly well find out what I'm like when I'm roused! Three determined rascals! Oh dear! I wish it was only two—or even one! Still, I'll be a match for them! I won't say a word to anyone! It's a jolly good thing I've found this out, so that I can be on my guard!"

She crumpled the paper and threw it into the waste-paper basket. The sight of the paper-basket gave Bessie an idea. Supposing she regarded that as one of the rascals—just for the time being!

Going to the corner, Bessie picked up a hockey-stick and struck with great determination at the paper-basket. Owing to an error of judgment it was the inkpot that suffered—severely! Bessie gazed at the spreading pool in great dismay.

"Doesn't matter! It would have hit one of the other rascals, anyway!" she muttered.

And Bessie, cheerfully heedless of the shattered inkpot, left Study No. 4 and started down to dinner, with an expression of solemnity that a general sending his troops into battle might have envied. After all, one couldn't worry about spill ink when there were three determined rascals writing that sort of thing!

Not so Funny, after all!

"ARMS upward—bend! Bessie Bunter!"

Miss Bullivant spoke angrily, and not without justification. Twenty-two of her scholars were standing with arms rigidly raised. The twenty-third member of the drill class, Bessie Bunter, was holding her arms downwards at her sides. Considering that Bessie had done the same sort of thing about a dozen times before, it was really not remarkable that Miss Bullivant objected.

"Bessie! I do not wish to have any more inattention!" exclaimed the mistress sharply. "Raise your hands! Arms downward stretch! Bessie!"

Bessie was still standing with arms raised!

"Fifty lines, you stupid girl!" thundered Miss Bullivant. "Perhaps that will teach you, Bessie! Why are you not attending?"

"I—I was thinking of something else," confessed Bessie Bunter.

"Good gracious! In drill lesson?"
 "I—I wish we could have some different exercises, Miss Bullivant," said Bessie Bunter. "Something with clubs—to bring my muscles up!"

"What an extraordinary request from you!" gasped Miss Bullivant. "Why do you say such a thing?"

"You'll never know when you'll need your strength," said Bessie mysteriously. "Supposing three determined rascals rushed in the room now and grabbed you—"

"Bessie! Cease this stupid chatter instantly! Continue with the same exercise three times!"

Bessie Bunter, somewhat subdued, did so by following the movements of all the others about three seconds late. Undoubtedly there was something the matter with Bessie.

Miss Bullivant tried to keep her eyes from Bessie's figure. There were times when even Miss Bullivant felt that Bessie was hopeless.

"Oh dear! Don't!"
 It was a childish voice, and not loud, that sent that sound floating into the hall where the girls were drilling.

It seemed to electrify Bessie Bunter. "Muriel Wills!" she gasped. "Oh dear! They're here!"

To Miss Bullivant's horror, Bessie Bunter rushed across to the rack on which the Indian clubs were hung.

"Bessie!"
 "I knew it!" gasped Bessie. "They've come here at last! I knew they would!"

"Girl!" cried Miss Bullivant. "Have you taken leave of your senses completely? Do you realise— Bless my soul! Come here!"

But Bessie Bunter did nothing of the sort.

Grasping a heavy Indian club in her hand, she ran to the swing-doors and disappeared into the passage.

Miss Bullivant went in pursuit, followed, it may be said, by quite half of her scholars. They were as alarmed as the mistress. They had never seen Bessie do anything quite like that before!

Single-minded Bessie, however, was dwelling on other matters. The three determined rascals had evidently come for Muriel—that was the cause of the gasping little cry that had reached her ears. What Bessie would actually do when she came upon such desperate daylight kidnapers was not at all clear. Fortunately, however, the need did not arise.

In the passage she came on Muriel Wills, held by one hand by the cruel grip of bullying Connie Jackson of the Sixth.

"I'll teach you to disobey me again, and make faces at me!" Connie was muttering. "I don't stand that sort of thing from Second-Form kids, I can tell you!"

Bessie Bunter pulled up abruptly as she understood. She meant to give Connie a dramatic and challenging cry, but it did not exactly come up to requirements. What Bessie actually said was:

"Oh, I sus-sus-say! Sus-sus-stop!"
 It was not dramatic, but it caused Connie to whirl about.

"What! Bessie again?" Connie ejaculated. "Bessie, what are you doing here, when—"

And there Connie broke off as Miss Bullivant appeared, followed by most of the members of her class. Connie was facing them; Bessie was not. She did not know that they were there.

"You—you were trying to bib-bib-bully Muriel again!" said Bessie, trying to pluck up all her courage. "I—I won't have it, and—and it's no good making those dreadful f-f-faces at me, either! I'll j-j-jolly well—"

"Bessie!" cried Miss Bullivant.

Bessie leapt round as though Miss Bullivant had fired a shot.

"Oh dear! I—I—"
 "Why have you left my class in this manner?" exclaimed the Bull. "And what were you saying to Constance?"

"Nun-nun-nothing at all, Miss Bullivant!" stammered Bessie. "I'm not a girl to sneak—not that sort at all. I—I wasn't going for her because she was twisting Muriel's wrist at all—"

"Constance! Is it true that you were hurting this young girl?" exclaimed Miss Bullivant.

"I was just speaking to her!" muttered Connie, with glowing eyes.

"Now I think of it, I remember hearing her cry out, Constance!"

"She—she imagined—"
 "And Miss Steel has spoken to me about this very girl, too," went on the Bull, in a grimmer tone. "Why are you out of your class, Muriel?"

"Please, miss, I was sent to fetch a book," said Muriel.

"And you met her, Constance? Is

"Muriel couldn't have got a better protector than me, could she?" she remarked proudly to Babs at tea-time.

"But what are you protecting her from?" Babs said, in amazement. "You didn't know that Connie was in the passage?"

"There are more serious things!" said Bessie gravely. "Rascals, for instance—perhaps half a dozen might come to hold Muriel to ransom!"

"My hat!" was all Babs could say in answer to that mysterious assurance.

Presently Bunny detached herself from the party and went into the school. It was ten minutes before she reappeared. When she had joined the party again they took two or three turns up and down the quadrangle, and then came towards the school. Bessie Bunter stopped them, and gave Muriel an affectionate smile.

"Where are you going now, youngster?" she inquired.

"To—to do some work in the class-



THE CHAMPION OF THE WEAK! Bessie Bunter, grasping the Indian club, blinked furiously at Connie Jackson. "You're tut-tut-trying to bib-bib-bully Muriel again!" she exclaimed. "I—I wuw-wuw-won't have it!"

there any reason why you should be speaking to her?"

Connie Jackson said nothing.
 "I see!" rumbled the drill-mistress.

"I am very annoyed with you, Constance—very annoyed indeed. You have caused Bessie to absolutely interrupt my class, although it is, perhaps, as well under the circumstances. I hope I shall not have to speak to you about such a thing again! Girls, back to the Hall at once!"

Connie Jackson hissed in Bessie's ear:
 "I'll teach you to sneak again!"

"Oh, really!" gasped Bessie; but Connie was already hurrying away.

Babs, for the sake of peace and quietness, took the club from Bessie and led her back to the Hall. Miss Bullivant was waiting for a few more words with Bessie.

The discovery of Connie, however, had directed Miss Bullivant's justifiable wrath away from Bessie. It was a talking-to on the subject of stupidity that Bessie received, but nothing more. Bessie accepted that with great cheerfulness.

room with Miss Scott," said Muriel, in a muffled sort of voice.

"Ahem! Yes; I—I dare say you'll be safe there," said Bessie thoughtfully.

"There's one thing, Muriel. You'd better tell Miss Scott to keep the door locked—just give her the message from me, and say I've good reason. She'll understand!"

Muriel went on, her face rapidly growing redder and redder. Bessie watched her unobtrusively to the end of the passage, and then turned and went thoughtfully up the stairs. She was far too preoccupied to see that Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear were following her.

Study No. 4 was empty when Bessie reached it, but almost at once a sheet of paper lying on the table attracted her attention. The fat girl looked at it, gasped, and looked again.

It was another message from her unseen foes:

"Bessie Bunter," it read—"Beware! We are here at last, hiding under the

table. Do not move, or we shall take you instead of Muriel.

"(Sined)

"THREE DETERMANED RASCALS."

Bessie Bunter read the message through three times. Then she turned. Even to Bessie's mind it seemed rather stupid to hide under the table, but her first thought was to get to a convenient distance to test the truth of the statement. She whirled open the door and dashed through.

Crash!

Three grinning youngsters saw Bessie Bunter—too late! There was no time to get out of the way. Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear sat violently in the passage and Bessie sprawled on top of them.

"Oooooo!" gasped Bunny. "M-my head! I—I'm sure—"

Bessie, heedless of the youngsters who had broken her fall, was scrambling to her feet again.

"They're in there—three of them!" she gasped. "Look out!"

And with that breathless gasp of warning Bessie was on her feet again and streaking along the passage.

It was only when she reached the lower landing that the fat girl paused for thought.

The three of them? All gathered in Study No. 4? Bessie began to see possibilities that had not been apparent before. At least she could have a look at them!

Feeling exceedingly bold, she commenced to ascend the stairs again. She heard voices coming from Study No. 4, but they were young voices. When she peeped into the room she saw that Bunny was holding aloft a sheet of paper, the ink of which was still wet. And this time Bessie read a message that could not possibly deceive her:

"Bessie Bunter,—We have dissided to kidnap someone else, as we are afraid of you, and shall not come here again.

"(Sined),

"THREE DEFEETED RASCALS."

Uttering a yell of great wrath, Bessie Bunter dashed into Study No. 4.

"Got you, you three!" I knew it all the time! You've been pretending to jolly well scare me! I'll make you sorry!"

"Run for it!" shrieked Beatrice Barlow.

The three Second-Formers attempted to do so, but it was not as easy as it might have been. Bessie, even though she claimed to have known about it all the time, was in a very vengeful mood. She grappled with Bunny, and had given her quite a hearty shaking before Pip and Teddy Bear managed to rescue her.

"I'll teach you!" puffed Bessie.

The three bright lights of the Second had already been taught. Before this they had regarded Bessie as a particularly suitable young lady for bright japes. They were rapidly changing their minds. They fled into the corridor and streaked for safety, with Bessie in hot but breathless pursuit. It was only the appearance of Connie Jackson that saved them.

"Bessie! Come here—instantly!" Connie cried, in a voice of undisguised triumph. "What are you doing? Chasing girls in the Second Form? Oh, there is no need for you to explain! You will write a hundred lines—unless you wish me to take you to your Form-mistress!"

Bessie tried to explain, but tried fruitlessly. That should have been obvious to the fat girl. Connie had reason for exerting her maximum power at such a fortunate "capture."

But Bessie very soon cheered up when

she reflected on the matter. They had been trying to jape her, but she was too jolly clever for that sort of thing! Oh, rather! The spiteful gleam in Connie's eyes that should have told Bessie that those lines were only the start of a few punishments that the ill-tempered mistress hoped to administer had not daunted her. She retailed the story in the Fourth that evening with great glee, being far too pleased with herself to heed any of the leg-pulling that followed her disclosures.

Connie's Spitefulness!

"COME in, Muriel! Hurry up!"

It was after tea on the following evening when Muriel Wills, the new girl in the Second Form, followed Bessie Bunter into Study No. 4. Muriel carried a fluffy and struggling kitten in her arms, which, when placed upon the table, immediately started to "Sharpen its claws" on the tablecloth. It was just as well for the peace of mind of Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn that they had complied with the fat girl's request for "five minutes alone with Muriel," and gone to chat with Peggy Preston.

"That's the way!" said Bessie approvingly. "He's only playing the piano—all cats do that, you know. I'm jolly glad you've brought a pet to school with you. All nice girls have pets. Of course, I've got the best one in the school—dear old Polly, there! I wouldn't part with Polly for anything!"

Muriel Wills glanced at the evil-eyed and mopy-looking parrot that Bessie indicated, and wondered how she kept from laughing.

It was certainly an ordeal for Muriel to come up and have this very serious interview with Bessie on the subject of pets.

"Polly's a fine bird!" said Bessie, with great and condescending pride. "He can talk, you know, and that's far more than Barbara's horrid little monkey can do, or Clara's hedgehog. Tell Muriel my name, Polly dear!"

Polly closed one eye at Muriel and said, very gravely:

"Sack of flour!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded Muriel helplessly.

Bessie Bunter glared from her "ward" to her pet.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle about!" she exclaimed indignantly. "Polly's a very naughty bird to say such a thing. I'm surprised at you laughing, Muriel. Now, Polly, what's my name?"

"Silly duffer!" said Polly promptly.

"Wha-a-at?"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Muriel.

"Don't laugh, Muriel—don't laugh!" gasped Bessie. "It only encourages him to say these naughty things! Polly, you're a little beast, and you sha'n't have a lump of sugar for saying that! You used to call me Beautiful Bessie!"

"In the dark!" said the parrot, and chuckled.

Muriel Wills shook with mirth. Bessie Bunter glared at her, and shook her fist at Polly. Muriel tried to control herself, but it seemed to be very difficult.

"Someone's been teaching Polly to say these horrid things, that's what it is!" hooted Bessie Bunter. "He doesn't really understand what he's saying! Don't take any notice of him, Muriel, and then he'll know he's in disgrace. I suppose you know how to look after a cat?"

"I—I think so!" said Muriel feebly.

Bessie Bunter surveyed the kitten with a judicial eye.

"I'm not really fond of cats, you know," she said. "Still, let every girl have her own taste. Let me see! I promised I'd make Polly and your kitten friends, didn't I? Said I'd introduce them—eh?"

"Oh, if you can!" said Muriel.

"Easy thing for me!" said Bessie. "I've got a wonderful way with pets, you know. They understand every word I say to them."

"Polly won't hurt puss, will he?" said Muriel, in sudden alarm.

"Hurt?" scoffed Bessie. "Polly's as gentle as—a dove! I've taught him to be like that, you know. I've trained Polly to do all sorts of things. Come on, Polly!"

The fat girl rose, took the parrot-cage from the wall, and placed it on the table. Clank!

"S-s-s-s-s!" said Puss, arching his back instantly.

"Little beast!" said Polly maliciously. Muriel shivered.

"Oh dear! I—I say, Bessie! I think you'd better hang the cage up again. I'm sure they won't agree!"

"You leave it to me!" said Bessie, complacently. "That's just looking at each other for the first time—probably their way of being friendly, you know. I've read heaps of books about animals and birds. Perhaps you didn't know that a crocodile can climb into a tree and grow!"

"Good gracious, no!" gasped Muriel.

"It's quite right—at least, I think it was a crocodile!" said Bessie hastily.

"Anyway, I know all about cats and parrots. There, I believe they're smiling at each other. You just want to put them together and they'll be friends in no time; that's what my book said. It's the influence of human beings; a strong mind like mine makes them feel friendly."

"I don't think it's safe," said Muriel apprehensively.

"That's because you don't understand! But you'll soon see how chummy they are! Nothing like making them all friends; that's always my motto. Come on, Polly, out you come! That's it, stand on the table and say something nice to puss!"

Polly stood on the table and gave the cat a startling shriek of defiance.

Squawk!

"Ow!" yelled Bessie, as the kitten immediately leapt on her shoulder, "Muriel! He's sticking his claws in! Ow-wow-wow! Help!"

Bessie Bunter jumped up.

At the same moment the kitten leapt back to the table, arched his back, and struck at Polly. Polly dodged and seized the kitten's tail in his beak. The cat streaked for the door, with Polly hanging grimly.

"Help!" cried Muriel. "Polly's after puss!"

"Polly! Polly! Leave go!" shouted Bessie frantically. "You'll be killed!"

