

BESSIE BUNTER APPEARS EVERY WEEK IN

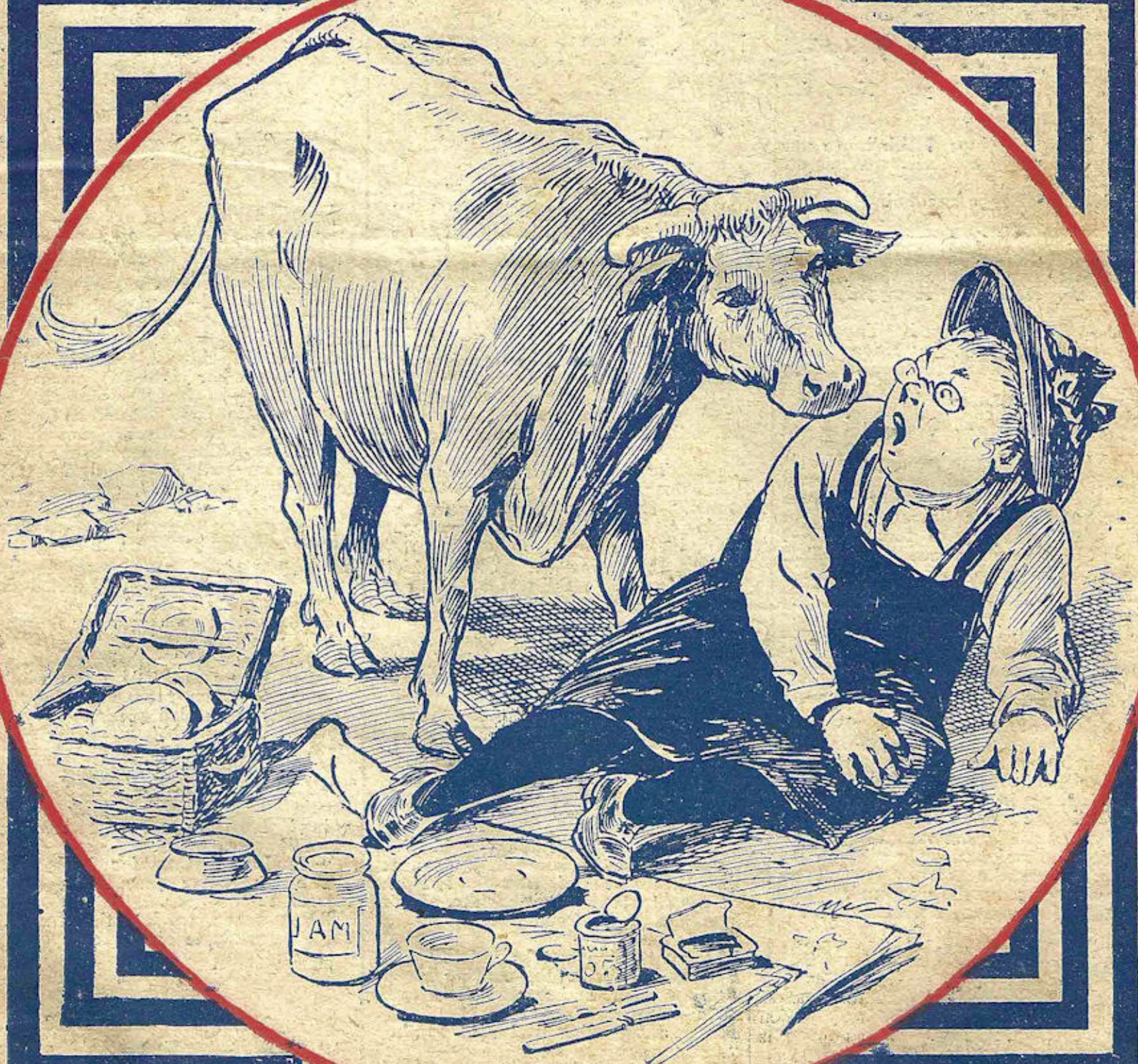
THE SCHOOL FRIEND

Every $1\frac{1}{2}$ Thursday

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A SEVERE SHOCK FOR BESSIE BUNTER! (An incident from the long, complete tale of the Girls of Cliff House. Complete in this issue.)



Bessie Bunter's Way!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete Tale of the
Girls of Cliff House, introducing Bessie Bunter.

By **HILDA RICHARDS.**

Babs Puts Her Foot Down!

"OH! Ow! Leggo!"
Babs and Mabs of the Fourth Form at Cliff House were chatting in Study Four, when that wild yell came along the corridor.

"Six is the number," said Babs, "and half a dozen each—"

"Help!"
"Makes fifteen shillings. Now, for fifteen shillings—"

"Yoooop!"
"For fifteen shillings, I think, we can manage quite a nice picnic. What do you think, Mabs?"

"Yaroooh! Leggo my hair!"
Mabs laughed.

"I think we'd better see what Bessie Bunter is howling about along the passage, Barbara," she answered.

Barbara Redfern shrugged her shoulders.

"Bessie Bunter's always howling about something," she said. "Never mind Bessie Bunter. Now, there will be us two—"

"Yow-ow-woooooop!"
"And Marjorie and Clara and Dolly—"

"Yah! Oh! Leggo my hair, Marcia Loftus!" came in an anguished wail along the passage. "I never touched your cake! I never knew you had a cake, even! I've not touched it—I wouldn't! Besides, it was only a little one— Yaroooh!"

"And Philippa," said Babs. "That makes six."

"Help! Yoop! Help! I say, you girls—"

Mabel Lynn jumped up from the rocking-chair.

"Come along, Babs!"

"Oh, bother!" said Barbara. But she slipped off the corner of the table, and followed Mabs from Study Four.

Outside Study No. 3, Bessie Bunter was wriggling in the grasp of Marcia Loftus, and the latter was pulling the fat junior's plait with great vigour.

Bessie Bunter was rather given to howling before she was hurt; but on the present occasion she was hurt.

Barbara frowned as she came on the scene.

Barbara Redfern was captain of the Cliff House Fourth, and therefore a person of authority in that Form.

"Stop that, Marcia!" she rapped out sharply.

"Sha'n't!" said Marcia.

"Yaroooh! Leggo! I say, you girls, make her leggo!" yelled Bessie Bunter. "I never touched the cake—never knew there was a cake—and it was only a little thing with hardly any plums in it—"

"The little pig has bagged my cake!"

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said Marcia angrily. "I'm going to give her a lesson. There—and there—and there—"

"Ow, ow, ow!"
Barbara strode forward, and caught Marcia's arm.

"Let go!" she said.

"I won't!" exclaimed Marcia savagely.

"Don't be such a bully, Marcia!"
said Mabel Lynn. "Let go Bessie's hair at once!"

"She's bagged my cake, I tell you!"

"No need to be a bully, if she has,"
said Barbara. "Will you let go her top-knot?"

"No!"
"Take her other arm, Mabs!"

Babs and Mabs gripped Marcia by the arms, and jerked her away from her victim.

Bessie Bunter rolled back, gasping for breath, and the chums of the Fourth marched Marcia Loftus into her study.

"Let me go!" panted Marcia passionately. "I tell you—"

"This way!" said Babs cheerfully.

Marcia, resisting vainly, was marched into Study No. 3, where her study-companion, Freda Footé, was getting tea.

"Lend me a hand, Freda!" gasped Marcia.

Freda shook her head, with a smile.

"My dear kid, I told you not to bully Fatima!" she answered. "You've got a bad temper, Marcia. You want shaking!"

"Why, you—you— Oh! Ah!"
gasped Marcia, as Babs and Mabs proceeded to shake her. "Let go! Don't you dare— Oh, oh!"

Shake—shake!

Bessie Bunter's fat face and glimmering glasses looked in at the door.

"I say, you girls, shake her! Shake her hard! I say, pinch her—scratch her! I say, you hold her while I scratch her!"

Shake!

"There!" said Barbara calmly.

"That's for your own good, Marcia!"

"Oh! Ow!"

"You should remember" said Babs severely, "that this is a girls' school, not a boys' school, and that Cliff House girls are expected to be ladylike. We're ashamed of you, Marcia!"

"Oh! I—I'll—"

"Now sit down and be quiet!"

Babs and Mabs led the panting Marcia to the armchair, and sat her down there with a bump.

Marcia sat gasping, red with wrath.

"I say, you girls, scratch her—"

"Be quiet, you little fat duffer!" said Mabs. "I think we had better shake you, too, for stealing Marcia's cake!"

"Oh, really, Mabs—"

"Oh, go away!"
Babs and Mabs returned to their study

to resume the important discussion which had been interrupted by the howls of Bessie Bunter

The fat junior followed them.

The bully of the Fourth had been punished; but Bessie Bunter wisely decided to give her a wide berth until her temper had had time to calm down.

"Oh, go away!" exclaimed Babs, as Bessie Bunter rolled in. "You're a horrid little fat burglar! Get out of sight!"

"I like that!" said Bessie indignantly. "I was only going to stand my whack towards the picnic to-morrow."

"What!"

"As I'm coming to the picnic—"

"You're not!"

"As I'm coming, I felt bound to stand my whack. As my remittance hasn't come, I—I was going to get a cake—"

"Marcia's cake!" exclaimed Babs.

"Nunno! I—I mean—I—I really meant to say—ahem!" Bessie Bunter stammered helplessly. "Of—of course, I wouldn't take Marcia's cake—though it would serve her right for being such a bully. In—in fact," went on Bessie brightly—"in fact, I took it to punish her! That was really my motive. And—and I should have contributed it to the picnic, only—only I thought I'd taste it to see if it was good, and somehow it went! It was only a small one, anyhow. But it's all right—you girls can depend on me to bring my share to the picnic!"

"Whose study are you going to rob next, then?" demanded Mabel Lynn.

"Oh, really, Mabel—"

Barbara held up a warning finger.

"If you don't let other girls' food alone, you'll get a Form ragging, Bessie!" she said. "And you won't be allowed to come to the picnic—and if you bring any stolen goods to this study, we'll go for you! Now run away!"

"Oh, really, Babs—"

"Are you going?" exclaimed Barbara.

"This is my study, isn't it?" demanded Bessie Bunter. "I'm jolly well not going! I believe you've got some toffee there!"

"Hand me that cushion, Mabs!"

The fat junior executed a strategic retreat to the door.

She put her face into the study again for a moment, to ejaculate:

"Cats!"

Then she disappeared.

Bessie in Trouble!

MARCIA LOFTUS' somewhat heavy face was dark and sullen when the Fourth Form went up to their dormitory that night.

Marcia had a passionate and bitter temper, which she was not wont to keep under much restraint.

But since Barbara Redfern had been elected captain of the Cliff House Fourth she had put her foot down, and Marcia Loftus had been severely called to order. In the present case, Marcia certainly had some cause for complaint, for the fat junior had undoubtedly taken her cake.

But there were limits, as Babs and Mabs had tried to impress upon her.

As she came into the dormitory, Marcia's glinting eye fixed upon Bessie Bunter with a threatening look.

"Ten minutes!" said Miss Bullivant; and she left the Fourth Form to turn in.

Barbara was brushing Mabs' flaxen hair, and she had no eyes for Marcia.

Bessie Bunter blinked uneasily at Marcia Loftus through her big spectacles. She was sitting on the edge of her bed, taking her boots off, when Marcia bore down upon her.

"Where's my cake?" inquired Marcia.

"Eh? What cake?"

"Oh, don't be a duffer, Marcia!" said Freda Foote. "You know she ate it."

"Oh, really, Freda—"

"Order!" called out Philippa Derwent. "Do be quiet, Marcia."

"Don't chip in!" said Marcia. "I tell you nobody can leave a thing about, if it's eatable, without that little pig scoffing it!"

