

THE CLIFF HOUSE VENTRILOQUIST

A Magnificent Long School Story. Complete In This Issue.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND

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THE FOURTH FORMERS' JOKE ON BESSIE BUNTER!

The Cliff House Ventriloquist!



Justice Is Done.

"I SAY, you girls!" Barbara Redfern waved an impatient hand at Bessie Bunter. Babs of the Fourth Form at Cliff House was busy. Her chin rested in her left hand, her elbow on the table. There was a deep wrinkle in her brow, and a spot of ink on her pretty nose. The pen, held in her right hand, was jabbing restlessly into the inkpot. Babs was wrestling with the Kings and Queens of England, and Bessie Bunter's interruption came at an inopportune moment. It was the pen-hand she waved impatiently at the fat junior—which was rather unfortunate, as the pen was heavy with ink. A sound a good deal like a yelp came from Mabel Lynn. "Oooowp! What are you splashing ink over me for?" "I say, you girls—" "Go away!" exclaimed Barbara. "Run off! Disappear! I'm worried! I'm bothered!" "Yes; but I say—" "Of all the silly duffers!" said Mabel Lynn, addressing Barbara. "Look at my blouse!" "I've no time to look at your blouse now, dear. I've got to get this done for Miss Bellew." "I mean, you've splashed it with ink!" "Eh?" "Look at the ink you've splashed over me!" "Never mind—there's plenty left! I sha'n't run out of ink," said Barbara. "The question is—" "I say, you girls—" "Do be quiet a minute, Bessie! You will do your chin some permanent injury if you keep on using it at this rate! Mabel dear—" "Keep that pen away!" shrieked Mabs. "Never mind the pen. I say, Mabel, do help me!" pleaded Barbara. "Who came after Queen Mary the First?" "What the dickens does it matter?" exclaimed Mabs, who seemed more concerned about the ink on her blouse than about the monarch who succeeded Queen Mary on the throne. "Nothing at all," answered Babs. "Then what are you worrying about?" "I've got to get it done for Miss Bellew," said Barbara pathetically. "I forgot three or four kings and queens to-day, and I've got to write out the whole list from Norman William to George the Fifth. And I've got to do it without the book."

Bessie Bunter gave a sniff. "How'll Miss Bellew know whether you use the history-book or not?" she demanded. "Little mix! She's taken my word." "That's all right," said Bessie Bunter. "You promised not to use your history-book?" "Yes." "Use mine, then." "What?" "That's keeping your word, and saving all the trouble, all the same," said Bessie brightly. "You only want a little gumption, you know. Rely on me for gumption!" Barbara looked dubious. "I don't think that would be quite fair," she said. "Miss Bellew meant any books. Besides, I've nearly got all the king and queens. I'm quite strong in Plantagenets, and the Georges are quite easy—they run on in proper order. But—" "Well, bother the kings and queens!" said Bessie. "I've come here to tell you girls—" "Do you know who came after Queen Mary?" "Of course I don't! Perhaps it was King Alfred—the chap who let the cakes burn, you know, and never smiled again!" suggested Bessie. "Oh, you little duffer! Mabs—" "Nine spots!" said Mabel. "How am I going to get those spots out, Barbara? Now, look here—" "Mabel dear, you know I mustn't look at the book—can't you suggest who might have come after Queen Mary?" "Milk!" said Mabs thoughtfully. "Milk! That isn't the name of a king!" "I mean, I might get it out with milk, if it's done at once—" "Mabs—" "Or salts of lemon—" "If you call it friendly, Mabs, to be chattering about ink-spots and blouses, when my hair's turning grey, I don't!" said Barbara. "Haven't you the faintest idea who came after Queen Mary?" "Philip, of course!" snapped Mabs. "Philip! There wasn't a King Philip!" "Philip of Spain," explained Mabs. "Philip of Spain married Queen Mary, but he didn't succeed her on the throne, you duffer!" "I never said he did." "You said—" "You asked me who came after Queen Mary," said Mabs cheerfully. "Philip must have come after her, or she wouldn't have married him." "Why, you—you—you—" stuttered

Barbara. "You're making silly jokes, when I'm worried almost to tears!" Babs jabbed the pen into the ink again quite fiercely. "I've got nearly all the others. Now, what king was it that came after Mary—or, was it a queen?" "I say, you girls—" "Will you give me a rest, Bessie Bunter? Do you want the inkpot?" exclaimed Barbara. "But I say, you know," persisted Bessie Bunter, blinking at Barbara through her big glasses. "I say, Barbara, I've had my hair pulled." "Good!" "What? It jolly well hurts." "Bravo!" "If that's what you call sympathy—" howled the fat junior, in great indignation. "I wish they'd pulled it harder," said Barbara heartlessly. "Now, who, in the name of fortune, came after Queen Mary?" "I say, it's up against this study, you know," said Bessie Bunter. "This is top study in the Fourth. You oughtn't to let Study Seven pull my hair." "Nonsense! Marjorie wouldn't pull anybody's hair," said Mabs. "It was Clara!" said Bessie. "I was just standing in front of the study cupboard, you know—just looking in. I dare say Clara thought I was after the cake. She's suspicious—" "So you were!" snapped Barbara. "Oh, really, Barbara! I may have tasted the cake—perhaps I took rather a large taste—but there was some left. I distinctly saw some on the plate—" "Go away!" "And she came into the study, and I didn't hear her, and she pulled my plait from behind," said Bessie Bunter indignantly. "And—and I had my mouth full just then—" "With the cake you hadn't been eating?" asked Barbara, with deep sarcasm. "I—I mean—" "Never mind what you mean! Go on your travels!" "And I was jolly nearly choked, you know. Some of it went down the wrong way," said Bessie Bunter pathetically. "I think you ought to go and pull Clara's plait, Barbara. I really think that." "You can't think, dear. Don't try!" "I'm your study-friend—" "Don't remind me of such horrid things!" "Look here, I'm in the same Form as you, anyway, and you ought—" Barbara rose to her feet. "Well, that's so," she said. "Clara

has pulled the hair of my Form-friend, so I'm bound to do something."

"That's it!" said Bessie eagerly. "You're bound—"
"She's pulled the plait of my Form-friend," said Barbara. "Well, I'll jolly well pull the plait of her Form-friend, and you can tell her I've done it! There!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Wharrer you at?" shrieked Bessie Bunter.

"And there—"
"Yoop! Leggo!"
"And there—"
"Wharrer you at?" howled Bessie Bunter. "Leggo!"

"I'm pulling the plait of Clara's Form-friend, same as she did with my Form-friend's plait!" chuckled Barbara. "It happens to be the same Form-friend. That doesn't matter, so long as justice is done. There!"

"Yarooooooh!"
Bessie Bunter jerked her plait away and fled.

Babs sat down again to her kings and queens. A fat, red, and wrathful face looked in for a moment.

"Yah! Cat!"
Then Bessie Bunter was gone. Barbara chuckled.
"Got it!" she said. "Bessie—of course—good Queen Bess! Fancy that fat little duffer reminding me who came after Queen Mary!"

Trouble in the Dormitory!

BEDTIME!
Miss Bullivant projected that word into the junior Common-room, as if it were a pistol-shot.

It was Miss Bullivant's duty to shepherd the Fourth Form off to their dormitory, to see that none were missing, and to see lights out.

Miss Bullivant's manner was not gracious.

The scholastic attainments of that lady were immense; she knew enough about mathematics to make any two ordinary heads ache.

She could speak German perfectly; and in the classics—she was tremendous on classics—her favourite author was Cicero, which she pronounced Kikero.

But in graciousness of manner, it could not be denied that Miss Bullivant's education had been neglected.

It wanted a few minutes to half past nine, at which hour the Fourth had to repair to their dormitory.

Miss Bullivant was never late—she had the still more exasperating habit of being early.

The Fourth-Formers would cheerfully have forgiven a little procrastination at bedtime; as Clara Trevlyn had remarked, punctuality was the thief of time.

However, there was no arguing with Miss Bullivant, and there was a general move of the Fourth when the formidable lady looked in.

A warm argument was in progress between Marjorie, Clara, and Dolly, of Study No. 7, on the one hand, and Babs and Mabs on the other.

But the argument stopped at once. Under Miss Bullivant's grim eye, the Fourth Form marched off to their dormitory.

"I shall return in ten minutes," said Miss Bullivant.

That was the usual formula. Then the "Bull's" heavy tread died down the corridor.

"Now, as I was saying when the Bull butted in—" began Clara Trevlyn.

"Don't, dear!" said Barbara. "If you begin, you won't be finished by the time the Bull comes back. You know what you are, you know."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Mabs.

Sniff from Clara.
"I was saying—" she repeated firmly.

"You're generally saying something!" sighed Babs. "It's growing on you, too; I've noticed that."

"If you interrupt me again, Barbara—"

"But you must be interrupted some time, dear. Otherwise you would be like the little brook, and go on for ever."

"If I were a boy," said Clara, "I think I should punch your nose, Barbara!"

"If I were a boy, dear, I should probably bump you!"

"I was going to say that Study No. 7 is top study in the Fourth," said Clara darkly; "and if anybody says it isn't, I've got a pillow here!"

"It isn't!" said Barbara promptly. Whiz!

Clara was as good as her word.

Yoop! I'm killed!" howled Bessie. "Who's throwing pillows at me? Yooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh dear!" gasped Barbara. "Sorry! It was meant for Clara!"

"Yow-ow-wooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Clara. "Do that again, Barbara!"

Bessie Bunter set her glasses straight on her little fat nose, and scrambled up in great wrath.

She grasped the pillow and swung it up.

"Not at me!" shrieked Dolly Jobling, dodging.

The short-sighted junior was blinking round for Barbara.

"Where's Barbara? Where's—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I'm not Barbara!" gasped Gwendo-



Squeak! "The mouse is right under your feet, Bessie!" said Gwendoline Cook. "Well, I don't care! I'm not afraid of a mouse!" said Bessie Bunter contemptuously. "I say, you girls, you're a lot of softies! I am ashamed of you—I am, really!"

"Oh!" shrieked Babs, as she caught the pillow with her chin. She was sitting on the edge of her bed to take her shoes off, and she went back on the bed with a bump. "Oh! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, Clara!" gasped Marjorie Hazeldene.

Barbara straightened up at once, the pillow in her hands.

Whiz!
The missile shot back to its owner with deadly aim.

Clara Trevlyn, with a chuckle, dodged—but there was no need to dodge.

Bessie Bunter rolled into the line of fire, just in time.

Bump!
"Oh! Ycoop!"

There was a roar from the fat junior as the pillow smote her. She sat down with a terrific concussion.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! What's that?"

line Cook, as the fat junior rushed towards her.

Bessie blinked.

"Oh! Then, where—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Barbara.

"Oh, there you are!" howled Bessie.

"And there's your pillow!"

Whiz!
Crash!

There was plenty of force in the throw, with Bessie Bunter's weight behind it, but the aim was decidedly bad.

The pillow missed Barbara by a yard or more, and caught Bridget O'Foole on the side of the head.

The unfortunate Bridget was sent spinning, amid a howl of laughter from the dormitory.

"Oh! Ochone!" howled Bridget.

"Phwat is ut intirely?"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"There! That serves you jolly well right, Barbara!" gasped Bessie Bunter.

"Ha, ha! It isn't Barbara you've floored!" screamed Mabel. "It's Bridget!"

"Oh dear, is it? I—I say, Bridget, I meant that for Barbara!"

