

EVERY GIRL'S SCHOOL-STORY PAPER!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND

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BESSIE BUNTER DOES NOT TAKE FIRST PRIZE! (An amusing incident from the Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale of the Girls of Cliff House, contained in this issue.)

NOTICE!
 ADVERTISSEER has for sale a fine tame pet Good chance for any girl wishing to compete for the Crown Prize. Apply at once Study No. 4. P.S.—No credit given Cash only.

The Cliff House Pet Club!



A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete Tale of Barbara Redfern & Co., introducing Bessie Bunter.

By **HILDA RICHARDS.**

Pets—and a Prize!

BABS! Do be a little more careful! My books—
 Flop!

"There you go, Babs! That inkpot— Look out!"
 Flop!

"My word! You are the limit, Babs!" said Mabel Lynn, of the Fourth Form at Cliff House. "What ever are you hunting for, turning the whole study upside-down?"

"I'm looking for my notes, Mabs!" cried Barbara Redfern, rummaging about Study No. 4 with feverish haste. "My notes for the meeting. I can't find them anywhere!"

"Crash!"
 "There you go!" said Mabel Lynn. "And there goes another shilling teapot! And look at my mended stockings in the grate, and the ink all over the floor!"

"But just think what it means, Mabs!" pleaded Barbara, dashing this way and that in the vain search. "It's two o'clock now, and didn't I fix two o'clock for the meeting in that notice on the board?"

Mabel Lynn chuckled.
 "I know how you spell 'zoological.' Ha, ha, ha! 'Z-o-o—' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mabs, do stop it! How am I to address the meeting if I haven't any notes?"

"Take a dictionary, Babs. Then, if any of the girls ask you how to spell 'zoological'—"

"Oh, do be serious, Mabs!"
 "Right-ho! I'll just mop up this mess from the inkpot, and then—"

"Stop!"
 "What's the matter now?"

Barbara snatched at the sheets of paper with which Mabel was mopping up the lake of ink.

"My notes—the very notes I've been looking for!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mabel Lynn. "Now you are all serene."

"Thank goodness!" said Barbara, and she scurried out of the room.

Mabel Lynn only paused to pick up the mended stockings and suspend them from the mantelpiece, with a clock and a jam-pot for weights, before she raced after her elum.

From the Fourth Form room, on the ground floor, there came a riot of voices.

It was evident that the two girls were late for the meeting; yet, as they drew level with the school notice-board, Mabel, for one, wanted to stop.

"Hallo!" she chuckled. "Here is your famous notice, Babs. I see you don't know how to spell 'zoological'! It's not 'z-o-o—' Just make a note of that. And, I say—"

But Babs tilted her chin, and marched on, and next moment the uproar changed to a round of cheers as she joined the great meeting.

"Hurrah! Here comes Babs Redfern!"

"You are late, Babs!" said Marjorie Hazeldene. "It's time to begin! Who's in the chair?"

"I am!" said Bessie Bunter promptly. And so she was.

By some means or other the fat girl of the Fourth Form had hoisted her huge person on to the class-room table, and there she sat, in a chair that looked all too small for her.

"Come out of that, Fatima!" ordered Mabel Lynn. "Barbara Redfern, as president of the Cliff House Natural History Society, is going to address the meeting, and I am in the chair!"

Bessie Bunter seemed to be rather deaf. She had a bag of pastries and a bottle of ginger-beer in her lap. She took a pull at the bottle, and then dived a hand into the paper bag.

"Guzzle, guzzle, guzzle!"
 "Get out of that chair!" said Mabel.
 "Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle!"

And again a pull at the bottle was followed by a bite at a jammy pastry.

"This is not an exhibition of fat ladies, Fatima!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It's a meeting of the Cliff House Natural History Society," said Barbara Redfern impressively. "Would you mind, Fatima? So sorry to trouble you, and all that, but—"

"Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle! Bessie Bunter continued to drink out of the bottle.

Babs and Mabs looked at each other. There was a lot in that look, too. The rest of the meeting waited.

"Half a moment, you girls!" said Bessie Bunter, starting on another jam-puff. "I'll just finish this before it gets stale, and then—"

The rest of the sentence was lost in a further gurgling draw at the bottle.

Mabs and Babs had slipped round to the back of the table. They laid their hands on it, and seemed to be counting—one, two, three!

"Speech-making is thirsty work," said Bessie, blandly surveying the crowd through her thick spectacles. "As I intend to take the chair and—"

"Go!" cried Babs.
 And Bessie Bunter went.

Up flew the table, tilting the chair and its occupant to a perilous angle.

"Yow-ow-ow!" shrieked Bessie Bunter.
 Crash!

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Fourth-Formers, as Bessie, the bag, and her bottle landed on the floor.

"Yaroooh! My back is broken in three places! Yow! My neck—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Cats!" cried Bessie fiercely. "Unfeeling cats!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Give her air!" chuckled the Fourth-Formers, crowding around the fat girl as she struggled up. "She's fainting! Give her water!"

There was no water, but there was just a little ginger-beer still left in the bottle.

Some kindly hand forced the fizzy liquor down the victim's throat, whilst the crowd expressed a hope that she would now feel better.

"B-b-b-better?" howled Bessie. "Ow! You e-e-cats! You— Grooogh! How e-e-can I make a speech after—"

"Order!" cried Mabel Lynn, who had lost no time in restoring the chair to the table and mounting to address the meeting. "Now, girls! I'm jolly glad to see the Fourth Form is so keen about this brand-new idea of a Natural History Society. As it is Babs' idea, I will now call upon her for a speech. I—I shall pull your plait, Fatima, if you don't keep quiet!"

"F-f-fellow m-m-members of the Fourth—" began Bessie Bunter.

"Order!"
 "F-f-fuff— Ow!" screeched Bessie Bunter, as she was dragged by her plait to the back of the throng. "Who did that? I— Ow! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" pleaded Mabs, trying not to laugh. "Barbara Redfern will now address the meeting."

"Bravo!"
 "Speak up, Babs!"

Barbara Redfern rose to her feet, holding a very bulky sheaf of papers in her hand.

"Well, girls," she said, "this being the opening of the Cliff House Natural History Society, I will explain what we are going to do. We—"

"One moment!" put in Marjorie Hazeldene, with a quiet smile. "Will the speaker first explain how she spells 'zoological'? In Study No. 7 we generally spell it with a lot of 'o's'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "There'll be any amount of 'Oh's,' if you don't keep quiet!" said Babs; and this time the laugh was turned against Marjorie.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go on, Babs!"

"The idea of the society is to induce each member to take an interest in natural history by keeping a pet," went on Barbara Redfern. "Miss Primrose has given her approval of the scheme, and she has offered to present a handsome pet—I mean, a handsome prize to the pet who keeps the best girl—I mean, the girl who keeps the best pet."

"Full stop!" said Clara Trevlyn. "But may we have that again, Babs?"

I am not sure whether you said that Miss Primrose is giving a handsome girl to the petter of the best prize, or—

"Ha, ha, ha! Be quiet, Clara! Give Babs a chance!"

But Babs laughed with the others. She knew there was nothing but good-nature behind Marjorie's and Clara's interruptions.

It was from another quarter that really malicious attacks were likely to come. Marcia Loftus was here, of course, and Marcia had already given her ill-natured opinion that the society was "all rot."

"I want to make one thing quite clear," said Babs, turning over the inky notes. "Miss Primrose will give the prize to the girl who has the best-kept pet, not the most valuable pet or the prettiest. I think that is only fair."

"Hear, hear!"

"Nonsense!" came the cry from Marcia Loftus. She had been waiting for her chance to get in a blow at Barbara, and it had come at last. "Barbara may tell you it's going to be worked like that, but, of course, the prize business will be a fraud at the finish! The pet that is the most valuable and most pretty is bound to look the best kept! I tell you what it is, girl—"

"Order, Marcia!"

"All right! It's nothing to do with me!" said Marcia. "I'm not joining the silly society! It is quite plain to me—"

"Order! Turn her out!"

"No!" said Barbara, from the table. "Let Marcia say what she has to say."

"Can't you girls see how you are being bamboozled?" said Marcia. "Barbara Redfern is only getting up this society because she is sure of getting the prize!"

"Don't talk nonsense, Marcia!" said Marjorie Hazeldene.

"I say she is bound to get the prize! Two days ago she had that pet from her uncle abroad—a sort of monkey-thing—a marmoset, I think they call it. Everybody says it is so pretty, such a dear, sweet thing, and so clean!" sneered Marcia. "I call it a disgusting creature! But, there it is. Miss Primrose and the others fell in love with the marmoset, and none of you will ever get a pet to put it out of the running for the prize!"

"Oh, really, Marcia!" struck in Bessie Bunter, hearing through the crowd. "I think you've made a mistake. There's my parrot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My parrot is bound to take the prize!" said Bessie confidently. "Why, Polly is the prettiest bird in England! It—"

"We don't want to hear about your parrot now, Fatima!" said Mabel Lynn.

"Oh, really, Mabel—"

"Order! Get on with the meeting!"

"Of course, you girls are only jealous because you haven't got a pet like my Polly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd be ashamed of myself if I was as jealous as you!" said Bessie Bunter loftily. "But I don't mind. I shall be bound to take first prize! My parrot—"

Mabel Lynn jumped off the table and seized Bessie by her plait.

"Ow! Stop it!" shrieked the fat girl.

"Will you keep quiet about your parrot, Fatima?"

"N-n-no! I m-m-mean, ye-ye-yes! I—Ow! My p-p-parrot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the crowd of Fourth-Formers, splitting in two so that

Mabel could drag the screeching Bessie to the door.

"Outside, Fatima!" said Mabel. "Yow! I won't go! I-yarocoooh! Help!"

"One good, hard push sent the fat girl out into the passage, where she sat down with a bump on the hard, unsympathetic floor. And then the door slammed."

"Now, Marcia," said Mabel Lynn, turning again to the meeting, "you had better follow Bessie, unless you have something better to say than a lot of spiteful nonsense!"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the girls. "Let's have your grievance, Marcia, if you have one. If not, clear out!"

And they waited for Marcia Loftus to speak.