"As if I would!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter indignantly. "I'm surprised at you, Marcia! You're suspicious. That's what you are—suspicious! It's not lady-like to be suspicious, Marcia. I—I say, wharrer you going to do with that hair-brush?"

"Hold out your arm!"

"Yow! I won't!"

"Then I'll make you!"

Marcia grasped Bessie Bunter's fat arm and jerked it out, and laid on with the hair-brush in the other hand.

There was a terrific yell from Bessie Bunter.

"Y-o-o-o-p!"

Whack, whack!

Barbara ran on the scene, and caught Marcia's hand. She dragged the hair-brush away angrily.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bessie Bunter. "Yow-ow! I'll tell Miss Bullivant when she comes in! Y-o-o-o-o-p!"

"Shush!" murmured Philippa. "The Bull will be coming in a minute."

"I'll tell her!" howled Bessie Bunter. "My arm's broken! It's broken in three places! Ow, ow!"

"Oh, ring off!" snapped Marcia. "You haven't had half enough!"

"You're a spiteful bully, Marcia!" exclaimed Babs, with a flash in her eyes.

"I've a good mind to give you the same!"

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"What's the matter now?"

"My arm's broken! Y-o-o-o-p!"

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed Babs.

"It's—yow-ow—broken in four places!"

"Another place already?" asked Mabs.

"Yow-ow-ow! I mean five places! The bone's in bits! Oh! Ow! C-c-call out to Miss Bullivant to send for a doctor!"

"Do be quiet, Bessie," murmured Mabs.

Marcia, with a look of indifference, went towards her own bed. She was not quite so indifferent as she looked, however.

Miss Bullivant was a stern lady, and Bessie Bunter seemed determined to let her know what had happened.

Babs and Mabs soothed the fat junior in vain.

"Send for a doctor!" moaned Bessie Bunter. "I—I can't go to bed with a broken arm, you know!"

"Look here, Bessie—"

"Yar-o-o-o-h!" shrieked Bessie. "What is it now?" exclaimed the worried Barbara.

"An awful pain—a fearful anguish!" gasped the fat junior. "I'm suffering awfully—dying, I think!"

"Oh, nonsense!"

"You can call it nonsense if you like, Barbara Redfern, but I suppose I ought to know whether I'm dying or not!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter indignantly. "I'm dying by inches! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Have some toffee, Bessie?" asked Phyllis Howell.

Bessie's howls suddenly ceased.

"Yes, rather!"

She held out a hand for the toffee at once. It was the broken arm, but the fat junior had forgotten, for the moment, that it was broken—or, at least, supposed to be broken.

But it was as hard as it was large, and she strove in vain to bite it in two.

"Answer me, Bessie!" commanded Miss Bullivant.

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

"Have you a cold?"

"M-mmmmmmm!"

Miss Bullivant rustled towards the fat junior, with knitted brow.

Bessie's teeth were embedded in the toffee, and she simply could not withdraw them.

She blinked at the drill-mistress in dismay and alarm, as Miss Bullivant towered over her.

"Bessie!"

"M-mmmmm!"

"Speak!"

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

"You have something in your mouth!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant.

"You are eating in the dormitory—eat-



"You have something in your mouth!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant. "You are eating in the dormitory. Disgusting! What are you eating?"

"M-m-m-m-m-m!" mumbled Bessie Bunter.

There was a ripple of laughter in the dormitory.

Footsteps were heard in the passage, but, fortunately, the toffee was answering the purpose of a gag, and Bessie Bunter was silent.

Miss Bullivant looked round her very severely when she came in.

"I think I heard a great deal of noise from this dormitory!" she said.

Silence.

"Were you calling out, Bessie?"

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

"What?"

"Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm!"

"Bless my soul! What is the matter with you, Bessie Bunter?" exclaimed Miss Bullivant, in surprise. "Are you ill?"

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

The chunk of toffee was large, and Bessie was making desperate attempts to deal with it.

ing at bedtime! Disgusting! What are you eating?"

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

"Remove that article from your mouth at once, Bessie Bunter!"

"Groogh! Mmmmmmm! Groogh!"

"I command you to eject it!" thundered Miss Bullivant.

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

"Oh, my word!" murmured Clara Trevlyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant.

"Bessie Bunter, I command you—"

Snap!

Bessie's teeth were through the toffee at last.

Half was squeezed into one cheek, half into the other, and the fat junior was able to speak, though looking as if she had a very bad toothache on both sides.

"Ow!" she gasped. "Yes! All right! Certainly! Oh, dear! I—I haven't got

anything in my mouth, Miss Bullivant. M-m-m-m-m!"

"What! Your face is puffed out with it."

"N-n-not at all, please! I—I've got the toothache!" gasped Bessie. "Always suffered from it—always! M-m-m-my face always swells like that when I've got the toothache, Miss Bullivant. M-m-m-m-m!"

"Open your mouth, Bessie!"

"M-m-m-m-my m-m-m-mouth?"

"Yes, at once!"

"Oh, dear! I c-c-c-can't!"

"Why cannot you?" demanded Miss Bullivant sternly.

"I—I've got lockjaw, I think!"

"Lockjaw?" ejaculated Miss Bullivant.

"Ye-e-es. M-m-my m-m-mouth always stays shut when I've got lockjaw, please!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "I—I often have it—all my life, in fact."

There was an irrepressible howl of merriment in the dormitory.

"You untruthful girl!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant angrily.

"Oh, really, Miss Bullivant—"

The "Bull" took hold of Bessie's fat chin and opened her mouth. Then the cargo of toffee was revealed.

"I thought so!" said Miss Bullivant grimly. "Eject that toffee in the fender at once, Bessie Bunter!"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Bessie Bunter.

The chunks of toffee clinked into the fender, and Miss Bullivant picked them up in the tongs and put them into the coal-scuttle.

Even Bessie Bunter was not likely to retrieve them from the coals and devour them.

"You are a greedy girl, Bessie!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"You will take fifty lines! Now go to bed." Miss Bullivant glanced round the dormitory with a gleaming eye. "If any girl laughs again, I will give the whole Form detention for to-morrow afternoon!"

The solemnity that immediately fell upon the Fourth Form was really remarkable.

Not the faintest chortle was heard in the dormitory till the door had closed after Miss Bullivant.

A Matter of Duty

"O H dear! Oh!"

The morning sunlight was glimmering in at the high windows of the dormitory, and the rising-bell had ceased to clang.

Bessie Bunter was the last out of bed—as usual—and a minute after she was out, her dulcet voice was heard raised in sounds of woe.

"Ring off!" came several voices.

"Do you want the hairbrush again?" called out Marcia Loftus.

"Look at my arm!" shrieked Bessie.

The fat arm was held up indignantly for inspection.

Where the hairbrush had smitten the previous night there was a deep red mark, which looked like a rash.

Marcia Loftus looked a little alarmed as she saw it.

Babs and Mabs and Marjorie were sympathetic.

"Never mind, dear!" said Marjorie Hazeldene consolingly. "It will soon go away."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Does it hurt?" asked Dolly Jebbing.

Bessie gave her a glare that almost cracked her spectacles.

"Of course it hurts, you duffer! It's fearful! Awful, in fact! Horrible!"

"Never mind—grin and bear it!" said Clara.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Oh, be quiet, do!" called out Freda Foote.

"I'm going to show this to Miss Bellew!" said Bessie Bunter. "As soon as we're in the Form-room I'm going to roll back my sleeve and show Miss Bellew."

"You mustn't sneak!" said Marjorie. Snort!

"Mustn't tell tales, you know!" urged Barbara.

"If I mustn't tell tales, Marcia mustn't bully!" said Bessie Bunter. "Besides, it's not a question of telling tales. Marcia is a bully! You know you're a bully, don't you, Marcia?"

Marcia Loftus made an angry movement towards the fat junior. Bessie blinked at her defiantly.

"Come on!" she said. "Give me some more marks to show Miss Bellew!"

Marcia halted.

"If you dare touch her again, Marcia, you'll get a Form ragging!" said Barbara quietly. "Mind, I mean that! You are a bully and a cad!"

Marcia gave the girls an angry look, but she turned away.

Bessie Bunter gave a triumphant crow.

"Yah! Bully! Cat!"

"Hold your tongue!" exclaimed Marcia passionately.

"Sha'n't! Cat, cat, cat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Marcia breathed hard, but she kept her back to the fat junior.

Bessie, with her marks to show, had the upper hand now.

"You only did it because you're jealous, Marcia!" pursued Bessie Bunter victoriously. "You can't bear good-looking girls—you know you can't! You pitch into me just because I'm pretty—you know you do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shriek of merriment through the dormitory, and even Marcia grinned.

Bessie Bunter blinked round her indignantly.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I can't help being the prettiest girl in the Form, and it's mean to be jealous."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I'm going to show this to Miss Bellew in the Form-room," continued Bessie Bunter determinedly. "Not because I'm malicious, you know—but from a sense of duty. Marcia's always pulling somebody's hair, or punching somebody's arm—the kids in the Third Form hate her! You know they do, Marcia! I'm going to show this to Miss Bellew—I think I ought."

"You're not to!" exclaimed Barbara.

"If you think you're going to persuade me not to do my duty, Barbara Redfern—"

"Oh, be quiet! You're not to sneak!" exclaimed Barbara.

"I'm going to do my duty!"

"You fat little duffer!" exclaimed Marcia. "I've a good mind—"

"Yah!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Yah!" repeated Bessie Bunter independently. "Who cares for you, Marcia? You're a cat! Your hair's the colour of tallow, and you've got a bad complexion! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Marcia gave the fat junior a furious look, but she refrained from more active measures.

She was, in fact, rather uneasy as to what would result from the fat junior's damaged arm being shown in the Form-room.

Bessie Bunter rolled out of the dormitory, last of the Fourth.

In the quad she gave Marcia a threatening look, receiving a scowl in exchange.

Babs and Mabs joined the fat junior; but Bessie Bunter shook a podgy finger at them.

"It's no good!" she announced.

"What's no good?" murmured Babs.

"You needn't try to talk me round!" said Bessie loftily. "I've got a sense of duty. I'm not like some girls."

"It's a disgrace to our study, if you sneak to Miss Bellew!" said Mabel.

"Rubbish!"

"Look here, Bessie—"

"I'm surprised at you, Mabel Lynn. It's wrong to try to persuade a girl not to do her duty."

"It's not your duty to be a sneaking little duffer!" exclaimed Mabs, losing patience.

"If you're going to call me names, this discussion had better cease," said Bessie Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

And she rolled away, leaving the chums of the Fourth in a state of great exasperation.

At breakfast, Bessie Bunter was still looking determined.

When the girls were going into the Form-room, Barbara made another attempt.

"Bessie—" she murmured.

"Nothing doing!" said Bessie Bunter.

"You mustn't sneak, you know!"

"I'm not going to sneak."

"Oh, you're not?" exclaimed Babs.

"Certainly not! I'm simply going to show Miss Bellew my arm, from a sense of duty."

"You—you—you fat little—"

"What did you say?"

"N-n-nothing! Look here, Bessie, you're not to sneak! It reflects on our study if you do. Study Four doesn't sneak."

"I'm not treated as a friend in Study Four!" said Bessie Bunter. "If I were, it might make a difference, of course. When girls don't ask a girl to come to a picnic with them, they can't expect a girl to do them favours."

Barbara drew a deep breath.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" she said.

"Nothing of the sort! I don't think I should come to the picnic in any case," said Bessie Bunter loftily. "Besides, I've got my duty to do. You see, I think Miss Bellew ought to know about Marcia. Not because I owe Marcia a grudge, you know; but for the sake of the kids she goes for—"

"Look here, Bessie—"

"Some girls have a strong sense of duty," said Bessie Bunter, blinking at her. "I'm one of that kind. I don't expect it to make me popular. People with a very high moral sense never are popular."

Babs breathed hard.

"You can come to the picnic, Bessie, if you don't sneak about Marcia!" she said.