"And I mean it for you!" exclaimed Bridget wrathfully, rushing at Bessie Bunter with a pillow in her grasp.

Bessie dodged wildly. "Hold on! I—I say, Bridget, old girl—keep off, you cat! I say, dear—don't you biff me with that pillow— Oh! Ah! Ow!"

Bessie Bunter dodged frantically round a bed, and then round a washstand, where she was cornered, and the pillow smote.

The force of the smite carried it out of Bridget's hands, and it flew past Bessie as she dodged, and there was a terrific crash.

It was the water-jug. The pillow knocked it flying, and it landed on the floor, with an echoing smash, in a score of pieces and with a mighty splash.

"My jug!" exclaimed Philippa Derwent. "You've done it now, Bridget!"

"Ochone!" gasped Bridget, in dismay. "Yaroooh! Keep off!"

"Cave!" called out Phyllis Howell. "Here comes the Bull!"

There was a general scampering to the beds.

The stately form of Miss Bullivant loomed up in the doorway. She had heard the crash.

Some of the girls jumped into bed—all were apparently unconscious of the broken jug on the floor.

Bessie Bunter stood in the centre of the room yelling:

"Yah! Keep off! Yow-ow!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant. "What is this?"

"Oh!" gasped Bessie.

Then there was dead silence.

Miss Bullivant advanced grimly into the dormitory.

She fixed her eyes upon the fragments of the jug, as if she could scarcely believe the evidence of her sight.

Then she looked round. Nobody caught her eye.

Only Bessie Bunter was blinking at her helplessly.

"Who," said Miss Bullivant, in a deep voice—"who has been guilty of this wanton damage?"

Deep silence.

"Was it you, Bessie Bunter?"

"No!" stuttered Bessie.

"Then who was it?"

Bessie Bunter opened her fat lips, and closed them again.

She understood the looks she received, on all sides.

Sneaking was barred in the Fourth Form at Cliff House.

"Do you hear me?" rapped out Miss Bullivant.

"No—I mean, yes."

"Then answer me!"

"The—the fact is, I—I don't know!" stammered Bessie Bunter. "I—I haven't seen that jug before, and I didn't know it was broken. I—I think it must have fallen over of its own accord, please."

"It could not fall over of its own accord, as you are perfectly well aware!" snapped the Bull.

"C-c-couldn't it? P-p-perhaps the—the centre of gravity got shifted somehow," suggested the fat junior brightly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bessie Bunter, I conclude that you have broken this jug, as you are standing by it."

"I didn't!" howled Bessie indignantly. "I'm not to blame at all. I couldn't help Barbara throwing a pillow at me, could I?"

"Oh, it was Barbara, then?"

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"No, it wasn't!" "You have said that Barbara threw a pillow at you!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant sternly.

"I—I meant to say that Barbara didn't throw a pillow at me, please."

"What?"

"That—that's what I really meant to say. I—I hope it's quite clear now, Miss Bullivant."

"Once for all, Bessie Bunter, tell me who has committed this wanton damage in the dormitory!" thundered Miss Bullivant.

"Oh, dear! I—I say, you girls—"

"It was knocked over by a pillow, I presume," said Miss Bullivant grimly.

"Horseplay! Pah! You will be punished, Bessie."

"I—I say, that's not fair!" wailed the fat junior.

"Bessie!"

"How could I help Bridget going for me with a pillow? I never asked her to knock the jug over, did I?" exclaimed Bessie Bunter indignantly.

"Oh!" murmured Barbara, shaking a fist at Bessie Bunter from behind Miss Bullivant.

Bessie blinked at her.

"I say, Barbara, what are you shaking your fist at me for?" she inquired.

Miss Bullivant spun round like a teetotum.

"Barbara!"

Babs was busy untying a shoelace, with crimson cheeks.

Miss Bullivant gave the top of her head a grim look, which fortunately did it no damage.

Then her steely eye fixed on the dismayed Bridget.

"Bridget, you broke this jug!"

"Ochone!"

"You will be detained for two hours to-morrow," said Miss Bullivant icily.

"During that time you will study mathematics."

"Ow!"

"Every other girl present will take an imposition," continued Miss Bullivant sternly. "Each girl will write, 'We must keep order in the dormitory!' fifty times."

"Oh!"

In grim silence the Fourth Form turned in, and the silence lasted till Miss Bullivant was gone, and the lights were out.

And then the silence was suddenly and emphatically broken.

Pulling Together.

"LITTLE minx!" "Sneak!" "Tell-tale!"

The voices came from every bed in the dormitory excepting Bessie Bunter's. Bessie was already settling down comfortably to sleep.

"I say, you girls, be quiet, will you?" she called out. "I want to go to sleep. You oughtn't to call one another names, either."

"We're calling you names!" shouted Mabs.

"Eh?"

"You?" came from a dozen voices. Bessie Bunter sat up in bed.

"Me!" she repeated, in astonishment.

"You—you fat little sneak, bedad!" howled Bridget O'Toole.

"I'd like to know what you're calling me names for!" exclaimed Bessie indignantly. "Who's a sneak? Perhaps you mean Marjorie?"

"What?" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Or Barbara. Or Mabel, perhaps?"

"You little duffer!" cried Barbara.

"You told the Bull that Bridget had broken the jug."

"I didn't!"

"Why, we heard you."

"You couldn't hear me when I didn't, Barbara. You're dreaming, my dear! You ate too much supper, I noticed."

"We all heard you!" shrieked Clara.

"And you've got Bridget detained, and lines for all of us."

"But I never told the Bull!" howled Bessie. "I simply said I couldn't help Bridget going for me with a pillow. I couldn't, could I?"

"That comes to the same thing."

"Not at all. If Miss Bullivant guessed from that that it was Bridget, it's not my fault. Be fair, you know."

"You—you—"

"I said distinctly that I never asked her to knock the jug over. You must have heard me!" said Bessie indignantly.

"That little idiot ought to be in an asylum!" said Barbara, in disgust. "We ought to make her do all the lines."

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"Only the Bull would know her fist," said Mabel, "to say nothing of her spelling!"

"I like that!" jeered Bessie Bunter. "Talk about spelling. You spelt 'proceed' without a 'w' the other day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I've seen you spell 'durable' with only one 'b.'"

"Oh, dear! Be quiet, Bessie, for goodness' sake! We're going to scalp you to-morrow for sneaking!"

"I say, you girls—"

"Be quiet!"

"Do you want a pillow?" demanded Barbara. "You'll get one in a minute, if you're not careful!"

Bessie Bunter snorted, and laid her head on the pillow again.

She was fast asleep in a minute or less, and there was a sweet smile on her fat face as she slumbered.

She was dreaming that she was in the school larder.

When the Fourth Form turned out at rising-bell in the morning Bessie Bunter received grim looks on all sides.

There was quite a chilly atmosphere in the dormitory that morning.

Bessie sniffed indignantly, and she wore an injured look when she went down.

Babs went to her study in the Fourth as soon as she came down, and was busy there for a few minutes.

When she came out there was a card in her hand, and she walked out into the quad to look for Bessie Bunter.

Bessie was planted before the tuck-shop, which was not open yet.

She was feasting her eyes on the little diamond-paned window.

Babs, with her hand behind her, came along quietly.

Bessie Bunter started as she was slapped on the shoulder from behind.

"I—I say, Mabel—"

"Little sneak!" said Barbara.

"Oh, it's you, Barbara!" said Bessie, blinking at her. "I say, you know, it's rather mean to make out that I gave Bridget away. I really don't know how the Bull guessed it was Bridget. I think very likely Marjorie told her."

"Br-r-r-r!" said Barbara, and she walked away.

Sniff! from Bessie Bunter.

The fat junior was quite unconscious of the fact that, when Babs had slapped her on the shoulder with one hand, she had pinned a card to her back with the other.

But the other girls in the quad were soon conscious of it.

As Bessie stood looking in the tuck-shop window, the card showed up, and the big letters on it could be read at quite a distance.

"I AM A SNEAK!"

PLEASE PULL MY PLAIT!"

There was a ripple of laughter in the

quadrangle, and Bessie Bunter turned her head.

"I say, you girls——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke?" demanded Bessie Bunter. "I—I—— Here, I say, leggo! Wharrer you pulling my hair for, Clara?"

"You asked for it!" chuckled Clara Trevlyn.

"Yow! I didn't!" Bessie backed away in surprise and wrath, and as she did so Dolly Jobling gave her plait a tug.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you want your plait pulled?" chuckled Mabs.

"Yow! No! Keep off!"

"Then you shouldn't ask for it!"

Tug!

"Yoooop!"

The fat junior fairly fled, followed by a roar of laughter.

But her troubles were not over yet.

stepped out of the doorway as Bessie arrived there at top speed.

The Third-Formers vanished at the sight of the stately Stella, but Bessie Bunter did not even see her—till she collided with her.

Stella Stone reeled back from the shock, and then grasped Bessie with a hand of iron, and stopped her.

"Bessie——"

"Yaroooh! Leggo!"

"You clumsy, silly, foolish——"

"Yah! Don't you pull my hair!" shrieked Bessie. "You let my hair alone!"

"Pull your hair!" gasped Stella, almost overcome by the bare suggestion that she, the Head of the mighty Sixth, could possibly condescend to pull a junior's hair. "What do you mean? Are you out of your senses, child?"

"Yow-ow! Leggo!"

"Goodness gracious! There is something on your back!"

warning finger at her, and walked out loftily into the quad.

The fat junior shook a podgy fist after her, and at that moment Stella Stone glanced round.

Bessie's fat fist was still sawing the air, under the surprised and horrified eyes of the tall Sixth-Former.

"Bessie! What are you doing?"

"Oh! Ah! Nothing!" gasped Bessie. "I—I—I was doing s-s-some exercises, you know! Gymnastics, you know! Oh dear!"

"Bessie, you——"

Stella Stone strode wrathfully towards the fat junior.

But Fatima of the Fourth did not wait. She vanished into the house, and was not seen again till breakfast.

At breakfast Bessie Bunter wore a frown. She was indignant, and she was wrathful.

But wrath and indignation did not impair her appetite.



"I'm waiting for you!" said Marcia Loftus grimly. "I-I say, I know you are only joking, you know," murmured Bessie Bunter. "I-I say, Marcia, old girl——" "If you call me old girl, I'll shake you!" said Marcia.

The placard on her back attracted general attention, and everyone was willing to accede to the request inscribed there.

To Bessie's amazement and wrath, every girl she passed near made a jump at her and gave her plait a tug.

Even girls of the Fifth, who were seniors, entered into the little joke.

The unfortunate fat junior gave a terrific howl as Flora Cann of the Fifth tugged at her plait with an athletic arm.

"Yaroooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let my hair alone! Oh dear! Wharrer you mean?"

"You shouldn't ask for it!"

"I haven't—I didn't—I wasn't——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie Bunter fled for the School House.

After her came two or three wild spirits of the Third, eager to give a tug.

Stella Stone, the head of the Sixth,

"Let my plait alone!"

"I tell you——"

"Cat!"

"What a—what a very extraordinary girl!" gasped Stella. "Oh dear! Who put this on your back, Bessie?"

Bessie Bunter blinked at the card as Stella held it up. She understood now.

"Oh! Ah! Cat!" she gasped. "That was it, was it? It must have been Barbara, or Mabs, or Marjorie, or Clara, or Dolly, or somebody! I'm sure it was somebody! Oh dear! Cat! I'll scratch her!"

Stella laughed.

"Go away, and don't be silly!" she said.