Marcia's eyes flashed. "It's true what I have said!" she cried. "But I'm sure I don't want to stay and argue the matter. Let Barbara

three cheers for the Cliff House Natural History Society. Hip, hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!" yelled the Fourth-Formers.

And, with a great buzz of talk, the meeting broke up.

Marcia Means Mischief.

"COMING upstairs, Babs?"

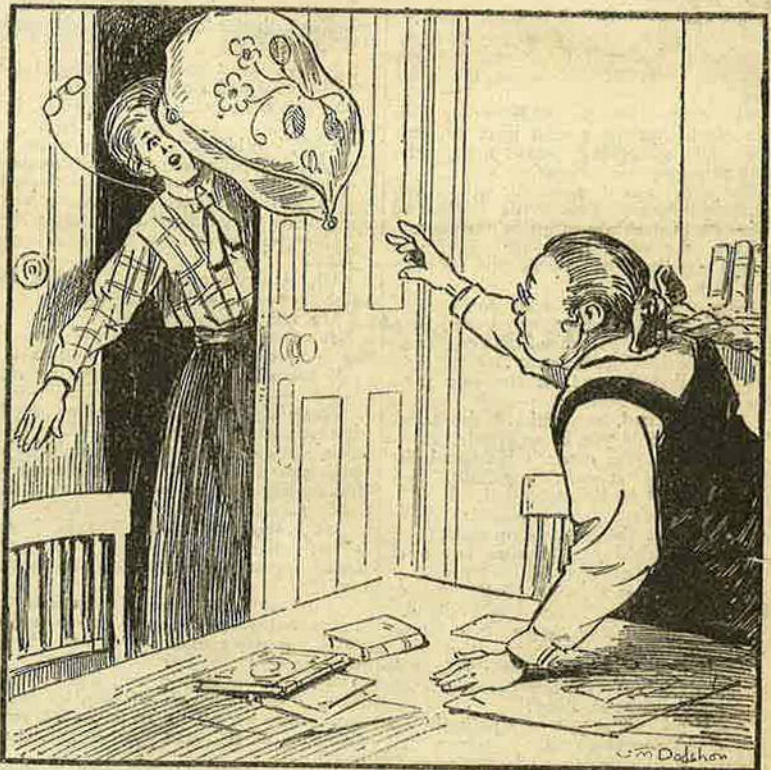
Mabel Lynn asked the question as she and her chum departed from the Form-room.

Barbara thought for a moment, then she nodded assent.

"I'm thinking about Tony," said Babs, as she and her chum mounted the stairs. "I don't want to kill him with fussing, but—"

"Tony?"

"That's what I have decided to call my marmoset, after Uncle Tony, who sent me the queer little creature," said Barbara Redfern. "I do hope he is all



Whizz! went the cushion, as the door swung open. Next moment Bessie Bunter gave a gasp of horror, as there came a muffled scream. "Mum-mum-my word!" she muttered. "The Bull!"

got on with her speech! Ha, ha, ha! Speech, you call it! Rubbish!"

And, with a toss of her head, she strode out of the room.

After that the meeting went on in a quite orderly fashion.

Barbara explained that a girl who kept the most ordinary sort of pet would stand just as good a chance as anybody else of getting the prize.

"It really doesn't matter what sort of pet you keep," concluded Babs. "There is just as much chance of a rabbit taking the prize as anything else. Of course, there is just a possibility that Bessie Bunter's parrot might win."

"It might not!" said Clara Trevlyn, with emphasis.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I don't think I've got anything else to say," said Barbara Redfern, with a smile. "But I think we might give

right. I left him fast asleep in his cage. Half a moment!"

So saying, Barbara turned aside to the landing window and looked out.

Down below there was a lean-to conservatory of glass, with one door opening on to the garden, whilst another gave admittance to a room in the house.

This warm, sunny greenhouse Miss Primrose had allowed to be set apart for the girls' pets, and Tony was already there in his cage.

Barbara, peering down, gave a sudden gasp.

"Mabs—quick! Look!" she said, in a whisper.

Then Mabel looked from the window. And through the glass roof of the "zoo" she saw a familiar fat figure, standing close to the solitary cage.

But Bessie Bunter, who had the place

to herself, was not interested in the marmoset.

At this moment her greedy fingers were conveying biscuits to her mouth, at a very rapid rate, from a small box beside the cage.

"The greedy little duffer!" cried Mabs.

"She—she's eaten the lot!" said Barbara, in deep disgust. "All those biscuits that I bought for Tony. My word! I'll pay her out for this, the greedy little pig! Don't let her see us, Mabs."

Bessie, having finished her stolen feed, rolled out of the place, little dreaming how her misdeed had been seen from above.

Barbara and Mabel watched her out of sight, and they were just drawing in their heads when somebody else appeared, making for the "zoo."

"It's Marcia!" whispered Mabel. "Hallo! What is she carrying that cat for? I say—"

"Be quiet, Mabs," murmured Babs. Marcia made the same mistake as Bessie. In taking care to see that she was not observed she forgot the glass roof.

She stepped into the conservatory with the cat in her arms, and next moment she did something that made the watchers gasp with anger.

The cruel girl dropped the cat on top of Tony's cage, causing the frightened creature to dash about inside the bars.

Then the cat arched her back, and hissed angrily, putting one claw between the bars.

The girls stayed to see no more. Down the stairs they raced, and in a few seconds, Babs, ahead of her chum, was inside the conservatory.

She pulled the cat off the cage, and then turned to Marcia.

"You wicked, cruel girl!" she cried. "Oh, how could you be so cruel?"

"What do you mean?" blustered the jealous girl. "It wasn't my fault. I—I found the cat teasing your pet. I—"

"You didn't," said Barbara. "We saw you from the window up there!"

Marcia looked up, became aware of the glass roof, and turned very red.

"I—I—I wasn't going to let the cat hurt the thing," she said feebly. "You're only making a fuss about nothing!"

"Nothing, when the poor creature is nearly dead with fright!" cried Mabel, casting a glance at Tony.

Barbara's pet looked very pathetic, his bright little eyes so full of terror, and his tiny form trembling and shivering.

"Clear out!" Barbara said to Marcia curtly. "This place has been given to the Cliff House Natural History Society; and, since you're not going to be a member, you will please keep away."

"With pleasure!" snapped Marcia, trying to put on airs. "I am sure I don't want to have anything to do with your nasty pets!"

And, with a snort of contempt, she marched away, leaving the two girls to make Tony quite happy and comfortable again.

In the meantime, Bessie Banter had rolled away to Study No. 4, and was busy with pen and paper.

Her pilfered feed of biscuits had had an inspiring effect upon Bessie. Quite suddenly a great idea had come to her. There was going to be a great craze for pets.

And whilst that craze was at its height, why shouldn't she sell her famous parrot at a high price?

So she busied herself for a few minutes with the pen and ink, writing out an announcement in very smudgy letters.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 10.

"Good!" she said to herself at last. "That will fetch them!"

Putting down the pen, she sucked an inky finger, then held the sheet of paper at arm's length.

At the top of the sheet was the big word:

"NOTICE!"

And underneath Bessie had written these striking lines:

"ADVERTISER has for sale a fine tain pet. Good chance for any girl wishing to compete for the Gran Priz. Apply at once, Study No. 4.

P.S.—No credit given. Cash only."

Bessie smiled all over her fat face as she heaved out of the chair and rolled towards the door.

"I'll go down and pin this on the board at once," she said. "And then—Ow! Babs, you cat, you—you—Yaroooh! You've knocked me breathless! Ow!"

"Sorry!" laughed Barbara, who had collided with the fat girl in the doorway. "What have you got there, Bessie?"

"I—I—I don't see why I should tell you," stammered Bessie.

She put the sheet of paper behind her back.

"Well," said Babs, with a wink at Mabel Lynn, who had followed her into the study, "there's one thing you might tell us, Fatima. Have you heard of anybody being taken ill all of a sudden?"

"Goo-goo-gracious, no!" said Bessie. "Why?"

"Oh, I don't see why I should tell you!" retorted Barbara Redfern.

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"It's the thief's own fault, anyway, if she is taken to the hospital and dies!" said Barbara. "What do you say, Mabs?"

"Certainly. It will teach other greedy girls a lesson," agreed Mabel. "But, Babs, do you think any girl could be so nasty and greedy as to go and steal all that special food for your marmoset, and eat it all up?"

"It tastes rather nice," said Babs. "That's the dreadful part. No one would dream it is so deadly, that special food!"

"F-f-food—sp-sp-special f-f-food!" stammered Bessie, beginning to understand Barbara's meaning. "Good-goo-gracious—"

"Don't let us detain you, Bessie," said Babs. "The culprit will soon be found out. She's certain to be taken ill. One mouthful of the stuff would upset anybody!"

"I suppose," said Mabel, "there are all sorts of queer things mixed up in that special food?"

"Oh, rather!" said Babs, pretending not to notice Bessie Banter's look of horror. "Marmosets are rather faddy, you know. In a wild state they live on flies and beetles, and—My word! What's the matter, Bessie?"

"N-n-nothing!" faltered Bessie. "But—but did you say flies, and—and beetles?"

"Yes," replied Barbara. "I expect they put 'em in that special food that I bought at the shop in town. It looks like nice biscuit, but it's bound to have flies and beetles—"

"Ow! Groooogh!" groaned Bessie.

"And chopped-up grubs—"

"Yarooooogh!"

"All mixed up together," said Babs cheerfully. "That's why Tony, my pet, likes it so. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I always thought," put in Mabs quietly, "the biscuit stuff had a fishy smell about it."

"F-f-fishy!" gasped Bessie.

"Oh, that would be a little chopped sticklebat for flavouring," nodded Babs. "Now you mention it, Mabs, they use a lot of tiddlers for that special food. It said so on the bag."

"St-st-stick-stick-stick—Gurrugh!" groaned Bessie.

"Well, it's a bad look-out for the greedy little pig who has stolen my Tony's food," said Barbara, not appearing to notice the look of anguish on Bessie Banter's countenance. "It will teach her a lesson—if she ever survives the stuff!"