"I'm afraid I can't accept an invitation put in that way, Barbara. If you really desire my company, I will come."

"You—you—"

"Otherwise, I decline!"

"Oh, decline, then, and be bothered!" said Barbara impatiently; and she turned away.

"I—I mean— Hold on, Barbara! I mean, I'll come with pleasure, old girl! That's what I really meant to say!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "As you're so pressing, I'll come—I will really."

"Then you're not to sneak about Marcia."

"Of course, it's understood that I don't mention Marcia. I don't mind doing you a favour, dear, as we're so chummy," said Bessie Bunter. "I say, are we going to have jam-farts at the picnic?"

"Yes," said Barbara, laughing.

"Mind, you're to keep your mouth shut, Bessie! If you say anything about Marcia, you sha'n't come."

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

Babs joined Mabel, and then went into the Form-room.

Bessie Bunter passed Marcia with a lofty blink of contempt.

Marcia's hand moved, as if instinctively, towards the fat junior's plait—but she dropped it again, and followed her, frowning, into the Form-room.

Bessie Bunter Talks Too Much!

THERE was a fat, satisfied grin on Bessie Bunter's face as she took her seat with the class.

She blinked at Miss Bellew, the mistress of the Fourth, but she hardly heard what that lady was saying. Her thoughts were with the picnic.

It was a half-holiday at Cliff House that afternoon, and the weather was fine and sunny.

Babs and Mabs, and Marjorie & Co., were rivals in the Fourth Form; but they had joined forces for a picnic on the cliffs that afternoon. But it was Bessie Bunter who was looking forward most keenly to the picnic.

She was thinking of the good things in store, of which the lion's share was to come her way—if she could contrive it.

"I say, Babs," she murmured, when Miss Bellew's attention was fixed in a different direction.

"Hush!"

"Did you say jam-tarts?"

"Yes—hush!"

Miss Bellew looked round, with her mild glance.

"You are talking, Bessie!"

"Oh, no, Miss Bellew! Not a word. I simply said to Barbara—"

"Silence, you foolish girl!"

Bessie Bunter was silent for a few minutes.

But she was soon whispering again.

"How many jam-tarts, Barbara?"

"S'hush!"

"There'll be seven of us, altogether—"

"Be quiet!"

"Three dozen, at least, I suppose—"

"Bessie!"

"Oh! Yes, Miss Bellew! I—I wasn't talking!"

Miss Bellew gave the fat junior a very severe look.

She was a mild lady, but Bessie's open and palpable "crammers" were a little too much for her patience.

"Bessie! How dare you tell me such stories?" she exclaimed. "You were speaking to Barbara!"

"Oh, really, Miss Bellew—ask Barbara! Was I speaking to you, Barbara? Did I say a single word about jam-tarts?" demanded the fat junior.

"Oh, you little duffer!" gasped Barbara.

"If you speak in class again, Bessie, I shall punish you," said Miss Bellew, frowning.

"I wasn't—I didn't—"

"Silence!"

Bessie Bunter blinked indignantly, and relapsed into silence.

There was no doubt that she was indignant—Bessie Bunter was always indignant when her word was doubted.

In a few minutes she was whispering again.

"Did you say three dozen, Barbara?"

Barbara kept her eyes fixed straight before her, refusing to be drawn. The fat junior nudged her arm.

"I say, Babs—"

"Will you be quiet?" muttered Barbara. "Miss Bellew is looking this way."

"Yes, but I say, we shall want something as well as tarts—they're nice, of course, but they ain't solid. What about meat pies?"

"I tell you—"

"Meat-pies, I think, are the thing. We might have a saveloy, too. If there's

any cooking to be done, you can leave it to me. I'm a dab at cooking. Did you say a saveloy, Barbara— Oh!"

"Step out before the class, Bessie Bunter!" exclaimed Miss Bellew angrily.

"Wha-a-at for, Miss Bellew?"

"For disobeying me, and talking. Come here!"

"Oh, really, Miss Bellew! I—I never—"

Miss Bellew picked up the pointer, and came to Bessie Bunter's desk. Bessie blinked at her in great apprehension.

"I must cane you, Bessie—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Don't make those ridiculous noises, Bessie. Hold out your hand at once!" snapped the Form-mistress.

Miss Bellew was angry for once. She seldom used the pointer, but she evidently intended to use it now.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Bessie, holding out a fat hand in a very gingerly way.

Barbara drew a quick breath as Bessie's

"I—I say, Miss Bellew, it—it—it's nothing," she stammered hurriedly.

"N-n-nothing at all! Now I come to think of it, it's not a fearful injury."

"It may be the symptom of something infectious, Bessie, and in that case you must be sent—"

"It isn't!" gasped Bessie. "A—a—a hair-brush isn't infectious, Miss Bellew."

"Was that mark made by a hair-brush?" exclaimed the Form-mistress.

"Yes. It's all right! I'm not going to tell anything about it. Barbara says I'm not to mention Marcia—"

"What?"

"I—I'm not going to say a word about Marcia Loftus, because they won't let me come to the picnic if I do—yaroooh!"

roared Bessie Bunter. "Who's that trampling on my foot? Yow-ow-ow!"

"Bessie Bunter, be quiet—be quiet at once—"

"Wooop! Somebody jammed a hoof on my toe!" wailed Bessie Bunter. "I



"Bessie Bunter!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant. "Where did you get that hat?" "This—this hat, Miss Bullivant?" faltered Bessie Bunter.

fat hand went out, and the mark on her exceedingly plump arm was revealed to view.

Miss Bellew saw it at once; she lowered the pointer.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed.

"What is that mark on your arm, Bessie?"

Bessie started.

She had forgotten the mark of the hair-brush; but as soon as she was reminded of it, she assumed an expression of patient suffering.

"Oh! Ow! Oooop! It—it's a fearful injury, Miss Bellew—"

"Nonsense!" said Miss Bellew sharply.

"It is nothing of the sort. But it must be seen to at once—it looks like a rash. It may be necessary for you to be sent into the sanatorium."

Bessie Bunter jumped.

She had never been in "sanny," but she knew of it as a place of short commons.

believe it was you, Barbara. I wasn't going to say anything. I'm not even going to mention Marcia's name."

"Marcia Loftus, stand up!"

Marcia, with a furious look at the fat junior, rose to her feet.

"Did you ill-use Bessie, and make this mark on her arm, Marcia?" exclaimed Miss Bellew sternly.

"I beat her for stealing my cake," answered Marcia sullenly.

"Oh, really, Marcia—"

"It was wrong of Bessie to take your cake, Marcia, if she did so; but that does not excuse you for acting brutally," said Miss Bellew.

"You will be detained the whole of the afternoon, and I will ask Miss Bullivant and Mademoiselle Lupin to set you tasks in French and mathematics. You are a cruel girl! Not a word. Sit down!"

Marcia sat down, with a black brow, and glinting eyes. Bessie Bunter blinked at her.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 9.

"I say, Marcia, it wasn't my fault—I never said a word, did I? I don't know how Miss Bellew guessed it was you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

The lesson was resumed; Bessie blinking uneasily at Barbara.

She was soon whispering again.

"I say, Babs, I haven't said anything, have I?"

"Be quiet, you little sneak!" muttered Barbara.

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"If you speak in class again this morning, I shall detain you for the afternoon, Bessie Bunter!" rapped out Miss Bellew.

And the fat junior was silent at last.

The Purloined Picnic.

"READY?" said Barbara cheerily.

"Yes; who's going to carry the basket?"

"I say, you girls, I'll carry it!" Bessie Bunter came into the study as Babs and Mabs were preparing to start. "Hand it over, Mabel dear."

"Mabel dear" gave the fat junior a grim look.

"Run away!" she said laconically.

"Oh, really, Mabel—"

Barbara took Bessie Bunter by her fat shoulders, and sat her down in the arm-chair.

Leaving her there struggling for breath, Babs and Mabs quitted the study.

"Yow-ow! I say, you girls—"

gasped Bessie Bunter.

Babs looked back in the doorway.

"You sneaked about Marcia," she said. "You're staying behind, you little fell-tale!"

"I didn't—Miss Bellew guessed somehow—"

"Nonsense!"

Barbara and Mabel departed, and joined Marjorie & Co., who were waiting on the staircase, with another basket.

Philippa Derwent came along with still another.

The six juniors went downstairs, and Bessie Bunter blinked after them, from the landing, with wrath in her fat face.

"Cats!" murmured Bessie Bunter.

"Fancy leaving me out—after all I've done for 'em, too! I'm jolly well not going to be left out, though!"

And Bessie rolled on the track of the picnickers.

She knew where the picnic was to take place, on the cliffs near Pegg village; the fat junior always used her ears to advantage.

As she came out of the school gates, Babs & Co. were a good distance down the road, and they turned off into a path to the cliffs, as Bessie stood in the gateway blinking.

"Cats!" murmured the disconsolate Bessie.

She stood for some minutes in reflection, and at last a fat grin overspread her face.

It was not much use tracking the picnickers to their destination, and claiming a share of the feast. She knew that Babs was adamant.

But there was another idea in the fertile brain of the Cliff House ventriloquist.

Her weird gift of ventriloquism was to come in useful.

If Miss Bullivant's voice was heard by the picnickers, ordering them to return to Cliff House at once, and leave the picnic.

Bessie Bunter chuckled at the thought.

The only drawback to that little scheme was the fact that the Cliff House girls already knew of her peculiar gift, and might "spot" an imitation of Miss Bullivant's voice, if the mathematics mistress

did not appear in sight. But Bessie Bunter was equal to that difficulty.

Her generally obtuse brain worked quite actively when spurred on by the prospect of a feast.

She hurried back to the School House, and up to Miss Bullivant's room.

The "Bull," she knew, was doing "French conversation" with Mademoiselle Lupin that afternoon, in the latter's study, and was not likely to be in her room.

She tapped at the door, however, before she opened it, being ready with an excuse, if Miss Bullivant was there.

She was prepared to have a toothache on the spot, and ask for a remedy.

But the Bull was not there, and Bessie entered the room quickly, and closed the door behind her.

She blinked quickly round through her big glasses.

In a minute she had found one of Miss Bullivant's hats.

Miss Bullivant wore a plain, small, black hat, which the girls irreverently compared to a pudding-basin.

It was not a thing of beauty, but it was a joy for ever to anyone with a sense of humour, as Babs had declared.

Bessie recklessly squeezed the hat into a smaller size, tucked it under her fat arm, and hurried out.

With her prize squeezed under her arm, the fat junior scuttled out of the house, and hurried on the track of the picnickers.

She turned off near the village, as Babs & Co. had done, and rolled on along the cliff-path till the sea was in sight in the distance.

Then she became very cautious.

She was close on the picnic now, and she listened carefully, as she trod on with great circumspection.

She became more cautious than ever as she spotted the hats of the picnickers among the rocks.

In a quiet spot, some distance from the path, the Cliff House party had camped.

The baskets were opened, and a kettle was singing merrily on a little spirit-stove, attended by Dolly Jobling.

Barbara was opening a tin, and Mabel was slicing a loaf, while Marjorie carefully extracted butter from a paper.

Clara Trevlyn was negotiating a tin of condensed milk—with some difficulty, to judge by her ejaculations.

Bessie Bunter chuckled softly, and crept among the big rocks that surrounded the picnickers' camp.

Keeping carefully under cover, she removed her hat, and placed Miss Bullivant's well-known headgear on her head.

"Oh dear!" came Clara's voice. "What duffer put in this tin-opener? It's not sharp. I'm getting sticky all over!"

"Clumsy!" remarked Dolly Jobling.

"Give it to me," suggested Philippa.

Clara sniffed.

"My dear, if it's difficult for me, it's impossible for you," she said patiently.

"Don't be a duffer!"

There was a chuckle from Mabs.

"It's running down your sleeve, Clara."

"Ow!"

Crash!