Neither Polly nor puss reappeared. Bessie and her "ward" fled from Study No. 4 in hot pursuit. They could see puss in the distance, with Polly still holding to his tail. Evidently Polly was in a very playful mood!

"Stop!" yelled Bessie Bunter.

They turned a corner and pulled up abruptly at the sight of a tall girl who held a kitten in her arms. Polly was near, fluttering about and uttering discontented threats about "pulling the old cat's hair." The girl who held the kitten was Connie Jackson!

"Oh, I sus-sus-say!" gasped Bessie, in dismay.

Connie Jackson's eyes gleamed. "Yes," she said. "I've caught you this time. I guessed you were at the

(Continued on page 129.)



THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY



No. 10. (New Series).

Week ending June 3rd, 1922.

BESSIE BUNTER is, beyond all question, the most distinctive girl at Cliff House. There is no girl in any Form remotely resembling her—in appearance. And yet, has she not shown that, at heart, she is one of the best—in her own way?

Bessie—usually addressed by Clara Trevlyn by the name of Fatima—is the fattest girl at Cliff House, and shares Study No. 4 with Mabel Lynn and myself. She has greenish-coloured, but not unpleasant eyes, wears large, thick, round glasses, and dark hair twisted into a long, thick, and cable-like plait, which, I believe, she values more than anything else in the world—with the possible exception of her parrot!

Her chief hobby appears to be the assimilation of food. She is immensely fond of eating, though, we have noticed, nothing like so gluttonous as she was at one time. To put the case more clearly, instead of eating being the only thing that matters, she has now put many more worthy interests before it—or, at least, they are equals to her! Nevertheless, Bessie Bunter's appetite is still a thing to marvel at.

One of Bessie's most striking characteristics is her extraordinary vanity. She confidently imagines she is thoroughly first-class at every kind of sport, at singing, at lessons, at acting, and any other subject—art or sport—she may fancy. As a matter of fact, she is a complete duffer at all the things mentioned, so much so, that it is perhaps as well she doesn't realise it!

The most peculiar fact, however, is that the very two things about which she is least inclined to "blow her own trumpet" are the two solitary respects in which she soars above



General Information concerning BESSIE BUNTER.

By Barbara Redfern (The Editress.)

every other girl at Cliff House—cooking and ventriloquism! She is a past-mistress of the art of cooking. Everything she makes, confectionery or solid foods, is a real treat to eat. She has a positive genius for the business, and many studies would be only too willing to shelter her purely on account of her powers in this direction.

The rare gift of ventriloquism is hers to a marked degree. She can mimic any type of voice or sound perfectly, and she can throw her voice—either her natural voice or a mimicked one—to appear to come from any part of a room. And I have known her, in the open, make a faint calling voice appear to sound from the other side of the Close.

At everything apart from cooking and ventriloquism, however, I must admit that Bessie is a hopeless duffer. Among other things, she imagines she is a fine writer of stories, and considers that her weird style of spelling is right, whilst that favoured by the dictionaries is wrong! For Bessie, as you may have noticed, believes in spelling words more or less as they are pronounced. Such a word as "United," for instance, she would probably spell "Yewnited." And for such a word as "talk," she usually writes "tork." I doubt whether the compilers of dictionaries will ever avail themselves of her example!

Bessie has many sterling qualities, but there is no denying the fact—however much she

and far and away the most gluttonous. She was despised by every girl who knew anything of her, for nothing at all mattered to the old Bessie apart from food, and she did not scruple about her methods of obtaining it. Any girl leaving her cupboard unlocked would be almost certain to find it "raided," and Bessie never felt qualms about telling lies to escape the blame. Even when caught red-handed, Bessie would promptly fix the blame on to some "w-w-wicked old kik-kik-cat," which, unlike any cat I've ever heard of, appeared to have an omnivorous appetite for jam-tarts.

But nowadays we never find our cupboards raided. We never hear Bessie denouncing wicked old cats. We can leave our cupboards open and crammed with food, and we miss none of it—unless Bessie asks, which she does many times and oft!

Best of all, we never hear Bessie tell downright falsehoods now. Though on account of her admitted fatuousness, Bessie will probably never have the strict regard for the truth that most of us have, what equivocations she still makes are never of a serious enough nature to be termed lies. They are more the result of stupidity than anything else.

Nothing ever gave Mabel Lynn and myself more pleasure than to see the old insufferable Bessie Bunter change into the sterling fat chum and study-mate we now value.



ABOUT THIS SPESHUL NUMBER!

By BESSIE BUNTER.

AT last, dear readers! At last, after looking forward to it for years and years—or, rather, weeks and weeks—your grateful and delighted eyes at last alight on your Bessie Bunter Number! Are you not glad now that you have conquered your impatience all these years—these weeks, that is—and that you have steadily kept up your spirit looking forward to the great day—to-day?

There is but one fault to find with this great number, dear readers. And, alas, as Shakspeare says, it was a greivous fault! Remembering that first great Speshul Number of mine that appeared, you will say: "Where are those fine ritters that Bessie secured for that issue—Elizabeth Gertrude, Gertrude Elizabeth, Elizabeth G. B., etc.? Why aren't they inklooded in this second wonderful Speshul Bessie Bunter Number?"

The sad, sorrowful fact, dear readers, is—they have been crowded out! Those famous talented others, dear readers, have been crowded out! It is hard to believe, but it is true. Owing to the jellucy and selfishness of gers whose names I skorn to mention, those great ritters have had, in the poetick werds of Milton, to take a back seat.

I admit that the gers have done their best to make this number as complete as possible. But the fact is, their best is nothing

to wave flags about. They don't know how to set about an important number like this. According to them, this number tells you all there is to be known about Bessie Bunter—that's me. But where have they made menshun of the number of lives I have saved from fires, floods, wrecks, thunderstorms, red indians, and all kinds of things? There is no menshun, dear readers, and they call this Speshul Bessie Bunter Number complete!

The fact is, dear readers, they have yewsed all their spairite riting about tryfles, carsting dowt on my assershunns concerning that wikked old cat who yewsed to steel tarts, and about Bunter Court, and showing their jellucy, as yewswewal, by implying that I am not the finest-figgered gers in the Fourth Form, and that I am no good at sports, and all that sort of rubbish.

All this, dear readers, is reely a warning to you. You must not talk for granted all that the gers say in this number. Do not run away with the idear that they are telling untruths. In Barbarer's "Jeneral Informashun," which you perseeve above, there is very little that is troo. But this does not mean that Babs is wilfully telling untruths.

Hear is the trooth, dear readers. The gers, one and all, lack one thing, and that is JUDGMENT! They cannot tell a ferst-rait, fine-figgered gers when they see one. They cannot tell a good sportswummon when they see one, a good singer when they hear one, nor a good riter when they read one. Their judgment of bewty and branes is orlso well off the mark. Thus, when you read that I am not good at any partiekewlar thing, you will understand that that reely means that I am good at it. Comproneuy voo?—as we said in Bongpare.

So, having prepared you for this Speshul Bessie Bunter Number, and shown you how to dror conklooshunns, I will leave you to make the best of the feechers that are not by the gifted pen of

Your loving friend,
BESSIE BUNTER.
THE SCHOOL FRIEND—No. 160.



BRIEF HISTORY OF BESSIE BUNTER.

Bessie Bunter has been "in the limelight" more times than has any other individual Cliff House girl. Though her roles have been very nearly always of the humorous variety, she has played one or two memorable dramatic parts, and on these occasions has shown a side of her character which is apt to be hidden by her laughter-raising procedure.

ONE finds it hard to associate the Bessie Bunter who arrived at Cliff House with the Bessie Bunter with whom we are more familiar. They are both very fat, they both wear the same glasses, the same thick plait; and both are vain to a fatuous extent; and yet—what a difference there is!

Cliff House has wrought wonders with Bessie Bunter. Under the influence of sterling girls the better side of her character has at last come forward, and the meaner side has dwindled into insignificance. The reedy voice is not so reedy, the vanity is more habitual than anything else, and, when she strays from the strict path of veracity, one might put it down more to the freedom of a whimsical imagination than to any intention of deceiving.

She indulges in her flowery word-pictures of Bunter Court more because she likes to believe in them herself than with any real idea of inducing her chums to believe in them. The truth is, Bessie Bunter has a decidedly more simple mind than the average Fourth-Former, and must not be judged by quite the same standard.

Such a vast number of parts—chiefly humorous—has Bessie played that each one can only be lightly handled in this small space, and the lesser ones must be left out altogether. When Bessie arrived at Cliff House—greedy, selfish, and conceited—she was not eagerly welcomed as a study-mate. From Study No. 4 she drifted to Study No. 7, whence Clara Trevlyn, in a manner quite her own, swiftly induced Bessie to return to Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn in Study No. 4.

Immediately following that, she was the dividing factor in an election for a Fourth Form captain. Barbara Redfern had eight votes, and Marjorie Hazeldene had eight votes. The vote of plump Bessie Bunter was to decide the issue—for the Fourth Form was smaller in those days. Bessie almost voted for Marjorie, but didn't, and Babs won the captaincy!

And after that Bessie was always to be found in some droll situation or other. No matter what dramatic happening was taking place, Bessie was always at hand to serve up the necessary "funny" element. On one memorable occasion, on account of her

inaptitude at lessons, she was moved down into the Third Form for a period. Bessie will never forget the time she had among the "kittens," as she called them.

And then later came the historic occasion on which Bessie Bunter fell in love! Bessie Bunter—in love! The youth who had captured Bessie's plump heart bore the romantic patronymic of Marmaduke Higgins, and was the nephew of Uncle Clegg, whose shop he minded. But the romantic epic came to an abrupt and ungraceful conclusion. It transpired that Marmaduke, who read burglar stories, had wild ideas of burgling Cliff House, and cultivated Bessie's affections as a likely means of getting into the building. After that Bessie resolved, in her own words, to be "a man-hater."

Bessie next caused a sensation by suddenly reforming. A reformed Bessie Bunter was something almost impossible to realise in those days. But Bessie "reformed" for a purpose. Her Aunt Rebecca wished to take her for a week's holiday, but Miss Primrose, on account of complaints from Miss Bullivant, refused to allow the fat girl to go unless she were of exceedingly good behaviour during the preceding week. Hence Bessie's reformation—for one week only.

There is no denying the fact that, for that solitary week, Bessie's reformation was really sincere. She showed the better side of her character, which we know so well nowadays. Nevertheless, the girls found the reformed Bessie even worse than the Bessie they were accustomed to. She insisted on playing games with them, and any game with Bessie in it could never be much more than a farce. She mended Clara's black stockings with green wool, and wrought grievous damage to the headmistress' lawn with the mower. Finally, however, she took, for the first time in her life, the part of a heroine, and rescued Miss Bullivant from the River Sark. That settled it—Bessie gained her holiday!

Humorous and even ludicrous as these exploits of Bessie's were, they showed that even at that time Bessie, with a fixed purpose in her mind, could be a girl of firm determination.

The next really great surprise in connection with Bessie Bunter came when she was elected captain of the Fourth Form in

place of Barbara Redfern! As the cause and results of this were described in the "Brief History of Clara Trevlyn," there is no need to go into this again. Suffice to remark Bessie, as well as everybody else, was glad when her brief reign ended.

Then came the subtle change in the nature of Bessie Bunter. All this while, it will be seen, she had been steadily improving. Qualities which were not noticeable in her at first were steadily coming to the fore—sympathy, consideration for others, and occasional heroine-like deeds.

It was unfortunate for at least one Cliff House girl that Bessie Bunter should have altered her ways. Mildred Tampling, the sneak of the Fifth, had a grudge against the Fourth-Formers for not falling in with a mean plan of hers. She went to Study No. 4 later with the intention of doing damage, but found Bessie Bunter there, cooking. Mildred caused trouble, and eventually even caused the study to catch fire. But Bessie, for one of the first times in her career, forbore to sneak about Mildred—when, indeed, she was perfectly justified in telling everything.

Far from being thankful, Mildred transferred her grudge to Bessie, and performed a series of spiteful actions in such a way as to cause Bessie to be held responsible. Apart from the business of the fire, Bessie was blamed for tearing flowers out of Miss Steel's window-box, lighting a fire when forbidden, and deliberately swaggering about in the hat and coat of a visitor of the mistress.

This was too much for poor, plottèd-against Bessie. She fled from Miss Steel, and hid herself in a cupboard. The back of the cupboard gave, and Bessie found herself among ramifications of hitherto undiscovered passages. She was hidden from the school! And whilst Bessie hid, her chums, who believed in her innocence implicitly, worked desperately to clear her—and succeeded!

Bessie's next great part is quite recent, coming when a firm of manufacturers offered twenty-five pounds as a prize for the best original recipe for a sweetmeat by schoolgirl cooks. Owing to Nancy Bell, Bessie had had a cycling mishap, ruining fifteen pounds-worth of eggs belonging to an old hawker. Bessie resolved to win the recipe prize and pay the poor old man for the damage.

Bessie was at her best then. When she found that the old man was workless, and nearly starving, her sympathy knew no bounds. She invented a really wonderful recipe, and won the prize. Nancy Bell first of all got the prize and the credit for the recipe, but she was shown up very quickly, and credit went where credit was due. Thus once again did Bessie Bunter's determination bring her through with flying colours.

Bessie Bunter never has been, and probably never will be, quite the same as other girls, but she is droll and amusing, and always means well in her own funny way.



THE BEST EVER!

By BESSIE BUNTER.

(Spelling corrected all through. This is quite bad enough without bad spelling.—Ed.)

Much have I travelled in the realms of food,
And many goodly feeds and banquets seen;
At many well-stocked tables have I been,
To which I need not here allude.

But the greatest feed my eyes did e'er behold—
A feed which fired the blood within my veins—
Was after a game of cricket with the Danes,
When Barbara Redfern spake out loud and bold:

"Girls! We've won this hard-fought match with
Danesford Hall,
Though how, without Bessie Bunter, beats me quite!
So away to Study 4, girls, one and all,
And see the spread that'll fill you with delight!"

And off we dashed—'twas I who got there first;
With one great wrench I opened wide the door.
And then upon my vision there did burst
The kind of spread I'd never seen before!

I rubbed my eyes, and, blinking, looked once more.
A feed like this would startle anyone.
Straight for the nearest vacant chair I tore,
And then, one second later, I'd begun!

WHEN I AM GROAN UP!

By BESSIE BUNTER.



WHEN I am groan up, dear readers, I shall live in stite,
and don't you forget it! I shall be at Bunter Court
acting as hostess, and I shall perform this funkshun
as it ort to be performed, not make a hatch of it as
Hettie Henden does. You will see me on the dorestep of Bunter
Court, hushing in dutchesses and marshonesses and erlesses and
vikingnesses and barronetesses. I shall be in my elliment, deer
readers.

But when I am the leeding figger in Sosyitty life, I will not
forget Klif Howse. I will not forget that there are such things
as gersls with fine figgers starving in skools, and I will gather
around me Sosyitty ladies of my own hart, and we will form a
league—a league for seeing that starving skoolgerls with good
figgers are getting sulsishtun nurishment.

Then we will go rownd in a boddly to all the gersls' schools in
the kingdum, and see how the pore, fine-figgered gersls are being
treated. We will see that all kinds of riforms are made, too,
such as increasing the number of meals and the kwontity of food
to eech meel. We'll see that skinny gersls like Aggy White are
made to eet a good deel more than they do, for feer they should
set a bad eggsampel to the other gersls. And we will orlso see
that more tukshops are blit adjoining the skools, and that a free
snack tabul is to be seen, well stokked, in every korridor at the
skool.

That is what I will do when I am groan up—and a good deel
more!



MY PETS AT BUNTER COURT!

By BESSIE BUNTER.