"But—but, B-B-B-Babs," said Bessie, with an awful shudder, "you don't mean it seriously, do you? Not beetles and flies and st-st-stick-stick-sticklebats?"

Babs patted the fat girl on the shoulder.

"You needn't worry about it, Bessie," she said. "You're all right. It isn't as though you had eaten the stuff!"

"Nunno! I didn't touch it! I—I—"

"If you had eaten it, then it would be time to fetch the doctor!"

"Much too late for the doctor," said Mabs. "We should have to get a stretcher! Did you speak, Bessie?"

"Er—er—how do you feel when you are p-p-poisoned?" faltered Bessie miserably. "I—I—I feel quite well myself, b-b-but—"

"The first symptom," said Babs, "is generally a pain under the chest. Then—What are you holding yourself like that for, Bessie? Have you a pain under the chest?"

"Nunno!" said Bessie, looking very sick.

"Then you feel your legs swelling, and your head gets dizzy, and your mouth is dry, and your lips turn blue, and your eyes turn up, and your hands twitch, and—"

"G-g-g-good gracious!" gasped Bessie.

"Help!"

She flopped into a chair.

"Ow! I'm poisoned! Yow! I'm dying! Help! Help!"

"Nonsense!" said Babs, winking at Mabs again. "You've only a little indigestion, after that bag of pastries and the ginger-beer. Get up and walk it off, Fatima!"

Bessie heaved out of the chair, then sank back with a horrible groan.

"Yow! I'm poisoned! Help! F-f-fetch the doctor—quick! I'm ill! I shall be dead in five minutes! Yooop!"

"Tell us exactly how you feel," said Babs.

"My mouth is dizzy, and my legs are turning blue, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't I laugh at me! Yow! F-f-fetch the doctor! Ow!"

"Have you been eating any of Tony's food, Bessie?"

"N-n-nunno! I didn't know where you kept it. I—I—"

"Then you can't be very ill," said Babs. "Out of my chair, Fatima!"

"Oh, lemme be! Ow! Lemme stop here!"

"Not likely! You hop it, Bessie! Here, Mabs," called Barbara, "take the other side of this passage, and help me to show her from the room. Heave her—go!"

"Help! Stop it! I c-c-can't m-m-move!"

"That's why we are helping you!" chuckled Babs.

And next moment the writhing fat girl was gently but firmly pushed into the passage, where she sank to the floor with another shuddering groan.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Barbara, when she and Mabel were alone in Study

No. 4. "That's only the beginning, Mabs! You wait a bit. If the little duffer comes squealing at the keyhole I'll have the biggest lark of all!"

But Bessie Bunter, staggering to her feet, decided not to do any squealing at the keyhole just then.

She was feeling very queer, for the simple reason that she had really eaten all Tony's food.

She had chanced to be in the greenhouse when nobody else was about, and, coming upon the bag of food, she had tried a sample bite.

Delicious it had seemed to her then, but now—

"Beetles, flies, chopped grubs! Grooooooh!" she shuddered, lurching down the passage. "St-st-icklebat's for f-flavouring! Oooh! It's awful!"

But when she got into the fresh air, and had taken a turn or two on the grass, she began to feel that anyhow she was not going to die.

No doubt Babs and Mabs had exaggerated. Perhaps they had a suspicion that she had taken the stuff, and were just frightening her.

This last idea made her feel quite well again. And so she decided to go on with her great scheme.

Making for the notice-board in the passage, she pinned the sheet of paper in a conspicuous place, and then went upstairs to await results.

In the study were Babs and Mabs. The latter was leaning in a chair by the open window, whilst Barbara was reading aloud from a newspaper which she had spread upon the table.

"The coroner, in summing up, said that this was a case which showed the danger of eating foods not meant for human consumption. No blame attached to the people who prepared this food, as—"

Babs broke off suddenly and looked at Bessie Bunter.

"I thought you said you were going to die?" she remarked. "You've jolly soon recovered!"

"W-w-what's that you were saying—about the coroner and f-food?" stammered Bessie.

"Oh, a very sad case!" said Babs, tossing the paper aside. "Somebody got poisoned through stealing something and thinking it was good to eat. The verdict was—"

"P-p-poison!" gasped Bessie, turning pale again. "Goo-goo-good gracious!"

And she sat down—flop!

A Parrot for Sale!

"WHAT'S the matter now?" asked Babs.

"N-n-nothing!" wailed Bessie.

"You'll feel better after tea. You've only got two hours to wait," said Mabs, getting up from her seat by the window.

"I say, Babs, there are some of the girls down below. They're off to find pets. Shall we go with them?"

"Oh, rather! As founder and first president of the Cliff House Natural History Society," said Babs, following Mabel to the door, "I am going to be in this. Good-bye, Fatima dear! If you should happen to find out who has eaten Tony's food, advise her to take hot mustard-and-water at once!"

"Hot m-m-mustard!" stammered Bessie Bunter.

"Yes. And if that doesn't do the trick, a good dose of castor-oil and vinegar, mixed."

"Ow!"

"Did you speak, Bessie?"

"Ow! No! I— Oh, I s-s-say, d-d-don't l-l-leave me, girls!"

But they did leave her, stifling their laughter as they strode off down the passage; and after that Bessie Bunter sat and writhed in the throes of her fancied agony.

Presently the door opened.

"Hallo! Babs is not here!"

It was Meg Lennox who had looked in. She stared at Bessie in surprise.

"Anything wrong, Fatima?" she asked.

"N-n-nunno! I'm not w-w-well, that's all!" faltered Bessie Bunter. "Oh, please go away!"

"I'm going!" said Meg. "Just tell Babs when you see her that I have come about her advertisement on the board. If she wants to sell her pet I might buy it."

"W-w-what?" stammered Bessie. In her surprise she began to forget her indisposition. "B-b-but that advertisement—it isn't Babs! It's m-m-mine!"

"Yours? You want to sell—"

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY!



No. 10.

MISS PRIMROSE.

"Yes; I want to sell my parrot," said Bessie. "At least, I don't want to sell it; but I might if I had a good offer. It's bound to take the prize!"

Meg cast an eye upon the evil-looking bird as it dozed on its perch in the cage.

"What are you going to ask for it, Bessie?" she said.

"Five pounds."

"Eh?"

"F-five pounds."

"Does that include the cage?"

"Yes," said Bessie eagerly.

"And the table?"

"Yes."

"And the rest of the study—chairs, books, china?"

"Yes," said Bessie Bunter. "I m-m-mean, have you had a good look at my parrot?"

Meg Lennox laughed.

"Yes, I have!" she said. "And that's what makes me not want to buy him. If I'd never seen him I might have thought you had a parrot for sale, not a pen'orth of hat trimmings!"

"Oh, really—" gasped Bessie, as Meg walked out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

A moment later there was another visitor.

"Hallo, Bessie!" said Katie Smith, walking in. "Babs is not here?"

"No," said Bessie. "But, I say, have you come about the pet?"

"That's it! Do you think I stand a chance?" said Kate eagerly. "I'd like to get hold of a good pet. And I had a remittance yesterday. What's it going for—do you happen to know?"

"F-f-five—"

"Five shillings?"

"No. F-five pounds."

"Five what?"

"Four pup-pup-pounds ten!"

"For a silly old marmoset?"

"Good gracious! No! F-f-for my parrot!" said Bessie. "It's my parrot that's being sold!"

"Oh!" said Katie.

She walked close up to the cage, looked at the bird, then stepped back.

"So it's being sold, is it? By the look of it one would think it were being sent away for repairs! Four-pounds-ten—I don't think!"

And without another word Katie Smith followed in Meg Lennox's wake.

Bessie, left to herself again, stared at the parrot. She wished it had more life about it, and more feathers, too.

"Polly!" she called to it. "Pretty Polly!"

The bird opened one eye, shook himself, and shed more feathers.

And then the door opened again, and another girl looked in. This time it was Budget O'Toole.

"Shure," said Bridget, "and Babs can't be here, or she wouldn't be out of the room! Faith, and it's unlucky I am, Bessie! I want to see Babs about that notice. It's selling her pet she is?"

"Er—I dunno!" said Bessie, feeling her way with this possible customer. "B-b-but I've got a parrot! I'm rather hard up, Bridget. I've been expecting a remittance, but it hasn't come. And so I shall have to do something about the parrot. Pets are all the rage just now. I shall be giving mine away."

"You'll give it away, will you? Faith—"

"For five pounds—e-e-cage and all!"

"Shure, and it's liberal you are, Bessie!" said Bridget. "You'll give the poor thing away, with five pounds?"

"N-n-nunno!" said Bessie, with a shake of the head. "You'll have my parrot, and I'll have your five pounds!"

"Phwat! And ye call that giving it away! I call it daylight robbery, Bessie! 'Tis ashamed ye should be!" cried Bridget. And she stalked from the room, banging the door after her.

Less than a minute later there was a great scurrying of feet in the passage. Then the study door burst open, revealing a crowd of Fourth-Formers.

"Bessie—"

"Fatima!"

"I say, Bessie. Don't forget me!"

"And me, Bessie! Give it to me!"

The fat girl of the Fourth stared in surprise at the group of girls.

"W-w-what do you w-w-want?" she asked helplessly.

"Aren't you giving your parrot away?"

"Eh?"

"It's all over the school!" chorused the crowd. "We were the first to get the news! And, Bessie—"

"G-g-giving it away?" stammered Bessie.

"Yes, with five pounds of tea," said Clara Trevlyn, the leading spirit in the crowd. "Aren't you giving away the parrot?"

"G-g-giving it away! No jolly fear!" exploded Bessie Bunter. "Me—give away my parrot! I'd rather die first!"

"You want to dye it first? Well,"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 10.

chuckled Clara, "it does look a bit faded!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, really—" said Bessie savagely.
"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Clara, backing out of the room with the rest of the laughing Fourth-Formers. "So you won't give the parrot away, Bessie? No wonder it looks so sad! Ha, ha, ha!"

And again the door was slammed, leaving the fat girl in a state of helpless rage.

"I won't put up with it!" she said to herself, stamping about the room. "It's a shame I can't make a fair offer like that, without being insulted! Here's somebody else coming to make fun of me," she added, as a step sounded in the passage. "But I'm not going to stand it any longer!"