The tin bumped on the rocky ground as Clara transferred her whole attention to her sleeve, which had bagged all the condensed milk that had escaped from the tin so far.

"Mind! You're wasting that milk!" exclaimed Barbara.

"Bother the milk! Look at my sleeve—all sticky!" exclaimed Clara, in great exasperation. "Only a duffer would have brought condensed milk! Why couldn't we bring a jug?"

"Well, you'd have upset it, most likely."

"Look here, Barbara Redfern—"

"My dear kid, I'm looking after the milk. You've wasted most of it. I really don't see what you wanted it in your sleeve for."

"I didn't want it in my sleeve!" shrieked Clara.

"Well, you've got a lot of it there, and a lot more on the ground, and there's some on your frock."

"Oh dear!"

"Still, there's enough left for the tea," said Barbara. "Never mind, Clara; it's all right."

"It's not all right. My sleeve's sticky."

"Didn't you know condensed milk was sticky?" asked Mabs sweetly.

"If you want me to put some condensed milk on your hair, Mabel Lynn, you're going the right way!" said Clara, in concentrated tones.

"Order!" said Marjorie, laughing.

"Don't be cross, Clara."

"Who's cross?" demanded Clara.

"Ahem! Nobody. But don't be, all the same. My dear Dolly," added Marjorie, "what are you looking at—a ghost?"

Dolly Jobling's eyes were fixed upon a small, dark object that had risen into view over a rock near at hand.

She pointed to it.

"The Bull!" she whispered.

"Oh dear!"

Clara Trevlyn was busy with her sieve, her arm, and her handkerchief; but she ceased that occupation all of a sudden, and stared at the little black hat.

The face under it could not be seen, owing to the intervening rock, but the hat was well known.

Clara gave a sniff.

"Well, suppose it's the Bull?" she said crossly. "Nothing to be afraid of. She can't rag us for picnicking, I suppose?"

"Hush!"

"She can't hear me."

"Careful, though. The Bull's got long ears!" murmured Mabs.

"She's calling to us!" exclaimed Philippa anxiously. "Hush!"

"Girls!" It was the deep and powerful voice of Miss Bullivant. "Marjorie, Barbara, I am surprised! This—this orgy—"

"What?" ejaculated Barbara indignantly.

"This orgy—"

"We're picnicking, Miss Bullivant."

"I call it an orgy. I forbid you to do anything of the kind. I shall certainly not allow this orgy to proceed."

"Oh!" exclaimed all the girls together.

"Return to Cliff House at once!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Immediately! Leave those things there. I will collect them, and follow you. I forbid you to touch them. You hear me? I shall take the whole collection of indigestible comestibles to Miss Primrose, and report the matter to her."

"Oh!"

"Go at once!" thundered the voice of Miss Bullivant.

Miss Bullivant's hat disappeared from view.

The girls looked at one another in wrath and dismay.

Miss Bullivant was always high-handed, but this was really the limit.

"Well, my word!" murmured Clara.

Marjorie compressed her lips.

"We'd better go," she said. "But if she takes us to Miss Primrose, I shall complain. The Bull has no right to interfere with us."

"What about the food?" murmured Dolly Jobling.

"She's told us to leave it here."

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 9.

"But—"

"Let's get off," muttered Philippa. "She may come prancing down on us any minute."

The black hat bobbed into view over the rocks for a moment, and the juniors hurriedly left the spot.

It was better to walk home by themselves than to be marched back to Cliff House in disgrace by the inexorable Bull.

With feelings too deep for words, the picknickers hurried away, leaving the camp just as it stood.

They reached the path, and started for Cliff House, in grim and resentful silence.

Their footsteps had hardly died away when a fat figure came cautiously up to the camp from the opposite side—Bessie Bunter's fat face grinning under Miss Bullivant's hat, which was still on her head.

"He, he he!"

Bessie Bunter chuckled gleefully.

Babs & Co. were wrathful as they walked off towards Cliff House.

But their wrath would certainly have been greater if they had known that the voice they had heard had not proceeded from Miss Bullivant at all, but from the Cliff House ventriloquist.

But that suspicion did not cross their minds.

The sight of Miss Bullivant's hat over the rocks had been convincing.

Bessie Bunter's round eyes glistened behind her spectacles as she surveyed the deserted camp.

"Jam-tarts, cake, pineapple, hard-boiled eggs, sardines—ripping! And chocolate-creams—good! And cocoanut-ice—gorgeous!"

Bessie Bunter sat down.

She was soon busy.

From the deserted camp of the picknickers there came a steady sound that was incessant—the tireless champing of the jaws of the fat junior.

Bessie Bunter was on her mettle, and the good things which had been provided for six disappeared at a remarkable rate.

Bessie had not been long at Cliff House, but her gastronomic feats had already excited great wonder there, if not admiration.

But all her previous performances were put into the shade now.

Perhaps the sea air sharpened her appetite, or perhaps it did not need sharpening.

It certainly seemed to require a great deal to blunt it.

There was an expression of beatific happiness on the fat junior's face as she travelled through the spread; and that expression was gradually changed into a shiny look.

Bessie slackened down a little when the sardines had followed the eggs, and the cake had followed the sardines.

There was another perceptible slackening when the pineapple and the jam-tarts had gone the same way.

But Bessie was not beaten yet.

Chocolate-creams and cocoanut-ice were too good to be missed, and the fat junior did not miss them.

She missed nothing, in fact.

The last crumb vanished, and the last spoonful of condensed milk vanished from the tin, and then Bessie Bunter lay back against a boulder, breathing hard.

Even she felt as if she had overdone it a little.

Her eyes closed behind her glasses.

She had not even taken off Miss Bullivant's hat before beginning on the spread.

Her fat, shiny face looked very queer under the mathematics mistress' hat as she lay back, breathing with some little difficulty.

Her eyes had closed, and they did not reopen.

Perhaps she required repose after her exertions.

In a few minutes more a deep rumble echoed and re-echoed among the rocks.

Bessie Bunter was fast asleep—and snoring.

Snorrrrrrrre!

Snorrrrrrrrr!

With a sweet and happy, though rather shiny, smile upon her face, Bessie Bunter snored, and dreamed of unlimited tuck.

Spoofed

"SHE'S not coming!" grunted Clara Trevlyn crossly.

Barbara & Co. had reached the school gates, and there they stopped and looked back for Miss Bullivant.

Freda Foote met them in the quadrangle.

"Back already?" she asked. "You can't have picknicked!"

Marjorie explained.

"And now we've got to wait about till the Bull comes in!" she concluded.

"Nice way to spend a half-holiday!"

"I don't think!" growled Clara

Freda looked puzzled.

"That's jolly odd!" she said. "I didn't know the Bull had been out. She's in now."

"In!" repeated Babs in surprise. "My dear kid, she's following us from the cliffs at this minute!"

"She's indoors," answered Freda. "I saw her coming out of ma'm'zelle's study five minutes ago."

"But—but—" ejaculated Barbara in astonishment. "How could she get in before us?"



"I say, you girls, shake her!" said Bessie Bunter. "Shake her hard! I say, you hold her while I pinch her!"

They expected to see the mathematics mistress following them with the baskets.

But the angular lady was not to be seen.

"She's taking her time!" snapped Mabel.

"I—I wonder if she's eating our food!" murmured Dolly Jobling.

Barbara laughed.

"Well, it's queer her telling us to clear off, and saying she'd bring the food!" argued Dolly. "What does she want to carry the baskets for?"

"To make sure we didn't tuck in on the way home," said Barbara. "It's not her business, but that's her way. Unpleasant old person!"

"She's a fury!" said Clara wrathfully.

"A gorgon! A—a—a— Oh, there really isn't a word for her!"

"I suppose we'd better go in!" sighed Marjorie. "What a miserable afternoon!"

"The Bull's spoiled it! Bless her!"

The six juniors went in disconsolately.

"I didn't know she'd been out."

"But she has!" exclaimed Clara. "She sent us home, I tell you!"

"Well, she's in her study now!"

Barbara & Co. went on to the School House in great surprise.

How Miss Bullivant had outdistanced them to the school was a mystery.

"Freda must be mistaken," said Babs.

"Let's go to the Bull's study and see. If she's in we've got to go with her to Miss Primrose."

The disconsolate six proceeded to the Bull's study. Barbara tapped at the door, and a sharp voice bade her come in.

Miss Bullivant was there!

The Bull was putting her papers tidy; she was generally tidying something or somebody.

She fixed her sharp eyes on the crowd of junior girls in surprise.

"Well, what is it?" she asked.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 9.

"We've come back, Miss Bullivant!" said Babs.

Miss Bullivant raised her eyebrows.

"Come back!" she repeated.

"Yes."

"I presume you have come back, as you are here; but I see no need for informing me of the fact!" said Miss Bullivant tartly. "What do you mean, Barbara?"

"I—I mean, we—we've come back!" stammered Babs.

"If this is some silly jest, Barbara—"

"You told us to!" exclaimed Babs indignantly.

"I told you to!" repeated Miss Bullivant. "I certainly did nothing of the kind! Do you mean to say I told you to come to my study this afternoon?"

"You told us to come back from the picnic."

"You have been on a picnic, then?"

"Eh? Yes!"

"Well, I certainly did not tell you to come back, as I was quite unaware that you were out of gates, and I have not been out of gates myself. I do not understand you, Barbara!"

The juniors stared at Miss Bullivant in helpless astonishment.

They wondered whether the mathematics mistress was wandering in her mind.

But though Miss Bullivant was beginning to look angry, she certainly did not look insane.

"But—but—but—" babbled Marjorie. "You came—"

"I came—where?"

"On the cliffs—when we were picnicking—half an hour ago—"

"Are you out of your senses, Marjorie Hazeldene? Half an hour ago I was in Mademoiselle Lupin's study."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I presume," said Miss Bullivant grimly, "that this is a childish jest—what the Lower Forms call, I believe, a jape. Is that the case?"

"Nunno!"

"N-n-not at all!"

"We—we certainly heard you speak to us, Miss Bullivant," gasped Barbara. "You told us to go back to school at once, and—and you'd bring the food!"

Miss Bullivant fixed her eyes on Barbara's flushed and amazed face.

She was growing angry, but she was keen enough to see that the girl was speaking the truth.

"In that case you have been the victims of a joke," she said. "Someone must have imitated my voice, if you really thought you heard me speak to you. I was certainly not out of gates. Why, indeed, should I interrupt your picnic?"

"Ahem!"

Miss Bullivant apparently did not realise that she was a high-handed and somewhat interfering lady, who was naturally expected to act in a rather tyrannic manner by her pupils.

Barbara & Co. certainly did not feel inclined to explain to her.

"But," ejaculated Dolly Jobling, "if it wasn't you, Miss Bullivant, how was it we saw your hat?"

"My hat?"

"Whoever it was spoke to us as wearing your hat," said Dolly positively. "We saw it plainly over the rocks, though we didn't see your face."

"We saw it," said Mabel; "quite plain!"

"What nonsense!" said Miss Bullivant testily. "You saw another hat like mine, perhaps. There are many such. Clara, kindly explain why you are smiling! Is there anything in my remark to cause you merriment?"

"Nunno!" gasped Clara. "I—I didn't mean—"

"But—but it was your hat, Miss Bullivant!" interposed Mabel. "We know it by sight. It—it's such a nice hat! Artistic—quite uncommon!"

Miss Bullivant's face relaxed.

"It is scarcely possible that a practical joker may have taken my hat from my room," she said. "But I will certainly ascertain!" She stepped to the door. "Wait here for me!"

Miss Bullivant hurried upstairs.

The juniors looked at one another.

"I—I think I understand now!" murmured Barbara. "I—I wish we hadn't mentioned the hat. It was Bessie Bunter!"

"Bessie?" repeated Mabs.

"Of course! She's the only girl here who can play such tricks; you remember her ventriloquism; she can imitate anybody's voice. And—and she must have taken the Bull's hat!"