"I'll scratch her——"

"Do you want me to cane you, Bessie?" asked the Head of the Sixth sternly.

Bessie nearly said "Cat!"—but she stopped in time. Stella Stone shook a

Bessie's eyes gleamed behind her big glasses when the girls came out from breakfast.

The fat junior had been thinking. She came up to Babs and Mabs in the hall, and fixed a crushing blink on them.

"You think you're jolly clever!" she began.

"Fairly!" admitted Babs, with a smile.

"There's some things you don't know!" said the fat junior mysteriously.

"A few!" assented Babs.

"I've been treated badly!" went on Bessie Bunter. "Girls calling me a sneak, and all that—when you know jolly well that I'm the most honourable girl in the Fourth."

"Oh!"

"I'm going to make you squirm!" said Bessie darkly.

"Oh dear!"

"I could tell you something if I chose. But I won't!"

Babs and Mabs stared at the fat junior.

Bessie Bunter's manner was darkly mysterious. Mabs tapped her forehead gently.

"Poor old Bessie!" she murmured. "I've been expecting this! Can't you take something for it?"

"You wait and see!" said Bessie Bunter, with increasing mysteriousness. "I know what I know! You wait and see!"

And with that Bessie Bunter walked loftily away, leaving Babs and Mabs in a state of great astonishment.

Brave Bessie!

BESSIE BUNTER was wearing a smile when the Fourth Form went in to lessons.

She met Barbara Redfern's eye, and nodded mysteriously.

Evidently the fat junior, still labouring under a sense of injury, was holding to her scheme of making the Fourth-Formers "squirm."

How she was going to do it was a mystery.

It had not occurred to the Cliff House girls that there was more in Bessie Bunter than met the eye.

Perhaps that was excusable, as there was so very much of her that met the eye.

"Good-morning, Miss Bellew!" said the whole class sweetly, as the Form-mistress came in.

"Good-morning, my dear girls!" said Miss Bellew, with her kind smile.

Miss Bellew always had a kind smile for her pupils. She was, as Barbara described it, a nerve rest, and her favourite author was not "Kikero." But she was kind and good-tempered, which was ever so much better, in the opinion of the girls of the Fourth.

Lessons with Miss Bellew generally went off quite pleasantly, and she was never known to rap knuckles in Miss Bullivant's unpleasant way; and she seldom or ever sent in a junior to the headmistress.

But lessons were not destined to run smoothly that morning.

The Fourth-Formers were following Miss Bellew upon a personally-conducted tour among the Anglo-Saxon kings when a sudden interruption came.

There was a faint squeak among the desks, and Bridget O'Toole jumped up with a scream.

Miss Bellew jumped, too.

"Bridget!"

"Arrah!" gasped Bridget.

"Bridget O'Toole, what do you mean?"

Squeak!

"It's a mouse entirely!" shrieked Bridget. "Sure, it's nearly under me feet!"

"Good gracious! A mouse in the classroom!" exclaimed Miss Bellew. "You must be mistaken, Bridget!"

"Sure, I hearrd it!"

"Nonsense! Sit down at once!"

Bridget stared under the desk and under the form, and sat down at last, palpitating.

Miss Bellew, with a very severe look at the Irish junior, proceeded.

But the Anglo-Saxon kings were not destined to have a quiet time that morning.

Squeak!

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

Scream!

Three or four girls jumped up in alarm.

"It—it—it really is a mouse!" ejaculated Miss Bellew, who heard the shrill squeak that time. "S-s-somebody must

have trodden on the poor little thing! Be very careful where you tread, my dear girls!"

There was no doubt that the girls were going to be very careful about that.

There were exclamations of alarm on all sides. Gwendoline Cook jumped on her form, and Cissie Clare climbed on her desk.

Squeak!

Squeak!

"Where is it?"

"Can you see it?"

"Help!"

"Calm yourselves! Calm yourselves, girls!" called out Miss Bellew anxiously.

"Pray be calm! Take example by Bessie. She is perfectly calm."

All the Fourth were on their feet now—or on the forms—excepting Bessie Bunter.

Bessie sat tight, with a disdainful smile upon her fat face. She, at least, was not scared.

"I'm not afraid of a mouse, Miss Bellew," she said loftily.

"Quite right, Bessie!" said the Form-mistress approvingly. "My dear girls, calm yourselves. Barbara—Marjorie

Squeak!

"It's under my desk!" screamed Mabs.

Squeak!

"Now it's under mine!"

"Drive it away!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Where is it? I can't see it!"

"I say, you girls, you're awful funks!" said Bessie Bunter. "What's there to be afraid of in a mouse? Poof!"

Squeak!

"Girls!" almost shouted Miss Bellew, in dismay, as the Fourth Formers clambered on seats and desks. "Girls! Calm yourselves! I—I will drive the mouse away! Good gracious! There is really nothing to be alarmed at! A poor little mouse cannot hurt you. It is really—really weak and foolish to show alarm at such a thing, and— Yooop!"

Squeak! came from almost under Miss Bellew's feet, and she broke off with a wild howl as she leaped clear of the floor.

It quite spoiled the effect of her little lecture to the Fourth.

"Good gracious!" Miss Bellew ran for her desk, and perched herself on the high stool, with her skirts drawn well away from the floor. "Oh, dear! The—the horrid thing!"

Squeak!

Squeak!

"Drive it away!" wailed Miss Bellew, almost in tears. "Barbara, take the poker from the fender—"

"Oh, Miss Bellew!" gasped Barbara.

Babs was standing on her desk, holding on to Mabs, who was beside her.

She did not feel inclined to descend and make the dangerous journey to the fender.

"Marjorie—Clara—"

"He, he, he!" came from Bessie Bunter. "Fancy being afraid of a mouse!"

Squeak!

"It's right under your feet, Bessie!" shrieked Gwendoline.

"Well, I don't care! I'm not afraid of a mouse!" said Bessie Bunter contemptuously. "I say, you girls, you're a lot of softies! I'm ashamed of you—I am really!"

Squeak!

"Oh, dear!"

"Will—will no one drive that dreadful creature away?" wailed Miss Bellew, clutching at her skirts.

"Shall I, Miss Bellew?" sang out Bessie Bunter.

"My dear Bessie—my dear, brave girl

—yes—yes, please do! I—I shall be—be infinitely obliged to you, my dear!"

Squeak!

"Hurry up, Bessie!" screamed Katie Smith. "Oh, dear! I don't believe you dare! Oh!"

"You watch me!" said Bessie Bunter valorously.

The fat junior jumped up and rushed to the grate for the poker.

She grasped the poker, and came valiantly among the desks.

The girls watched her in amazement.

Bessie Bunter had certainly never been suspected of so much courage.

But it was quite plain that she was not scared.

She routed under the desks with the poker, watched breathlessly by the whole Form.

Squeak! Squeak!

Then Bessie made a rush for the door, and threw it open.

Squeak! died away faintly in the corridor.

Bessie Bunter closed the door, and turned back, with a triumphant grin.

"It's gone!" she announced.

"Oh, goodness gracious!" gasped Miss Bellew, descending from her perch at last. "I did not see it! Did you see it, Bessie?"

"Didn't I drive it out, Miss Bellew?"

"Yes, yes! I am very, very much obliged to you, Bessie! You are a dear, good, brave girl!"

"Not at all, Miss Bellew. I've got some gumption, you know," said Bessie. "What is there to be afraid of in a mouse?"

"Ahem!"

The girls descended from desks and forms.

Bessie Bunter sat down with an air which made many of her Form-fellows long to shake her.

"I say, you girls, you looked an awfully queer lot of wildfowl, perched on the desks!" chuckled Bessie. "Why don't you have a little pluck—like me? He, he, he!"

"We—we—we will now resume," gasped Miss Bellew.

During the morning it came out that Bessie Bunter had done no prep the previous evening.

But there was not even a reprimand for the heroic Bessie.

When the class was dismissed Bessie rolled out of the Form-room with her fat little nose high in the air.

She evidently regarded herself as the hero of the hour, and if she had borne her blushing honours with a little more modesty her claim might have been allowed.

As it was, however, the girls felt more inclined to shake her than anything else.

Mysterious!

ISAY, you girls!"

"Oh, run away!" said Barbara crossly.

Some of the junior girls were in Auntie Jones' little shop, refreshing themselves with chocolate-creams and ginger-beer before afternoon lessons, when Bessie Bunter rolled in.

The fat junior grinned at them.

"I say, you girls, have you got over your scare?" she asked.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"You ought to take example by me, you know, as Miss Bellew told you! If you'd had any gumption you'd have made me captain of the Fourth, instead of Barbara," remarked Bessie, with a shake of the head. "Fancy being afraid of a mouse! He, he, he!"

"Do give us a rest!" pleaded Mabs. "You've been swanking about that mouse ever since. Give us a rest, Bessie!"

"I say, have you seen my purse?"
 "No!" snapped Clara.
 "I must have left it somewhere," said Bessie seriously. "I hope it won't get lost. There's banknotes in that purse!"
 "I don't think!" murmured Mabs.
 "I say, you girls——"
 "No!" said several voices.
 "Eh?"
 "My dear kid, you're not going to have any ginger-pop," said Barbara. "You are a sneak. Also a swanker. And an unpleasant little duffer! Go and look for your purse—and take special care of the banknotes when you find them!"
 "When!" said Mabs.
 "If you're going to be mean, Barbara——"

"Oh, do run away!"
 Bessie Bunter blinked round at the group of schoolgirls, more in sorrow than in anger.
 "Nobody's offering me any ginger-beer, even after I rescued you all in the Form-room!" she said. "I call that mean! I must say I am surprised at you, Barbara!"

"Go hon!"
 "Did you say ginger-pop, Marjorie?"
 "No," answered Marjorie Hazeldene, laughing.
 "Did you, Clara?"
 "No fear?"
 "Ginger-pop for Bessie Bunter, auntie!"
 "Yes, Miss Gwendoline."

Gwendoline Cook was munching chocolates near the door, and she had not looked up.

Auntie Jones set out the ginger-beer for Bessie, who very quickly disposed of it.

"Give Bessie half a dozen tarts, auntie," went on the voice of Gwendoline Cook, who was still negotiating the chocolate without looking round. "I'll pay."

"Yes, Miss Gwen."
 Bessie Bunter sat on a stool at the counter and started on the tarts.

Six tarts did not last Bessie very long. A bell rang in the distance as she finished the last of them.

"Oh, that's classes!" said Marjorie. "Come along!"

There was a clinking of small silver and coppers on the counter.

Bessie Bunter slipped from the high stool and rolled away to the door.

"Miss Gwendoline!" called out Auntie Jones, as Gwen Cook was going out. Gwendoline looked back.

"Yes, auntie?"
 "You know I never give credit, Miss Gwendoline."
 "I've paid for the choocs, auntie."

"Yes, but the ginger-beer and the tarts——"

"I haven't had any tarts, and Barbara paid for my ginger-beer," said Gwendoline Cook warmly.

"I mean those you told me to give Miss Bessie."
 "What?"
 "One ginger-beer and six tarts——"

"I told you to give Bessie? Bother Bessie! I'm not providing ginger-beer and tarts for Bessie Bunter!" exclaimed Gwendoline indignantly.

"But you ordered them?" exclaimed Mrs. Jones.

"I didn't!"
 "Oh, Gwen!" exclaimed Marjorie. "You can't have forgotten. You called out to auntie!"

Gwendoline stared at her.
 "I called out to auntie?" she repeated. "Of course you did!" exclaimed Dolly Jobling. "We all heard you!"