(EDITRESS' NOTE.—We know for a fact that Bunter Court does not really exist outside Bessie's fancy. Bessie lives in a fairly well-to-do suburb of London, but she would not be Bessie Bunter if she did not exaggerate in this case as in every other. Bessie loves to weave fancy stories about her home, her plump figure, her parrot, and anything else she might be proud of. So when you read the following, you are reading what Bessie likes to believe, not what really is!—BARBARA REDFERN.)

EVERYBODY is jellus of Bunter Court, the hoam of my farther and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Bunter, the notable dissidents of the notable Sir Bunter de Bunter, who came over with William the Konkerer, to fite the Battle of Eestborne.

There are jellus cats who belevee that Bunter Court does not reely egzist, but their opinions are beneeth kontent. I diskribed my palaysihul hoam in one of the erliest numbers of the "Klif Howse Weekly," and orltho I know you would like me to fill two or three pages of this Speshul Number with a full diskripsium of Bunter Court, you must be satisfide this time by being told of some of my pets there.

I was only abel to bring one pet to Klif Howse with me, and that one is the deerest of them orl—Polley, my bewtiful parrit. But

I luv the other pets at Bunter Court orlmost as much as I luv Polley.

BWSEFFERLUS, THE HORSE.

Bwsefferlus is the bewtiful, fine-figgered horse which pulls our trap—I should say, our gilded carridge, which we sometimes yewe when we are tiered of the moter-cars. Bwsefferlus, as you will see, is named arfter the horse of Aleksander the Grate, but he is a much better horse altogether. Farther says he named our horse arfter the old Bwsefferlus, becoss it would take a man like Aleksander the Grate to konker him. But that is only farther's joak. He has called our horse Bwsefferlus becoss he is such an admirabbul, fine-figgered horse.

KLARENCE, THE DOG.

Klarence is the bewtiful, fine-figgered mastiff who gards Bunter Court. We wouldn't part with him for werlds! Orl the berglars who have their eyes on Bunter Court have herd of Klarence, our loyal Bulldog, and that is why they never brake in. Klarence's kennel is dekerated with medes which he has one at Spanniel shows, and ever so many dog finansiers have told us that Klarence is the best Newfoundland they have ever seen. He has done me orl kinds of good turns. Wunce, when my hat blew off and fell in the Tems, Klarence, being a retriever, dived in and

brort it back to me. Klarence is not an ordinery dog, and I wish I had him with me at Klif Howse!

HORACE, THE TORTUSS.

Horace is my bewtiful tortuss. He is hundreds of years old, and no Bunter of any time can remember him ever being out of the family. We think he must have come over with Sir Bunter de Bunter. It is romantik to think that Sir Bunter might have crossed the Channel on the back of Horace. Horace's only fault is that farther keeps falling over him. Horace makes free with Bunter Court, and goes up and down all the staires. If he happens to be on the staires, and farther puts his foot on him, then farther orlways falls all the way to the bottom. Farther does not like Horace, but, next to Polley, he is my faiverit pet.

SAMUEL, THE SWON.

Samuel is the most bewtiful of the hundreds of swons that swim in our laiks at Bunter Court. We have several laiks, of course, and eech one is full of swons. Samuel was named arfter my ugly and greedy younger brother Sammy, but that is all there is to be saif against my pet swon.

RANDOLF, THE KROKERDILE.

Randolf is one of our bewtiful krokerdiles which swim in the laiks with the swons. All the krokerdiles are very fond of all the swons, and they orphen play hide-and-seek together. Randolf is the most affekshunat of the lot. I am thinking of bringing him to Klif Howse one day.

I have ever so many more pets, of course, such as elifants, hedgehogs, jirrafs, rabbits, tame tigers, and prize beetles, among many others. But I must see if I cannot rite about them some other time.



Bessie Bunter. A Self-Krittisizzum!

By Bessie Bunter.



A RIFFORMED KARAKTER—THE KITCHIN CAT!

By BESSIE BUNTER.

A SELF-KRITTISIZZUM, deer reeders, needs careful handling. People who are konseted orlways flatter themselves too much in a self-krittisizzum. People who are moddist on the other hand, do not do themselves proper justiss. I belong to the latter sort.

Yes, deer reeders, I am atrade in a self-krittisizzum. I did think of letting Babs rite this for me, but on second thorts I realized that Babs is inklined to be inappreshiative of such things as a fine figger, a powerful brane, and sewerpber sportswummanship. So I dissided to rite it myself. But reeders must remember that, in this self-krittisizzum, I am too moddist to do myself anything like proper justiss.

The finest-figgered gerl, the best all-round atherleet and sportswumman, the shining lite at classes, and the plukkiest gerl at Clif House is—Bessie Bunter. There is no getting away from it, deer reeders. If I were not riting this self-krittisizzum myself, I could, of course, say more. As it is, I must meerly say that I am the best all-round gerl at Clif House.

I will now let reeders into a dark sekret by letting them know that I have a liking for food. Yes, deer reeders, one of my cheef mottoes is, "When in dowl, eat food—and plenty of it!" No growing gerl could have a better motto than that. This is the motto which ennabuls me to keep up such a fine figger, to be the best all-round atherleet and sportswumman, the shining lite at classes, and the plukkiest gerl at Clif House.

Everybody knows what a jolly fine ventri-lokwing and cook I am, but even these grate powers of mine fade into insignifankerance beside my genius at singing, dancing, riting, speling, and many other things. But, as I have said, I cannot do myself anything like proper justiss in a self-krittisizzum, so I must leave you all to imagin how reely accomplished I am. But remember this, deer reeders—that the only krittisizzum in this number that comes anywhere near the trooth is this "Self-Krittisizzum," by Bessie Bunter.

THERE was wunce a time, deer reeders, when food—in large kwontities—used to disapper from gerls' studdies. The gerls would go to the playing-fields, leaving their cubberds chock full with eetabblus, but when they returned they would find like the old wummon who lived in a shoo, that the cubberd was bare!

Who was the kulprit, deer reeders? Who was the gilty hand? I will tell you. It was the niffeiryus werk of none other than **THE KITCHEN CAT!** He was the kulprit! His was the gilty hand—I should say, paw!

The kitchen cat was at wunce the greediest and most dishonniest cat I have ever known. He was without prinssipples. He had not been brort up properly. But heer is the drammatik part, deer reeders—the part which will make you eksklame in koarus: "Booo, kitchin cat! Brarvo, Bessie Bunter!" You will hardly be abel to belevee your eers when you reed these werds.

The kitchen cat was just as kunning as he was greedy and dishonniest. He was a skeemer of the klevverest kind. He was a marster krimminul in feeline form. Sometimes, if a gerl had missed a lot of jam, and fownd me asleep in a chare with jammy marks on my face, she would kry: "Bessie Bunter, you have been raiding my cubberd agene!" And then she would proseed from werds to akshuns which I need not diskribe.

Now, deer reeders, that is just what the kitchin cat has skeemed for. Taking advartidge of my innsent slumber, he had rubbed some of the jam across my face with his dishonniest paw, and everything had werked out akkording to his wikked plan. How he mannigged to open sardeen and sammon tins, I don't know. But he must have done it somehow, for the open tins were left behind arfter many of his dishonniest depridashuns. I orphen advized the gerls to call in detektives to follow up these kloos but there invariabbul reply was insulting in its implikshun: "Your too yung yet to go to prizlon, Bessie!" But I think a drammatik titel for a detektive kase would be: "The Klue of the Opened Sardeen Tins!"

The kitchin cat was orlways at his werst where jam-tarts were konserved. He had a

simply, omniverous appitite for jam-tarts. Any jam-tarts that were not behind lock and keel orlways disappered, and I, as yewe-yewall, was given the blaim.

But now I have joyful news for those reeders who have given up hope for the kitchin cat. The kitchin cat no longer steels tarts and opens sardeen and sammon tins and smeers jam across an innsent gerl's face to give her the blaim! No, deer reeders! The kitchin kat is a rifformed karakter! He has turned over a new leef!

I have tride to prove to the gerls that the kitchin kat, though he wunce had a pashon for tarts, is now an altered karakter. He came into the crowded Common room the other evening, and I put a big jam-tart belonging to Clarer Trevervlin before him. He sniffed at it, and then, seeing that it belonged to somebody else, he rizisted the big temptashun to drower it, and worked out of the room with his nose in the air.

As I eksplained to the gerls, this proved praktikkally and lodgikally, that the kitchin cat was wunce a glutton for tarts, but now that he has rifformed he will not eet what does not belong to him. But the gerls only larf, and cannot see my line of rezoning.

Clarer Trevervlin did not even attempt to be lodgikal. When I cried: "Duz not this prove, beyond dispwet, that the kitchin cat is a rifformed karakter?" she replide: "What about my tart? How can I eet it arfter this old cat has been sniffing at it?" To prove that the tart could be eten, I immediately seazed it, and partook of a large mouthful.

So annoid was Clarer at being beeted in lodgikal and praktikal argewment that she ruffly nokked the bewtiful tart out of my hands. It went up into the air, turned a summersalt, and came down upon my head! Then, just to change the subjekt because I was beeting them in the argewment, the girls pretended to be amewsed by Clarer's foolery; and, though I told them that I was blessed if I could see anything to cakkle at in that, they kept on cakking like higheeners. So I skornfully swept away to the barth-room, having proved beyond dispwet that the kitchin cat is a rifformed karakter.



SOUND ADVICE TO NEW GIRLS!

By BESSIE BUNTER.

If you have a good figger, deer new gerls, beware! You will find yourself among a good many rather skinny gerls, and, orltho they may not mean it, they can't help being jellus of you. This is one of the cheat things you must be prepared for.

YOUR PARRITT.

Perhaps you might be fortunate enuff to have a bewtiful parritt for a pet, and you will bring it to skool with you. But a lass! You are certain to find yourself among gerls who cannot appreciate your bewtiful parritt, and they will say thaf its luvverly voyse is like skraping tin on glass, and narsty things like that. But you must talk no notiss of all this, and keep on huvving your bewtiful parritt.

IF YOU ARE A VENTRILOKWIIST.

If you have the yewsful gift of ventrilokwezium, deer new gerl, you will find that this, like your parritt, is not appreciated. If you are prakkissing, and you throce your voyse, and make it seem that there is a lyon under the tabel, or a tyger in the kubberd, or a dog under the chare, or mice in the tabel drorer, the gerls you are prakkissing on will, when they find it is you, turn very violent and unreasonabul. Therefore, when you are prakkissing your splendid gift, it is advizabbul to keep very near the dore.

IF YOU ARE EKSPKTING A REMITTUNCE.

If you are ekspekting a remittunce, deer new gerl, and it is being delaid in the post, you must be prepared to have your staiments met by disbelief from those about you. Partikewerly strong will be the disbelief that comes from the suspishus laidy behind your skool tukshop kownter. But you will get yewed to all this when your remittunce has been delaid long enuff, and your korrekt attitwed towards it should be one of diggernifde skorn and kontent.

THE SUBJECT OF FOOD.

Having a fine figger, you will nacherally want plenty of food to keep yourself perfekt. You will then be the objekt of dirrishment among the pore skinny gerls about you. Pore things! They cannot understand you having a fine figger, and wanting plenty of food for it. So be kind, and treat these gerls with simperthy on akkownt of their iggerance, and let your attitwed towards food remane unaltered. Let good food, and plenty of it, be your maksim, and you will find that seven meals a day, not inklooding snaks, will meet with your rekwiirements.



IF BESSIE WERE IN THE SECOND!

By "PIP"—Priscilla Ivy Pacey
(Second Form.)

(Spelling specially corrected throughout.—Ed.)

My word! We would have some larks if Bessie were one of us in the Second! I have heard Miss Bullivant say she is so stupid that she ought to be in the Second, and we only wish she were, too! Everything she does is funny, and it would be like spending our whole time at a ripping pantomime!

First of all, we'd see how much she really could eat. We'd club together and invest all our money in doughnuts, and lock Bessie in a room, and not let her out until she'd finished the lot! And I can believe she'd eat all we gave her, too!

We'd play all kinds of ripping japes on her, too! We'd put pepper in her jam-tarts, and watch her face as she eats them! And we'd put vinegar in her cherry cider, and watch her face again! And then we'd put salt in her tea, and keep on watching her face! Ha, ha, ha!

Sometimes we'd lock her in one of the box-rooms during the dinner-hour, and when we'd finished our meal we'd go up to her and describe through the keyhole what a lovely dinner we'd had. I'm sure it would do her good to miss a few meals. Say, a day or two locked in the vaults with a jug of water and half a loaf would be just the thing for her! We'd try it, anyway!

We have just borrowed a thick plank from old Piper, and a barrel from Ephraim Pennyfarthing, and we have started a see-saw in the Close. Oh, wouldn't Bessie be useful here! Three of us could sit on each end, and, with Bessie standing on the middle part and shifting her weight from one side to the other, we could see-saw without any effort at all!

We'd play all kinds of jokes on her at night. As soon as she'd got into bed, we'd tell her we'd seen a snake crawl under the clothes! Then when she was asleep we'd steal all her blankets, and pretend to be all asleep, and that a ghost had done it! Then in the morning we'd wake her up by emptying the water-jug over her! We don't have slackers in the Second Form!

BESSIE'S FUNNIEST DOING THIS WEEK!

A few accounts obtained by
PHILIPPA DERWENT.



BARBARA REDFERN.—She's been in so many, to my knowledge, that I can hardly settle on which is the funniest. I should think this was when she got an alarm that Miss Bullivant's study was on fire, and she dashed in with the fire-extinguisher, and turned it full on the Bull, who was kneeling by the fireplace invisible in a cloud of smoke. It turned out that some paper had closed the register, and this accounted for the smoke. Neither Bessie nor the Bull saw the funny side of the doings, I might mention!

CLARA TREVLYN.—Mending old Ephraim Pennyfarthing's watering-can. This was Bessie's idea of doing the gardener a good turn. I don't know whether she managed to mend the original hole, but I know she managed to make ever so many more! And so did Ephraim; for Bessie, apart from stopping up the proper ones at the end, made a few new ones in the side, too, with the result that poor old Ephraim watered himself!

FREDA FOOTE.—To my mind, her funniest doing this week was a wonderful jape of hers in the form of "Haunting Cliff House!" Gwen Cook was her intended victim, and Bessie tried to make her believe that "mysterious and ghostly" strains of music were to be heard in the Great Hall. Gwen is always ready to give credence to such yarns, and went straightaway to the Great Hall to listen. Meanwhile, Bessie went through the secret passage on to the rafters, taking with her the best instrument she could find for the purpose of making "mysterious and ghostly" strains of music. But she had not been able to find anything better than an old and disused trombone that had once belonged to Frances Barrett. Unluckily for Bessie, Miss Bullivant happened to be giving a lecture to Fifth-Formers in the Great Hall at the moment. The musical accompaniment, in the form of ear-splitting sounds from the trombone, did not seem to help the lecture a bit. She soon had Bessie out, and it was only the fat duffer's explanation that saved her a caning.

STELLA STONE.—Bessie has been busy in our Sixth Form quarters this week. Frances Barrett invited a number of her friends to a high tea, and, knowing Bessie's famous powers as a cook, she mentioned to Agnes White that Bessie's services would be gratefully received. By the time Agnes had found Bessie, her bad memory had been at work again, and she told Bessie that Frances had invited her to a feast which, on account of her cooking powers, was in Bessie's honour! Bessie promptly went, cooked the various things, and had eaten three parts of them by the time Frances and her guests came in! I don't know how Bessie fared, but I believe things were not pleasant for her or Agnes!

JAPES WE PLAY ON BESSIE!

By MADGE STEVENS
(Third Form.)



We can't think of Bessie Bunter—Booby Bunter, as we call her—without thinking of the numberless japes we play on her. Bessie is simply born to be japed.