"Oh!"

"Not a word—here she comes!"

Miss Bullivant came back into the study with a glinting eye.

"A hat is missing from my room!" she said. "Someone has abstracted it!"

"Oh, Miss Bullivant!"

"I shall inquire most strictly into this matter. It is plainly a Cliff House girl who played that foolish trick on you—no other could obtain access to my room and abstract my hat. It is most serious!"

"Oh, dear!"

"You may go!" added Miss Bullivant. Barbara & Co. left the study.

They were glad, on the whole, that the matter had turned out to be a false alarm; they were not to be taken before Miss Primrose, with a worrying complaint from Miss Bullivant.

But they were feeling more wrathful than ever—though their wrath was now directed against Bessie Bunter, instead of the mathematics mistress.

"The little idiot!" said Barbara, breathing hard. "She played that trick on us—to get away from the camp! And while we're gone—"

"She's eating the food!" wailed Dolly Jobling.

"Of course, that's what she did it for. I—I think I'd have smelled a rat, if we hadn't seen the Bull's headgear. Now that little fat minx has taken us in—"

"And the spread, too, by this time!" said Clara.

"It would serve her right to tell Miss Bullivant!" exclaimed Dolly.

Barbara shook her head.

"We won't do that; but we'll scalp her! Come on, she may not have finished the food yet!"

A minute more, and the girls were speeding away down the lane towards the picnic camp.

There was a hope—a faint hope—that the fat junior had not yet completely eaten the picnic.

That hope, certainly, was faint.

But if the juniors were too late to save the spread, they would be in time to avenge the loss—and Bessie Bunter would assuredly not have snored so peacefully among the rocks, if she had dreamed that half a dozen vengeful juniors were on the warpath.

Where Did You Get That Hat?

"I SAY, you girls, it wasn't me!"

Bessie Bunter started and awoke suddenly.

Before she was quite awake, she uttered that denial, as she heard somebody—or something—moving close to her.

"It wasn't me! I—I'm not here! I say— Yaroooooh!"

Bessie's voice trailed off into a howl of terror, as she saw a huge, bovine face and horns within a few inches of her fat little nose.

She sat paralysed.

The cow was sniffing about the picnickers' camp, and she seemed very interested in the fat junior; perhaps seeking to discover the cause of the deep, rumbling snore that had been proceeding from the fat junior a few moments before.

Evidently the animal had wandered on the cliff path, from one of the fields close by the cliffs, and certainly it intended no harm.

It was probably simply interested in Bessie Bunter as a remarkable phenomenon which had never come before within the range of its bovine experience.

But the sight of the huge head within a few inches of her own paralysed the fat junior.

She was too terrified even to consider whether it was a cow or a bull.

Bessie Bunter blinked at the cow, with round eyes behind her glasses, gasping, and the cow gave her a slow, solemn stare.

"Ow! Gerraway! Help! Yooop! Ow!"

The fat junior rolled sideways, and picked herself up breathlessly.

The cow swung round towards her, and Bessie Bunter fled shrieking.

"Yoop! Help! Fire! Murder! Yaroooooh!"

"Moooooooh!" came from behind her.

There was nothing really alarming in that "mooch," but the growl of a tiger in the jungle could not have terrified Bessie Bunter more.

Without looking back, and with Miss Bullivant's little black hat bobbing up and down on her head, the fat junior fled for her life.

Bessie Bunter had never been celebrated for her running powers, but at the present moment she really looked as if she had a chance for the quarter-mile in the school sports.

Her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground as she fled.

She came out of the cliff path into the road like a locomotive under full steam, still shrieking.

Crash! Bump!

She met Barbara & Co. at the corner, as she came round.

The juniors were running, and they had no time to stop as Bessie came charging round the corner.

There was a terrific collision.

Barbara went spinning to the right, and Mabel to the left.

Clara was bowled completely over, and Dolly Jobling sat down with a wild howl.

Bessie Bunter reeled from the shock, yelling.

"Yah! Keep off, you beast! Yah! Shoooh! Gerraway! Yooop!" The fat junior seemed to have the impression that the cow had headed her off, and that she had run into it. "Yoop! Help! Thieves! Fire!"

"Oh!" gasped Barbara.

"Oh, dear!"

"It's Fatima!"

"Bessie—"

"Oh! Ah! Ow! I—I thought it was that other beast!" gasped Bessie Bunter.

"What?"

"The—the cow! Run for your lives!" shrieked Bessie.

Barbara caught her by the arm and shook her.

"You little idiot! What do you mean?"

"Leggo!" shrieked Bessie, struggling. "The cow—oh, dear—it's after me—the kik-kik-cow—"

"There isn't any cow!" shrieked Barbara.

"Yooop! It's just coming round the corner! I shall be gored! Oh, dear! Lemme go! Oh! Ow!"

Bessie Bunter tore her arm away, and ran on frantically.

She quitted the road to take a cut across the fields towards the school, pounding on at a terrific rate.

The juniors stared after her blankly. "There isn't any cow!" gasped Marjorie.

"I suppose she's seen one a mile off!" said Mabs. "Or, more likely, it's a trick to get away from us!"

"After her!"

There was a rush in pursuit. Bessie Bunter heard the footsteps behind, and she ran on desperately.

"Stop!" shouted Barbara.

"Yaroooh! The cow!"

"Stop!"

"Ow-w-w-w!"

Bessie Bunter was very far from stopping; wild horses would hardly have stopped her at that moment.

She pounded on, with mud and water splashing round her boots.

She was heading across a swampy meadow, hardly aware of it in her terror.

The juniors halted, and Barbara shouted again.

"Bessie! Stop! You'll get stuck in the mud!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

Bessie rushed on.

But she came to a halt, and nearly stumbled over, as her boots sank into a deep, soft patch of muddy swamp.

The grass was still damp from the last rainfall, and water had collected in the hollow, and the ground was like a bog.

Bessie Bunter yelled as she went ankle-deep in clinging mud.

"Ow! Oh! Help!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Barbara.

"Help! I'm sinking!" howled Bessie. "I shall be tossed and gored! Keep that cow off! Drive her away! Yaroooh!"

"There isn't any cow!" howled Mabs.

Bessie Bunter blinked round at them.

There was certainly no cow to be seen; as a matter of fact, the peaceful animal had not followed Bessie Bunter at all.

But the fat junior's terrors peopled the whole horizon with imaginary cows.

"Come out of that!" exclaimed Barbara, who had stopped on the edge of the swampy hollow.

Bessie essayed to pull out her boots. But her weight was against her.

Instead of pulling out, her boots sank deeper.

"I—I can't move!" she wailed. "I—I say, you girls, come and help me! Don't be cats! Come and pull me out! Ow!"

"You scoffed our picnic!" exclaimed Clara.

"I didn't—I wasn't! I—I never even knew you were going to have a picnic, and I didn't follow you! Help!"

"You imitated the Bull's voice, and made us clear off!"

"I—I didn't—I couldn't, you know!" wailed Bessie Bunter. "I—I'm not a ventriloquist at all. Besides, I wouldn't, you know. I say, you girls, I'm sinking—I'm going down to my knees! Ow!"

"Serve you right if you go down to your neck!" said Barbara sternly. "You put on the Bull's hat to make us believe—"

"Yaroooh! I didn't!"

"Why, you've got it on now!" shouted Clara.

"I—I haven't—"

"What!"

"I—I—I mean, I—I don't know how it got there!" wailed Bessie. "I—I suppose Miss Bullivant must have come by while I was asleep, and—and changed hats with me."

"Oh, my word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie Bunter's explanation was a little too much for Barbara & Co., and they roared.

"I—I say, you girls, I'm stuck fast!" wailed Bessie Bunter. "I—I say, I—I've never seen this hat before—I haven't really! I haven't scoffed the feed, and—and—and— Yaroooh! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, I'm sorry, and I won't do it again!" howled the fat junior. "I won't, really—honest Injun! I—I really meant to leave some for you, too, only—only—I mean, I never touched it! If it's gone, the cow must have eaten it! You know what horrid animals they are! Ow! Help!"

The fat junior was making desperate efforts to drag her feet out of the swamp, but they were sinking deeper instead of coming out, and the mud was now half-way to her knees.

There she stuck, her boots on firmer ground under the mud, yelling for help.

Barbara wiped her eyes.

"I suppose we must get her out somehow," she said. "It would serve her right to leave her there."

"Ow! Help!"

"Oh, my word! Here comes the Bull!" ejaculated Clara, in dismay.

The powerful figure of Miss Bullivant was striding along by the fence that bordered the road.

The Bull was evidently out to look for the disrespectful girl who had borrowed her hat; the expression on her firm, frowning face was enough to show that she was on the warpath.

Barbara hoped, for a moment, that Miss Bullivant would pass along without glancing into the field; but Bessie Bunter's loud yells drew the attention of the mathematics mistress.

Miss Bullivant's grim eyes gleamed round at the scene.

"Now look out for squalls!" murmured Clara Trevlyn.

Miss Bullivant came through the gateway, and strode upon the scene.

Bessie Bunter blinked at her, as she stopped where Barbara & Co. were standing.

"I—I say, Miss Bullivant—help! I say, I'm sinking! Oh, dear! Make 'em come and help me out! Oh!"

Miss Bullivant's eyes were fixed upon Bessie Bunter's head, where reposed the hat which was likened at Cliff House to a misfit in pudding-basins.

"Bessie Bunter!" The Bull's voice was quite awful. "Where did you get that hat?"

Bessie Bunter spluttered.

"This—this hat, Miss Bullivant?"

"Yes. You have ventured to take my hat from my room at Cliff House, and to wear it out of doors!" thundered Miss Bullivant.

"Oh, no," gasped Bessie, "not at all!"

"Then where did you get it?"

"I—I found it! Help!"

"I will help you, Bessie Bunter," said Miss Bullivant grimly. "I shall take you direct to the headmistress."

"Ow!"

Miss Bullivant gathered up her skirts, and trod carefully to the spot where the fat junior was embedded.

She grasped Bessie Bunter with a grip of iron, and jerked her out of the swampy mud, a good deal like a cork from a ginger-beer bottle.

They came squashing back to terra-firma—Bessie gasped dismayfully, and Miss Bullivant with tight, set lips.

"Ow, ow, ow!" moaned Bessie. "I—I say—"

"Follow me at once to Cliff House, Bessie Bunter!"

"I say, I didn't—"

"Follow me!"

"I mean, I wasn't—"

"Come!" thundered Miss Bullivant, in a terrifying voice.

And Bessie Bunter gasped, and followed the angry schoolmistress.

She squelched away dismally with the mathematics mistress, whose face wore its most "basiliskic" expression.

Clara whistled softly.

"Looks like trouble for Fatima!" she remarked. "Serve her right, too! Let's go and see if there's anything left of the picnic!"

The cow had wandered away, when the juniors reached the camp by the cliff-path.

They found the basket there, and the spirit-stove, and the teapot, and the kettle.

But of the comestibles only a few crumbs remained—and probably they only remained because Bessie Bunter had been too short-sighted to spot them.

"Well!" said Barbara, with a deep breath.

"She ought to be bumped!" said Clara. "And if the Bull doesn't punish her, we jolly well will!"

"We will, anyway!" said Dolly Jobling warmly.

The juniors gathered up the baskets and utensils, and started for the school.

It was a sorry end to a picnic, and their wrath was great.

But they thought of Bessie Bunter being called over the coals by Miss Bullivant, and they were comforted.

The Only Way!

"NOTHING for tea!"

"How's the money market?"

asked Babs.

"Stony!"

Barbara sighed.

"We shall have to go into Hall, I suppose! It's too bad. Fancy coming in from a picnic as hungry as a hunter!"

"It's not much use looking into Study Seven," remarked Mabs. "Marjorie & Co. will be in the same boat. We could go to tea with Freda, but—but Marcia's in her study, and you know what her temper will be like after detention."