And, with one eye on the closed door, she snatched up a cushion.

"Keep out!" she cried. "The next one to come bothering me, I don't care who it is, I—"

Whizz! went the cushion as the door swung open.

Plop!
"Help!" came a muffled scream from behind the downy missile.

Bessie Bunter gave a gasp of horror. "Mum-mum-my word!" she muttered. "The Bull!"

Pets and Popso!

BESSIE-BESSIE BUNTER!
How dare you—how dare you!"
Miss Bullivant, the drill-mistress, had caught the cushion full in her angular face. Her dignity was hurt, and it was a bad look-out for Bessie.

"Who—where—what has become of her? Oh, there you are!" cried the Bull, with a swish and a pounce as she caught sight of the fat girl crawling round the legs of the table. "Come out! Stand up! Explain!"

"Ow, Miss B-B-Bullivant! Oh, please—"

"Disgraceful!" raved the drill-mistress, rubbing a sore nose. "Did you hurl that cushion at my head, Bessie?"

"Ow! Yes—I m-m-mean no—that is—"

"You deny it?"
"Ye-ye-yes, Miss Bullivant! I m-m-mean, I w-w-wish I could, but I c-c-can't!"

"You'd better not!" warned the Bull, glaring. "What we are coming to—it passes belief! In my time, Bessie Bunter, girls at school were young ladies. But you—you— But tell me, what do you mean by that disgraceful notice on the board downstairs? That is what I came to see you about!"

"N-n-notice, Miss Bullivant?"

"About a pet for sale in this study," said Miss Bullivant. "Did you write the notice?"

"Ye-ye-yes, Miss Bullivant!"
"Well," said Miss Bullivant sternly, "you will go downstairs and remove that offensive notice from the board. At once!"

"Ye-ye-yes, Miss Bullivant. Cer-certainly!" faltered the fat girl.

And she rolled out into the passage and made for the stairs, with Miss Bullivant hard on her heels.

The tone of the school—the freedom that is allowed—the hare-brained schemes that you girls indulge in," boomed the drill-mistress, as she trooped down the stairs. "It is dreadful!" She stopped as she reached the notice-board. "That is the offensive notice, Bessie!" she said. "Tear it down! Merciful goodness, what do I see now?"

What the Bull saw, as she stepped to the hall door, was a long line of Fourth-Formers fling past on their way to the "zoo."

It was evident that the large greenhouse was their intended goal, for each girl in the procession carried a contribution to the Cliff House Natural History Society's collection.

"Stop!" cried Miss Bullivant, pouncing forward.

The procession halted.
"Merciful goodness!" gasped the drill-mistress again, as she cast an eye down the long line.

She stepped close to the first girl.
"Clara Trevlyn, what have you in that shabby old cage?" she asked.

"A hedgehog, Miss Bullivant!"
"W-w-what?"

"A hedgehog. I bought it at the bird-shop in Friar-dale. I had to have a nice pet, Miss Bullivant," said Clara calmly. "Study No. 7 means to get the prize if it can. Marjorie Hazeldene has a squirrel coming, and Dolly Jobling has bought a—"

"What have you bought, Dolly Jobling?" demanded the Bull, turning to the next in the procession.

"Two guinea-pigs, Miss Bullivant!" answered Dolly.

"Two—two guinea-pigs!"
"They are only small ones, Miss Bullivant."

"Show them to me!"
Dolly removed the brown paper wrapping from the cage.

"Disgusting creatures!" snorted the Bull. "Do you consider them fit and proper pets for a young lady of refinement? The one with the brown spots must have a bath, Dolly. At once! You will give it a bath!"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant!"
"And the one with the black spots—what is the matter with it?"

"It's rather quiet," said Dolly. "It was like that in the shop."

"Is it alive?"
"Oh, yes—I mean—"

said Dolly, looking closer at her pets. "I don't think it can be. It—it looks as though it's dead!"

It was, indeed, defunct, and now the Bull looked sterner than ever.

"Disgraceful!" she said. "You had better bury it at once. I—I— What is it, Boker?"

Boker, the school page, touched his hat as he came up with a large parcel under one arm.

"Please, marm, this here—"

"Boker, how often have I told you not to say 'this here'?"

"That there," said Boker, putting down the parcel, and pointing at it.

"Piper give it to me, just now, to hand to Miss Marjorie Hazeldene. It's from London, marm!"

"Oh, my lovely squirrel!" cried Marjorie, darting forward from the doorway, where she had been watching the scene between Miss Bullivant and the returned expedition.

Tearing off the brown-paper covering, she held up the brand-new cage.

"Look, Miss Bullivant! Oh, doesn't he look fine!"

The maths. mistress gave a grudging nod of assent.

Even she could not deny that the beautiful tame squirrel, in its handsome cage, was an outfit to be proud of.

"Take it away, Marjorie!" she snapped. "I am busy with these other girls! It appears to me—"

And there the Bull stopped with a gasp, her fiery eyes fixed upon what the next girl carried.

It was a small cage with two white rats.

"Horrible!" cried the Bull at last.

"Take it away! If Miss Primrose will allow these things, I cannot forbid them! But it is awful! And you, Gwendoline

Cook, what have you in that handkerchief?"

"I—please, I'm not quite sure! I—"

"Not sure?" cried the Bull. "Gwendoline Cook, that is a very remarkable statement! Is it bird, beast, or what is it? Not a reptile, I hope? Ow!"

Gwendoline, undoing the handkerchief, had exposed to view a very fat frog.

"It's so tame, Miss Bullivant," she pleaded meekly. "I would like to keep him. I caught him in the field. Is it a toad or a frog? I don't quite know."

Miss Bullivant was not going to appear ignorant. She forced herself to take a closer look at the queer pet as it squatted on Gwendoline's hand.

"Ahem! It has not the eyes of a toad, Gwendoline," she said. "You remember Shakespeare's lines about the toad?"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant."

"They occur in 'Romeo and Juliet,'" went on the drill mistress, bringing her eyes still nearer for closer inspection.

"But this is not a toad. It is a frog. I feel certain it is— Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed the onlookers, as the frog took a flying leap and landed full in the Bull's face.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant, falling back. "I—I— Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Fourth-Formers.

"Silence! Not a word!" snapped the Bull. "Gwendoline Cook, take up that wretched monster! Catch it—quick!"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant."

"Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Miss Bull—"

"Then catch it!"

"I'm trying to catch it, Miss Bullivant, but I—I can't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The shrieks of laughter were terrific as Gwendoline dashed after the elusive frog.

It seemed to have taken a fancy to Miss Bullivant, making a leap at that lady for every step she retreated.

"Never mind, Gwendoline Cook," said the Bull. "Let it go. We will proceed. What other pets have you girls obtained this afternoon? Show them to me!"

And then the procession filed past, drawing a stream of horrified cries from the censor of pets.

"Fancy mice! I am sure Miss Primrose will never allow mice!" said Miss Bullivant. "A canary! I hope it will sing; but it looks very poorly. More mice! And another guinea-pig! Merciful goodness! What is the matter with this rabbit's ears? A puppy—a white puppy! We shall have it barking and yapping from morn to night! A one-legged magpie, and a chameleon—a chameleon, of all things in the world! Go! Take them all away! It is," finished up the Bull, "a most amazing exhibition of folly! I say no more. And what have you bought, Barbara Rodfern? And you, Mabel Lynn?"

Babs and Mabs, coming last in the line of girls, explained that they had not been to buy pets.

Mabel's people would be sending her something in a day or so. Meantime, the two girls were quite sure that Study No. 4 could hold its own against all others with the famous marmoset—to say nothing of Bessie Bunter's parrot.

"And now the thing is to play our little jape on Bessie!" chuckled Babs, as soon as she and her chum had "passed the censor."

"Come on, Mabs! And don't give the game away, whatever you do!"

"Not likely!" laughed Mabel, as they hurried upstairs. "I wonder if we can bring it off before tea?"

"Oh, rather!" said Babs. Reaching their study, they found Bessie sitting there, looking very pale and sad.

"Hallo, still alive and kicking!" cried Babs.

In an off-hand way she put a black glass bottle on the mantelpiece, then took off her hat and tossed it aside.

"My word, I'm thirsty!" she said to Mabs. "But I suppose we'd better wait for tea. Feel thirsty, Fatima?"

"Awful!" said the fat girl feebly. "I don't know how to bear it! I've had an awful afternoon!"

"Thinking about that greedy little pig who stole Tony's food?" said Babs lightly. "Well, I wouldn't pity her, Fatima. She's not worth pity. Come on, Mabs! We'll go down and have a look at the zoo!"

And off they went again. Bessie sat upright in her chair and heaved a deep sigh.

Then she looked at the bottle on the mantelpiece.

"I wonder what Babs has brought home in that bottle?" she said to herself. "Another new kind of summer drink, perhaps?"

The thought of summer drinks made her mouth seem drier than ever.

She got up, and rolled towards the mantelpiece.

"Popso! That's a name I've never seen before," said the fat girl, smacking her lips, as she scanned the label. "New kind of stopper, too! I wonder if it opens easily?"

Pop! went the cork of the bottle of popso—very easily indeed.

Bessie closed one eye, and peered greedily with the other into the hole where the stopper had been.

"It doesn't fizz," she murmured. "But I wonder how it tastes?"

Gurglo, gurgle, gurgle!

"Delicious!" said Bessie, with satisfaction.

Gurgle, gurgle!

"My word, I could do with a dozen bottles of this! I—"

Gurgle, gurgle, gur-gur-gurgle!

"I can't help it if Babs kicks up a fuss. I shall have to pay for it when my remittance comes!" said Bessie desperately.

And she finished the bottle. And then Babs and Mabs came back with a rush, hardly giving the fat girl time to whip the bottle back and drop into her seat.

"Yes, we have time before tea," Babs was saying to Mabs. "And I would like to see Tony at once."

"Oh, rather!" said Mabel. "It would be a shame to neglect him. I— What's the matter, Babs?"