Of course, we're always making her Bagged Beatrice or Sat-on Sally, but there are much funnier japes we play on her. Once just lately we collected as many envelopes of different sizes as we could find, and in the smallest we put a postal-order for sixpence, with a sheet of paper pinned to it: "With the best of love from Aunt Madge (Stevens)." Then we put that envelope inside a shade bigger envelope, and that inside a bigger, until something like a dozen separated the smallest envelope from the largest.

Then we suggested to Bessie that her Aunt Madge had left a remittance for her in the rack. Bessie did not care who her Aunt Madge might be, but she cared about the remittance! Her face, as she opened envelope after envelope, was simply a scream. And when she came to the sixpenny order, and saw who it was from, you can imagine how she chased us! But she was soon in the tukshop with the small P.O., make no mistake!

It is always easy to jape Bessie by flattering her. It is the easiest thing in the world to jape her with flattery. We told her she was a fine actress the other day, and then asked her to help us with a Punch-and-Judy show of ours! And Bessie was quite willing to take the part of Judy! If you have ever seen a Punch-and-Judy show, you will remember how Punch whacks Judy with the big stick. Well, I took the part of Punch, and with a hard roll of brown paper began the show. Of course, Bessie felt inclined to give up after each whack from the paper, but the girls around kept on yelling that she was acting splendidly. So, what with the pleasure of being flattered and the indignity of being whacked with the paper, Bessie was in a peculiar fix! She stood it for a long time, and then she suddenly hooted "Cats!" and tore away.

There are any amount of japes we play on Bessie day after day. They are usually pretty simple, like the two I mentioned, but they cause us no end of fun and merriment. Life would not be the same without Bessie to jape!

BESSIE BUNTER'S TASK!*(Continued from page 124.)*

bottom of this, Bessie Bunter. So you've been setting your parrot at this unfortunate kitten, Bessie?"

"I—I didn't!" quavered Bessie. "I—I tried to make them friends. Poor old Pip-Pip-Polly didn't understand."

"I consider it deliberate and malicious cruelty!" said Connie gloatingly.

"Bessie wasn't cruel!" cried Muriel. "You don't understand! I'm sure she thought—"

"Silence, Muriel, unless you wish to receive the same punishment as Bessie! Bessie, come with me!"

Muriel was mutinous. Bessie herself could see that. The fat girl did not want to see her in any scrape from which she could escape, so she drew Muriel nervously aside.

"It's—it's quite all right, Muriel," she whispered. "I—I don't mind it at all—in fact, I rather lul-lul-like it. I'm as tough as nails, and—and fearfully brave, you know! I—I'm used to this sort of thing, too! You lul-lul-leave it to me!"

Muriel did so, but very reluctantly. She could understand the triumphant smile on Connie's face as she led Bessie away. It scared Muriel exceedingly, being only a youngster and new to school.

"Come in!" said Connie, at the door of her study. She surveyed the trembling fat girl with glittering eyes. "So you're the girl who protects a youngster in the Second Form, eh? I've a jolly good mind to take you to Miss Primrose!"

"I—I—"

"Hold out your hand!" said Connie grimly. "I'm going to cane you!"

"Kik-kik-cane me?" gasped Bessie. "Oh, really! I—I'd really rather let the whole matter drop. I don't think you're trying to be spiteful at all! It isn't because Miss Steel jolly well told you off when you deserved it—"

"Hold out your hand!" gritted Connie, colouring suddenly. "Very well, I will help you!"

Swish!

A light cane descended on the fat palm that Connie had herself raised with her left hand to receive punishment.

"Yaroooooh! Ow-wow-wow!" yelled Bessie Bunter, clapping her hand to her mouth. "Oh, you cat! Oooooo! Oooooo!"

"Let it be a lesson to you!" snarled Connie, thrusting the fat girl toward the door. "And I shall watch how you continue to 'protect' Muriel Willis in future! Now get away!"

Bessie Bunter rolled back to the Fourth Form quarters sucking her fat hand and making extraordinary noises. She met Babs and Mabs outside Study No. 4.

"Oooooo! Ow-wow-wow!"

"Bessie! What ever's the matter?" exclaimed Babs sympathetically. "Have you hurt your hand?"

"Ow! Kik-kik-Connie's been lamming me!" gasped Bessie. (Sniff!) "Still, I—I ain't going to blub, you know!" (Sniff!) "I—I'm as tough as nails—always have to stand this s-s-sort of thing when you're pip-pip-protecting a girl! Oooooo! Oh dear! Ow-wow-wow!"

And Bessie Bunter went into Study No. 4 and continued to give vent to dolorous and unhappy noises.

A Little Too Clever!

MURIEL WILLIS was not getting on well.

A jape organised by Bunny and the cheerful members of the Second had gone wrong, and Muriel, the "prentice hand" at that sort of thing, had received far more than her share of blame from Miss Scott.

On top of that, a Second Form examination had been held, and Muriel—possibly through nervousness—had occupied the glorious position usually held by Bessie Bunter in the Fourth, bottom of the list. It caused Bessie to give very grave consideration to the manner in which she was fulfilling the "trust" that Aunt Rebecca had placed in her.

The fact of the matter was that Bessie, for a day or so, had been neglecting Muriel. The combined persuasion of Babs and Mabs that Bessie was taking Aunt Rebecca too seriously, and the disastrous results that had followed Bessie's first efforts to look after Muriel, were chiefly responsible. But Bessie's old enthusiasm was returning to her as she sat pondering deeply in Study No. 4.

"There's nothing else for it—I'll have to watch her night and day!" Bessie told herself, shaking her head gravely. "Unless I'm always there, she'll go from bad to worse, I'm sure. Fancy her finishing up by being expelled—just because I didn't keep my eye on her!"

It was just the sort of way that Bessie always looked at things.

Rising suddenly, Bessie had a quick look round the study and did a little "straightening up"—which was fortunately not a long job, as they were chiefly the things of Babs and Mabs that she "straightened," and Babs and Mabs were away from the study.

Having done that, Bessie sailed down to the Second Form Common-room, and "commandeered" Muriel.

"I'm going to take you in hand, Muriel," said Bessie gravely, as she led the youngster to Study No. 4. "You're very bad at your work, aren't you? That's dreadful, you know. Of course, I don't get very high in exams myself, but that's because of jealousy. There's no jealousy in the Second."

"I—I think I'll get on all right, thanks," said Muriel, trying to keep serious.

"It's help you want—and I'm the girl for that!" Bessie declared. "Someone who really knows what's what—that's what you need. I'll just give you half an hour's coaching, and you'll be amazed to see how much you learn. Here we are!"

Bessie Bunter led the way into Study No. 4, and beckoned Muriel to follow her. She glanced around with an approving eye, and plumped herself in the rocking-chair. Muriel was invited to sit at the table.

"Now, lemme see!" said Bessie thoughtfully. "Your worst subject was history, wasn't it? I'd better teach you a bit of history first. Who was King Alfred?"

Muriel was suddenly so tickled by the ponderous gravity of Bessie's words that she dared not trust herself to speech.

"You don't know?" said Bessie, in surprise. "Well, that's very bad; but don't be upset, Muriel, if I'm a little sharp with you! Just my way, you know. I don't mean to be angry! Don't go so red!"

Muriel was going red from other reasons.

"Alfred the Confectioner—used to bake cakes, you know," said Bessie. "Every girl ought to know that. He burnt them all because he was thinking about having a battle. You know the poem? Cannon to right of him, cannon

to left of him, cannon on top of him, and cannon underneath him! It's a ripping poem."

"Did they hurt him?" murmured Muriel. She had come fully prepared to give Bessie a patient hearing, but her sense of humour was too great for her.

"Hurt him? Well, I—I expect they did," said Bessie. "The poem says he never smiled again, you know. But you'd better start writing this down. Take a sheet of paper—that silly old poem by Clara will do. Write down Alfred. Do you know how to spell it?"

"A-l-f-r-e-d?" asked Muriel.

"Dreadful—dreadful!" said Bessie reprovingly. "I can see you haven't been taught properly. It's A-l-l-f-r-e-d."

"Not A-l-f-r-e-a-d?" questioned Muriel.

"That's another way, of course," said Bessie vaguely. "It varies a bit. They couldn't spell very well in those days. Still, you write it down. Alfred the C-o-n-f-e-k-s-h-o-n-e-r? Got that? Now I think—Oh dear! What do you want, Babs?"

Barbara Redfern had appeared in the study. Mabel Lynn, Clara Trevlyn, and three or four others were behind her. They were gazing at Bessie in a dazed sort of way.

"What—how—" Babs began.

"I wish you wouldn't bother me for a few minutes, please!" said Bessie airily. "I'm just giving Muriel a little lesson, and it's rather important. Lemme see! We were getting on with Alfred, weren't we?"

Babs came into the study and gazed at the table, and then at Bessie Bunter.

"What have you done with all the papers that were here?" she asked.

"Papers?" said Bessie. "Oh, I've put them away! I didn't like them lying about in the study."

"My hat!" gasped Babs. "It was the copy for the 'Weekly'! Where have you put it?"

"Just out of sight somewhere," said Bessie. "Still, don't worry about it. I'll write you some articles when Muriel's lesson is over. Now, as I said—"

"Where's the copy?" cried Babs.

"Don't shout at me!"

"We must have it, you giddy duffer!" yelled Clara Trevlyn.

"Ssssh! Don't talk like that when Muriel's here!" said Bessie reprovingly. "I've spoken to you before, Clara, about that. I don't want Muriel to learn those expressions. That's probably why I put your article in the coal-scuttle."

"In—in the coal-scuttle?" stammered Clara.

"Either there or behind the cupboard," said Bessie. "I'm really surprised at Babs for leaving such things about when Muriel might be coming up here at any moment. Why, there was even an article about ghosts, by Gwen Cook! Suppose Muriel had read it and found out about such things? She might have been quite nervous when I wasn't with her!"

"Thrown all our copy away so that—that Muriel shouldn't see it?" spluttered Clara. "Why, you howling chump!"

"Oh, really! Such an expression—Yow! Leggo my hair! Help, help!" gasped Bessie desperately. "Muriel, rescue! Your lesson, you know—"

But Muriel was already outside the door. A very wise move on Muriel's part.

Bessie Bunter followed her at a breathless speed that was entirely involuntary. She collided with the opposite wall just as the door of Study No. 4 was slammed and locked. Bessie Bunter gazed at it breathlessly and indignantly.

"There, that's gratitude for you!" she

gaped. "Only because they're jealous, too! They're afraid I shall make you captain of the Second Form. My own study, and— Oh, really, I'm blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!"

Muriel Wills, although with the best intentions in the world, was simply convulsed with laughter.

Bessie Bunter surveyed the closed door again, and turned away with an indignant sniff.

"I'm not going to be defeated anyway," she said. "You come with me, Muriel. We'll soon find some where else where we can work in peace."

But it seemed easier said than done. They found an empty study that seemed peaceful enough until Marcia Loftus arrived. They settled in the Cosy Corner at the end of the passage, but domestic Annabel Hichens appeared there with muddy boots, and started to brush them vigorously.

"I'm not going to be defeated, anyway!" muttered Bessie, in a determined voice. "The Bunters are never beaten, you know; we always struggle to the last! Come on, Muriel!"

Muriel followed obediently, and they came at last to what appeared to be the very place. Under the eaves in the quadrangle was a sheltered, shady spot that seemed the ideal place for the study of Bessie Bunter's version of her country's history. The rustic benches and comfortable basket-chairs would have offered an excellent choice, save for one thing. They were all occupied by Madge Stevens & Co. of the Third Form.

"Oh, dear! Can't go there. Far too much noise," said Muriel.

But Bessie Bunter grinned, and gave Muriel a particularly knowing wink. "That's all right, Muriel; you leave that to me," she murmured. "I'll soon clear them out of it. They're only having a stupid old Form meeting out of doors; quite the wrong place for it. Besides, we can't allow Third Form kids to stop your study, you know."

Bessie approached nearer. The bright members of the Third were arguing with all their customary noise and excitement. But a voice came suddenly to their ears, a voice that caused all the hubbub to die down instantly.

"Madge Stevens—all of you Third Form girls, I want you!"

No wonder there was a sudden, startled silence! It was the voice of Miss Bullivant!

"Where ever is she?" gasped Madge Stevens, peering in every direction.

"You are making too much noise there—far too much!" went on the voice of the unseen speaker. "You are all to come and stand in my study for half an hour. I hope that will teach you to be quieter in future!"

"Of all the cheek!" gasped Madge Stevens, in an explosive voice. "As though we were annoying the Bull! It's spite, nothing more!"

But she started to obey the order, and so did the others. Bessie watched them from the side, grinning. Muriel Wills plucked at her sleeve as the dejected youngsters trooped past.

"I say," she murmured. "How funny that Miss Bullivant should speak like that just when we want their seats!"

Bessie giggled. "He, he, he! That wasn't the old Bull. She's gone out for a walk. That was me! I was doing ventriloquism."

"Ventriloquism!" repeated Muriel, in round-eyed awe.

"Rather! Jolly clever, don't you think?" chuckled Bessie. "They'll all go and stand in the old Bull's room, and we can sit here—"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND—No. 160.

"But Miss Bullivant's in the school—in her study!" gasped Muriel.

"Never!" scoffed Bessie.

"Yes. I saw her come in as we were coming downstairs. I thought you saw her, too!"

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Bessie Bunter. She gazed after the retreating Third-Formers in sudden alarm. Miss Bullivant in her study already? Bessie began to shake. She hadn't known that when she worked that clever trick for Muriel's sake.

Never before had Bessie made quite such a terrible blunder in "throwing her voice."

"Muriel, we've got to stop them!" she gasped.

With that breathless cry Bessie Bunter raced for the school, Muriel at her heels.

Pushing heedlessly past the stragglers of the Third, who were entering the school door, Bessie pelted along the passage. She drew level with Madge Stevens just as she was approaching Miss Bullivant's study.

"Stop!"

Madge Stevens stared at her.

"It's—it's quite all right, Madge!"

Bessie Bunter gasped. "I—I don't know where you're going, but I—I want to speak to you all in the quadrangle."

"But we've got to go and stand in the Bull's room," said Madge.

"I—I wouldn't if I were you!"

"Why not?"

"It—it's all right!" chattered Bessie.

"She—she doesn't really want you. Some—some girl may have been japing you."

"Japing us?"

"Y-y-yes. Imitated the Bull's voice, you know. That's my opinion, anyway. D-d-don't you go in there, Madge. You take my word it's all right."

Doris Redfern gave a startled exclamation.

"My hat! Don't you see, Madge?"

she gasped. "It's Bessie. She's been swanking her ventriloquism to this new kid, and she's afraid of us giving her away!"

"Bessie's japed us!" ejaculated Madge Stevens. "Catch her, girls! We'll make her sorry!"

"Ow! Oh, dear!" shrieked Bessie.

The Third-Formers understood at last, and were acting as one. They were after Bessie. They would want vengeance! Bessie knew it without waiting to be told.

She streaked upstairs, with the whole crowd of them in hot pursuit. She raced along a corridor and down the stairs, and out in the quadrangle. They pursued her round the school and out into the playing-fields. Bessie must have spent quite twenty minutes in breathless flight before they finally gave up the chase.

"Asking" for Punishment!

"GOOD old auntie!"

Bessie Bunter gave vent to that ejaculation as she read the letter that had arrived for her on the Wednesday morning. It was in the handwriting of Aunt Rebecca, and, in spite of the fact that it contained no remittance, was very welcome. Bessie was looking ahead.

"I gather from Muriel's letters that you have been kind to her, and far more thoughtful than I thought you could be, Bessie. I am very grateful, indeed, and shall not forget—"

There was an even more exciting paragraph farther on.