"Thanks—I'd rather miss my tea!" said Babs, with a grimace. "That little duffer, Bessie—But I suppose we shall have to forgive her, as the Bull is ragging her now."

There was a hurried patter of feet in the passage; and as the two girls looked round, the door of Study No. 4 was hurled open, and Bessie Bunter rushed in.

She slammed the door, and turned the key in the lock, and stood gasping for breath.

"Well, what's the name of that game?" asked Barbara Redfern.

"Ow! She's after me!" panted Bessie.

"Who—Miss Bullivant?"

"No—that girl Clara! She seems waxy about something!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "She's after me with a hockey-stick! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at that I can see! How would you like to be brained with a hockey-stick?" demanded Bessie Bunter indignantly. "I don't know why Clara is so bad-tempered. I'm sure I've done nothing."

"What about scoffing the picnic?" demanded Mabs.

"Oh, if you're going to begin on that again, Mabel!" exclaimed Bessie. "I can tell you, I'm tired of the subject!"

The door-handle shook from without.

"Yah! You're not coming in, Clara!"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 9.

Trevlyn!" hooted Bessie. "Go away! You're unladylike! Yah!"

"Let me in, Barbara! I'm going to slaughter your porpoise!" came Clara's voice through the keyhole.

"Oh, go away!" said Bessie. "Why don't you try to be ladylike, like me, Clara? I set you an example! Why don't you follow it?"

"Oh, my word!"

Clara Trevlyn's footsteps were heard retreating. But Bessie Bunter did not unlock the door.

She had a suspicion that Clara Trevlyn had not gone far.

"What about tea, you girls?" asked Bessie, blinking at Babs and Mabs.

"There isn't any tea," said Mabs gruffly. "You've eaten all we had in that line."

"For goodness' sake, Mabel, do let that subject drop! You make me tired, you do, really! I've had enough chinning from the Bull."

"Have you been punished?" demanded Barbara.

Bessie Bunter grinned.

"No fear!" she answered.

Babs and Mabs looked at her in astonishment.

They had taken it for granted that Bessie was booked for a record punishment, when the Bull marched her off to the school.

"Didn't the Bull take you to Miss Primrose?" ejaculated Mabs.

"Oh, no!"

"Or came you herself?" exclaimed Barbara warmly.

"Certainly not!"

"Why not?"

"You see, I explained the matter to her as we came home," said Bessie Bunter. "I told her how it happened. As for having imitated her voice, of course, that was out of the question, as I explained that I hadn't been anywhere near the place."

"But you had been!" hooted Mabs.

"I—I— For goodness' sake, Mabel, don't shout at me! I don't think it's ladylike to shout at a girl!"

"Do you mean to say that Miss Bullivant hasn't ragged you for taking her hat out for a walk?" exclaimed Barbara.

The fat junior chuckled.

"I explained about that," she answered.

"I don't see how even you could think of any tales that would explain that," said Barbara.

"Oh, really, Barbara! If you mean that I am untruthful, I can only say it shows a suspicious mind. I explained to Miss Bullivant," said Bessie, with dignity. "I told her how I had always admired her hat—"

"Admired it!"

"Yes; because it was so pretty and artistic—so different from common hats—"

"Good gracious!"

"And I said how I longed to have a beautiful hat like that—"

"My word!" said Babs faintly.

"And—and so I couldn't resist the temptation just to take it for a few minutes and look at it. And when I put it on it looked so nice that I couldn't help going out for a walk in it. It was such a beautiful hat—"

"Oh, you awful, little, fat fibber! It's the ugliest hat in the county!"

"Well, perhaps I exaggerated a little," admitted Bessie Bunter. "Just a trifle, perhaps. But you should have seen how pleased the Bull looked! She prides herself on her artistic taste, you know. I've found that out. That's why she wears that awful hat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, that beautiful hat. I

think she was flattered at a girl thinking her hat so beautiful and tasteful—"

"You mean, you were pulling her leg, you little duffer?"

"Well, perhaps I was a little," confessed Bessie. "I jolly well know I didn't want to be caned by Miss Primrose for taking her wretched old rag of a hat. She got quite good-tempered before we reached the school, you know. Funny, wasn't it? She's offered to help me trim a hat."

"Well!"

Babs and Mabs gazed at the fat junior in wonder.

They had never deemed it possible before that the Bull's leg could be pulled.

And it had been done—by the duffer of the Fourth!

And Bessie Bunter seemed to be sublimely unaware that she had departed from the straight and narrow path of veracity.

Certainly she was extremely well satisfied with herself.

"So she's let you off!" exclaimed Barbara at last.

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY!



No. 9.

FREDA FOOTE.

Bessie Bunter nodded.

"Yes, she was quite good-tempered. She says I mustn't do it again, but it's all right. I'm going to take a hat to her study to-morrow, and she's going to help me trim it."

"My word!"

"I'll take one of your hats, if you don't mind, Barbara."

"You jolly well won't!" said Babs warmly. "Why should you?"

"Well, you know how the Bull trims a hat. I don't want her to ruin one of mine," said Bessie.

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Barbara. "What about mine, then?"

"Oh, really, Barbara, if you are going to be selfish—"

"So you haven't been licked!" interrupted Mabel Lynn. "You've got off scot-free by telling untruths!"

"Look here, Mabel—"

"And you've bagged our picnic, and left us stranded," continued Mabs indignantly. "We were going to let you off, because we thought the Bull was ragging you. But now—"

"I—I say, you girls, don't be cats, you know!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter, in alarm. "That's just what Clara said

when I told her I hadn't been licked, and she rushed for the hockey-stick. I believe you girls want me to be caned for nothing. I call it unfeeling."

"You're jolly well going to be punished for raiding the picnic!" said Barbara determinedly. "We're going to make you run the gauntlet in the passage. We'll call up all the Fourth—"

"I—I say, you girls—"

"You needn't say anything. You'll want all your breath for howling with soon!" said Barbara darkly.

"I—I say, you know. I—I—I didn't really mean to bag the picnic. I—I was only tasting the stuff really," pleaded Bessie Bunter, "and—and it all went, somehow. I—I think that cow ate most of it."

"Unlock the door, Mabs."

"Besides, I—I'm going to stand a spread in the study, to make up!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter breathlessly. "I say, you girls, don't be cats! Give me a chance, you know! You don't want to have tea in Hall, do you?"

"Nonsense!"

"But I really mean it!" gasped Bessie. "You leave it to me. You go and ask Clara and Marjorie and Dolly to come, and Philippa—anybody you like! I'll have it all ready at six."

Barbara raised her hand warningly.

"We'll give you a chance," she said. "You've bagged the picnic, and you've got to be punished. We'll let you off if you make it good. Mind, a real study spread at six o'clock, or you get a bumping!"

"Done!" gasped Bessie.

"So you've had your remittance at last!" said Mabel.

"M-m-my remittance! No—yes—of course—I mean—exactly! You—you rely on me," stammered Bessie Bunter.

"We will!" said Barbara significantly. "At six o'clock we'll come back here with the rest, and if tea's not ready—a real study spread—you look out for trouble. Come on, Mabs!"

The chums of the Fourth left the study. Bessie Bunter blinked after them in dismay.

"Oh dear!" she murmured. "Wha-a-at am I going to do? The cats really mean it, and it's only put off till six o'clock! Fancy ragging me, just as if I'm to blame in some way! Mrs. Jones won't give me a tick at the tuckshop. She's a cat! I can't borrow any tin along the passage. They're all cats! There isn't time to run over to Greyfriars and borrow something of Billy. Besides, he wouldn't lend me anything. Oh dear!"

The hapless fat junior sat down to think it out.

She had postponed her well-deserved punishment by undertaking to provide a study spread in compensation for the raided picnic.

But the evil hour was only postponed. She knew what to expect if six o'clock came without the feed.

Dire vengeance hovered over the head of Bessie Bunter.

Three quarters chimed out, and Bessie Bunter started to her feet. It was a quarter to six.

"Oh dear! It's got to be done!" she murmured. "I've got to manage it somehow. Besides, I want tea myself. I'm awfully hungry!"

And Bessie Bunter quitted the study, and rolled along the Fourth Form passage, like a lion seeking what it might devour.

During the next five minutes three loud yells were heard in the Fourth Form passage, as Bessie Bunter was ejected from three studies in succession.

Unfortunately for the fat junior, most of the girls were in their quarters at that

time, and the raiding of study cupboards was impossible.

Bessie Bunter was not to escape from her difficulty by that method.

Barbara Redfern glanced out of Study No. 7 as Bessie came along, breathless and disconsolate.

"Ten minutes!" she said warningly.

"I—I'm just going for the grub!" gasped Bessie.

"Better hurry up, then!"

Bessie Bunter rolled on, and disappeared down the staircase.

There was a ripple of laughter in Marjorie's study, where six girls were gathered, waiting for six o'clock.

Not one of them supposed for a moment that the fat junior would have the spread ready, or that she had the remotest prospect of getting a spread at all.

But they did not quite know their Bessie Bunter yet!

"Six tins of bloater paste, I think—"
"Yes, Miss Bessie."

Auntie Jones's voice was quite respectful. As a rule, the good dame was not very charmed to see Bessie Bunter. Her tone was a sufficient indication that Bessie was not, on this occasion, asking for "tick."

But where the fat junior had obtained the cash for such expensive purchases was a deep mystery.

"One dozen eggs—new-laid, mind."

"Yes, Miss Bessie."

"I think I can do with half a pound of butter, and two pounds of sugar—I shall want some sugar for my parrot. Have you any meringues to-day? Better put in two dozen meringues."

"Oh, yes, Miss Bessie!"

"And a dozen scones—they're rather more solid—we shall want something a bit solid. And half a dozen—no seven—"

"Nonsense! Make it up to a pound, Mrs. Jones."

"Phew!"

"I think that's over a pound," said Auntie Jones, who was making abstruse calculations with a stump of pencil on a fragment of wrapping-paper. "Yes, it's well over the pound, Miss Bessie."

"H'm! Take some of the things away, then—some of the tarts—unless you'd like to trust me for another pound, Mrs. Jones."

"I'll take some away," was Mrs. Jones's reply.

The pile was reduced a little, and Auntie Jones, after further calculations, brought the account to exactly twenty shillings.

The money already lay on the counter.

"Help me carry the things in, Barbara," said the fat junior.



Barbara Redfern and her chums were running—and they had no time to stop as Bessie Bunter came charging round the corner. There was a terrific collision.

The Founder of the Feast.

"THREE dozen jam tarts!"
"Yes, Miss Bessie."
"Two cakes—one seed and one plum—large ones!"
"Yes."

Babs jumped.
At six o'clock, the half-dozen girls had proceeded to Study No. 4—not in expectation of finding the spread there. They found the study empty.

Babs left her comrades in Study No. 4, and hurried down to the school shop, to see whether Bessie Bunter was there.

It was Bessie Bunter's last chance—Babs did not really expect to find her there making purchases.

But as she came up to the little doorway, she heard the voice of the fat junior within—giving orders.

And such orders!

Barbara simply blinked, as the fat voice ran on:

meat pies—better put in eight, as I shall want at least two!"

"Well, my word!" murmured Barbara, in amazement.

Babs entered the tuck-shop. Bessie Bunter blinked round at her.

"Is it six?" she asked.

"Yes; but—"

"Well, I'm getting a really good spread, you know—it's worth waiting a few minutes, isn't it?"

"You must be rolling in money!" exclaimed Barbara, staring at the pile of good things Auntie Jones was stacking into a basket on the counter. "You shouldn't spend money like that, Bessie."

"What's the good of being wealthy if you don't spend the money?" said the fat junior.

"I suppose your remittance has come at last," she said.

"My—my remittance! Oh, yes! exactly!"