"I didn't!" shrieked Gwen.
 "Oh, Gwen!"

"All the young ladies heard you, Miss Gwendoline," said Auntie Jones severely. "I must say I am surprised at this. The things must be paid for."
 "But I never——"
 "Oh, Gwen, you're losing your memory," said Phyllis Howell. "We all heard you!"

"But—but—— I remember now I heard somebody order something for Bessie, but it was not I!" exclaimed Gwendoline hotly. "I never said a word!"

"Oh!"
 Gwendoline's face was flushed and red, and she looked quite angry.

The other girls looked astonished. Every girl in the shop had heard Gwendoline's voice when the tarts and the ginger-pop were ordered.

"I say, you girls, you'll be late for class!" called out Bessie Bunter, and

Gwendoline's dismay seemed to be entertaining to the fat junior of Cliff House—for some reason best known to herself.

Not Quite So Brave!
WHAT a face! Oh, what a face!"

Barbara jumped. It was really not a polite greeting that met Babs as she came into Study No. 4 at tea time.

"Only the parrot!" said Mabs, laughing.

Barbara Redfern shook her finger threateningly at the evil-eyed bird in the cage at the study window.

The parrot blinked at her solemnly. "Horrid bird!" said Barbara.

"What a face! Where did you get those features? In a raffle? He, he!"



As she heard the squeaking of a mouse, Bessie Bunter clambered on the table, on her hands and knees, recklessly disregarding the fact that one knee was planted in the butter, and the other in a plate of cream puffs.

she disappeared, grinning, into the quadrangle.

"Pay up, Gwen, and let's get out," said Barbara.

"I—I—I—I tell you I never ordered anything for Bessie," gasped Gwen. "If I did, I must have spoken without knowing it!"

"Well, you did!"
 Gwendoline hesitated, with a puzzled and wrathful expression, but she paid up at last, and followed the other girls from the tuck-shop.

She was still looking puzzled when the Fourth assembled in their Form-room.

If she had ordered that treat for Bessie Bunter, Gwen knew that she must have done it unconsciously, and that was a really alarming thought.

No wonder she was puzzled and dismayed.

Bessie Bunter blinked at her along the Form with a fat grin.

Barbara coloured with wrath. "Bessie, you little duffer!" she exclaimed. "I believe you teach that bird to say these things on purpose!"

Bessie Bunter chuckled.

"Polly's got a lot of sense," she remarked. "She's sized you up, you know. She knows you!"

"Why, you cheeky little minx——"
 "Oh, what a voice! Why don't you get it filed?" came from the parrot's cage.

"I don't see anything to grin at, Mabel," said Babs severely. "Bessie's nish-parrot is a horrid thing!"

"Oh, really, Barbara——" written:
 "Now, about tea," said Babs. ES. ER IN THE

parrot talks again, Bessie, I'll Clara. cushion at it. We've got to

with tea! I've got a lot to Sullivan said," writing a play" She may have
 "You writing a play?" write the sentence Bunter. keep order in the

Barbara nodded loftily.

"For the Cliff House Stage Society," she explained. "I'm knocking Shakespeare into shape. We're going to do Hamlet. Don't boil those eggs hard, Mabs!"

"If you can boil eggs better than I can, Babs—"

"I can, my dear, but I haven't time. Bessie, leave that jam alone. If you touch it again, I'll shake you!"

The three girls sat down to tea, Barbara with a sheaf of impot paper on the tablecloth at her side.

The amateur playwright was rather busy with her improvements on Shakespeare.

There was quite a lot in Hamlet that required improvement before it was up to the level of the Cliff House Stage Society.

"Blessed if I know how you're going to act Hamlet unless you borrow a lot of boys from Greyfriars," said Bessie Bunter. "There's only two girls in the play, that I remember—Ophelia and the Queen. I say, you girls, I'll play Ophelia, if you like!"

"Oh, dear!"

"I rather fancy myself as Ophelia, you know. What you want for a Shakespeare heroine is a girl with a figure—a presence," said Bessie Bunter.

"Now, I've got a figure!"

"You have," agreed Mabs. "Lots!"

"Heaps!" said Barbara. "But Mabel is going to play Ophelia, and chance the figure!"

"Well, I don't mind being the queen!"

"You may not mind, my dear, but the Stage Society would mind a great deal. Marjorie's the Queen!"

"You're leaving yourself out!" exclaimed Bessie in surprise. "If I got up a play, I should jolly well take the best part, I know that!"

"I'm Hamlet!" said Barbara loftily.

"Oh, dear!"

"Pass the butter, Mabs—and the jam, if Bessie has left any."

"But you can't play Hamlet, you know," said Bessie Bunter. "Hamlet's a boy—at least, a man. Miss Primrose wouldn't let you dress like a boy, would she?"

"Hamlet's a girl in our play," answered Barbara. "We're altering it!"

"Oh!"

"You see, Shakespeare was hopelessly old-fashioned," explained Barbara. "He lived in the time when girls took a back seat. That's how he came to write his plays in such a silly way, with men taking all the limelight. I think it's nonsense, myself. My idea is, that if Shakespeare had been a bit more intelligent, he would have written a play about a Princess of Denmark, instead of a prince. That's what I'm doing."

"And a jolly good idea," said Mabs heartily.

"Well, I really think it's a good idea," confessed Babs modestly. "Of course, some of Shakespeare's lines are quite good, and I shall not have to alter them. I shall simply recast the play, and make it a little brighter and more sensible. For instance, where Hamlet exclaims, 'Oh, my prophetic soul, my uncle! I shall make Princess Hamletta exclaim, 'Oh, goodness gracious, my aunt! I think it's really queer.'"

"Heaps!" said Mabel, with a chuckle. "don't see what you're laughing at."

"Hamletta" is a tragedy, not a

er put that on the programme, the audience may make a mis-

ere, Mabel— Oh!" broke

"A mouse!" exclaimed Mabs, in alarm. "Oh, dear! That's that hole by the fireplace. I knew there were mice—"

Squeak!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bessie Bunter.

The fat junior jumped up with a yell, and her chair went flying backwards, and the table rocked.

"Look out!" shrieked Barbara, as the milk-jug reeled over, and crashed on the sugar-basin. "Bessie—"

Squeak!

"There it is!" exclaimed Mabs, as she spotted the little animal—more terrified than the girls, as a matter of fact—scampering across the floor. "There—oh, dear—oh—ah—"

"Help!" yelled Bessie Bunter. "Help! Fire! Murder! Yoooop!"

"Look out—"

"Bessie—"

"It's near your feet—"

"Yaroooop!"

Bessie Bunter dashed across the study wildly.

She plunged into Barbara and sent her spinning, and Babs sat on the carpet.

Bessie plunged on, knocked a chair over, and dodged round the armchair, shrieking.

"Is it gone? Oh, dear!"

"You clumsy duffer!"

"Oh! Ah! Help!" yelled Bessie. "Look! Oh, dear! Drive it away! Help! Yaroooooooh!"

The frightened mouse was scampering, and Bessie fled across the study, and rushed round the table.

She bumped on the table and it rocked, and a shower of tea-things shot off to the floor.

There was a terrific howl from Barbara as she captured the jam-dish with her chin.

"Oh! Ah! Yah!"

"Help!"

"It's gone!" screamed Mabel. "Bessie, you duffer! You dangerous lunatic! It's gone! Keep still, you charging elephant!"

"Yaroooh!"

Bessie Bunter clambered on the table, on her hands and knees, recklessly disregarding the fact that one knee was planted in the butter, and the other in a plate of cream puffs.

She blinked, with a terrified blink, round the dishevelled study.

"Oh, dear!" she moaned. "Are you sure it's gone? Oh, dear!"

Barbara scrambled up.

"You young duffer!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "What do you mean by wrecking the study like this?"

"Yow-ow-ow! Are you sure it's gone?"

"Shake her!" howled Mabs.

"I—I say, you girls, are you sure it's gone? Oh, dear!"

Barbara and Mabel grasped the fat junior by the arms, and hauled her off the table.

Bessie came to the floor with a bump, with a chunk of butter clinging to one knee, and cream puffs plastered on her dress.

And with hearty vigour, Babs and Mabs proceeded to shake her.

"Look at our tea!"

"Yurrrgh! I—I say, you girls—"

Shake! Shake!

"Put the cream puffs down her back!" exclaimed Mabel, in great exasperation. "After all her swank about the mouse in the class-room, to wreck the study like this!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Bessie Bunter dodged out of the study before Mabel could carry out her dire threat.

Barbara brandished a cushion after her as she fled.

"Come back! Come back, and be squashed!"

But Bessie Bunter did not come back. Barbara turned breathlessly into the study.

It looked as if a cyclone had smitten it in full career.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Barbara. "The little duffer, to wreck the room like this—and all because of a mouse! I—I suppose it's really gone, Mabs?"

"Yes. Isn't it queer?" said Mabel, rather thoughtfully. "Bessie wasn't at all afraid of the mouse in the Form-room, and yet, now—"

"She's a queer girl altogether," said Barbara crossly. "Let's get the study to rights, and if she comes back, I'll shake her—hard!"

But Bessie did not come back to finish tea—she had left very little to finish, as a matter of fact.

But it was probably the mouse that kept her away; she was not quite sure it was gone.

And both Babs and Mabs could not help thinking how very curious it was that Bessie, who had shown such heroic courage in the Form-room, should be so scared by a mouse in the study.

It was difficult to explain; though the explanation was to come in time.

Called Off!

"**P**oor dear!" said Barbara Redfern sympathetically.

It was a case for sympathy. All the Fourth commiserated the unhappy Bridget, who was booked for two hours' detention.

Immediately after tea, she had to go into the Form-room.

Miss Bullivant was there, all ready to spring "extra maths" on the unhappy victim.

Bridget O'Toole groaned dismally. "Isn't it awful?" she said. "I wouldn't mind so much if it was anything but maths. But sure, me head aches wid them. It's Bessie Bunter that ought to be detained intirely."

"She's a little sneak," said Marcia Loftus. "She ought to be beaten! I'll beat her for you, Bridget!"

"Sure you won't, Marcia," answered the good-natured Bridget. "Yes, I'm coming, Miss Bullivant!"

Bridget entered the Form-room. Miss Bullivant looked out for a moment.

"Kindly do not forget your impositions," she said acidly.

The girls received that injunction in grim silence.

Marcia knitted her brows as she turned away from the Form-room door.

"It's all Bessie Bunter's fault," she said. "She ought to be made an example of."

"Well, she is rather a little duffer," admitted Barbara. "But you're going to let her alone, Marcia. You've been punished by Miss Bellow for bullying. Don't begin again."

"Look here, Barbara—"

"You'll let Bessie alone," said Barbara, frowning. "Mind, I mean that! Come along, Mabel. I've got a wheeze! It's a joke on the Bull!"

"I say, the Bull isn't safe to joke with," murmured Mabs, as she followed her chum.

"Leave it to me."

And Barbara led the way to Marjorie's study, apparently requiring the assistance of Study No. 7.

Marcia Loftus looked after the chums with knitted brow, and followed up the stairs more slowly.

Her eyes were glinting under her drawn brows.

Fifty lines took up a good deal of time,

and Marcia was not feeling inclined to write lines.

She was feeling much more inclined to punish Bessie Bunter, and as Babs and Mabs entered Study No. 7, Marcia went long to Study No. 4.

She found Bessie Bunter there.

Bessie was feeding her parrot, and she blinked round at the newcomer a little uneasily.