"Some friends of mine in Courtfield are holding a party on Wednesday, the day on which you will get this letter, and I want you to get permission to take Muriel. I am writing to Miss Primrose about it. You must arrange—"

Bessie laid the letter down, and her eyes glowed.

"Jolly fine idea!" she ejaculated. "Not at all bad having to look after Muriel, after all. Of course, I'll take her to the party, and just see that she doesn't overeat, or anything like that. I know what these young children are like. I'd better go down and speak to her now. I shall have to make quite sure this afternoon that she knows how to behave, being so young. Better have a sort of rehearsal!"

Bessie explained that to Muriel, walking with Bunny & Co., in the way that only Bessie could. Muriel had suffered cheerfully at Bessie's hands, but she really drew the line this time. Aunt Rebecca had written her as well, and she knew about the party; but that afternoon she had arranged to go with Bunny & Co. on one of the Second Form Adventure Club outings, on which they all seemed so keen.

Bessie was listened to in breathless silence.

"So you see," she finished, "we'll just pretend we're having a party, and I'll see that your manners are quite all right. That part's fearfully important, you know."

"Hasn't anyone told you I'm in detention this afternoon?" Muriel asked.

"In detention!" gasped Bessie. "Oh, I say! There you are! I knew something would happen like that. I'm sure it's all your fault, Bunny!"

"Nothing very dreadful in detention. You've often been there!" said Bunny cheerfully.

"Oh, really, you shouldn't tell a young girl things like that!" protested Bessie.

"It might make Muriel quite fond of getting in detention to know that I—I've been there sometimes, through little accidents and jealousy. Oh, Muriel, what ever will you do?"

"Don't you worry, Bessie," said Muriel evasively; "I'll be all right!"

"There's that funny drawing on the back of the old well map that wants completing—the one of the Bull sliding down a hill in the snow," said Bunny thoughtfully. "I started it last time I was there. Muriel might finish it!"

"You're not to do any drawing in the detention-room this afternoon, Muriel!" exclaimed Bessie. "I really mean it, you know! It might be awfully serious if you were caught, might even stop us going to that party this evening. Oh, dear, I am annoyed to think that this has happened!"

And even then Bessie Bunter did not seem to be decided about the matter. She went into school with a thoughtful frown on her forehead. When lessons started there was just a glimmering of a scheme in her eyes.

"It's the only thing!" Bessie muttered. "Jolly heroic of me, but I'm always like that. I'll be able to train her as well."

And when Miss Steel came into the class she saw a most extraordinary sight. Bessie, usually very docile at the commencement of lessons, was not in her seat. She was standing by the open window, heedless of the whispers of her chums—whistling, or attempting to do so.

"Bessie!" gasped Miss Steel.

Bessie turned round, but only made a half-hearted attempt to go to her place.

"Did you hear me speak?" exclaimed Miss Steel. "Why are you not in your place?"

"I—I don't feel like working this morning," said Bessie.

Miss Steel was a lady of action. That mood in Bessie surprised but did not daunt her. She took the girl by her plump shoulders, and ran her to her

desk. Bessie sat down heavily and painfully.

"Ow! Oooooer!" gasped Bessie. "That's not fair. I—I don't think you ought to treat me like that, Miss Steel!"

Miss Steel ignored the comment, and went to the front of the class.

The girls, already amazed at Bessie's queer conduct, watched her. Bessie's behaviour that morning was extraordinary.

The times she turned in her seat seemed to be legion.

Whenever she was asked a question she gave an answer that was, even for Bessie, stupid in the extreme.

Miss Steel grew increasingly angry.

"Bessie, you are very annoying, indeed!" she cried, at last. "I have no patience with you at all! Come and stand in the corner! If you are determined not to attend you shall, at least, cease to annoy me!"

"S-s-stand in the corner?" gasped Bessie Bunter. "Oh, I say, that isn't wh-wh-what I want!"

"But you will obey me!" said Miss Steel grimly. "Instantly!"

And Bessie, after what looked like an inward struggle, did so.

During the interval she was the centre of amazed comment.

"You'll finish up in detention for the whole afternoon if you're not careful!" said Barbara Redfern, quite angrily. "I've never seen you like it before, Bessie! It'll be detention, nothing else!"

"I don't care!" said Bessie, smiling broadly. "I'm not afraid of the mistresses; I've always told you that! Quite time I stood up for my rights!"

And the same spirit seemed to animate Bessie to an even more marked degree in Miss Bland's lesson which followed.

Miss Bland spoke to Bessie and shook her, and stood her in the corner as Miss Steel had done, and finally placed her outside the door for the rest of the lesson. Every time it seemed that Bessie had literally "asked for" her punishment, but every time she seemed to feel ill-used and dissatisfied. Instead of getting cross, Miss Bland grew quite worried, and spoke to Miss Bullivant when she came in to take the last lesson.

"Now, you'd better be careful, Bessie!" whispered Babs, when Bessie returned to her place. "The Bull's got her eye on you, and she'll stand no nonsense at all. What is the matter with you?"

"I'm fed up with this silly school!" retorted Bessie, in a discontented and indignant tone. "Fancy Miss Bland putting me outside the door. Old Connie Jackson came along just now, and I was only just looking at the fire hose to see how it worked. She's jolly well given me a hundred lines because she made me jump, and caused me to drop the nozzle on her toe."

"I can only say you deserve all that!" Babs returned.

"But I don't want lines!" retorted Bessie.

"Then what do you want?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bessie, instantly cautious again. "I shouldn't tell you that I want to be put in detention at all. I'm not that sort of girl!"

"Bessie," said Miss Bullivant sternly, "you are whispering. I understand that you have been very troublesome this morning. I do not wish to hear you say a single word."

Bessie Bunter gave a half-grin, and then started to go red. Bessie saw a way of being very defiant indeed, but it needed some courage, a courage that Bessie had been vainly and half-heartedly trying to screw up all the

morning. She made the obvious retort tremblingly.

"A sis-sis-single word, Miss Bullivant," said Bessie.

Miss Bullivant stared.

"What do you mean, Elizabeth Bunter?"

"You told me not to say a single word, and I—I've said it!" gasped Bessie Bunter, with far more nervousness than boldness.

"Bless my soul!" said Miss Bullivant.

She grasped the pointer, and whirled to Bessie's desk. The pointer fell on Bessie Bunter's podgy knuckles.

Crack!

"Yaroooooh!" yelled Bessie. "Oh, I say! Ow-wow! That isn't what I want at all!"

"You will have it if you are impertinent again!" said the Bull.

And Bessie did receive that punishment—on two more occasions! Those were the occasions when her courage was screwed up sufficiently to "cheek" Miss Bullivant in a very mild form. The Bull was known as rather a "tartar,"

"Oh!" was the horrified gasp that came from almost every girl.

Miss Bullivant seemed to quiver with anger.

"Bessie Bunter, one hour's detention!" she thundered.

Bessie beamed at last.

"Good gracious! You dare to smile?" cried the mistress. "Two hours, Bessie Bunter!"

"Thank you, Miss Bullivant!" said Bessie gratefully. "I—I promise I'll behave now!"

Miss Bullivant was nonplussed. She looked at Bessie's peaceful smile, and her cheerful air of attention, and marvelled. Without another word to the fat girl she went on with the lesson.

There would have been a crowd around Bessie after the lesson finished two or three minutes later, but she did not wait for that. Rising from her seat, she rushed from the room first of anyone. In a lower passage she was fortunate enough to discover Muriel Wills.

"Hooray! Muriel, you'll be awfully pleased!" beamed Bessie. "I've done it



RECKLESS WITH A REASON! Bessie Bunter hurled the screwed-up blotting paper at Marcia Loftus, and a horrified gasp came from almost every girl. "Bessie Bunter!" thundered Miss Bullivant.

and intended to stand no nonsense from Bessie. The fat girl herself became very painfully aware of the fact. How easy on other days when she wanted it! Today the mistresses were meting out the very sort of mercy that she was in no mood to appreciate.

The whole morning had almost gone, and she still had her afternoon's liberty. Only another five minutes, and classes would be dismissed. Bessie began to grow more restless than ever. She wanted to be bold, but safely bold—a very difficult distinction for anyone to draw.

"Good gracious! Even now you are not attending, Elizabeth Bunter!" rapped out Miss Bullivant suddenly. "I positively will not warn you again. Unless you sit quietly, girl, you will be placed in detention this afternoon!"

And then Bessie's heart fluttered.

Her chance at last! Could she do it? On the impulse of the moment the fat girl acted.

Rising suddenly in her seat, she screwed her blotting-paper into a ball, and hurled it full at Marcia Loftus.

at last. I've managed to get put in detention with you this afternoon. Isn't that ripping?"

"Managed to get in detention?" gasped Muriel, going very red, indeed. "Oh, Bessie, you don't mean that, do you?"

"Rather!"

"Oh, dear!" quivered Muriel. "I—I say, I'm awfully sorry, Bessie! I—I didn't know you were going to do this. I—I was only pulling your leg this morning—I'm not really in detention myself."

"What?" shrieked Bessie Bunter.

"It—it was just a little j-j-jape on our part—I asked you if you had heard that I was in detention—I didn't say I was—"

"Oh, you little cat!" hooted the fat girl. "You're not in detention after all? And I've been trying all morning! Oh, my goodness! Whatever shall I do now?"

"I didn't think you took me seriously, really," said Muriel, anxiously. "It wasn't really a fib, but—"

Bessie Bunter had gone again. She saw Miss Bullivant at the further

end of the passage and ran contritely to her side.

"Please, Miss B-B-Bullivant I—I'm awfully sorry!" stammered Bessie.

The mistress gave her an icy smile. "The f-f-fact of the m-matter is that I don't w-w-want to be in detention now," said Bessie, nearly in tears.

"Good gracious!"

"I—I know I was very naughty, but I'd much rather have the pip-pip-pointer again!"

"Bessie!"

"If—if you won't hit too hard!" shivered the fat girl.

"Perhaps you will explain what you mean?" said Miss Bullivant, icily.

Bessie Bunter did so, very nervously and very apologetically. She said it was all a mistake, and she would promise never to be such a worry again. Miss Bullivant saw daylight at last, and perhaps even saw some of the humour of the situation. But she gave no sign of that as she replied.

"You were very annoying indeed, Bessie," said the mistress. "If I change your punishment to two hundred lines it will be on the distinct understanding that such a thing never happens again."

"Oh, I pip-pip-promise that!" said Bessie, gratefully. "I say, thanks awfully, Miss Bullivant! It's absolutely ripping of you! I'll write those lines beautifully—I'll write them all in red ink!"

Connie Jackson's Treachery!

A CONTRITE Muriel Wills abandoned her proposed outing with the members of the Second Form that afternoon, and accompanied Bessie Bunter to Friardale, listening rather guiltily to Bessie Bunter's views on the folly of telling falsehoods.

Bessie had chosen the village in order that she might properly prepare for that evening's party. The fat girl, as it happened, still had three pounds standing to her credit in the Post Office Savings Bank—all that remained from the prize she once won for inventing a new sweetmeat. By dint of threats and cajolery, she had secured the bank-book from Babs, its custodian, and was going to withdraw one pound. Babs could really not refuse that request now that she understood the extraordinary

measures that Bessie had been taking that morning to "look after Muriel."

"Now mind," said Bessie, when Friardale came in sight at last. "We've got to think about the party to-night. I'll tell you just how to go on when we're walking back, but we've got to buy some ribbon and other things first. And then—oh, my word! Why didn't I think of it before?"

Bessie Bunter had stopped before a hair-dressing establishment.

There was a wax head in the window, and from that head hung long, waving, and beautiful curls. In the glass, Bessie could see the reflection of her own stiff and cable-like plait. Why had she never thought of it before.

"I say, Muriel! It's just the very idea!" gasped Bessie. "I'm going to the post office to get my money at once!"

"But—" began Muriel, and then followed the scudding figure of Bessie Bunter. It was the only thing to do!

"I want a pound, please. I want a pound—I want a pound!" said Bessie, gaining the post office. "I say, do hurry up! I want a pound out of my account! Oh, really you might serve me next! I'm in an awful hurry. I want a pound!"

Bessie Bunter was given her pound, and went on her way rejoicing. Again Muriel had to chase her.

"I say, Bessie! What are you—"

Bessie did not pause until she had managed to explain to the manageress.

"I want my hair curled—like that one in the window!" she said, breathlessly. "Just like that, you know, only mine will look better. Muriel's had hers bobbed, but you'd better do the best you can for it, as I'm taking her out to a party, and she's so excited—rushing about everywhere! Do you think it'll suit me? Oh, rubbish! I'm sure it will! I say, shall I undo my plait now? Muriel's so excited you know to have her own done! Do back up!"

"Really, Bessie—" began Muriel. "Don't talk—don't get so excited!" admonished Bessie. "You'll go off your head with excitement if you're not careful. You'll do me now, ma'am? Oh, thanks awfully! I'm sure it'll look ripping! Try and be like me, Muriel, and not get so excited, and then you'll—bother the horrid old mat! Fancy sticking it there!"

Bessie almost pitched headlong into the hairdressing saloon that was situated behind the shop. Muriel Wills, the "excited one"—according to Bessie—stopped making further attempts to protest. Bessie was already unravelling her plait.

It was more than half an hour before they emerged from the shop. The change in Bessie by that time, even if not particularly attractive, was certainly striking.

Bessie thought so herself. She paused three times to beam at herself in the three mirrors in the shop, and stood outside the window to caress her hair with a loving hand and compare it with the "specimen" in the window. The famous hair was plaited no longer; it hung in curling waves down Bessie's back, and was looped in "fetching" curls over her forehead. They must have been "fetching," because Bessie was convinced of that herself when she ordered it to be done!

"Jolly fine, eh?" chuckled Bessie. "Just the very thing I've wanted for a long while—it's a wonder I never thought of it before! Don't you think it looks all right, Muriel?"

"Yes," said Muriel, dubiously. "But it may not last long, and it's an awful lot of money—"

"Oh, that's all right—I'm standing treat!" said Bessie easily. "Yours doesn't look half bad, but I'm not going to praise it up because it might make you conceited. It's awful for a young girl to be conceited, you know—dreadful thing! I haven't got any patience with a girl talking about her looks—unless she happens to be jolly good looking of course! Don't you think they'll say I look spiffing?"

Bessie Bunter was quite the pride of Friardale, as she pressed on to do her shopping.

They reached Cliff House and passed in through the gates. A titter of laughter grew to a positive yell as the eyes of a party of Third Formers fell on Bessie Bunter's waving curls.

"What are you grinning about, Madge Stevens?" demanded Bessie Bunter indignantly. "I suppose you're jealous because my hair looks a jolly sight better than your skinny little lot! That's all I expect from Third Formers. Come on, Muriel! You follow me, and treat them as I do!"

Bessie walked on, with her fat little nose held loftily in the air.

Madge and Co. shrieked louder than ever.

There was a clock just inside the entrance door, and Bessie gasped as she looked at it.

"Oh, my goodness! Past four, Muriel!" she exclaimed. "I say—my watch must have stopped! We'll only have time to dress and get off, or else we shall be late! Oh, dear!"

"Well, let's be quick, then," said Muriel. "We can just do it, I know. Hurry up, Bessie, and then we shall be able—"

The youngster broke off as a figure appeared.

Something in the very bearing of Connie Jackson of the Sixth, who was approaching them, seemed to send a cold chill to their hearts.

"So you are here at last, Muriel!" said Connie, in a curiously honeyed tone that, they knew, disguised a very different feeling. "Where have you been all the afternoon?"

"Where?" repeated Muriel, instantly alarmed. "Why, out with Bessie. But why do you want to know?"