"But you shouldn't spend it in this reckless way," said Barbara.

"Certainly. But, really, Bessie—"

"My dear kid, I believe in doing a thing in style," said Bessie Bunter, loftily. "I said I'd stand a really good spread, didn't I? Well, I'm going to. I think this will be all right—better than your old picnic, anyhow."

"It's extravagant," said Barbara.

"Not for a rich girl!" answered the fat junior. "That's all right—you help me carry them in."

The two juniors left the tuck-shop, one carrying a basket, and the other a parcel. Flora Cann, of the Fifth Form, called to Bessie Bunter in the quad, as they were crossing to the house.

"Come on, Babs," said Bessie, hastily.

"Flora Cann's calling you," said Barbara.

"Never mind her—no time to waste—"

"Stop a minute, Bessie Bunter!" called out the Fifth-former.

"Sorry—in a hurry, you know! Come on, Barbara!"

"We're not in such a hurry as all that," said Barbara. "Hold on a minute, and don't be uncivil, Bessie."

"Look here—"

Flora Cann came up. She was a tall girl, with a rather sharp face, and very sharp eyes.

"You didn't give me the key, Bessie," she said.

"The—the key?"

"Yes. Mind, there was to be nothing extra for the key—that was agreed."

"Oh, yes! All right! Of—of course! I'll bring it to your study in a few minutes. Come on, Babs!"

"Well, mind you don't forget," said Flora, sharply. "You told me you would bring it at once."

"I—I couldn't find it—I—I mean, it's in my other pocket—that is, I'll be sure to bring it after tea. Do come on, Babs!"

Bessie Bunter caught her companion by the arm, and hurried her on. Barbara was wondering a little.

"What key does Flora Cann want?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing! Did—did she say a—a key?"

"Yes, you know she did."

"I—I—she—that is, it's a—a key to her study," stammered Bessie Bunter.

"She—she's lost her study door-key, and—and I was going to give her an old key I found. I hope you don't think it was a clock-key. Nothing of the sort. Simply an old door-key. Do hurry up, Barbara—the girls will be hungry."

Bessie Bunter rolled into the house, and Barbara followed her.

There was an exclamation from five girls at once, as they entered Study No. 4.

"Here she is!"

"Collar her!" said Clara Trevlyn.

"Hold on!" said Babs, laughing.

"Bessie's kept her word!"

"What?"

"Here's the spread!"

"Well, my word!" ejaculated Clara Trevlyn, in astonishment.

"Somebody said the age of miracles was past—and here's Bessie standing a spread!" exclaimed Philippa. "Keeping her word, too!"

"Extraordinary!" said Marjorie, laughing.

"Oh, really, Mar—"

"Hold on, though!" said Dolly, suspiciously. "Has she bagged this from somewhere? You know what she is. We don't want somebody coming raging into the study after their food!"

"Oh, really, Dolly—"

"All above-board!" said Barbara. "I saw her buying it in the school shop. It's bought and paid for."

"Paid for—and Bessie Bunter!" said Clara, dazedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" said Mabs. "Bessie's the founder of the feast. There's more here than we had at the picnic. We can call it square!"

"I should jolly well think so!" said the fat junior warmly. "You don't often get a spread like this, I can tell you. You ought to be jolly glad to have a wealthy girl in the study."

"Wealth beyond the dreams of avarice!" chuckled Barbara. "Bessie's spent a whole solid pound note on this feed!"

"Whose note?" asked Dolly Jobling.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mine!" hooted Bessie Bunter. "I had a—a—a remittance—"

"By post?" asked Dolly.

"Yes, of course."

"The post isn't in yet."

"I—I mean, last post, of course."

"Then you had the note when you bagged the picnic!"

"Nunno! I—I'd forgotten it!" stammered Bessie. "You—you see, being so

wealthy, I don't take much notice of a paltry sovereign, as you girls do. It's nothing to me—nothing at all. Look here, suppose you help get tea, Dolly Jobling, instead of making unladylike remarks."

"Bow-wow!" said Dolly.

But there was high good-humour in the study.

The spread was really quite a record one, and infinitely more acceptable than tea in Hall—which was plentiful but plain—and, moreover, had to be eaten under the grim eye of Miss Bullivant.

All the girls set to work to help, and many hands made light work.

In a very short time, the festive board was spread.

Bessie Bunter presided at the somewhat crowded table, with a very lofty expression on her fat face.

It was not often that the impecunious fat junior was the founder of a feast—and she enjoyed the distinction.

She enjoyed the feast also.

After her remarkable performances that afternoon it was really surprising that she was able to deal with the lion's share of the study spread; but she was—there was no doubt about that.

Apparently the picnic feast had merely whetted her appetite.

At all events, she was remarkably busy at the festive board, and she had little time for talk.

A merry ripple of conversation ran round the table, but Bessie Bunter made few remarks.

Her jaws were otherwise occupied.

The girls had come in hungry, and it was rather late for tea, so there was keen appreciation in Study No. 4.

Indeed, Bessie Bunter was almost popular.

When the joyous feast was over, Marjorie & Co. rose to depart, and they addressed graceful thanks to the fat junior before they went.

Bessie Bunter grinned affably.

"Not at all," she said. "My dear kids, I'm delighted! I hope you'll come again. Not at all!"

"She isn't such a fat little bouncer after all," Clara Trevlyn remarked considerably, as the Co. went down the passage.

"Oh, no!" said Marjorie, smiling.

"But," said Dolly Jobling thoughtfully, "I wonder where she got the money? It wasn't a remittance—I know that. I wonder whose it was?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it was somebody's!" said Dolly.

"Nonsense!" said Marjorie, laughing.

"You're getting suspicious in your old age, Dolly. Now for prep."

Philippa went to her study, and Marjorie & Co. to Study No. 7, to prep.

But Dolly Jobling was still looking very thoughtful as she sat down to preparation.

She was still wondering where the pound-note had come from.

The Clock That Went.

"PREP, I suppose!" said Mabs, with a sigh.

"It's time," said Barbara.

"Bessie, don't go to sleep in the chair. You've got your prep. to do."

"Rotten, isn't it?" said Bessie Bunter.

"I wonder if Miss Bellew would guess I hadn't done any prep—"

"Come and get to work."

Bessie Bunter did not move from the armchair.

As usual, at a spread, she had done not wisely, but too well.

Babs and Mabs set to work, while Bessie rested after her great exertions.

Barbara looked up presently.

"You'd better pile in, Bessie. Time's getting on."

"Yaw-aw-aw!" came from the fat junior.

"It must be nearly eight— Why, where's the clock?" asked Barbara.

"Yes; it's not on the mantelpiece."

"The—the clock!" repeated Bessie Bunter.

"Yes; it's on the mantelpiece."

"Isn't it?"

"Well, if you look, you'll see it isn't," said Barbara. "What duffer's put it out of sight?"

"I thought you had," said Mabs. "I noticed it wasn't there at tea-time."

"I—I dare say it's behind the vase," suggested Bessie Bunter.

"Fathead! The clock's wider than the vase, so how could it be out of sight if it was behind it?" said Barbara. "Some silly duffer must have borrowed my clock. There'll be a row if it's broken."

"Perhaps somebody's hidden it for a joke?" suggested Bessie Bunter.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"She might forget where she's put it, and it might never turn up again—never at all," said Bessie thoughtfully.

Barbara Redfern fixed her eyes upon the fat junior.

"Have you hidden my marble clock, Bessie?" she demanded.

"Oh, really, Barbara, of—of course not! As—as if I would!"

"Then don't talk nonsense!"

Barbara pushed away her books, and rose from the table, Bessie Bunter blinking at her with great uneasiness.

The mention of the clock seemed to have disturbed the fat junior somehow.

"Wha-a-at are you going to do, Barbara?" she asked.

"Look for my clock, of course. It's too valuable to be lost sight of," said Babs.

"Whoever's taken it might break it, and it's worth three guineas."

"Oh, dear! Three guineas! And that girl—"

"What?"

"Nothing. I—I say, Babs, hadn't you better do your prep? Miss Bellew will rag you in the morning."

"Look here, Bessie, do you know where my clock is?" demanded Barbara crossly. "It's a present from my Aunt Gladys, and it's valuable. I haven't had it long, and I don't want to lose it. Do you know where it is?"

"How should I know?" stammered Bessie. "Of course, I didn't know it was a present. You didn't tell me."

"Well, I want to find it."

Barbara looked about the study a little crossly.

The clock was a little French marble clock, and a rather valuable article of furniture for a junior study.

There was no reason, so far as Barbara could see, why anyone should remove it from the mantelpiece, where it had stood ever since Aunt Gladys had presented it to her niece.

And Bessie Bunter's evident confusion made Babs suspect that the fat junior knew something of the timekeeper's disappearance.

"Some practical joking duffer may have hidden it about the study," said Mabel, looking up from her work.

"It's impossible," said Barbara. "Look here, Bessie—"

"I don't see why you should suspect me," said the fat junior, with an injured look. "I haven't hidden your old clock anywhere. Is—is the key lost, too, Babs?"

"The key? No; I keep that in my purse."

"Oh! Well, the key won't be much good to you if you can't find the clock, will it?" remarked Bessie Bunter. "I

say, Barbara, you might give me the key."

"What?"

"It's no good without the clock!" urged Bessie. "I'll tell you what, Babs. I'll give you twopence for the key. It's no good, you know."

"You little fat duffer!" said Babs. "That can only mean that you know where the clock is, and you want the key, too!"

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"Where is it?" demanded Barbara.

"Squawk!" came suddenly from the parrot's cage, before the window. "Cackle, cackle! Squawk! What a face! Where did you dig up that nose? He, he!"

Barbara started.

"It's only the parrot!" said Mabs, laughing.

Barbara shook her fist at the evil-eyed bird in the cage, who blinked at her solemnly.

"Now, about that clock!" she went on.

"Cackle, cackle! What a chivvy! What a bad-tempered girl! Oh, my eye!"

"You horrid bird!" exclaimed Barbara. "Bessie, if you teach your parrot to say such things, I'll—I'll give him away to a tramp!"

"He's jolly clever!" said Bessie, with an affectionate blink at her evil-looking pet. "It isn't every parrot can talk like that!"

"Now, look here, Bessie, I know perfectly well that you've done something with the clock!"

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"If you've broken it, own up," said Babs sharply. "You're clumsy enough, and I'd rather you didn't tell me any untruths about it."

Bessie Bunter's fat face brightened up. "Oh! All right! I—I say, I'm sorry—awfully sorry! I—I've broken it into a hundred bits, Babs—"

"Oh, dear!"

"I—I wasn't going to tell you, so I—I threw all the bits away," said Bessie. "I—I'm sorry! Of course, I shall pay for the clock. As soon as my remittance comes—"

"You little idiot!" exclaimed Barbara, aghast. "Even if it's broken badly, it could be mended. What have you done with it?"

"Thrown it away, in the dustbin."

"Oh, you little idiot! Still, I can get the pieces out—the bin won't be cleared before to-morrow!"

"I—I mean, I—I threw it into the river!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "I—I was going to throw it into the dustbin, but on second thoughts, I—I decided it would be better to—to throw it in the river."

"Oh, dear!" almost wailed Barbara. "What will Aunt Gladys say when she comes?"

"You can tell her you've pawned it!" suggested Bessie Bunter brightly.

"You—you little idiot!"

"Well, I'm going to pay for it, you know," said Bessie Bunter. "In fact, as soon as my remittance comes, I'll buy you a clock like it—so exactly like it that you won't be able to tell the difference. I promise that."

"Oh, don't talk nonsense!" snapped Barbara. "I've a good mind to give you the shaking of your life!"

"I—I say, Babs, don't be waxy, you know. I—I couldn't help the thing falling down, you know, could I? I—I can really get you one just like it. If you could lend me a pound—"

"You couldn't get one like it for a pound. Don't be silly!"