"This bottle! My word, look!" cried Barbara, holding up the empty black bottle. "Why, it's empty! I say, Bessie—"

"Dud-dud-did you s-s-speak, girls? I—I—I think I was dozing!" faltered Bessie, opening her eyes.

"This bottle that was on the mantelpiece!" cried Barbara. "It's empty!"

"Well, w-w-wasn't it empty when you b-b-brought it here?"

"Empty! It was full, and the stopper was fixed! Who has been playing tricks on me? You, Bessie?"

"M-m-me? N-n-nunno!"

"But you have been here all the time we've been away!"

"I know, but I—I—I didn't see anybody come in. I must have been d-d-doing!"

Babs and Mabs stared at each other. They were looking very serious.

"This is dreadful!" gasped Babs. "I do believe the same greedy little pig who stole Tony's food has crept in here and

stolen the stuff I bought for him to drink!"

"St-st-stuff you b-b-bought for Tony?" faltered Bessie, sitting up with a jerk.

"What stuff?"

"In this bottle! I got it at the bird-shop."

"I—I—I thought it was a new summer drink!" stammered Bessie.

"And you've drunk it?"

"N-n-nunno! No, Babs. I—really, I—Popso—"

"Popso is only the old name on the bottle, you goose!"

"Then—then what was in it?" gasped Bessie.

"Have you ever heard of permanganate of potash?" asked Babs.

"P-p-p-permanganate of p-p-potash? What's that?" stammered the fat girl feebly.

"A disinfectant. Keeps the cages sweet and clean!"

"Ow! N-n-nunno! I'm culy going to— Yaroooogh!"

"She's poisoned herself!" cried Babs.

"Look here, Bessie," said Babs. "Do you feel a pain in the side?"

"Ye-ye-yes!"

"Have you a dizziness in the head?"

"Ow! Nunno! I mean, yes—an awful dizziness— Yooop!"

"And shivers all down your back?"

"Ye-ye-yes! Ow! Don't leave me!" howled Bessie. "Save me! Help! I've drunk the whole b-b-bottle of p-p-p—"

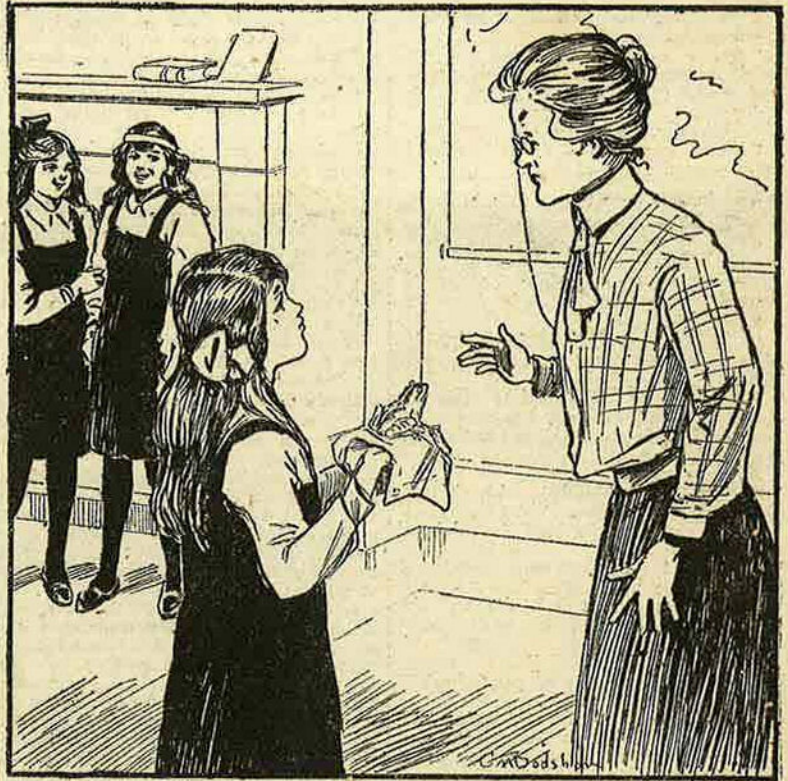
"What?" cried Barbara and Mabel together.

They seized the fat girl then, and hauled her out of the chair.

"You admit you drank that bottle of—"

"Pup-pup— Ow! Yes! Oooch! I'm going to die!"

"Stand up, you greedy little duffer!" cried Babs, giving the fat girl a



"It's so tame, Miss Bullivant," said Gwendoline Cook, exposing a very fat frog to view. "I would like to keep him. I caught him in the field!" "It is the most disgusting, the most repulsive of vermin!" gasped Miss Bullivant.

"Mum-mum-my word!" Bessie was breaking out into a perspiration. Her face was shiny with it.

"And is p-p-p-permanganate of p-p-potash a p-p-p-pup-poison?"

"That," smiled Babs grimly, "remains to be seen!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Bessie.

And she sat down again.

The Puppy That Wasn't There!

"Ow! Oooch!"

"Bessie!"

"Ow! Yow! Grooogh!"

"Fatima! Why, what—"

"Yow-ow! Yarooogh!"

Babs and Mabs rushed at Bessie Bunter as she sat limply in the study chair.

"What's the matter, Bessie?" said Barbara. "Are you unwell?"

shake. "So you drank the bottle of Popso?"

"Yes! I—I thought it was a summer drink! I— Ow, ow, ow!"

"And you denied drinking it?"

"Shake! 'Bessie Bunter!' Shake! 'You are a horrid little fibber!'"

"N-n-nunno!"

"You are!" Shake! "And now you are going to confess that you ate all Tony's food?"

"N-n-nunno! I mean, ye-ye-yes!" stammered Bessie. "Ow! Be quiet! Lemme go away and die! I'm p-p-p—"

"We knew it!" cried Mabel, helping Babs with the shaking. "You little pig!"

"Oh, t-t-tell me," faltered Bessie, rolling her eyes about, "am I going to d-d-die?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Shake! "We'll see

that you don't die, Bessie!" Shake! "We'll cure you!" Shake—shake—shake!

"Ow, my poor head! I must be bad! Lemme alone, do!" wailed the fat girl. "I only ate the biscuits be-be-because I thought you might give too many to Tony! Over-feeding is bad for p-p-pets! Yaroooh!"

"You are going to find it's bad for girls, too," said Babs grimly. "Hand me that hockey-stick, Mabel!"

Mabs came back from the corner with the hefty-looking weapon.

"Now, Bessie dear," said Babs, in a very sweet tone, "we are going to be nice and kind, and admit that we have been pulling your leg. There is no harm in that biscuit of Tony's. Only it was meant for Tony, not for you—see?"

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"And the bottle wasn't full of permanganate of potash. It was a bottle of Pops for me and Mabs, not for you. See?"

"Oh, dear!" sighed Bessie, with relief. "I'm so—so glad!"

"Half a moment! You can begin to be glad when you get outside this study—not before!" said Babs. "See this hockey-stick!"

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"I'd be sorry," said Babs, "to let it drop on your toes like that!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mabel, as the fat girl skipped half a yard into the air.

"Run away!" said Babs, making further dabs at Bessie's toes with the hefty stick. "Hop it, Fatima!"

"Ow! Stop it!"

"I said 'Hop it'!"

"Oh, help!" yelled the fat girl, skipping faster and faster to avoid the swift dabs. "Stoppit, you—you—"

Barbara signed to Mabel to open the door, and next moment Bessie scuttled round the table and made a frantic dash for the passage.

Bump!

The fat girl collided with Marcia Loftus, in the passage.

"You clumsy little idiot!" exclaimed Marcia.

"Yow-ow! P-p-p-please, Marcia, I d-d-didn't see you! I—"

"You—you clumsy little duffer!" she cried, giving the fat girl a push. "Get out of my way, do!"

"Oh, really, Marcia—"

"Don't give me any of your cheek!" flared up the spiteful girl.

She clenched her hand and looked like striking Bessie. And then she noticed the open door, and Barbara and Mabel hovering near.

That was not good enough for Marcia. She gave Bessie another angry push, and marched on to her own study.

"But I'll take it out of that fat kid sooner or later," she muttered, entering Study No. 3, and banging the door. "I'll make Study No. 4 sing small before I've finished!"

Freda Foote and Vivienne Leigh, both of whom were sharing No. 3 with Marcia at this time, looked up from their work at the table.

"What's Bessie Bunter done now?" asked Vivienne.

"Barged into me, the clumsy thing!" said Marcia. "I felt like taking it out of her, but—"

"You thought better of it?" put in Freda quietly. "It is as well to think better about taking anything out of anybody, when Barbara and Mabel are on hand. They have a special knack of sticking up for Bessie, at times. I've noticed it."

"Just because she's in their study!" sneered Marcia, flinging herself down in a passion. "You think it a fine thing, I

suppose, for Barbara and Mabel to stick up for Bessie, against me? But you don't seem to care about sticking up for me, Freda, although you share this study with me and Vivienne."

"I like to be loyal," said Freda quietly. "But I don't care about being a party to—"

"Well, what?"

"No, I won't say. I'd better not."

And Freda drew a book towards her, opened it, and began to read. Freda did not get on very well with Marcia.

"You'll agree with me, anyhow," said Marcia, turning her sullen face upon Vivienne. "It's time we took Barbara and her pals down a bit. Barbara is the worst by far. She gets too high and mighty!"

"She seems to take the lead in everything," nodded Vivienne.

"Just so. Look at this silly idea of pet keeping!" Marcia seemed to be bubbling over with jealous rage. "The girls may say what they like—they'll find out that I was right in what I said. Barbara Redfern is out to get the prize!"

"Well, she has a lovely pet—that marmoset," admitted Vivienne.

"Lovely pet! Disgusting beast. I call it!" snapped Marcia. "I'd like to drown it!"

Freda got up, closed her book, and walked out, closing the door behind her.

"Freda's giving herself airs," said Marcia. "I suppose she objected to what I said about this pet-keeping business. But I have a right to my own opinion!"

"Certainly," said Vivienne.

"And I mean to act up to it!"

"Certainly," said Vivienne again.

"Why not?"

Marcia looked at her. She felt that it was going to be rather nice having Vivienne in Study No. 3.