"Didn't you see your name on the notice-board for work in my study this afternoon?" asked Connie.

"No—and it wasn't there, either!" Muriel burst out. "You've tried to make me work for you before. Bunny told me always to look at that board, because you couldn't fag me without putting my name up."

"Your name is there," said Connie, in a harsh voice.

"Then you've put it on since I looked!" Muriel could not help crying.

Connie took her shoulder in a tight grip.

"What? You dare to accuse me of doing such a thing against the rules?"

Muriel shook.

"I—I didn't mean to say that. I'm sorry if—if—"

"You will come with me now, anyway!" said Connie, grimly. "I want you for an hour. There is a lot of washing-up and dusting to be done, and no girl has been near the study to-day."

Oh, I say, Connie!" cried Bessie Bunter. "Muriel can't come with you now—it's impossible! We're going to a party!"

"You will mind your own business!" snapped Connie.

"I won't—I mean, it is my business! You're trying—"

"Muriel Wills! Come with me!"

Muriel struggled furiously. Bessie Bunter went hesitatingly to her assistance.



How to be
Happy in
1922

What is real happiness? The Editor of the PICTORIAL MAGAZINE, in the issue on sale TO-DAY, says that, with the worries and strife of our time, happiness is harder to reach than ever before. The greatest need now is for all of us to learn how to be happy all over again.

If you want to know how to get the best out of life, see this week's

PICTORIAL—2
MAGAZINE

GREATLY ENLARGED

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"I—I—I'll tell Miss Bullivant if you don't let Muriel go!" stuttered Bessie.

"Tell her, if you like!" Connie retorted. "And then I'll explain why I'm doing this. You've dragged this youngster out of the school just because you think you can defy me. Every mistress in the school will uphold me when Muriel's name is on the list and she has stayed away. Now come on, youngster, and no struggling!"

With her heart palpitating queerly Bessie watched Connie disappear up the stairs, dragging the reluctant youngster at her side.

"I'll jolly well see that cat Connie!" muttered Bessie suddenly.

She went rushing up the stairs, filled with that courage that was always most in evidence when her foes were not present. When Bessie reached the door of Connie's study she tried unavailingly to open it. It was locked.

Bang, bang, bang! went Bessie's foot. "Who is that?" cried Connie from inside.

"It's ma!" said Bessie, ungrammatically. "I say, do let Muriel come out again! We want to go to the party!"

"If you kick that door again I shall come out with a cane!"

Bang went Bessie's foot. But there was an almost instant stir in the study, and Bessie guessed enough. She turned and fled.

Where? Bessie searched the Fourth Form passage for someone to advise her. She could not discover a single girl. They had all gone out—probably to the river. Whether they would be back in time to have tea in their studies Bessie did not know. She had not worried about those matters earlier.

She wandered disconsolately up and down the passage, then went into No. 4 study and dropped into the rocking-chair. Bessie Bunter wept from sorrow and indignation. She was startled, at length, to hear a step in the passage.

Connie Jackson looked into the study and gave her a sneering smile.

"Eve left your friend to finish my study," said Connie. "She is to stay there for a full hour. She doesn't know that the door is not locked, but I turned the key again after I had locked it on coming out. That's just for your knowledge—understand?"

Bessie Bunter sniffed dismally.

"You can go up and speak to her again at ten past five—not before!" said Connie resuming. "I'm going out now but if you let her out before then you'll be very sorry. And if my study is ragged in any way you'll be sorrier still! That's all! Now you can go on with your crying and you'd better 'protect' Muriel better in future!"

With that last sneer Connie disappeared from the study. Bessie dried her eyes and sat gazing at the closed door.

"Connie going out now!" muttered the fat girl suddenly. "Oh, dear! It's—it's not so bad after all! I'll jolly well risk it—yes I will!"

Bessie went to the door and peered into the passage. It was quite clear. She became more confident than ever as she walked away from No. 4 study.

Poor Bessie! It was not very difficult to trick her. It did not strike her as curious that Connie should be going out within ten minutes of "capturing" Muriel. She did not think it queer that Connie should come and tell her so soon, either, and rely merely on an empty threat. As for the idea in her mind to rag Connie's study by way of revenge why, Bessie had not the vaguest idea in her mind that Connie herself had put that thought there!

Deliberately? It looked like it. For, as Bessie

Bunter went creeping with quite exaggerated caution up the stairs to the Sixth Form quarters, a figure appeared from the shadows and followed her.

And on the face of Connie Jackson was a smile of complete and perfect triumph!

Single-minded Bessie did not look behind when embarking on such an important mission. She reached the Sixth Form passage and crept along to Connie's study, while behind her the monitress herself lingered, now in no apparent hurry to overtake the fat girl. Bessie laid a quivering hand on the door knob and turned it.

"I say, Muriel, it's quite—"

She broke off, the words seeming to freeze on her lips. Muriel was not there, but the window was open wide.

And even as Bessie stood there, the first dawning horror in her mind, she heard a vague, scuffling sound come from outside the window. In a moment it

youngster's hands clutched the ivy and seemed to have a firm grip. It was terror, rather than actual peril, that brought those shrill cries from her lips.

"Oh, I sus-sus-say!" chattered Bessie, almost as scared for the moment as the youngster. "M-M-Muriel! Oh dear! How have you g-g-got there?"

"I—I tried to get to the window of the next study. Oh, help me, Bessie! I shall fall from here! Oh, please!"

Bessie Bunter quivered like a jelly. Muriel's plight was a terrible one—she could see that. The pitiful, beseeching cry stirred to its depths the queer affection and responsibility that Bessie felt for her ward.

Scared as she was, she must do something.

And Bessie did! Afterwards the girls wondered how she could have made herself act in such a prompt and efficient manner. Bessie showed a boldness that she had seldom



A TRANSFORMED BESSIE! A perfect yell of laughter burst from the Third Formers as their eyes fell on Bessie Bunter's profuse curls. But Bessie walked on with Muriel, her fat little nose held loftily in the air.

was repeated, more loudly. Then, almost at that instant, she understood the cause—the voice of her "ward," Muriel Wills, rose in shrill appeal.

"Help—oh, help! I'm falling! Help!"

"Bravo, Bessie!"

FOR the moment Bessie Bunter stood rooted to the spot with horror.

"Help! Oh, I shall fall!" She heard that pitiful, beseeching voice again. "Help!"

It pulled Bessie together. She was not brave. The very tone of the voice was enough to inspire a palpitating fear in her own breast. But there was no one to call on—no one at all! And the voice was Muriel's.

Bessie tottered across to the window and gazed wildly through. She looked down into the white face of a girl just below her—Muriel, her young friend. One foot Muriel had on a sort of coping that ran just beneath the windows; the other dangled helplessly in the air. The

shown before, and perhaps would seldom show again. She leant far—dangerously, in fact—from the window, and gripped Muriel's wrists.

It steadied the youngster—gave her confidence.

Perhaps Bessie was not strong enough to hold the young girl should she lose all other support. But the grip of her fat hands helped, and gave the confidence so badly needed.

Together they raised their voices to attract the attention of others.

"Help! Help!"

Bessie Bunter gave the youngster a wan, but wonderfully brave, smile, and closed her eyes. The ground below, at that distance, seemed to be swimming about. Her position, leaning so far from the window, was a really perilous one. And Bessie was scared—dreadfully scared!

Was she going to fall? She absolutely believed, in the dreadful minute that followed, that she would.

"Help! Help!" they yelled again. Voices at last answered them from the

quadrangle. She closed her eyes, felt that she was really slipping, and shrieked desperately.

But hands at last clutched her fat ankles and held her.

A palpitating voice—Connie Jackson's without a doubt—whispered hoarsely:

"It's all right, Bessie—I've got you! I'm holding you! You won't fall now!"

But Bessie hardly heard the words, and still less grasped their meaning. That last shock had been almost too much for her. She just understood that there was a pair of trembling young wrists that she must still hold with all her strength.

She did not see the ladder that grated suddenly against the wall. A dim voice as though from a long way, told them both to hold on.

"I've got you now, Muriel!"

Bessie heard the voice, yet did not understand. The gasping, shivering cry that Muriel gave, penetrated her numbed brain more readily.

"Oh! You—you will hold me tight?"

"Yes! It's quite all right now, Muriel! You can't possibly fall. Bessie, you can let go now!"

Bessie Bunter hung there.

That same voice repeated the words, and shouted them. Her fat hands relaxed as though mechanically, but she still hung there. Bessie had fainted at last!

"It's all right—I've got her!" cried Connie Jackson's agitated voice.

"We'll get her in!"

There were two or three to help Connie now. They pulled the fat girl's limp dead weight into the room, and she swayed in their arms. Stella Stone, laying her on a settee, splashed cold water on her pallid fat face.

"Oh! Oh dear!" moaned Bessie, and her eyes flickered. All of a sudden she was struggling to sit up. "But—but, Muriel—where— Oh, there you are, Muriel!"

And the tears—real, genuine tears of relief, started to the eyes of Bessie as she sat up, that foolish, trembling smile on her face, and saw Muriel Wills.

Muriel, white, obviously shaken, had appeared outside the window, on the rungs of the ladder that was now plainly visible. Behind her came Barbara Redfern, whose prompt ascent of the ladder and steady hand had given Muriel the courage to mount again to safety.

"Come in, youngster!" Stella Stone breathed, and she took a grip of the Second Form youngster and lifted her bodily into the room. "Thank goodness you're safe at last!"

"I—I'd never have been safe if it hadn't been for dear Bessie!" whispered Muriel, tearfully and hysterically. "Oh, I know I'd have fallen if it hadn't been for her holding me! Oh, Bessie dear!"

And Muriel tottered to Bessie Bunter's side and hugged her in a passionate embrace that none—including Bessie herself—would ever forget.

"You dear—oh, you are a dear old friend!" choked Muriel, and clung to Bessie, unable to say more of the words of gratitude that fought for utterance.

"Bessie! Muriel! Oh, wonderful—wonderful!"

It was almost a shriek that came as the door opened.

A tall, angular lady, very red-faced, her hat on the back of her head, her prim coat flying behind her, rushed into the room with an excitement that the

girls had never seen in her before, and clasped the pair of it.

"Ooooh! Auntie—Auntie Rebecca!" was all Bessie could gasp.

"Yes, I am here. You did not expect me. Only decided at last moment!" said Aunt Rebecca breathlessly. "But I was just in time to see it—everything! Thank goodness you are safe, dear little Muriel! And Bessie—dear me! Never did I think you could be so brave if you tried! Oh, I am proud of you—prouder than ever!"

Aunt Rebecca, usually prim, severe, critical and autocratic, showed not one of those traits now. She kissed Bessie, and she kissed Muriel; and then she hugged them. Aunt Rebecca, martinet though she might be, had received the shock of her life. She was not slow in showing her tremendous relief now.

Babs, blushing modestly, came in, of course, for her full share of praise.

Muriel Wills here broke in.

"It was my fault, Miss Bunter," she said falteringly. "I—I thought I was locked in the study, and I'd heard that girls had—had sometimes climbed out of the windows, and I tried to get to the next room—"

"But why locked in?" said Aunt Rebecca dazedly.

Stella Stone took one look at the white, trembling figure of mean-spirited Connie Jackson of the sixth, and stepped forward.

"That is a matter that only Miss Primrose can find out, Miss Bunter," said Stella, in a voice that shook slightly. "I saw something from the end of the passage, and Connie Jackson has just made a statement to me that I am bound to report. I—I believe that Muriel was driven to this."

Connie Jackson gave a gasping cry and dropped to a chair.

"She was—she was. Oh, I will admit that before you go further," groaned the agitated Sixth-Former. "I was trying to tease Muriel and Bessie, too, but I've had my punishment for that in this dreadful shock. I shall never forget what a scare this has given me. I was angry and I wanted to—make Bessie look small, but I've had my—my lesson." And Connie sank her face in her hands and her shoulders shook.

Miss Rebecca Bunter laid quite motherly hands on Bessie and Muriel and led them towards the door.

"There is evidently something here in which I should not interfere," she said, with a touch of her well-known frigidity in her voice at last. "I am sure that it will be investigated properly. And now, perhaps, we can get to some cheerful place—I suggest No. 4 study in the Fourth." She looked at Bessie! What-ever have you been doing to your hair?"

"The—the party, you know, Aunt Rebecca—" Bessie began.

"The party?" said Aunt Rebecca, and stared again. "Good gracious!"

Connie Jackson, true to all Fourth-Form predictions, appeared at the door of No. 4 study before very many minutes had passed. She was the humblest and most dejected Connie they had seen for many a month.

"Miss Primrose has told me that I am to come here and apologise to Bessie Bunter and Muriel Wills," Connie faltered, not raising her eyes. "I wish to—do so now. I hope it is accepted."

"Oh, that's all right!" declared Bessie Bunter, almost her usual beaming self again. "I'm not the sort of girl to bear malice, eh, girls? Under the circumstances I shan't say that it was just a

spiteful trick that Connie tried to work to keep Muriel and me from going to the party. Nothing unforgiving like that about me, you know!"

The colour mounted guiltily to Connie's cheeks as Bessie revealed in her blundering way the very thing she was "keeping secret."

"Do you accept my apology as well, Muriel?" muttered Connie.

"Oh, yes—thanks," stammered Muriel.

Connie Jackson went away, to the accompaniment of subdued hisses in the passage. There would be a strict and careful eye kept on Connie after this!

But Aunt Rebecca closed the door of No. 4 study and smiled on her fat niece, beaming with good-nature.

"Thank goodness that dreadful girl has gone!" she exclaimed. "The girls have been telling me, Bessie, how really well you have been trying to save Muriel from the spitefulness of that monstres! When I wrote, you know, I never expected you to do so much."

"You didn't?" gasped Bessie. "Oh, I say! I told them you did!"

"Ahem! But I appreciate it greatly!"

Aunt Rebecca hastened to say. "But I must now tell you my real purpose in coming here to-day. I am going to take you both to that party that I wrote about. If you will hurry up and put on your party dresses I will go to Miss Primrose and ask for you to be allowed to stop until the very end of the party, instead of coming away early!"

The excitement of Bessie at that!

She was ready at last, and there was a purring taxi-cab at the gates to take the three of them to Courtfield. In the quadrangle a crowd collected to wait for Bessie. She appeared at last, a dazzling and most unusual vision of flowing curls, and all the vanities that Bessie showed when bent for a party. The titters of the girls were quickly checked as they showed their real purpose in gathering there.

A genuine cheer of well-deserved salutation rent the air.

"Good old Bessie! Well done!"

And Bessie strutted to the gates, beaming with pleasure, holding her head proudly, and walking with the walk that Bessie thought eminently fitted such an occasion. They followed her to the taxi, and gave her a final yell as she went away, listening at last to Aunt Rebecca's promise that her remittances certainly should be increased!

What does it matter that, that evening, Bessie really behaved very much as the Bessie of old? What does it matter that she had many and frequent snacks in addition to a really gigantic supper, and was the victim of an uncomfortable attack of indigestion on the following day?

Those were the little ways of Bessie Bunter, and nothing would ever change them permanently. The girls were ready to laugh, good-humouredly and tolerantly. Bessie would always remain Bessie; but that there could be a better, if still blundering, side to her nature had been amply proved to all the girls by the spectacle of how Bessie Bunter had performed her task of looking after Muriel!

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND will contain "Marjorie Hazeldene's Sacrifice!"—a magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House School, a beautiful art card of Marjorie Hazeldene, free, a special Marjorie Hazeldene number of the "Cliff House Weekly," and further long, absorbing instalments of "Friendship Forbidden!" and "The Signalman's Daughter." Order your copy of the SCHOOL FRIEND in advance.)