"I could!" exclaimed the fat junior

eagerly. "Well, perhaps twenty-five shillings—she's rather mean—"

"What? Who?"

"Eh? Nobody!" stammered Bessie Bunter. "What I mean is, that if you would lend me twenty-five shillings, I'd—"

Tap!

The study-door opened, and Flora Cann of the Fifth came in.

Bessie Bunter broke off suddenly, her jaw dropping, and her eyes almost bulging through her spectacles at the sight of the Fifth-Former.

If the sharp-featured Miss Cann had been a grisly spectre, she could not have startled Bessie Bunter more.

"You haven't brought me the key," said Flora Cann, fixing her sharp eyes on the fat junior.

"I—I say, I—I was just coming!" stammered Bessie Bunter. "I—I—I'll come at once, you know."

She jumped up hastily from the armchair.

"No need for you to come to my study, as I've come here," answered Flora. "You can give me the key here, I suppose."

Next Thursday's
Issue of—

THE SCHOOL FRIEND . . .

WILL CONTAIN

"The Cliff House Pet Club!"

A Magnificent, Long, Complete
Tale of Barbara Redfern & Co.,
AND

A Splendid Long Instalment of
"The Girl Crusoes!"



"I—I'd rather come to your study—"

"Nonsense! Give me the key now."

A really extraordinary expression was growing on Barbara's face.

She had not forgotten the interest Bessie Bunter had displayed in the clock key.

"What key do you want, Flora?" she asked quietly.

Bessie Bunter broke in hastily.

"I say, it's all right, Babs! Don't you bother! I—I'm just going to get the—the key, Flora. Only a door-key, Babs, that's all—simply a door-key—"

"A door-key!" repeated Flora. "What do you mean? What's the use of a door-key to me? What are you making faces at me for?"

"I—I wasn't, I—I mean—"

"You were winking at me!" exclaimed the astonished Fifth-Former. "What do you mean by it?"

"I—I—"

"Look here, I've got no time to waste here," said Flora Cann. "Give me the key, and I'll be off. I want to wind up the clock before I go to bed."

"The clock!" exclaimed Babs and Mabs together.

"Oh, dear! Fuf-Fuf-Flora doesn't mean the—the clock!" gasped Bessie

Bunter. "I—I say, Flora, c-c-come up to the dorm with me—it's in my other pocket—"

"Stay where you are!" said Barbara Redfern sternly. "I think I'm beginning to understand now. My clock's disappeared, and you were asking me for the key. What clock is it you want, Bessie Bunter to give you the key for, Flora Cann?"

"The one she sold me, of course."

"Sold you!" ejaculated Mabs.

"Yes."

Barbara fixed a terrifying look on Bessie Bunter, who skipped round the armchair, as if for protection.

"So Bessie's sold you a clock?" asked Babs.

"Yes; why shouldn't she?" said the Fifth-Former. "I wanted a clock, and she had one to sell."

"Was it a French marble clock?"

"Yes; you've seen it?" asked Flora.

"Seen it?" gasped Barbara. "Yes, I rather think I've seen it, as it's mine—a present from my Aunt Gladys."

"What?"

"Did you give her a pound for it?" shrieked Mabs.

"Yes. Only she hasn't given me the key."

"You've sold my clock to Flora Cann!" exclaimed Barbara, her eyes gleaming at the dismayed fat junior.

"You—you little rascal—"

"Your clock!" repeated Flora. "Look here, if you mean that—"

"Of course it was mine!" exclaimed Barbara. "And that fat little duffer—"

"Oh, really, you know," said Bessie Bunter feebly. "I—I thought I'd better sell that old clock, you know, as—as we were hard up for tea—"

"You told us you had broken it!" shouted Mabs.

"That—that—that was only a figure of speech, you know," gasped the fat junior.

"You little duffer!" exclaimed the Fifth-Former. "Give me back the sovereign at once, and Barbara can fetch her clock."

"I—I can't, you know; it—it's gone!"

"Gone, is it?" said Flora grimly. "Well, if that clock's wanted again in this study, the pound will have to come to my study first."

And the Fifth-Former turned to the door.

"It's my clock, you know," said Barbara.

"And it's my pound!" retorted the Fifth-Former. "This study can have the clock, when this study produces the pound."

And Flora of the Fifth walked out of Study No. 4, and closed the door after her with unnecessary emphasis.

There was a dead silence in Study No. 4 after the Fifth-Former had gone.

Babs and Mabs regarded Bessie Bunter fixedly, and the fat junior blinked at them from behind the high back of the armchair.

Bessie was the first to speak.

"I—I say, you girls—"

"You little minx!" said Barbara Redfern, in measured tones. "Do you know what would happen to you if I reported this to Miss Primrose?"

"Oh, really, Barbara—considering that I did it entirely for your sake—"

"My sake!" howled Babs.

"Certainly. You wanted the spread, and I had been disappointed about a remittance. Besides, I was going to get you a new clock—it was only a temporary loan, you know. If you think I've done anything wrong, I can only put it down to your suspicious mind."

"Mum-mum-my suspicious mind!" murmured Babs dazedly.

"Well, to say the least, you might be decently grateful!" said Bessie Bunter.

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"Gig-gig-grateful!"

"I saved you all the trouble of finding somebody to buy the clock—I got a pound for it; I don't suppose you'd have got more than fifteen shillings. I took all the trouble off your hands, and now you round on me like this!" said Bessie Bunter warmly. "I call it mean! I really don't know why I do as much as I do for this study. I certainly never get any thanks for it."

"Thanks!" murmured Babs. "Oh, my word!"

"I've got a generous nature," said Bessie Bunter loftily. "I do these things—I'm always doing them; and I never get discouraged by ingratitude. Still, I think you might say you feel obliged. I must say I think that."

"Well!" gasped Babs.

"As we don't seem to agree, we'd better let the subject drop," said Bessie Bunter.

"We're not going to let it drop yet," said Babs grimly. "Not quite, you little fat duffer!"

"If you're going to call me names, Barbara, this discussion had better cease. If you're going to be mean about the clock, I'll let you have a pound out of my next remittance—the very next. I say—Leggo! Yaroooooh!"

Barbara's patience was exhausted—

which was not surprising, under the circumstances.

She made a rush at the fat junior, caught her by her podgy shoulders, and shook her vigorously.

Shake, shake, shake!

"Yaroooh! Wharrer you at? Help! Fire! Murder!" roared Bessie Bunter.

"You"—shake—"little"—shake—"fat"—shake—"duffer!" gasped Barbara, punctuating the sentence with shakes.

"Yooop! Help! Fire!" roared the fat junior. "Leggo! Help! Yoooop!"

"Good gracious!" The door opened, and Miss Bullivant looked in. "What is all this—what—Barbara! Barbara!"

Babs released the fat junior suddenly.

"What does this mean?" rapped Miss Bullivant. "Barbara, you have been shaking—actually shaking Bessie!"

"Yow-ow-owwwwooop!"

Barbara compressed her lips.

She could not explain; the affair of the clock, which seemed so trifling to Bessie Bunter, would have seemed terribly serious to Miss Bullivant, and it was impossible to explain.

Thunder was gathering in the Bull's brow.

"I—I say," gasped Bessie Bunter, "it—it's all right, Miss Bullivant. I—I forgive Barbara. I do, really! I don't

mind being shook—I mean shaken. I—I don't mind a bit. I forgive her."

"I hope, Barbara," said Miss Bullivant, in her most stately manner, "that your friend's forbearance will be a lesson to you—a lesson you need, Barbara. I will say no more about the matter."

Miss Bullivant withdrew, still frowning. Barbara breathed hard, as the door closed behind her.

"Jolly lucky I spoke up for you, Barbara, wasn't it?" said Bessie Bunter, blinking at her. "That's like me—always generous. I suffer for it sometimes; but I can't help it—it's my nature, you know. But do try to keep your temper, dear, it's really very trying. And now, I must say, the least you can do is to help me with my prep. And I'll tell you what, Barbara," went on the fat junior brightly. "The next time you want to sell a clock, or anything, you leave it to me—I'll take all the trouble off your hands, same as I did this time. I can't say fairer than that, can I?"

Babs did not reply to that question. She couldn't! Bessie Bunter had taken her breath away.

THE END

(Another long, complete story of the Girls of Cliff House, entitled "The Cliff House Pet Club!" in the issue of "The School Friend," on sale Thursday next. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)



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,—You will be glad to learn, I feel sure, that next Thursday's magnificent long complete tale of Barbara Redfern & Co. will be packed with humorous incidents and laughable scenes. Your letters tell me that you are all specially fond of a funny story, and therefore I am convinced that you will thoroughly enjoy

"THE CLIFF HOUSE PET CLUB!"

By Hilda Richards.

When Miss Primrose offers a prize for the best-kept pet, you may be sure that there is a good deal of excitement amongst the Fourth-Formers at Cliff House. There is a big demand for pets, and you will be very surprised and amused when you read about the strange pets which some of the girls select.

You will also enjoy reading about Bessie Bunter and her parrot. The "pet craze" quite appeals to Bessie. How she endeavours to raise money; how she helps herself to the pets' food, and the result; how she suffers disappointment after disappointment; and how she is absolutely confident of taking the prize, makes the most interesting reading.

You will also revel in the midnight alarm, when the pets stray about the school, and a certain mistress has a most unpleasant ten minutes; and you are sure to be interested when you read what one girl in the Fourth Form does to obtain her revenge on one of your favourite characters, and you will admire Barbara Redfern for the part she plays.

The winner of the prize is—Well, you will have to wait until next Thursday before you learn the name of the fortunate prize-winner. That you will be delighted with this story I have not the slightest doubt. As I have said before,

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this yarn is full of humorous incidents, but there are some dramatic ones in it as well.

Of course, our next issue will contain another magnificent long instalment of our splendid adventure tale,

"THE GIRL CRUSOES!"

By Julia Storm.

One reader wrote to me the other day, and said: "There is one thing I like about 'The Girl Crusoes!' and that is, that there is always something happening on Diamond Island. It seems that no sooner have Hilda, Pat, and Joe emerged from one adventure than they meet with another, and no sooner have they made a marvellous discovery than fresh ones crop up." I am glad to say that this will be the case all through this grand story, and, therefore, you may rest assured that next Thursday's instalment will be as good, if not better, than any that has so far appeared.

TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS.

I have received several letters just recently from readers who have told me that their friends have recommended them to read our new paper. Now, I happen to know that a very large number of readers are doing their utmost to obtain fresh supporters for THE SCHOOL FRIEND, and I would assure all these readers that I very much appreciate all they are doing to make our new paper more popular than ever. Do YOU know of any boys or girls who do not read THE SCHOOL FRIEND? If so, you will be doing me a great favour by recommending our paper to them, and persuading them to become regular readers.

A RECORD!

I am sure you will all be glad to hear that during the last week I have received more letters than in any previous week. The first week THE SCHOOL FRIEND appeared on the market letters simply poured into my office, and I quite thought that the number for that week would remain a record. But the record has been broken! The number which have reached me this last week is higher than ever, and I want to thank all those readers who so readily responded to my request for letters. But, like Oliver Twist, I want more. Can we break this last week's record? It rests with you, my dear readers, to do the record breaking. Always remember, there is nothing that gives me greater pleasure than to hear from you, and to have your candid opinions of THE SCHOOL FRIEND, and I derive as much pleasure from replying as promptly as possible to your welcome communications.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

A. M. (Macclesfield).—Send me two penny stamps, and I shall have much pleasure in forwarding you the number of THE SCHOOL FRIEND which you require. Yes, back numbers, if in stock, can always be obtained from this office at the price of twopence a copy—that is, three-halfpence for the paper, and a half-penny for postage.

Connie Harris (Blackfriars Road).—I sent you a letter, which was returned through the post, marked "Not known." If you have changed your address, and care to send it along, I shall have much pleasure in writing to you again.

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.