Freda Foote had not been very easy to get on with. But Vivienne was a bit weak; she would do and say anything to please.

"Of course," said Marcia, after taking a turn about the room, "I don't care really whether there is a natural history society or not. What I do object to is Barbara Redfern being at the head of it, as she is always at the head of everything else. And I tell you, Viv, I'd give anything to take her down a peg. If only somebody else could get the prize! How small that would make Barbara feel. After getting up the thing, just because she was certain she would get the prize, how ripping it would be for her to come a cropper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Vivienne.

"But that is not likely to happen—is it?"

"I don't know so much," said Marcia fiercely.

"You've got a plan?"

"Perhaps. And perhaps I'll get you to help me."

"I don't mind," said the weak girl, smiling. "But it seems to me it is going to be all against you, Marcia. Miss Primrose is very fair and just. She will stick to the condition, and give the prize to the girl with the best-kept pet, not the prettiest, or the most expensive."

"Rubbish! Don't you see that with a pet like Barbara's, the others have no chance?" insisted Marcia. "I'm not taking any chances, anyhow. I'm going to make certain that something happens to— Well, you'll see," she finished up darkly. "And now let's have tea on our own. I've got that new cake to cut."

"Oh, good!" said Vivienne.

And it really was a capital spread to which the couple sat down, ten minutes later.

There were only the two of them for the feast, and the talk flagged a little.

So it happened that they heard snatches of chatter from other girls who went to and fro in the passage, when tea was over downstairs.

"Nothing but pets, pets, pets!" muttered Marcia. "They've got pets on the brain! This place is going to be more like a zoo than a school. Freda Foote had better not get the craze. If she does, out of this study she goes!"

"Certainly!" said Vivienne. "That would be— Hark! There's Miss Bullivant in the passage!"

"And she's coming here!" burst out Marcia, as the impressive step halted outside the door.

The door opened, and Miss Bullivant stalked in.

"Ahem!"

The pompous, little cough was followed by a heavy pause, during which Miss Bullivant looked all round the floor.

"Excuse me," she said, with fancied sweetness, "but have you girls any pets?"

"Certainly not, Miss Bullivant!" answered Marcia. "I think it is disgusting to keep pets!"

"Yes, it is dreadful! I do trust that Miss Primrose will put down this craze with a firm hand, when she knows that girls are bringing pets into their studies," said Miss Bullivant. "I have seen rats, mice, a tortoise—all the most awful creatures—crawling about the studies I have been to."

"The girls are making idiots of themselves," said Marcia. "It is a pity Barbara Redfern ever started the idea."

"My dear Marcia, I agree," nodded the Bull. "I—er—you are sure you have no pet here, Marcia?"

"Yes, Miss Bullivant."

The Bull paused.

"I thought I heard a faint yapping as I came along, like the bark of a very young puppy," she said.

"Lucy Morgan has a puppy," said Vivienne Leigh.

"Yes, but that puppy has been taken downstairs, by order," said the Bull. "I thought, however, that I heard a very faint barking. Hark!"

In the sudden silence a distinct "Yap, yap, yap!" seemed to come from the corner cupboard.

Miss Bullivant jerked her head a little higher, staring straight at the cupboard door.

Yap, yap, yap!

"There it is again," said the matron. "Marcia—Vivienne! How can you tell me that you have no puppy, when I distinctly hear a—"

Yap, yap, yap!

Marcia looked at Vivienne, and Vivienne looked at Marcia. Their eyes were full of sheer bewilderment.

Yap, yap, yap!

"Open that cupboard door!" said the Bull, sweeping forward. "I am surprised, Marcia Loftus! You have been deceiving me!"

"I—I—I haven't, Miss Bullivant!"

"Open that door!"

Marcia flung open the cupboard, revealing a litter of sporting tackle, hat-boxes, and old shoes. But there was no puppy.

"And yet," said Miss Bullivant, "I could have sworn—"

Yap, yap, yap! came again from the darkest corner of the dark cupboard.

"It must be in the next room," said Marcia. "I hate puppies! I loathe all pets!"

The Bull turned slowly.

"Most extraordinary!" she exclaimed. "I—ahem!—I will pursue my investigations in the adjoining study."

And she stalked from the room, just as another pathetic, little yelp came from the corner cupboard.

The Malice of Marcia.

"SHUT that door!" Marcia said to Vivienne sharply. "The idea of Miss Bullivant thinking I had a puppy here!"

"But, Marcia," said Vivienne, "there really was a—"

"Ye-el-elp! Yap, yap, yap!"

"My word!" said Vivienne, turning pale. "It must be in that cupboard, after all!"

"I tell you it is next door!" exclaimed Marcia. "The thin wall would make it seem as if it were in the cupboard! Bother the puppy! If I had the little beast, I would—"

"Yap, yap, ye-elp!"

"Marcia, really, it must be—"

"It can't be! You can see for yourself, Vivienne!"

The door swung open, and Miss Bullivant stalked in again.

Behind her loomed a small crowd of Fourth-Formers, amongst whom were Barbara, Mabel, and Bessie Bunter.

"The dog is not in the next room!" said the Bull. "It is here!"

Yap, yap, yap!

A titter of laughter arose from the crowd at the door.

"Silence!" cried the Bull angrily. "Marcia Loftus, I strongly suspect you of deceiving me! There is a puppy here, in this room! It must be here! Why, it is under the table!"

And, with a pounce, Miss Bullivant lifted the hanging cloth, and peered beneath the tea-table.

"No! Most extraordinary! I could have sworn— There it is again! Marcia, you have some secret hiding-place!"

"Miss Bullivant, I have no puppy, and no hiding-place! I tell you I detest puppies!"

"But—"

"Yelp! Wow-wow! Yap-yap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded the crowd.

"Poor little Fido!"

"Girls, be quiet! One of you," said the Bull, "fetch Piper here at once! Tell him to bring a hammer and chisel! There must be a puppy under the floorboards! Poor creature, it has got there in some mysterious fashion, and is languishing. But no—the chimney! I understand at last!"

And a great light suddenly lit up the Bull's fierce face.

"Marcia," she exclaimed "have you put a puppy up the chimney?"

"Certainly not, Miss Bullivant!" replied Marcia.

"But how else could the puppy get there?" cried the maths mistress, going down on hands and knees in front of the fireplace. "Keep quite quiet, please!"

Again there was dead silence; and again a pathetic little yelping sounded plainly in the room.

This time it really seemed to come from the chimney.

The Bull swelled with pride.

"Poor thing!" she murmured, putting her head in the wide grate to try to see up the chimney. "It may perish before we can save it!"

She took up the poker.

The crowd at the door watched with bated breath.

"I cannot see the poor thing!" said the Bull, pushing and prodding with the poker. "But—"

"Yelp! Yap! Wow-wow-yelp!"

"This is awful!" said the mistress. "I think the end of my poker touched something—I am not quite sure!" She peered closer than ever. "It is either a loose brick, or—"

There was a sudden rattling in the chimney, and then a shriek from the Bull.

"Help! Groooogh! Good gracious! Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Bullivant dashed about a pound of soot from each eye, and glared round upon the laughing crowd.

"Silence!" She waved the poker. "How—how dare you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That was too much for the Bull. She jumped up, and the action caused a small pyramid of soot to fall from her hair and run all down her face and neck.

"Yow! Groooogh! Yoooooh!"

"Yap, yap, yap!" came the puppy's cry again.

"Silence! I will not—I will not stand this impudence!" raved the mistress, swishing about with the poker in her hand.

She was now as black as a sweep, and the whites of her eyes looked horrible.

"Who has been deceiving me?" she demanded angrily. "I will report this! I—I will go and wash," she broke off in despair. "Look at me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How dare you look at me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the crowd.

At this moment Piper, the school porter, came upon the scene, panting for breath.

In his hand he held a hammer and chisel.

"Is it here I'm wanted?" he cried, as the crowd parted to let him in. "Miss Bullivant— Good 'evings!" he gasped, coming face to face with the black Bull.

"Piper!" screamed Miss Bullivant. She shook the poker in his face "How—how dare you!"

"Me—dare, ma'am?" said the porter.

"But it ain't me! It's you!"

"Insolent scoundrel!"

"You sent for me, ma'am, and here I am, with me 'ammer and me chisel! I'm all right, ma'am! I ain't got no soot on my face!" said Piper.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was more than Miss Bullivant could bear. Flinging down the poker, she dashed through the laughing crowd, which now began to break up.

"Clear out!" called Marcia curtly, to those who lingered. "Now, Piper, you are not wanted here! Shut that door on the lot of them, Viv!"

Vivienne obeyed; and in a few minutes she and her study-friend, having cleared up the mess of soot and put the tea-things away, were settling down to their prep.

"I'm not going to forget this business, Vivienne!" said Marcia savagely.

"I know what it means! It dawned upon me when I saw those girls from Study No. 4 grinning at the door. Miss Bullivant made one big mistake, Viv."

"What was that?"

"She was wrong about the puppy! It wasn't a puppy, but a cat!"

"What!"

"Yes!" said Marcia snappishly. "A clever little cat who knows how to throw her voice! That is the only explanation. Well, next time I get hold of Bessie Bunter, I'll get the secret out of her. I'm sure she was responsible for that barking!"

Vivienne raised a finger.

"Hark!" she said. "That sounds like Bessie Bunter's step. I wonder if we could entice her in here, and then—"

"Good idea!" chuckled Marcia.

"We'll put her through it, Viv!"

But when Vivienne opened the door and looked out, it was to see Bessie's broad back, as she scuttled along with the parrot-cage swinging at her side.

Bessie had her own cunning reason for shifting the famous parrot from Study No. 4.

In the last few hours she had seen that the craze for pets was catching on.

Also, she had been forced to the conclusion that the parrot held no earthly chance of winning the prize. It was mopeish, and it was moulting.

Another point that weighed with the fat girl was that she was as hard up as ever. She was still waiting for the remittance that never came.

She had made up her mind about one thing. The parrot simply must be sold.

She hoped that, by taking it downstairs and putting it in the "zoo" amongst the other pets, it would live up a bit.