Bessie Bunter might be obtuse on some points, but she was keen enough on others, and she had already observed that Marcia Loftus was a little bit of a bully.

Girls can be bullies as well as boys, though the bullying may take a milder form.

"I—I say, c-c-come in!" said Bessie Bunter uneasily. "W-w-would you like to hear my parrot talk, Marcia?"

"No!" snapped Marcia.

"Ahem! I—I say, there's a tart in the cupboard—"

"I've got fifty lines to do!" said Marcia.

"S-so have I."

"It was your fault."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"And you're a little sneak," continued Marcia. "I've come here to twist your arm, as a warning."

"Oh! I—I say—"

"Come here!" said Marcia, raising her hand commandingly.

Bessie Bunter promptly retreated round the table. She blinked at Marcia Loftus across the table warily.

"I'm waiting for you!" said Marcia grimly.

"I—I say, I know you're only joking, you know," murmured Bessie Bunter.

"I—I say, Marcia, old girl—"

"If you call me old girl, I'll shake you!"

"I—I say, dear—"

"You brought that old Gorgon Bullivant down on us, and I'm going to twist your arm—"

"MARCIA!"

The bully of the Fourth jumped.

Through the open doorway, Miss Bullivant's voice came from the passage.

Marcia turned quite pale.

"Oh, dear! Oh—"

"She heard you!" grinned Bessie Bunter.

"What did you call me?" proceeded the voice in the passage. "Follow me to the Form-room at once, Marcia, you bad girl!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh, dear! Yes, Miss Bullivant!" gasped Marcia.

Bessie Bunter chortled.

Marcia Loftus almost limped from the study.

If Miss Bullivant had heard herself alluded to as an old Gorgon, there was simply no telling what the consequences would be.

Marcia limped into the passage, and then she glanced round her in surprise.

Miss Bullivant was not to be seen.

Under the impression that the "Bull" had stepped into one of the studies, Marcia waited a few minutes; but Miss Bullivant did not reappear.

Gwendoline Cook came along the passage, and stopped as she saw Marcia's troubled face.

"Anything up?" she asked.

"Have you seen the Bull?" gasped Marcia.

"No; isn't she down in the Form-room?"

"She—she was here a minute or two ago, and she heard me call her a Gorgon!"

"Phew!"

"She told me to follow her to the Form-room, but—"

"Then you'd better get a move on,"

said Gwen. "I say, you are a duffer, Marcia! You'll make her waxy, if you keep her waiting."

Marcia went along dismally to the stairs.

It was amazing how Miss Bullivant had disappeared so quickly. But there was nothing in it but to go to the Form-room.

Marcia presented herself there, and found Bridget working at her desk, and Miss Bullivant, seated at the Form-mistress' desk, with a volume in her hand, doubtless her favourite "Kike'o."

She glanced up coldly as Marcia came in.

"Well?" she said briefly.

"Please, Miss Bullivant—" faltered Marcia.

Marcia did not look much like a bully now.

"Well?"

"I—I didn't mean—I—I didn't know—that is, I—I never meant—" stammered Marcia.

Miss Bullivant looked at her fixedly.

"Will you kindly explain yourself, Marcia Loftus, instead of stammering in that absurd way?" she said.

"I—I—I—when I said Gorgon, I—I didn't mean Gorgon—"

"When you said what?"

"And—and I'm sorry, Miss Bullivant."

"In the name of goodness, what are you talking about?" exclaimed Miss Bullivant impatiently. "Why have you come here?"

Marcia jumped.

"You—you told me to."

"I told you to! Oh, you mean that you have written out your imposition, I suppose, and have brought it to me? You may lay it on the desk."

"Nunno! I—I haven't—"

"Then what do you want? When did I tell you to come here, you foolish girl?" exclaimed Miss Bullivant sharply.

"A—a few minutes ago," stammered Marcia, in utter bewilderment.

"What?"

"Upstairs, in the Fourth-Form passage."

"If this is impertinence, Marcia—"

"But—but—but you told me," said Marcia helplessly.

"I have not been in the Fourth-Form passage for several hours, at least," said Miss Bullivant coldly; "and for a quarter of an hour I have been seated at this desk."

Marcia Loftus gazed at her blankly.

"Then—then you did not tell me—"

"Certainly I did not."

"Oh!"

"You are very strange in your manner, Marcia. Are you ill?"

"N-n-no! I—I thought—" said Marcia dazedly.

"Nonsense! You may go. And remember that your lines are to be written out before bedtime."

"Yes," gasped Marcia.

She quitted the Form-room in a dazed state.

It really seemed as if she was suffering from hallucinations, unless Miss Bullivant was.

Whose voice was it she had heard outside Study No. 4 if it was not Miss Bullivant's?

There was certainly no other sharp, strident voice like the Bull's at Cliff House.

Marcia returned to the Fourth-Form quarters feeling quite dazed, and she passed Study No. 4 without even glancing at it.

But Bessie Bunter saw her pass, and she grinned, and winked at the ceiling.

To judge by Bessie Bunter's expression, she was not so much in the dark about that mysterious voice as Marcia was.

Not Good Enough.

"NONSENSE!" said Clara Trevlyn decidedly.

"Now, Clara, don't be a duffer!"

"Nonsense!" repeated Clara. "My dear kid, you can't think of wheezes in Study No. 4. This is the study for wheezes!"

"Hear, hear!" said Marjorie, laughing.

"Yes; here, here!" said Clara. "I don't know what your wheeze is, Barbara, but you may take it away and bury it."

"Deep!" added Dolly Jobling.

Babs looked exasperated. She had come to Study No. 7 full of that wheeze, and this was not a flattering reception.

"I tell you it's a first-class joke on the Bull!" she exclaimed.

"The Bull isn't a first-class subject for joking," said Marjorie, shaking her head.

"She's more likely to use the pointer than to see the point," remarked Dolly Jobling, quite brilliant. "Drop it, old girl."

"I don't often agree with Study No. 7," remarked Mabs. "But I must say—"

"Rubbish!" said Barbara.

"Now, my dear, you know what a duffer you are," said Mabs patiently. "You know what happened when you put the gum into the Bull's inkpot."

"Will you listen to the wheeze?" exclaimed Barbara warmly.

"Oh, go ahead!" said Clara. "I've told you in advance that it's nonsense; but you can go ahead."

"The Bull gave us impots last night—"

"And we'd better do them, instead of chin-wagging," assented Clara. "The Bull will be on the rampage if they're not done by bedtime."

"I know how to do them in a couple of minutes."

Clara looked interested at last.

"If you've got a wheeze for doing fifty lines in two minutes you're a genius," she said. "I'll hear that with pleasure."

"You remember what Miss Bullivant said?"

"Yes. We've got to write out fifty times, 'We must keep order in the dormitory,'" said Marjorie.

"Wrong?"

"That's what the Bull said."

"Not quite. She said: 'Each girl will write, 'We must keep order in the dormitory fifty times.'"

"Well, that comes to the same thing, doesn't it?"

"Not a bit! Are we bound to do what Miss Bullivant said, or are we bound to guess what she meant, and do that?"

"Eh? We must do what she said, I suppose," said Marjorie, in perplexity. "But I don't see—"

"Look, then!"

Barbara took pen and paper and scribbled.

The juniors watched her in astonishment, as they saw that she had written:

"WE MUST KEEP ORDER IN THE DORMITORY FIFTY TIMES."

"My word!" ejaculated Clara.

"Ha, ha!"

"That's what Miss Bullivant said," declared Barbara. "She may have meant that we were to write the sentence fifty times, 'We must keep order in the

dormitory. But we're not bound to go around guessing at what she meant. What she actually said was that."

"But she meant—"
"Don't I keep on telling you that we're not bound to guess what she meant? She wasn't holding a guessing competition, was she?"

"Ha, ha! No. But—"
"You're as full of 'butts' as a billy-goat," said Barbara crossly. "That's the impot, according to Miss Bullivant. We're bound to do exactly as she told us. Otherwise, we should be lacking in respect."

"Oh!"
"I hope you don't want to be disrespectful to a member of Miss Primrose's staff, Marjorie?" said Babs severely.

"But the Bull—"
"There's the impot. For goodness' sake, get yours done, and let's take them in!" exclaimed Barbara. "The Bull can't go back on her own words."

"I suppose there's a millionth part of a chance that we can bluff the Bull like that!" chuckled Mabs. "Let's try."

"Oh, I'm on!" said Clara. "She can't do worse than make us write out the impot in full, and we're booked for that, anyhow."

That was a conclusive argument. The five juniors soon had the impot done—on the Bab's method.

They chuckled over them as they wrote.

Even if the little scheme did not succeed, it was quite a good joke on the Bull.

Babs called in some more of the juniors, and two or three decided to venture; some, who were perhaps a little more prudent, deciding not to follow the meaning of the Bull's command quite so literally.

But there were nine girls in the party that proceeded in search of the mathematics mistress, with the curtailed impot in their hands.

"She's in the Form-room," said Barbara. "Mind, you're not to grin. Do keep your face serious, Dolly Jobling!"

"A single grin will spoil the whole thing," said Clara anxiously. "Mind, solemn as judges. Try to look as if you're miserable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"That won't do. Silence!" exclaimed Babs. "Look as if we are all going to be caned!"

"Perhaps we are," suggested Dolly.
"Be quiet, you little Jonah! Now, then, as solemn as you can," said Barbara; and the party marched into the Form-room, where poor Bridget was still grinding dismally at extra maths.

Miss Bullivant, at the high desk, was having quite a pleasant time in her own way. She was deep in Cicero.

She looked up rather sharply as the girls came meekly in.

"If you please, Miss Bullivant, our impots—I mean impositions," murmured Barbara.

"Very well!"
The girls marched up to the desk, papers in hand.

Miss Bullivant glanced at them, and her features seemed to become suddenly frozen.

"What—what is this?" she exclaimed. "WE MUST KEEP ORDER IN THE DORMITORY FIFTY TIMES. What? What? In the name of goodness—"

"Isn't that what you told us to write, please?" asked Babs, soft as the cooing dove.

"Barbara!"
"I'm sure, Miss Bullivant, that was what you said!"

"Oh, yes, Miss Bullivant!" chorused the juniors.

Miss Bullivant's face was assuming more and more what Babs had called her basiliskic look.

The girls were keeping quite serious; that was easy enough, for the growing ferocity of the Bull's look was quite enough to keep them serious.

There was a dreadful pause.
"This—this is sheer impertinence!" broke out Miss Bullivant at last.

"Oh, Miss Bullivant!"
"You have written this—this absurdity—"

"But you said—"
"You were perfectly well aware of my meaning, Barbara. Did you actually suppose that I intended you to write out a single nonsensical line?" fumed Miss Bullivant.

"Ahem!"
"I presume," said Miss Bullivant bitterly, "that this is a practical joke."

"Oh, Miss Bullivant!"
"I shall withdraw your imposition of fifty lines—"

"I shall withdraw your imposition of fifty lines—"

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY!



No. 4.
BESSIE BUNTER.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Bullivant!"
"You need not be in a hurry to thank me. You will now take your places at your desks."

"Oh!"
"Where you will remain one hour—"

"A-a-ah!"
"And devote your attention to mathematics—"

"Ow!"
"And probably," said Miss Bullivant, with deep sarcasm, "you will reflect a little before you venture upon practical jokes with me again."

That was very probable!
Barbara & Co went to their desks with feelings too deep for words.

They had landed, under Babs' able leadership, out of the frying-pan into the fire; and the looks the juniors gave Babs during the next hour were sulphurous.