The SIGNALMAN'S DAUGHTER



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THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

OLIVE WALTERS, a pretty, golden-haired girl of fourteen, who attends St. Mildred's School as a day boarder.

TOM WALTERS, Olive's father, a signalman who was on duty at "Gosbridge Box."

MR. THEODORE DUKE, a big financier, and the father of

SYBIL DUKE, who, with Olive, is a member of the Fifth Form at St. Mildred's.

Through an enemy of Mr. Duke tampering with the levers in Tom Walters' box, a special train bearing the financier was derailed, and Mr. Duke was injured. From that moment his daughter, Sybil, at St. Mildred's, was the bitter enemy of Olive, and took every opportunity for scheming against her.

Tom Walters was discharged by the railway company; and, on top of that, the bank which held his small savings suspended payment. Swallowing all her pride, Olive sang in the streets to earn money, and was seen by Sybil Duke, who did not hesitate to turn it to her own spiteful advantage.

A little later Olive was engaged to sing at quite an important concert, but a few minutes before her turn came a message was given to her to the effect that her father had suddenly met with an accident. She dashed off home, to find that the message had been nothing more than a cruel trick. And though Olive more than suspected that this was Sybil Duke's doing, she was powerless to act.

And then came the important examination for the Sir John Howard scholarship. Shortly before, the scholarship paper containing the answers to the questions disappeared, and through an accusation from Sybil Duke, Olive was suspected by many of the theft. Olive had no difficulty in answering the examination questions, but, if she won, how would she be treated by her enemies?

(Read on from here.)

Triumph?

SEVERAL days elapsed, during which those who had entered for the important scholarship lived through a period of mingled hope, doubt, and suspense.

In Olive's home life there happened two things that gave her gratification.

Her father obtained a couple of days' work in a warehouse, which promised to be repeated whenever the works proprietors were busy and needed extra labour. Then old Simple Sam betook himself to a fair in a neighbouring town, and did magnificently with his entertainment with the clever Paddy.

Always, however, there was a looming shadow to trouble Olive—how Winnie Norris was to be repaid—the twenty odd pounds she had loaned her parents.

Although Winnie might declare that it was of no consequence, the debt was ever present in Olive's mind, and she felt that

she could never be quite happy until every penny was returned to her generous friend.

One evening Olive lingered again near the house into which she had seen the train-wrecker go. She saw nothing of the man, however, and although that might have been pure chance, the fact strengthened the girl's idea that the ruffian who had been mainly responsible for her father's great ill-fortune might have left the neighbourhood.

Then at last came the great and momentous morning—that on which the result of the examination for the Sir John Howard Scholarship was due to be announced!

Every girl concerned was in her place in the Fifth Form class-room minutes before the bell rung by the bald-headed Parker made it imperative for her to be there.

The rest of the class assembled, and presently Miss Symes made her appearance.

A murmur of excitement ran through the room as it was seen she carried a paper in her hand—evidently the detailed result of the examination.

Winnie glanced at Olive, and saw that the colour was coming and going agitatedly in her delicate cheeks, that she was breathing a little fast, and that the corners of her mouth were twitching with nervous excitement.

"I do not envy her feelings at the moment," thought Winnie, who knew how much the winning or otherwise of the scholarship meant to her chum. "She must be absolutely thrilling with suspense."

Miss Symes approached the front of the class.

"Ahem!" she began, glancing round. "Ahem! I have to announce the result of the Sir John Howard Scholarship."

At last! There was a quick indrawing of breath, then a deeper silence than had prevailed when Miss Symes had first begun to speak.

"The maximum number of marks possible, two hundred. First—ahem!—Olive Walters, one hundred and eighty-seven marks. And I would like to remark"—Miss Symes beamed with unusual good humour through her pince-nez—"that both the examiners and myself think this a really brilliant accomplishment. Olive Walters, I—ahem!—heartily congratulate you on your success. It does you and St. Mildred's great credit."

"Bravo!"

The impulsive cry burst from Winnie, and she vigorously clapped Olive upon the shoulder. But every other girl in the class received the announcement of Olive's magnificent performance with a significant silence.

It surprised Miss Symes. She had fully expected an uproar of cheering to break out. She frowned a little, and dropped her eyes again to the paper she held.

As for Olive, she had momentarily flushed with pleasure, then her face had gone ashen white, and she sat with her eyes fixed straight before her. Poor girl! She understood well enough what the silence of her schoolfellows meant.

Apart from having decided to shun her because of the plotting of Sybil Duke, they remembered the missing scholarship paper and the circumstantial evidence—which Sybil had been so ready to point out—that made it appear as though she had stolen it.

Miss Symes began to speak again.

"Second, Winnie Norris, one hundred and sixty-two marks," she announced. "This is also a very—ahem!—satisfactory performance."

One or two girls near Winnie raised a feeble cheer. Though she was the friend of a girl they were all against, they could not forget what a good sort Winnie had always proved herself, and they were glad she had done so well.

The girls waited eagerly to hear the third and final announcement, and it was not long in coming.

"Third—ahem! Sybil Duke, one hundred and thirty marks," proclaimed Miss Symes.

Sybil bit her lip. It was hard to come fairly near and then to find that she had been beaten by one girl whom she hated, by another she bitterly disliked.

Quite a rousing cheer was raised for her, but it did little to heal her piqued feelings. She turned and shot a vindictive and contemptuous glance at Olive, then, very meaningfully, she shrugged her shoulders and gave a smile in which there was a bitter sneer.

When the excitement had died down, morning school commenced, continuing without any unusual happening until Parker rang the bell as the signal for dismissal.

As they reached the quad, a few seconds later, Winnie Norris and Olive found quite a crowd of girls gathered about them, and Esme Conyers clapped Winnie upon the shoulder.

"Bravo, Winnie! I was certain you would win," she cried.

"Yes, bravo!" exclaimed Hilda Ware.

"One hundred and sixty-two against one hundred and thirty is not so bad! I, too, am quite pleased you won!"

"I did not win! Do not be so ridiculous!" Winnie snapped, not understanding, as yet, and taking their congratulations for sarcasm; "I am second, and you know it."

"Second! Oh, yes, I suppose you are

—formally!" sneered Hilda Ware, as she threw a scornful glance at Olive.

Sybil Duke moved through the little crowd of girls.

"This is no joking matter, girls," she said, with a cruel smile. "I think you all ought to congratulate Olive Walters on her wonderful achievement. Why, she could hardly have done better if she had seen the majority of the questions some time before the exam, and had an opportunity to 'swot' them up!" she added mockingly.

An uproar of jeering followed this vindictive sally.

Winnie began to speak her mind, but Olive knew it would be useless again to protest her innocence where the missing scholarship paper was concerned, and, with flaming cheeks and indignant eyes, she pushed her way free of the sneering, mocking throng and strode towards the gates.

Winnie ran after her and slipped her arm through hers, as Olive was about to pass into the road.

"I'll never believe what they think—or pretend to think, Olive, darling," she said warmly. "They are worse than snobs—I can find no word which would describe their small-souled meanness. I know that you beat me fairly and squarely, and I am proud to congratulate a better scholar than myself."

"Thank you, Winnie," Olive said huskily, her eyes bright with tears and her voice shaking, as she pressed Winnie's hand. "I shall never forget what a true friend you are proving to me."

The Missing Paper Turns Up!

SYBIL DUKE was very thoughtful during her dinner, as the meal between morning and afternoon school was popularly called.

Her mind was very busy, and, as well as thinking over the win of the girl she so bitterly hated in the important scholarship, she also had Miss Agatha Symes in her mind.

Sybil could be very observant when she liked, and that morning she had particularly noted two characteristics of the head-mistress, which she had been aware of only subconsciously in the past.

Though these two little peculiarities of the mistress may seem quite trivial, the fact that they existed was to have very far-reaching results.

One habit of Miss Symes, who was again due to instruct the Fifth this afternoon was to walk a short distance up and down the gangway between, the desks, when she warmed to the subject she was dealing with. The other, which was invariable, was to borrow any book she needed from the girl who sat at the end desk in the second row on the right—and that girl was Olive Walters.

For instance, she might wish to refer to some point in a lesson in which printed school books played a part. She would pause by Olive, borrow the book and study it to note whatever it was she wanted to see, then return it with a word of thanks, usually punctuated with her inevitable little cough.

Sybil Duke hurried through dinner and slipped up to her study. She unlocked a writing-case which stood on a shelf there and took something from it which she slipped into the pocket of her skirt.

Now Sybil left the study and made her way down the broad staircase. She turned at its foot and approached the sliding doors of the Fifth Form classroom. She hesitated glanced furtively about her to make sure she was not observed, and then, pushing open one of

the doors, she glided into the school-room.

Sybil made sure it was deserted, as she had expected to find the case. On tiptoe, as if fearing to make any noise that would attract the attention of anyone passing in the corridor without, she stole to the desk of the girl upon whom she had vowed revenge. She tried the lid and smiled grimly as she found it unlocked.

Sybil seated herself before the desk. Raising the lid and allowing it to rest upon her head, she was engaged for a few seconds upon some occupation within the desk itself.

This completed to her satisfaction, she softly closed the lid of the desk and left the Fifth Form classroom as silently and furtively as she had entered it.

The subject in which Miss Symes was to give instruction to the Fifth that afternoon was mathematics. She was particularly keen upon these lessons, which occurred every Thursday afternoon, and she was sometimes apt to wax eloquent, when discussing and explaining some knotty problem.

She made her appearance the moment the bell began to ring to summon the girls to afternoon school, and eyed with stern mien those who were behind in setting down in their places.

"Ahem! Attention, girls!" she said, as the shuffling of feet at length subsided. "Attention!" She rapped upon a desk in the front row with her pointer. "Let—us—ahem!—commence—our studies."

Most of the girls would far rather have been excused, as, outside the school-room windows, the sun was shining brilliantly, and tennis of boating would have offered far more appeal than a somewhat dry lesson. However, it was school time and it just had to be.

Olive Walters had been early in her place, as had Winnie Norris. Winnie pouted more than once, as she glanced towards the sunshine and longed to be out-of-doors, but she was her usual, don't-care, sunny self and contrasted sharply with Olive, who was very pale.

But, if Olive was pale and quiet, another was even more white and subdued. Sybil Duke seemed unable to pay attention to the lesson in progress, and more than once earned a stern rebuke from Miss Symes for allowing her eyes to wander about the spacious room. She had the air of a girl who was expectant, a little uneasy, perhaps. She seemed to be waiting for something to happen, and she caught in her breath and bent her eyes over her work, as, presently, the head-mistress moved, as so often her custom, into the central gangway between the desks.

Miss Symes was vigorously discussing some tricky point in one of the problems she had set the class, and, as luck would have it, a girl raised a question which, for the moment, left the head-mistress in doubt, learned lady though she was.

"Yes, yes—I follow your argument, Lily Smith," she said. "Dear me! I must confess that for the moment, I am not quite sure." Then, following her invariable habit—"Lend me your book for a moment, if you please," she requested, turning to Olive.

Olive Walters took up her book of "Mathematics" from her desk and passed it to the mistress. Miss Symes began to flick over the pages, and suddenly something slipped from between them and fell to the floor—a folded paper.

The headmistress stooped and picked it up, and she was about to return it to its place in the book, when something about its appearance caused her to pause. With a frown, she unfolded the paper, and glanced at its typewritten contents. And, then, there broke from

the lips of Miss Symes a half-horrified, half-incredulous cry, which caused every girl in the class to turn and rivet their eyes upon her.

Miss Symes stood staring down at the paper she held with a shocked, and amazed glance, and her face had whitened with agitation, as well it might.

For the paper that had lain folded in Olive's book was that which the head-mistress had missed from her desk a short while ago, and believed she had accidentally destroyed, the missing paper of questions to be asked in the Sir John Howard Scholarship!

Miss Agatha Symes gasped.

She pressed the back of her hand to her lips, as though she feared she was going to scream, as she continued to gaze down at the typewritten paper she held in her trembling hands.

The missing scholarship paper! And it had come to light in a book belonging to the girl who had come out top in the contest!

Though sometimes rather short-tempered, Miss Symes was not unkind at heart, and she hated to think ill of any girl in the school she controlled. But she felt that there was only one inference to be drawn.

Olive Walters must have purloined the paper of questions on the day she had gone to her study for her spare pair of glasses, and thus she had won the scholarship under false pretences, conditions so false and dishonest that there would surely be nothing for it but to disqualify her.

The mistress realised that every girl in the class was regarding her askance.

Never before had the headmistress of St. Mildred's felt at so great a loss. She became even more agitated, flurried, as she asked herself just what course she should take.

She took out her handkerchief, and, as was sometimes her custom when she wanted time to think, she removed her pince-nez, and commenced vigorously to polish the lenses.

Her hands were shaking so badly, however, that the glasses almost slipped from her fingers. As she made a wild effort to save them, the folded scholarship paper fell from her hand on to the desk before Olive, and Winnie Norris, who sat next the ex-signalman's daughter, glanced at it with a slightly puzzled expression.

Although she was not sure, Winnie Norris, who had witnessed Miss Symes bring the paper to light, guessed that it was the cause of the cry she had uttered and her obvious distress of mind.

Winnie wondered what the nature of the document could be, and as she allowed her eyes to fall upon it, she saw that upon its white surface was a greasy, black mark, which had evidently been made by someone handling it with an oily thumb.

The thumb-mark recalled to Winnie's mind an article she had recently read in a well-known magazine. But she promptly forgot it as she raised her glance once again to the face of Miss Symes, who quickly picked up the paper and readjusted her nippers upon her nose.

For Miss Symes was regarding Olive Walters with a stern, accusing expression.

"Olive Walters, did you—ahem—perceive that I came upon this paper I hold in your book?" the mistress asked, in a voice that was unsteady, and in which there was almost a note of pain.

Olive sat looking up at the mistress wonderingly, asking herself what could have occurred so to upset her.

"I saw it fall from the book, Miss Symes, the girl answered, nodding.

"And you know what it is?"
Olive shook her head, her surprise increasing.

"I have not the least idea, Miss Symes," she replied. "I do not remember putting it in the book, though I suppose I must have done so at some time in the past."

Miss Symes was silent again as she searchingly studied the girl's rather pale face. She must be guilty, she told herself. But she had nerve and, though she must realise she was in a tight corner, she meant to impudently brazen the matter out.

"That will do!" Miss Symes said, very sternly. "Go to my study! I will join you there immediately, for there is a serious—a very serious matter I—ahem—must thrash out with you!"

Olive rose slowly to her feet. She was a trifle nervous and confused, as she found that the whole class had transferred its glance from Miss Symes to her.

She was bewildered, a little dazed. What could be the nature of the paper that it should throw the headmistress off her mental balance, as it had done, and cause her to turn upon her so menacingly? Olive hesitated, wondering if she should ask for an explanation then and there. But she decided that she would know soon enough what it all meant when she reached the study, and was joined by Miss Symes; and she left her place, passed out of the gangway, and walked towards the swing-doors of the class-room.

Miss Agatha Symes followed the girl with her eyes, unconsciously giving a sad little shake of her head. She was more distressed even than she had allowed to be seen at the unpleasant discovery she had made.

She had always admired Olive Walters as a studious and clever girl, and it hurt her terribly to think that so promising a scholar might, instead of leaving the school with flying colours, have to be expelled under a cloud.

Miss Symes left the class in charge of the monitress, who chanced to be one of Olive's open enemies—Hilda Ware. No sooner had the mistress vanished through the swing-doors after Olive than there broke out a positive uproar that Hilda could not hope to stem.

"What was the matter with Squibs?"
"What was the paper she found in that book?"

"Why did she cry out and look as though she was going to faint?"

These and similar questions broke from the many girls in the line upon line of desks. And from Esme Conyers, another who loved to jeer at and make matters uncomfortable for the unfortunate Olive.