At any rate, it would be on view before the whole school, and some girl with more pocket-money than discretion might make an offer for the bird.

The "zoo" was crowded out when Bessie got to it with her cage.

Barbara and Mabel were there, and so were Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Dolly Jobling.

And there were at least a dozen other girls besides, most of them busy making their pets comfortable for the first night "in quarters."

It was a sign of the old friendly rivalry between Studies Nos. 4 and 7 that Barbara's wonderful marmoset now had a next-door neighbour in Marjorie's pretty squirrel.

And, really, looking at each of those pretty creatures, it was hard for anybody to prophesy which would get the prize.

Bessie, squeezing her way down the centre, begged for a little more room for herself and the cage.

The result was sudden uproar.

"Stop pushing, Fatima!"

"You and your mopy parrot—"

"I might have expected you to be jealous!" said Bessie. "When anybody comes along with a nice pet like mine, then—wow! Leggo!"

"Then don't tread on my tortoise!" shrieked the angry owner of the reptile that was crawling about the tiled floor.

"Get out of it!"

A push sent the fat girl crashing against Clara Trevlyn, who was handling her hedgehog.

"Get away!" cried Clara. "There's no room here!"

"B-b-but—"

Clara snatched up her pet and dabbed its bristly back full in Bessie's face.

"Wow!" howled Bessie, dropping her cage. "Ugh! You cat!"

"Hallo! What's this old lumber doing here?" said Marjorie, taking up the parrot-cage. "Look here, girls, is this thing alive or dead?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Marjorie, that's my p-p-p—" began Bessie.

"Anybody want to buy an old cage, with the parrot thrown in?" cried Marjorie; whilst the merry crowd hustled Bessie to keep her from getting at the unhappy pet. "The cage might be useful. Sixpence, shall I say? Sixpence, anybody?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Marjorie, you cat! M-m-my parrot! Gimme m-m-my p-p-p—"

"This parrot, ladies and gentlemen," said Marjorie, "is the property of a lady in reduced circumstances—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"She is willing to hire it out by the hour, day, or week—"

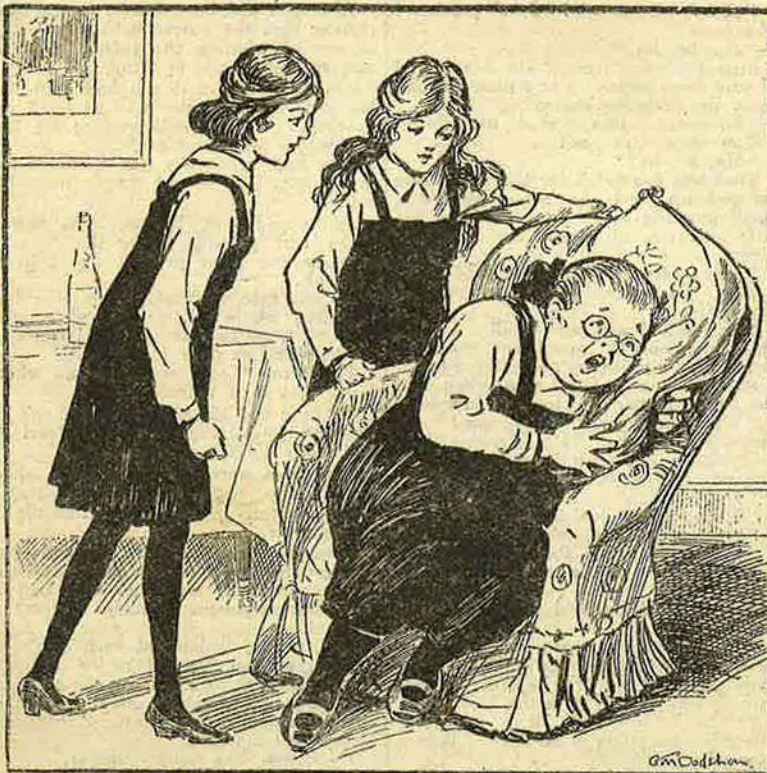
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or will present it to any kind person in exchange for a pot of jam!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No offers, Bessie!" said Marjorie, handing over the cage. "Take it away, and get some new feathers sewn on!"

"You're j-j-jealous cats, all of you!" flared up Bessie, embracing the cage. "You and your m-m-mice, and your



"Have you a dizziness in the head?" asked Barbara Redfern. "Ow!" groaned Bessie Bunter. "Nunno! I mean, yes—an awful dizziness! Yoop!" "And shivers all down your back?" "Ye-ye-yes!" stammered Bessie.

g-g-guinea-pigs, and your t-t-tortoises! But you wait until I get the prize! Then you'll see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie dumped the cage on to the lower shelf, next to Barbara's marmoset.

"Stay there, Polly!" she said.

"Better get some glue, Bessie!" struck in Barbara solemnly.

"G-g-glue?" stammered Bessie. "W-w-what for?"

"To make the parrot stay there on its perch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then Mabel came forward with a coin in her hand.

"Where do you put the penny in the slot, Bessie?" she asked.

"Penny in the slot? W-w-what for?"

"To make the parrot move. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It doesn't m-m-move—I mean, it talks, and that's more than any of your pets do!" Bessie turned to the parrot.

"What do you think of them all, Polly?"

"Cats—jealous cats!" came from the cage. "I shall get the prize!"

This remark created a sensation.

"I wouldn't sell him for pounds and pounds!" said Bessie proudly.

"Well, cheer up; you're not likely to find anybody who wants to buy him," said Barbara.

"Now, listen to me, Bessie! You see this little box that I keep close to my pet's cage? It's got sugar in it and biscuits and—"

Bessie Bunter endeavoured to help herself to a lump of sugar.

Barbara gripped hold of the fat girl's plait, and pulled.

"Ow! Leggo! Yow-ow!"

"Keep your greedy fingers out of the box, then!" cried Babs, as she gave another tug at the fat girl's plait.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 10.

"That's just what I was going to warn you to do!"

"And these nuts for my squirrel," chimed in Marjorie. "Don't you dare touch them, Bessie!"

"And these biscuits for my puppy," added Lucy Morgan. "You leave them alone!"

Bessie Bunter looked indignant.

"Oh, really—" she began.

Then Miss Bellew came in, to see how the girls were getting on with their various pets, and to warn them that in a few minutes the "zoo" must close for the evening.

Miss Bellew was like the headmistress. She had a keen interest in the Cliff House Natural History Society, and her delight over the different kinds of pets was very pleasing to Barbara and her fellow-members.

They went off at last, feeling quite satisfied with the start they had made, and for the remainder of the evening the talk was still of pets and pet-keeping.

But Bessie, at heart, was far from happy. Putting the parrot on show in the "zoo" had not produced any results.

So, in the twilight, when no one else was about, the fat girl returned to the conservatory to think things over.

She pulled the bit of sacking from the cage, and stared rather sadly at Polly. And Polly stared rather sadly at her.

"Oh, dear!" said Bessie. "I don't know what to do."

Replacing the bit of sacking, she turned away, and went the round of the place.

All the other cages were covered for the night, and it really seemed as if she was not going to get much inspiration by hanging about there.

And then suddenly her greedy eyes fell

upon Barbara's box of biscuits and sugar.

Bessie opened the lid, took out a lump of sugar, and scrunched it between her teeth. Then she took another. She finished all the sugar, and started upon the biscuits.

"I know they are good for people to eat," she said to herself. "Barbara said so! And I can make it up to her. I'll pay for the biscuits and the sugar out of my remittance. It's bound to turn up in the morning!"

Having finished the biscuits, she suddenly remembered Marjorie Hazeldene's nuts for the squirrel.

"Spanish nuts, already cracked?" said the fat girl, with a gloating smile. "I love Spanish nuts!"

And she stuffed them in her pocket.

"My word! Biscuits for Lucy Morgan's puppy!"

She took one from the bag, and nibbled it.

"My word!" she said. "These biscuits are quite good. I shall have to pay Lucy Morgan for these when my remittance comes. It's bound to arrive in the morning, but if it doesn't I may be able to sell my parrot. If only some of those girls would get rid of their hedgehogs and tortoises and guinea pigs and—"

Bessie broke off with a sudden little gasp as an inspiration came to her.

"My word!" she muttered once again.

"I know what I'll do. I'll—"

But Bessie did not say what she was going to do. She left the Cliff House "zoo" chuckling to herself.

Evidently a scheme had flashed across her mind which greatly appealed to her.

The Midnight Alarm.

Y^{AP}, yap, yap!

"What's that?" Barbara Redfern sat up in bed with a start. So did the rest of the girls in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

Yap, yap, yap!

"It's a dog!" went up the whisper from all parts of the dark dormitory.

There was a brief silence, and then—

Whe-eel-olp! Yelp! Yap!

"It's a dog right enough!" said Barbara Redfern. "Lucy Morgan, if you've brought your puppy up here—"

"That isn't my puppy!" said Lucy Morgan. "My puppy is down in the zoo. I tied him up in his corner."

Yap, yap, yap! came the cry again.

And again the dormitory laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We must find him and keep him quiet," said Barbara.

She got out of bed.

The rest of the dormitory followed her example.

At dead of night the Cliff House Natural History Society found itself assembling for a special meeting.

The one thing the Cliff House Natural History Society dreaded was an upset that would cause Miss Primrose to change her views about pets.

"It's somewhere in this room!" said Mabel Lynn. "No, it isn't! Hark!"

This time the yapping seemed to come from the landing.

"I say, you girls," said Bessie Bunter, "I'm going to explore. I'll go down—"

"And search the pantry for puppies and jam!" chuckled Clara Trevlyn.

"We know you, Bessie! Come back!"

"Yes; hold that fat duffer back!" urged Babs, hurrying forward. "We mustn't make a noise."

Whelp, whelp! Yee-ap!

"Ha, ha, ha!" Babs held up her hand for silence.

"Is that the puppy scuttling about on the landing?" she asked.

It was not. It was Miss Bullivant, who now burst upon the scene with a lighted candle, which dripped tallow as she swung it wildly around.

"Lucy Morgan," cried the maths. mistress, "you have brought your puppy into the school!"