Only the Dog!

"I SAY, you girls—"
"Br-r-r-r!"
"Where have you been all this time?" asked Bessie Bunter. "I say, I wanted you to lend a hand with my impot; I haven't done it yet."

"It's all your fault!" snapped Mabs. "We've been grinding maths with the Bull. Oh dear!"

Bessie Bunter grinned.
She had heard of Barbara's wonderful wheeze, and she was not surprised at the result.

"Well, it really serves you right, you know!" she remarked, blinking at her tired and exasperated study-friends.

"What?"
"It was a silly idea," said Bessie, shaking her head. "I must say that you haven't much gumption, Barbara!"

"You little fat duffer!"
"I could have told you how it would turn out, if you'd asked me. Now you've got what you really deserved, you know—"

If you throw that cushion at me, Mabel Lynn—"

"Will you be quiet?" demanded Mabs, greatly incensed.

"Well, what about my lines?" asked Bessie Bunter. "I've got those fifty lines to do, you know; and there's prep, and there's supper, and I don't see how it's to be done! If you girls take twenty each, I don't mind doing ten. Nothing slack about me. I'll tell you what," went on Bessie brightly, "I'll do ten first, so that you can copy the handwriting. Think that a good idea?"

"No."
"I hope you're not going to be selfish—"

"Be quiet, dear, do!"
"But what about my lines?"
"Bother your lines!"

"After all I've done for this study—"

began Bessie Bunter wrathfully.

Mabs clutched the cushion again, and Bessie left her sentence unfinished.

She wound up with a didactical snort. Study No. 4 sat down to prep, not in a good humour.

Bessie Bunter devoted most of her attention to a packet of toffee, and the rest to prep.

As for the fifty lines, they were indefinitely postponed.

Barbara looked up presently.
"You'd better do your lines, Bessie. The Bull is in a temper, and she'll come here for them, if you don't take them in."

"She may forget," said Bessie hopefully.

"The Bull never forgets impots. She's got a good memory."
"Well, I'll do ten, and then you girls—"

"Br-r-r-r!"
A little later there was a sharp rap on the study door, and it flew open.

The three girls jumped up as Miss Bullivant entered.

The Bull's stern glance fastened on Bessie Bunter.

"Bessie, you have not brought me your lines!"

"Mum - mum - my lines!" stammered Bessie.

"Yes. Have you done them?"
"No—yes! Yes, certainly. I—I hope you d-d-don't think I would neglect an— an impot, Miss Bullivant."

"You should have brought them to my study. All the other lines have been brought to me!" said Miss Bullivant sternly. "However, where are they?"

"The—the lines?"
"Yes. Give them to me, if you have really written them."

"I—I was just going to bring them to you, please—"

"Very well; give them to me now."
"But—but—"

"You have not written your lines, Bessie!"
"Oh, yes!" gasped the fat junior. "Certainly! Every one! I—I did them first thing, you know. But the cat—"

"I mean, the dog. The dog whipped into the study, and—and ate them!"

Babs and Mabs looked at one another, quite overcome.

That Bessie Bunter should expect Miss Bullivant to swallow a yarn like this was simply astounding.

Miss Bullivant seemed overcome, too. She blinked at the fat junior.

"Bessie!" stuttered Miss Bullivant at last. "Girl! How dare you tell me such—such absurd stories—"

"It was the—the dog, Miss Bullivant—"

"You untruthful girl—"

"He ate them—"

"The dog did not eat them!" shrieked Miss Bullivant. "And there is no dog in the house! How dare you—"

Gr-r-r-r!

A sudden, ferocious growl interrupted Miss Bullivant.

She spun round, clutching at her skirts; that savage growl seemed to come from almost under her feet.

"I didn't, Miss Bullivant!" answered both the juniors simultaneously.

"Did you, Bessie?"

"Oh, no! Not at all! The—the savage animal rushed into the study suddenly, please, and—and ate up my lines—"

"Bessie—"

Grhrhrrrrrr!

"There it is again! It must be driven out!" shrieked Miss Bullivant. "Barbara, take a stick—and Mabel—drive that dog downstairs! It must be some strange animal that has strayed in. Drive it out at once!"

Barbara seized a hockey-stick, and Mabel the fire-shovel, and they ran into the passage.

Miss Bullivant's powerful voice called on the other juniors to help, and in a few minutes nearly all the Fourth were searching for the intruder.

But the dog was not found.

Apparently it had wandered out, as

"I'm sure of it," said Barbara. To which Fatima of the Fourth only replied:

"He, he, he!"

Another Mystery.

"SNAKE!" Thus Bridget O'Toole, in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

Bridget shook a scornful finger at Bessie Bunter, as she thus addressed her. Bridget's detention had evidently left her in a temper that was not good.

"Snake!" she repeated.

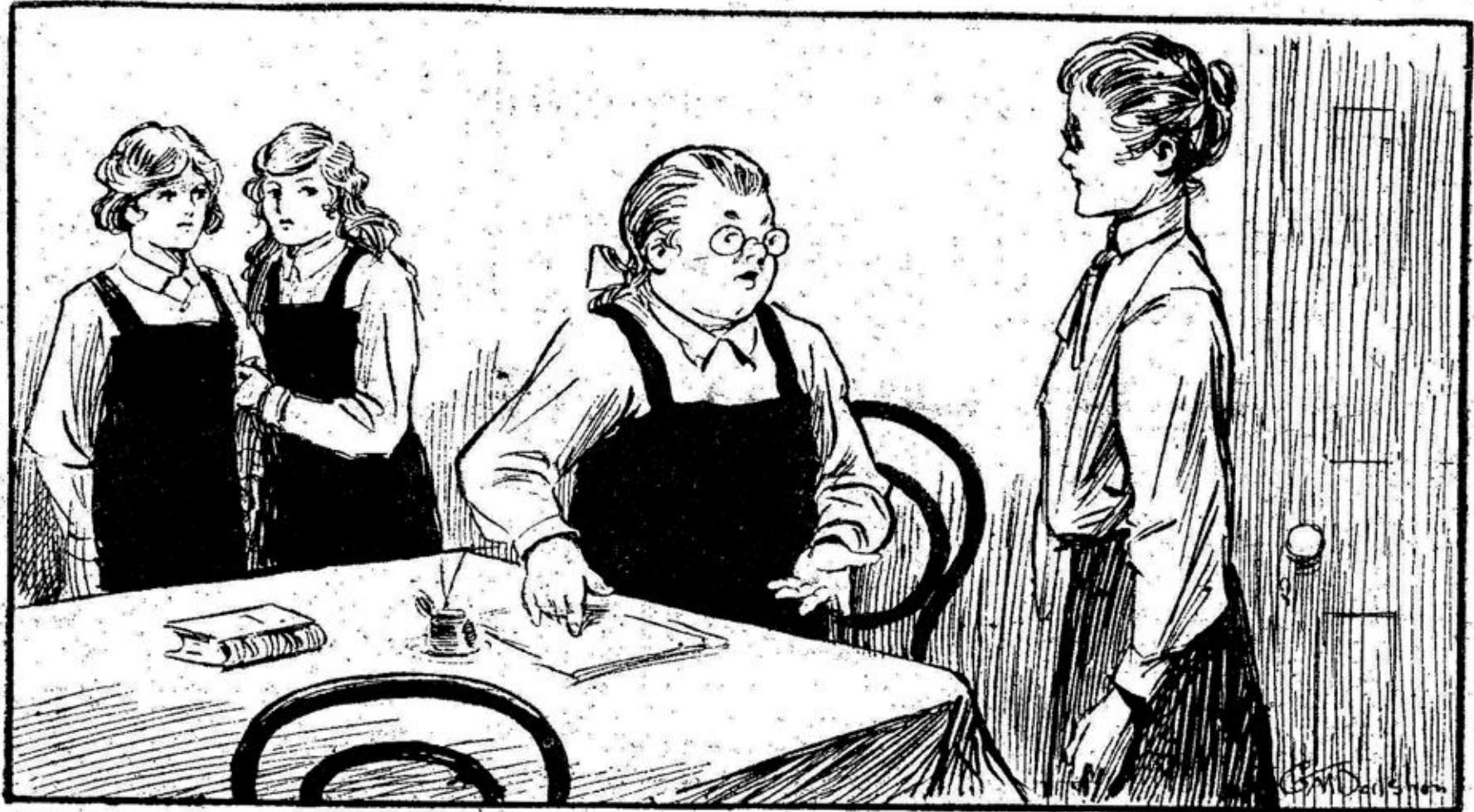
"Oh, really, Bridget—"

"Snake!"

"I'm not a snake!" howled Bessie Bunter indignantly. "If you call me a snake, I'll call you a serpent."

"You're a snake intirely. Sure me head's spinning wid mathematics!" said Bridget. "And it's all your fault! Snake!"

"Serpent!" retorted Bessie Bunter.



"You have not written your lines, Bessie!" said Miss Bullivant. "Oh, yes," gasped Bessie Bunter. "I did them first thing, you know. But the cat—I mean the dog—whipped into the study, and—and ate them!"

"Why—why—What—what—There is a dog here!" gasped Miss Bullivant. "Barbara, how dare you keep a dog in the study?"

"I—I don't know anything about a dog!" exclaimed Barbara, in amazement. "I haven't seen one here, Miss Bullivant!"

Gr-r-r-r! Bow-wow! Gr-r-r-r!"

Miss Bullivant spun round again in alarm.

The growl seemed behind her again. A sharp yelp came from the passage.

"Goodness gracious! There—there is really a dog here!"

"I told you so, Miss Bullivant," said Bessie Bunter meekly. "I don't like having my word doubted, please. It—it pains me."

Miss Bullivant stepped into the passage.

There was no dog to be seen.

She stared along the corridor, and then looked back into the study.

"Barbara! Mabel! Which of you brought a dog into the house?"

it had wandered in, unseen—it was not heard again, and it was not seen at all.

Babs and Mabs returned to the study at last, very much puzzled.

"Found the dog?" grinned Bessie Bunter.

"No."

"I say, you girls, that's queer, isn't it?" chuckled the fat junior.

Barbara gave her a suspicious look.

"I believe you know something about it, Fatima!" she exclaimed.

"He, he, he!"

"Did you bring the dog in?" exclaimed Mabs.

"He, he, he! I say, has the Bull gone away?" asked Bessie. "I suppose she believes now that it ate up my lines. I think it's bad of her to doubt a girl's word, don't you?"

"You were not telling the truth," said Barbara.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"It's jolly queer what's become of that dog," said Mabel. "But I believe that Bessie knows something about it."

"Phwat will you be calling me?"

"Serpent!"

"Here, draw it mild, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Barbara Redfern.

"You mustn't pay compliments like that. I'm surprised at you, Bridget."

"She's a snake—"

"And you're a serpent!" howled Bessie Bunter. "Yah! Serpent!"

"What?" came Miss Bullivant's voice at the door, in horrified tones. "Bessie Bunter, did I hear you call Bridget a serpent?"

"Ow! Oh! No! Certainly not!" ejaculated Bessie.

"What? I heard you! You dared to use such an expression—such a vulgar, offensive expression—"

"Well, she called me a snake," protested Bessie Bunter. "She's as much a serpent as I am a snake."

"Did you call Bessie a snake, Bridget?" asked Miss Bullivant sternly.

"Sure I called her a snake, not a snake."

"What?"

"A snake," explained Bridget. "I

didn't mean she was a reptile, though, faith, she is one intirely. I meant she was a snake."