"What has that Council School upstart been doing now, I wonder? From Squibs' manner I guess it is, something for which she is going to catch it hot, girls."

Sybil Duke turned in her seat, a sneering smile on her lips.

"Do you mean to say, girls, that you haven't made a good guess at what the paper was?" she asked meaningly.

"Guess, Sybil, dear? How should we guess? We didn't even get as much as a glimpse of it," said Agnes Graham, who occupied the desk beside hers. "She had folded the paper before she almost dropped her glasses and let it fall upon the desk."

Sybil shrugged her shoulders and tossed her head.

"What short memories some of you have!" she mocked. "Do you forget so soon that Olive Walters, who won, or was supposed to win, the Sir John Howard Scholarship, was in Miss Symes' study alone on the afternoon that Squibs missed the paper of questions?"

Excited exclamations came from all sides.

"Oh, do you think, Sybil, it was the paper of questions?" cried Hilda Ware, quite forgetting that, in her position as monitress, she ought to be doing her best to keep the class silent.

"I did not see it, but I will pay for a feed in the dormitory and invite everyone of you if it was not the paper!" Sybil replied, her eyes defiant and scornful, as they met those of Winnie Norris. "Did none of you see how pale and shaky Olive Walters went when Miss Symes opened the paper and cried out?" she asked, drawing upon her imagination.

Winnie Norris sprang to her feet. She said no word, but, with a look of determination upon her face, she passed out of the gangway, and started towards the doors of the class-room.

"Winnie Norris, where are you going?"

It was Hilda Ware who sharply called the demand after Olive's friend. As monitress, Hilda loved to show her authority on every possible occasion, though she had, of course, a perfect right to ask her present question.

"I am going to Miss Symes' study!"

of eyes were fixed upon the girl who was defying the monitress, no one noticed either that or how Sybil's face went a trace paler than it had been before.

For the second time Hilda Ware attempted to clutch at Winnie's arm, but the latter was too quick for her. Eluding Hilda's outflung hand, Winnie hurled herself through the doors, and they closed with a slam in the monitress' face.

Hilda looked for a moment as though she would go in pursuit, then she turned back into the class-room, with a gesture of indifference.

She felt that Miss Symes would be not a little angry if her interview with Olive was interrupted, and, with a vicious snap of her eyes and a tightening of her lips, she determined that she would make a report against Winnie that would considerably add to any unpleasantness that might be in store for her.

Meanwhile, Winnie Norris was speeding up the wide staircase.

She reached the corridor in which stood Miss Symes' study, the door of which she saw was closed.

Winnie hesitated. She was too honest and open of nature to like playing the



"Bravo!" The impulsive cry burst from Winnie Norris as she clapped Olive upon the shoulder. But every other girl received the announcement of Olive's success in the exam with silence—significant silence!

Winnie Norris retorted coolly, as she turned.

"You must not! You must remain here!" Hilda Ware cried, in an imperious tone. But Winnie merely shrugged her shoulders and moved on towards the doors.

Hilda Ware ran after her and seized her by the arm as Winnie was about to pass through them.

"Remember that I am monitress, and that you have to obey me when Miss Symes is absent from the room!" Hilda said angrily. "I order you to return to your seat!"

"Do you, indeed?" Winnie returned, her nose in the air and her eyebrows raised with an annoying hint of lofty surprise. "Well, I am just not going to return to my seat!" she added, shaking the taller and elder girl off. "Olive Walters is my friend, and behind her back a wicked accusation has been made—or, rather, repeated against her. What that paper was that Miss Symes found I do not know, but"—and her voice was raised so that the whole class could hear—"if it was the missing paper of questions, I am going to suggest to Miss Symes a means by which it can be proved whether Olive or somebody else put it in that book."

In her seat, Sybil Duke gave the slightest of starts, though, as every pair

part of eavesdropper, and for a moment or two she was reluctant to steal to the door and listen to what was passing within.

Then she decided that there was nothing really dishonourable in what she proposed. It was for Olive's sake that she wanted to hear what was transpiring in the study, and if it turned out to be some matter not connected with the missing scholarship paper, she could quietly draw back and listen no more.

So Winnie tip-toed to the study door, and, with indrawn breath, stood there with her head near one of the panels.

In the study, Miss Symes was seated in the swivel chair by her desk, her eyes fixed upon Olive, who stood somewhat timorously before her.

Miss Symes had sat silently regarding Olive with a pained expression upon her face for so long that the girl had become disconcerted, almost frightened.

It was only as Winnie Norris took up her stand outside the door that Miss Symes held the paper she had found in the girl's book before Olive's eyes, and asked curtly:

"How do you account for this, Olive Walters?"

Olive looked down at the typewritten document puzzled, until she realised what it was. Then, if it were possible,

she turned even more pale, and an amazed and horrified cry issued from her lips.

"One—of the scholarship papers, Miss Symes!" she faltered dazedly.

"Precisely. And it was folded and presumably hidden intentionally in the book of mathematics I borrowed from you in the class-room," the headmistress said. "I repeat, how do you account for its being there—concealed in a book belonging to you? It is the paper I missed some time ago from my desk."

Olive stood like one stunned for a long moment. Then the colour flooded indignantly into her cheeks as she understood all that the mistress question implied.

"Answer me, Olive Walters, please!" Miss Symes persisted, her voice and bearing even more stern.

"I—I cannot account for it, Miss Symes," Olive gasped. "I don't know how it—it came in my book. Oh, you do not think"—with tears rushing into her eyes and her lips a-quake—"that I—I stole on that day from your study, and that I won the scholarship through knowing many of the questions that would be asked?"

Miss Symes' eyes seemed to peer into the girl's very soul. She gave a helpless shake of her head.

"What am I to think?" she asked, though not without a touch of regret in her tone. "I missed the paper after you had been to my study and admittedly opened my desk and—"

"To find your spare pair of glasses, Miss Symes," Olive flashed in a low, breathless voice. "If there were any of the scholarship papers lying there then, I did not know. If I had been so mean as to study or steal any paper of questions to do with the scholarship, I could not have looked you in the eyes when I returned to the school-room, much less have entered the examination-room and sat amongst girls whom I should have known I was wickedly cheating. And is it likely that, had I been so mean as to steal the paper, I should have mentioned that I had opened your desk?"

She tried to say more, but sobs choked her. To find herself mistrusted by Miss Symes as well as her fellow-scholars was the last straw. She hid her face in her hands, and for several seconds wept brokenly.

Miss Symes sat staring at her in mingled distress and doubt. Was the girl innocent, the victim of circumstances, or some deliberate and despicable plot? Or was it that she was merely a clever actress? The mistress asked herself. It was a most unpleasant position for Miss Symes.

"It is useless to cry," she said, speaking almost roughly because of her own agitation. "This matter must be cleared up forthwith, Olive Walters. You say you do not know how the papers came in your book, which is a denial, of course, that you yourself placed it there. Have you, then, any idea as to how it could have come there? Have you, for instance, loaned the book to one of the other girls recently?"

Olive removed her hands from before her face, and perhaps Miss Symes felt some compassion as she saw the pathetic tremor of her white lips and the tears that glistened upon her dark lashes.

"Come, you must answer me, please!" she said, but less sternly.

Olive shook her head. "I have not lent the book to anyone, Miss Symes," she replied. "The only suggestion I can make is that someone placed the paper in the book in my desk at some time when the school-room was unoccupied."

"Why should they do that?" Miss

Symes asked. And again Olive hesitated and was silent.

Miss Symes drummed her finger-tips impatiently upon her desk.

"You make a serious accusation which involves, if not the whole school, at least all those girls who entered for the scholarship!" she said sharply. "You must answer my question, Olive Walters. Why should any girl place the missing paper in the book in your desk?"

Silence still. Olive bit her lip and clasped and unclasped her hands agitatedly. Then there came a startling interruption to the interview between the mistress and the persecuted girl.

The door was tapped and flung open, and Winnie Norris stood framed upon the threshold.

"I can answer that question, Miss Symes," she said quietly. "The thing is possible, because St. Mildred's houses many snobs who are against Olive because she has had the grit and energy to enter here by winning a scholarship!"



Sybil sea'ed herself before the desk, raising the lid and allowing it to rest upon her head as she engaged in some occupation within the desk itself.

Miss Symes' Eyes are Opened!

"Winnie Norris, what is the—ahem!—meaning of this?" Miss Symes had risen sharply to her feet.

"Can it be that you have been listening at the keyhole—playing the part of an eavesdropper?" she demanded, with anger and indignation.

Winnie came into the room, coolly shutting the door behind her. The eyes of Olive were wide with surprise as they rested upon her friend, whilst the gaze of the headmistress was so austere and forbidding that any girl might well have quailed and become nervous beneath it.

Not so madcap Winnie, however.

"I have been listening outside the door, Miss Symes," she frankly confessed, "because Olive is my friend, and because I am convinced there has been a wicked plot against her. Then, if you will forgive my pointing out the fact, I am an interested party in what has happened this afternoon. If Olive were disqualified for the scholarship it would revert to me, and I should like to say at once that on no account would I avail myself of its advantages! For I will never believe my friend guilty of stealing the paper of questions!"

"Tut, tut! If the scholarship became yours and your parents wished, you would—ahem!—be compelled to go to college, Winnie Norris!" Miss Symes said.

"But my parents, when I had told them the whole truth, would never let me accept it and so rob a girl less fortunate than myself who had fairly beaten me, Miss Symes!" Winnie declared, her eyes flashing.

"Bless my soul! For a mere child, I think you presume rather a lot, Winnie!" Miss Symes said. "Somehow I cannot be angry with you, though I really ought to be for listening at my study door when I am engaged in a private interview with another scholar. Your loyalty to your friend does you credit, however. And, now that you are here, you will please explain just what you meant by the expression you used against—ahem!—certain other girls here. Also why you are so convinced that Olive is blameless where the paper of questions is concerned. Please speak quite frankly, Winnie. I pride myself upon always being just and fair, and I will listen to anything you have to say."

"Thank you, Miss Symes!" Winnie answered. "I will be quite frank, and, firstly, I will explain why I referred to certain girls at St. Mildred's as snobs."

She stopped to take breath, but only for a moment. For weeks her indignation at the abominable treatment at the school of Olive had seethed hotly within her, and now that at last there was an outlet for it, madcap Winnie was fairly wound up.

"Nearly every girl in Olive's Form comes of wealthy parents who have been able to pay to send them here to be educated," she went on. "Olive comes of parents who are not so fortunate, and who were obliged to let her go to a free school, and because she comes from a Council School these others look down upon her and try to make her life here unbearable."

"Dear me! I can hardly believe the girls here could be so small-minded and—ahem!—mean!" Miss Symes exclaimed, a little shocked.

"It is scarcely believable, but true, Miss Symes!" said Winnie warmly. "There is one girl in particular who dislikes Olive, and who has aimed at hounding her from the school."

"Her name?" Miss Symes demanded quickly, really indignant, and bent upon seeing fair play.

But Winnie shook her head. "No, Miss Symes. To tell you that would be quite against the code of honour here," she protested. And Miss Symes understood. "But it is mainly through this certain girl that others have shunned and jeered at my friend, who, in my opinion, is worth any dozen of them. I believe her innocent of taking the scholarship paper from your desk, because I know her too well to credit for one moment that she would sink to so unfair a trick. I think that the real culprit, after making use of the paper to try to win the scholarship unfairly, put it in Olive's book, in the hope that it would come to light and make her appear the thief. And perhaps there is a way to prove that, Miss Symes," she added quickly.

Miss Symes could not fail to be impressed by the girl's earnestness.

She raised her brows inquiringly, and Winnie pointed to the scholarship paper which Miss Symes had laid upon her desk.

"That oily thumbmark, Miss Symes—is it almost certainly not yours, I expect," Winnie said.

Miss Symes smiled faintly. "I think not," she answered. "I should—ahem!—scarcely sit down to work at my desk with unclean fingers. Besides, Winnie, I doubt if I have had occasion to handle anything whence oil

could come since my—ahem!—younger days, when I possessed a bicycle.”

She bent over the paper and examined the oily impression upon it. It was quite black, and it occurred to Miss Symes that it had been caused by a thumb which might have come into contact with the dust-thickened grease from a bicycle—from an unclean chain, perhaps.

“You attach importance to this thumb-mark, Winnie?” she said, as she looked up. “How could it either prove Olive Walters’ innocence or convict the guilty party, however?”

“It might quite easily do so, Miss Symes,” declared Winnie eagerly. “Would you mind waiting for a few moments whilst I run to my study for something? Then you will understand.”

Miss Symes inclined her head; and, darting to the door and opening it, Winnie vanished. A strained and awkward silence prevailed between the mistress and Olive until the madcap of St. Mildred’s presently returned like a whirlwind.

Winnie carried in her hands a monthly magazine. It was opened at a certain article headed “Identification by Finger-Prints,” which had been contributed to the journal by a well-known retired official of the London police headquarters, Scotland Yard.

“If you will glance through this article you will understand the plan that is in my mind, Miss Symes,” she said, as she handed the magazine to the mistress.

And as Miss Symes was by no means slow-witted, she had but to glance at

the title of the article to glean an inkling of the scheme that had formed in Winnie Norris’ mind.

She nodded.

“Return to the class-room, both of you,” she instructed, laying the magazine open upon her desk. “Say nothing to the other girls of what has transpired here. I realise the—ahem!—possibilities of your plan, Winnie Norris, and I think I can promise you I shall put it to the test.”

The two girls quitted the study, and, outside, and with the door closed upon Miss Symes, Winnie slipped her arm sympathetically about Olive’s shoulders.

“Don’t worry, dear,” she whispered. “Unless I am very much mistaken, things are coming right for you very soon now. Just wait till Squibs gets going upon the idea I have put into her respected noddle. Something startling is going to happen then—take the word of your Auntie Winnie!”

“But what is it you have put into Miss Symes’ mind to do?” Olive asked, puzzled. “Oh, Winnie, I am so grateful to you for standing by me and refusing to think ill of me, but I do not understand how the thumbprint upon the scholarship paper can prove it was not I who took it from Miss Symes’ desk.”

“Just wait, dear,” Winnie said again, smiling mysteriously. “I am not going to tell you what is going to happen; it would spoil the surprise of it.”

They were on their way down the wide staircase. In another few seconds they had entered the Fifth Form class-room, and, whilst all the other girls threw curious glances at Olive, and did not fail

to note the tell-tale redness of her eyes, Hilda Ware positively flew at Winnie.

“I shall report you to Miss Symes for leaving your class-room, Winnie Norris!” she said, a gleam of maliciousness in her eyes.

“You will waste your breath, Hilda dear,” Winnie said sweetly. “Squibs and I have been having quite a heart to heart chat, and, believe me, she was most indebted to me for going to her study. I poured certain words of wisdom into her private ear, you see.”

This was a poser for Hilda Ware. In puzzled surprise, she stared after Winnie, as she and Olive returned to their desks. Scarcely had they seated themselves than the swing doors again opened to admit Miss Agatha.

Miss Symes walked to the front of the class, the scholarship paper in her hand.

“Girls—ahem!—attention, please!” she ordered, sweeping the class with her eyes. “I have something serious to say to you!”

(The smartness of Winnie Norris has brought about a dramatic turn in the affair of the stolen exam. paper. But for the thumbprint Miss Symes must have been convinced that Olive was the culprit. But will the thumbprint enable them to get on the track of the real girl? How will Miss Symes act, and what is she about to say now that she is before the Fifth Form? Further surprising developments will take place in next week’s enthralling instalment of “The Signalmans’ Daughter!” Take care you do not miss it, by ordering your copy of the SCHOOL FRIEND in advance!)

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