"A snake is a reptile, Bridget. You—"

"Not a snake!" shrieked Bridget. "I didn't call her a snake."

"Then what did you call her?" snapped Miss Bullivant.

"A snake!" answered Bridget.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bridget! Unless you are out of your senses—"

"Please, Miss Bullivant," interposed Marjorie, checking her merriment with an effort. "I think Bridget meant sneak."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the Fourth.

"A—a—a sneak!" repeated Miss Bullivant. "I presume Bridget knows best what expression she applied to Bessie. And she says distinctly that she called her a snake."

"It's only her beautiful accent, Miss Bullivant," gasped Marjorie. "I—I mean, it's the brogue—"

"Sure it's plain English I'm spaking," exclaimed Bridget. "I called her a snake, not a snake, and a snake she is intirely, as she snaked about me breaking the jug."

"Oh!" ejaculated Miss Bullivant, understanding at last.

A smile broke out even on Miss Bullivant's iron face. But she dismissed it at once.

"You should not call Bessie a sneak, Bridget."

"Sure she's a snake!"

"You will take fifty lines for using such an expression," said Miss Bullivant. "Now, go to bed!"

"Oh, ochone!"

The Fourth turned in, and Miss Bullivant extinguished the light, and retired.

As soon as she was gone Bridget's voice was heard again.

"Fifty lines, begorra, and all through that fat little snake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing matter intirely! She ought to be shaken!"

Marcia Loftus sat up in bed.

"Give her a dormitory ragging," she suggested. "We'll make her run the gauntlet—"

"No, you won't!" snapped Barbara.

"Who says we won't?" demanded Marcia angrily.

"I do! I'm captain of the Fourth, and I say so. Go to sleep, my dear, and don't be a bully."

"Sure, she ought to be shaken," said Bridget. "She's a snake—"

"Yah!" came from Bessie Bunter's bed. "Serpent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure I'll box yere ears, then!" exclaimed Bridget, jumping out of bed.

"And I'll help you!" said Marcia.

"Order!" exclaimed Marjorie, sitting up.

"I say, you girls—"

"Marcia—"

"Sure it's a bully ye are, Marcia, and you can go back to bed and mind your own business intirely."

"What?" howled Marcia.

There was a buzz in the dormitory. Marcia had turned out to help Bridget, and this remark was, to say the least, ungrateful.

"Why, Bridget," exclaimed Marcia, "I'll box your ears instead of Bessie Bunter's."

"Phwat do you mean? Here, keep off! Let go intirely. Phwat are ye going for me for?" shrieked Bridget.

"Let go my hair!"

"You called me a bully!"

"Me! Sure I niver opened me mouth at all, at all," wailed Bridget. "I heardd somewan call ye so, Marcia, darling, but I niver opened me mouth."

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 4.

"Do you think I don't know your voice?" howled Marcia.

"Sure I— Yarcooh!"

"Order!" exclaimed Barbara. "Do you want a dormitory ragging, Marcia? You're going on the right way to get it!"

"Yaroo! Leggo my hair!" wailed Bridget.

"There!" panted Marcia. "If you call me names again, I'll pull it really hard next time."

"But sure I didn't—"

"Oh, stop it, Bridget!" broke in Gwendoline Cook. "We all heard you, and we know your voice, I suppose."

"Sure it's mistaken ye are! I niver opened me mouth at all, at all."

"Nonsense!"

Bridget crawled back into bed, quite giving up her hostile designs on Bessie Bunter.

Bessie chuckled and settled down to sleep.

But her fat chuckle had scarcely died away when it was followed by a loud yell, as the bedclothes were jerked off her bed.

"Now, you fat little sneak—" came Marcia's voice.

"Yaroo!"

"Marcia!" called out Barbara.

"Yaroo! She's pulling my hair! Yooop! Cat! I'll scratch you!"

Babs and Mabs and Marjorie turned out of bed, and Babs struck a match, groping for a candle-end on her washstand.

At the same moment there came a deep voice from the direction of the door.

"Marcia! How dare you?"

Marcia Loftus released Bessie Bunter's hair as if that untidy "mop" had suddenly become red-hot.

For it was Miss Bullivant's voice.

"Oh!" gasped Marcia.

"Fairly caught!" murmured Babs. "And serve you right, Marcia. What you want is a jolly good bumping!"

Marcia stood rooted to the floor in dismay.

How Miss Bullivant came to be inside the dormitory in the dark, was a strange mystery; but her voice, at least, was there.

The candle flared up, and the girls looked round for the "Bull."

"Why don't she turn on the light!" murmured Mabs.

Barbara held up the candle.

But Miss Bullivant was not to be seen.

The door was closed, and there was no sign in the dormitory of the drill mistress.

"What—what—why—who—how—"

stammered Barbara, in bewilderment.

"She—she isn't here!"

"Oh!" gasped Marcia.

"I heard her voice!" exclaimed Marjorie blankly. "She—she must have just looked in for a moment."

"And gone again!" said Clara.

"Well, my word!"

"You'll hear from her in the morning, Marcia!" said Freda Foote comfortingly.

Marcia made no reply; she turned in very quietly.

The candle was blown out.

"It's awfully queer," murmured Barbara. "I can't understand the Bull! I thought she'd turn on the light and make a regular fuss. And—and I didn't hear the door shut, either. It's awfully queer!"

There was a faint chuckle from Bessie Bunter's bed. But Bessie made no remark.

The conduct of Miss Bullivant seemed strange and mysterious enough to the

Fourth Form, and it puzzled them considerably.

It was possible, however, that it did not puzzle Fatima of the Fourth.

Once too Often!

"BABS!"

"Run away!"

"Mabs!"

"Don't bother!"

"But, I say, you girls!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter eagerly. "Auntie Jones has some lovely new tuck this morning. Jam tarts—"

"Take a little run, dear!"

"I say, you girls, I only want to stand treat!" said the fat junior reproachfully. "Come along! It's my treat, you know!"

"Well, if it's your treat, you ought to be encouraged," remarked Mabs sarcastically, and the chums of the Fourth followed the fat girl into the school shop.

Mrs. Jones came out of her little parlour.

"A dozen jam-tarts, please, Mrs. Jones," said Bessie Bunter.

Auntie Jones gave the fat girl a very fixed look. She had already learned to know her Bessie.

"Oh, dear!" ejaculated Bessie suddenly. "I say, you girls—"

"You've forgotten your purse—eh?" chuckled Mabs.

"Yes, exactly. Could you—"

"Good-bye!"

"You, Babs—could you lend—"

"Ta-ta!"

"I say, you girls—"

Babs and Mabs walked to the door.

Auntie Jones, with a severe glance at Bessie Bunter, was about to return to her parlour, when Barbara's voice was heard.

"Give Bessie a couple of tarts, Mrs. Jones. I will pay!"

"Yes, Miss Barbara."

Barbara Redfern spun round.

"What's that?" she exclaimed.

"I said yes, Miss Barbara," said Auntie Jones, looking at her.

"I—I say, Babs, Marjorie's calling you, in the quad!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter anxiously.

"Never mind Marjorie now. Somebody just said 'Give Bessie a couple of tarts!'" said Barbara. "Was it you, Mabel?"

"I!" said Mabel, with a stare. "No; it was you!"

"It was you, Miss Barbara!" said Auntie Jones, in astonishment.

Barbara's face became grim.

"I did not speak," she answered.

"But I know now who did—and why you supposed that Gwen gave you an order for Bessie the other day. Bessie, you spoofing little minx, you imitated my voice!"

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"Don't hand out those tarts, auntie, unless Bessie can pay for them!"

"I—I say, Auntie Jones, I'm expecting a remittance—next post—"

Auntie Jones gave an expressive grunt, and replaced the tarts.

Barbara took Bessie Bunter by one fat arm, and led her out of the tuckshop.

Bessie was looking alarmed now.

"Now, Bessie, you young minx!"

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"You imitated my voice in the shop," said Barbara.

"I—I wasn't—I mean I didn't—I couldn't, you know!" stammered Bessie Bunter. "Look here, there's Freda Foote calling me—"

"You imitated my voice, same as you did Gwen's the other day. I see that now," said Barbara. "I never thought you were clever enough to do such a

thing. But how did you make it sound as if it did not come from you?"

"My word!" said Mabel. "She couldn't—"

"It's some sort of a trick," said Barbara. "I remember now hearing it said that Billy Bunter, that fat little duffer at Greyfriars, is a ventriloquist. Bessie, being his sister, we ought to have guessed it before. It runs in the family, I suppose!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mabel.

It was light at last!

"I—I say, you know," stammered Bessie. "I'm not a ventriloquist, you know. Not at all! I—I can't imitate voices, you know, and—I can't make my voice come from anywhere I like—not at all. I never used to play such tricks on them at home—never! My father's never boxed my ears for doing it—never! You see, I couldn't—yaroooh! Leave off shaking me!"

"Little minx!" exclaimed Barbara, still shaking. "And it was you made us think the Bull was in the dorm that time!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bessie involuntarily. "Weren't you startled? I—I mean, I didn't—I wasn't—I never—Yah! Leggo!"

"And the mouse!" shrieked Mabel, as further light dawned upon her. "The mouse in the Form-room—that's why she wasn't frightened!"

"Because there wasn't a mouse; it was Bessie playing tricks!" said Barbara breathlessly. "Oh, the deceiving little minx!"

"And Bridget slanging Marcia in the dorm—that was Bessie too—"

"Of course—"

"Shake her!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Little minx!"

"Yow-ow! Leggo! I—I say, don't be cats!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "It—it was only a joke, you know. I—I can't help being so jolly clever, can I? I—I say, leggo, and I'll make the Bull squirm this afternoon in class. I will, really!"

Bessie Bunter's study-friends released her.

"You own up?" exclaimed Barbara.

Bessie grinned.

"Well, you see, I may be a ventriloquist, or I may not," she answered cautiously. "If you're going to be pally, I don't mind admitting it; but if you're going to be cats, I deny the whole thing. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think sometimes you're too silly to live," exclaimed Barbara.

"Well, I like that! There isn't a girl at Cliff House as clever as I am, I know that. Look at the way I can throw my voice—"

"You admit it, then?"

"Oh, no! Not at all! I—I was speaking figuratively."

"You ought to be ragged!" said Barbara sternly. "Still, it is rather clever of you. You made the Bull think there was a dog in the study."

"He, he, he!"

"I suppose it's a gift," said Barbara. "I know you wouldn't have brains enough to learn it, if it wanted learning!"

"It's a jolly clever gift," said Bessie warmly. "My brother Billy thinks he taught me, but he didn't! He can't ventriloquise half so well as I can. Sammy can't do it at all. Now, I'm awfully clever, and if you'll be decent, I'll make the Bull squirm this afternoon, and we'll get out of maths."

"You couldn't, you little duffer!"

Bessie Bunter sniffed.

"You watch me!" she answered. "I

told you I'd make you squirm, for calling me a sneak, and I've done it!"

"I've a good mind to shake you—"

"Here, I say, no larks, you know! I'll give the Bull a merry time this afternoon, and we'll all get off maths," urged Bessie Bunter.

"Well, if you'll do that, we'll forgive you," said Barbara, laughing. "Otherwise, you're going to get a study ragging!"

"Done!" said the fat junior. "I say, you girls, don't tell the others—you see, it's no end of a joke to make them order tarts for me."

"Is it?" said Babs grimly. "Then we'll tell them all at once, and put a stop to that kind of joke."

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

Marjorie & Co. came along from the gates, and Barbara gave them the news on the spot.

"Nonsense!" was Clara Trevlyn's comment.

"She hasn't brains enough," said Marjorie decidedly.

"Rubbish!" said Dolly Jobling. "Tell us an easier one!"

Bessie Bunter blinked at them indignantly.

"Oh, really, you girls—"

"Well, give us a sample," said Clara incredulously.

From under the trees close at hand a shrill, wailing cry came all of a sudden.

"M-m-meat! Cat and dorg m-m-meat!"

"My word!" exclaimed Clara, turning round in surprise. "That merchant ought not to be in here! Why, where is he?"

Clara looked round blankly in search of the catsmeat man.

"He, he, he!" cackled the fat junior.

"Bessie! You!" ejaculated Barbara.

"He, he, he!"

"Well, my word!" said Clara, with a wondering look at the fat junior. "That takes the cake! I'd never have believed it! How such a born duffer—"

"There goes the bell!"

The Fourth Form went into lessons, Bessie Bunter wearing a fat smile of satisfaction.

Her little secret had been discovered; but she was being regarded with curiosity and some admiration, and that was compensation to her.

For a short time at least she was basking in the limelight!

A Very Mysterious Merchant.

MISS BULLIVANT was looking rather cross when she came in to take the Fourth in mathematics.

Her somewhat sharp nose was glowing red, a sign of indigestion, and it was as good as a danger-signal to the Fourth.

The junior girls realised that they had to be very careful during the half-hour Miss Bullivant was to devote to them that afternoon.

Bessie Bunter gave a little cough, as if to clear her plump throat.

Babs knew what that meant, and she was a little alarmed.

Miss Bullivant was not looking like a promising subject for ventriloquial jokes.

Barbara leaned a little towards Bessie, and whispered:

"Bessie, better not try—"

"Barbara!"

"Oh! Yes, Miss Bullivant?"

"Do you not know that you should not chatter in class, Barbara?"

"Ye-e-es."

"If it happens again, Barbara, I shall detain you."

Barbara did not utter another sound.

Bessie Bunter closed one eye at her cheerfully. She was not nervous.

Miss Bullivant, at least, was not likely to guess at the existence of her peculiar gift.

The class had not been at work many minutes when a mournful cry floated in at the window, which was open, the weather being sunny and fine.

"Catsmeat! Cat and dorg m-m-meat!"

Miss Bullivant stopped dead, and stared at the window.

"Good gracious! What impertinence!" she exclaimed. "A catsmeat-man in the quadrangle! Good gracious!"

"Catsmeat! Any catsmeat to-day! Cheap and good! M-m-meat!"

There was a suppressed chortle in the class.

"Silence, girls! Marjorie, go out and tell that man to go away at once!"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant!" said Marjorie Hazeldene demurely.

Marjorie quitted the Form-room. She came back in a few minutes with a very serious face.

"Have you sent him away?"

"If you please, Miss Bullivant, I could not find him."

"What nonsense! He was there, I presume, as we heard him calling just outside the window!"

"I did not see him!"

"Perhaps he had already gone. You may go to your place, Marjorie."

"Catsmeat! Cat and dorg m-m-m-meat!"

It was a regular howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Marjorie, you silly girl, go and warn that man to leave the premises at once! Tell him the dog will be set on him otherwise!"

"Very well, Miss Bullivant."

"Catsmeat! Cat and dorg meat! All fresh and tasty!" came the howl at the open window.

"Extraordinary impertinence!" fumed Miss Bullivant. "I have never heard of such a thing! Outrageous! Well, Marjorie?"

Marjorie came in again.

"If you please, Miss Bullivant, there's nobody in the quad."

"Nonsense!"

"Catsmeat! Cat and dorg meat! Tuppence a time!"

"How dare you tell me there is no one there when the man is shouting right under the window, Marjorie? I suspect that you desire to waste time, and lose your lesson. Go to your place. I will speak to the man myself!"

Marjorie went to her desk, smiling, as Miss Bullivant, in a state of fuming wrath, whisked out of the Form-room.

The Fourth Form chuckled gleefully, but they relapsed into silence when the mathematics mistress came back.

Miss Bullivant was looking perplexed and perturbed and very angry.

It was easy to see that she had not found the obnoxious catsmeat merchant.

"Is he gone, please?" ventured Barbara.

"He is gone—at all events, I did not see him. We will go on," said Miss Bullivant, through her set lips.

"Catsmeat! Cat and dorg meat! Prime and tasty!"

"Good gracious!"

Miss Bullivant rushed to the window and slammed it shut with a slam that very nearly cracked the panes.

She turned a flushed face to her class who had a hard struggle to suppress their giggles.

"Girls, this is not a laughing matter! The next girl who laughs will be—"

"Catsmeat! Cat and dorg m-m-m-meat!"

Miss Bullivant stood rooted to the floor. The howl of the catsmeat-man came from the door of the Form-room.

"The—the—the impertinent ruffian is actually in the house!" stuttered Miss Bullivant. "Of all the impudence! I—I—"

"Catsmeat! Any catsmeat to-day, marm?"

Miss Bullivant rushed to the door and dragged it open.

She looked into the corridor, with a look that the fabled Gorgon might have envied.

"Man, how dare you come here!" she exclaimed. "You— Why, where is the man? This is most—most extraordinary!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Catsmeat!" came in a scream. "Cat and dorg meat! All fresh an' tasty! Yes, marm, tuppence, marm!"

Miss Bullivant spun round dazedly.

The cry came within the Form-room now, and she was utterly amazed.

"He—he—he is here! Is he here? What does this mean?" she stuttered.

"The impudence of it! Girls, why did you not tell me that that wretched man stepped into the class-room while I was gone out? You know where he is? Where is he? Barbara, tell me where that man is!" shrieked Miss Bullivant.

"Oh dear! I—I haven't seen any man!" stammered Barbara.

"You must have seen him if he came in while my back was turned!"

"But—but—"

"Catsmeat! Cat and dorg m-m-meat!" came a wail, and Miss Bullivant spun round again.

Her eyes were fixed upon the case-cupboard at the end of the Form-room, of which the door was ajar.

"So he is there!" Miss Bullivant

gave her class a bitter look. "You must have seen that man—who must be insane—come into the Form-room, and hide himself in that cupboard! This conduct—"

"Catsmeat! Catsmeat! Dorg's meat!"

"Oh, my word!" murmured Clara. Miss Bullivant strode towards the tall cupboard.

The look on her face would probably have terrified any ordinary catsmeat-man at that moment.

She dragged the door wide open.

"Come out!"

"Oh, marm!"

"Come out at once!" shrieked Miss Bullivant.

"Don't you want any catsmeat to-day, marm?"

"No!" shrieked Miss Bullivant. "I do not want any catsmeat! I do not keep a cat! Certainly not! How dare you come here! I command you to come out of that cupboard at once, you—you ruffian!"

"M-m-meat!"

"Will you come out?"

"Only tuppence, marm!"

Miss Bullivant set her lips hard, and stepped into the big cupboard.

She stepped out again with an astounded expression on her face.

For inside the cupboard she had found a blackboard—merely that, and nothing more.

"Good gracious!" said Miss Bullivant faintly.

The Form-room door opened, and Mademoiselle Lupin came in. She glanced in surprise at Miss Bullivant.

"Somezing is ze matter?" she asked. Miss Bullivant gasped.

"Have you—have you seen anything of—of—a catsmeat-man, mademoiselle?" she asked faintly. "A—a man has—"

"I have seen nozzing of him. But a catsmeat-man, he would not come here viz himself, isn't it?" exclaimed mademoiselle, in surprise.

"I—I certainly thought he was in that cupboard."

Mademoiselle jumped.

"You zink zat a catsmeat-man he is in zat cupboard viz himself, Mees Bullivant? Vy for shall he carry himself in zat cupboard?"

"I—I do not know. It—it is most surprising. I must have been mistaken as to the direction of the voice, yet I certainly believed— Hark! There he is again!"

"Catsmeat!" The howl of the catsmeat-merchant seemed to come from the passage now, and it died away faintly in the distance.

"M-m-meat! Cat and dorg m-m-meat!"

Miss Bullivant's eyes glistened. She picked up a ruler from the desk, and left the class-room hurriedly.

There was a gasp from the Fourth.

What Miss Bullivant intended to do with that ruler if she found the catsmeat-man, can only be guessed.

Fortunately, she did not find him.

The Cliff House Fourth, in cheery spirits, settled down to the French lesson with mademoiselle, and the voice of the catsmeat-man was heard no more.

And Mademoiselle was a good deal puzzled by the bursts of irresistible chuckling that came over her class every now and then during the lesson.

The Fourth had lost Miss Bullivant's valued instructions that afternoon, but they bore the loss with great fortitude, and, in fact, they felt inclined to pass a vote of thanks to the Cliff House Ventriloquist!

THE END.



Your Editor's Corner.



Write to me as often as you like, and let me know what you think of "The School Friend." All readers who write to 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 have this week to offer my hearty thanks to all those readers who have so kindly written to tell me their opinions of the SCHOOL FRIEND. Letters have simply poured into my office—hundreds of them at a time, and I am thankful to say that my correspondents have nothing but praise for our new paper.

Babs and Mabs are liked by all of you; Marjorie, Clara, and Dolly, too, are general favourites, and Bessie Bunter has, as I thought she would, afforded you any amount of amusement. Many readers, in expressing their opinions of our first story, remarked that they were simply longing for No. 2 to appear on the market, so that they could read more about the girls of Cliff House, and about Bessie Bunter's amusing ways.

Bessie Bunter is, without doubt, very popular with all, and I am confident that the part she plays in next Thursday's long, complete tale of the girls of Cliff House, which is entitled:

"THE FOURTH FORM MAGAZINE,"
By Hilda Richards.

will afford you plenty of amusement. Babs and Mabs decide to bring out a

paper, and they keep the matter a secret. Bessie Bunter, of course, makes an attempt to probe the secret, with what result you will learn when you read this splendid story. Barbara, by the way, tries to write some limericks. They send Mabs into roars of laughter, and I am confident you will laugh, too, when you read them.

Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn are not called upon to contribute to Babs' paper, but Barbara receives the surprise of her life when she discovers that the chums of Study No. 7 have been working on a similar idea, and are going to have their paper printed in the village.

She realises at once that, whereas by producing a Fourth Form weekly she had hoped to score off Marjorie and Clara, it is Study No. 7 who are going to score, after all. Barbara Redfern puts on her thinking-cap, and—well, she thinks of a scheme for turning the tables on Marjorie and Clara, and, with Mabs' assistance, proceeds to put it into action. The nature of the scheme, and whether it meets with success, you will learn next Thursday.

This is a magnificent story, a worthy successor to the tales that have already

appeared, and I am sure you will all enjoy reading it. You will also like next Thursday's instalment of our grand adventure serial,

"THE GIRL CRUSOES,"

By Julia Storm.

Many things happen in this instalment. For instance, Hilda, Pat, and Joe embark upon the task of making a boat with a good deal of success, and Edith Foster makes a cake, which is certainly not a success. Hilda and her chums go out alone on a little expedition, and they make some more surprising discoveries, all of which are bound to prove of interest to you. You will also enjoy reading of a trap into which Edith Foster and Gladys Knox fall, and of the part that Hilda, Pat, and Joe play in rescuing them.

Pressure of space prevents my writing any more this week. But, in conclusion, I want to urge upon all those readers who have not yet written to me to hurry up and do so. I shall not be satisfied until I have received a letter from every reader.

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.