"I haven't brought him in, Miss Bullivant!" said Lucy Morgan promptly.

"How dare you tell me untruths!" snapped Miss Bullivant. "If the puppy isn't here, how can he—"

Yelp! Yap! Yelp!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Girls, silence! Once and for all, I will have this matter ended. Stay here! I am going down."

And, with a majestic turn, Miss Bullivant swept out of the room, and swished towards the stairs.

The girls waited, their ears on the alert. But now the puppy was silent.

For a full minute deep silence brooded over the whole house. And then, suddenly, there was a loud shriek, a bump, a crash!

"Help—help!" came from the lower regions. "Help!"

"My word!" cried Babs, dashing from the room. "That is Miss Bullivant! I wonder—"

"Help! Ow! Help!" came the maths. mistress' yell of terror.

Babs was not the only one to respond to the cry. In a flash the entire Natural History Society was fitting down the dark staircase.

In the hall below, a ghostly figure was fitting wildly about.

It was Miss Bullivant. She had dropped the candle, and had quite lost her head.

The result was a series of bumps and crashes as she dashed this way and that, upsetting flower-stands, chairs, and china vases.

"Oh, my gracious!" panted the Bull, still dashing around. "The place is alive with them. I have seen hundreds—hundreds—oh!"

"Hundreds of what?" chorused the girls.

"Rats, mice—white rats, white mice!" exclaimed Miss Bullivant. "Look, there's another! Help!"

"Ow!" howled some of the girls, huddling together as a white rat streaked across the floor.

Bang! Crash! went the entire hatstand, as Miss Bullivant tried to climb up it in her efforts to escape the rat.

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Barbara and a few others were screaming with laughter now.

"Miss Bullivant—"

"The candle! Oh, will somebody pick up the candle and light it?" wailed Miss Bullivant, perching herself on a chair. "Quick!"

Barbara groped around, found the candle and matches, and lit up.

The hall was a scene of wreckage. In a few seconds Miss Bullivant had done almost as much damage as an air raid.

Babs and Mabs began to pick up the overturned chairs, and then another yell went up from the scared crowd.

"There—look! Another rat!"

"The same one, no doubt," said Babs. "Now, then!"

The white rat had dived under the grandfather clock. Keeping a watch on the hiding-place, Babs took a stick from the overturned hatstand, and advanced to the attack.

"Be careful," said Miss Bullivant, stepping down very gingerly. "I am not afraid, myself!"

And she forced herself to draw nearer.

"Mind the clock, Barbara!" she said. "It would be a pity to damage the clock. Let me take the stick and—"

Bang!

That was the stick, as Barbara brought it down with a mighty swipe.

But she missed the rat.

"Yoooop!" shrieked Miss Bullivant. "My foot!"

And she hopped round on one leg, whilst she nursed her other foot with both hands.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the girls.

"Oh, Miss Bullivant, was that your foot I hit?" cried Babs in pained surprise.

"Mum-mum-my foot? It was my corn!" wailed the Bull. "Oh, hear—oh! If Miss Primrose doesn't put a stop to this craze for pets, I shall resign. First the puppy, and then—oh, dear—"

She broke off, falling back a step. "Look there! What—what is it?"

"Please, Miss Bullivant," said Dolly Jobling, "that's my guinea-pig."

And she dashed forward and snatched up the pet, which, after making a little run into the centre of the hall, had suddenly stopped dead.

"Your guinea-pig!" gasped the mistress. "And pray, what do you mean by leaving your guinea-pig at large in the school?"

Dolly was spared the trouble of finding an answer to that question, for at this moment Miss Primrose came hurrying down, with the rest of the school in her wake.

"Miss Bullivant—you!" cried the headmistress, gazing around in blank amazement. "And all the girls, too! But what does it mean, please? Such a commotion at this hour! I feared burglars!"

"Oh, it is worse than burglars, it is dreadful—dreadful!" wailed the Bull. "Miss Primrose, behold! The place is

swarming with rats and mice and guinea-pigs and puppies—"

"Not swarming with them, surely? Miss Bullivant?"

"Teeming with them—teeming!" insisted the Bull. "See the damage they have done—everything upset!"

"It is evident that you, yourself, are upset," smiled Miss Primrose. "But—"

"My feelings are hurt," said the Bull. "Rats, mice, guinea-pigs! What shall we have next?"

As if in answer to that question, a queer-looking creature suddenly crawled lazily into view from the hall mat.

Miss Bullivant pointed a shaking hand at the wanderer.

"There—behold for yourself, Miss Primrose! A-a-a— Oh, disgraceful! A chameleon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Primrose looked the least bit dismayed.

"Get a shovel and broom, and sweep up that—that reptile," she said. "This is very unfortunate. I had no idea such pets were being kept. You girls must understand that I did not intend you to go in for the lower forms of animal life. Are there any other pets of that nature?"

"Here's a frog," said Barbara Redfern. "And a tortoise!"

"What? Where?"

"Here in the corner, Miss Primrose!"

"And here's a one-legged magpie!" cried Mabel Lynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really!" exclaimed the headmistress.

"I—I—"

"Quick!" called Marjorie Hazeldene from the adjoining room. "The carpet is covered with rabbits!"

"What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Girls, don't laugh," pleaded Miss



"Help!" shouted Marcia Loftus. "I'm drowning! Help!" Barbara Redfern swam swiftly to the rescue.

Primrose. "Has everything escaped? What does it mean?"

She strode into the room where the rabbits were frisking about, and her roving glance fell at once upon the door leading out into the glass conservatory.

That door was half open. "Dear me!" said the headmistress, striding through with a candle in her hand. "Every pet in the collection is at large! No, I am wrong! Barbara's marmoset is here, and the squirrel, and— Is this a parrot, girls?"

"Ye-ye-yes, Miss Primrose," said Bessie Bunter, coming forward. "That is my parrot!"

"Then to-morrow," said the headmistress firmly, "you will spend an hour cleaning out the cage. Bessie Bunter, such a fine pet as that should not be neglected. Now, girls, we cannot be robbed of our night's rest like this. Catch the things and put them back at once. And, remember, no more reptiles!"

With which final warning Miss Primrose departed, leaving Miss Bullivant to take charge of the grand round-up.

Roars of laughter came from the girls as they hunted out the strayed pets; but as for the Bull, she remained from first to last the picture of grim disapproval.

"Now to bed," she ordered her charges when the hunt was over. "And remember what Miss Primrose has said—no more reptiles!"

Candle in hand, she lighted the way upstairs, and then, having seen the girls to their different rooms, retired to her own quarters.

Barbara, getting between the sheets again, laughed softly.

"Ha, ha, ha! What fun it was, girls," she said. "But I'd like to find out who let all the pets loose. I wonder—"

And there she stopped, sitting bolt upright in bed, as a wild shriek burst upon the air.

"Help!"

It was the Bull again—no doubt about that.

In an instant the girls were leaping from their beds and dashing for the door.

"Help! Oh, help!"

The maths mistress was on the landing now, and all over the great house doors were banging open.

"Miss Primrose—quick!"

"Well, what is it now?" cried the headmistress from the threshold of her room. "Is that you, Miss Bullivant?"

"Yes!" went up the wailing answer. "And there's something in my bed—some monster—"

"What?"

"A prickly thing—a hedgehog—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded the girls, for the fiftieth time that night.

"Miss Bullivant, I thought you had more sense," said the headmistress. "Can't you refrain from making such disturbances? A hedgehog is quite harmless—"

"It—it's in my bed!"

"Then take it out! Take it downstairs; and then do try to get some sleep, and let others get theirs! Good-night!"

Miss Primrose's door slammed, and all that the listening girls heard after that was a series of shuddering groans, as the unfortunate Miss Bullivant removed the offending creature from the bed and took it downstairs to the "zoo."

Presently she came creeping back. There was the snick of a lock as she closed the bed-room door behind her, and then silence.

And so peace and quietness settled upon Cliff House School once more, and in the Fourth Form dormitory the girls were soon fast asleep—all save one.

That one exception was Bessie Bunter. There in the dark lay Bessie, with a smile of self-satisfaction on her face.

"No more reptiles to be kept!" she said to herself, repeating Miss Primrose's order. "It was a great idea of mine to work up that scene by letting all the horrid things loose! And now, to-morrow—"

The fat girl chuckled softly. "To-morrow I'm going to sell the parrot!" she said.

Bessie's Luck is Out!

BUT the morrow, when it came, brought disappointment to Bessie Bunter.

By dinner-time she discovered that parrots were not in demand at Cliff House, despite the craze for pets.

Even the girls who had received notice, as it were, to get rid of undesirable pets, such as reptiles and rats—even they were proof against the wiles of Bessie.

She had built her firmest hopes on these girls, and it was a great blow to be shown the door directly she started to extol the merits of her Polly.

The price, of course, was a difficulty. Bessie's figure of four pounds ten—as she explained, it was "dirt cheap" for a parrot and cage, all complete—but not many girls walked about with four pounds ten in their pockets.

So Bessie suggested a sort of limited liability company, the girls to take five-shilling shares in Polly as a going concern. But even this wonderful scheme fell flat.

"The fact is," said Bessie, in disgust, when, for the third time, she was being shown to the door, "you girls, who go in for rats, and mice, and frogs, you are a lot of paupers! You can't afford anything better!"

It was Gwendoline Cook who was holding the door open for Bessie.

"How much money have you in your pocket, Bessie?" Gwen asked sweetly.

"I—I'm sorry to say I haven't any at present; but—"

"Then," said Gwendoline, taking Bessie by her plait, and pulling hard, "the next time"—pull!—"you needn't be so quick about"—pull!—"calling people paupers!"

"Wow! Leggo! You cat!" shrieked Bessie.

The door slammed, and Bessie was again out in the cold.

"Hallo, kid!" said Clara Trevlyn, coming along the passage a moment later. "What's happened to your parrot?"

"N-n-nothing that I know of!" blurted out Bessie, in a sudden fright. "Is it dead?"

"It might be, you look so down in the mouth!"

And Clara passed on. Bessie rolled after her, full of sudden hope.

"I say, Clara—I s-s-say— M-m-may I s-p-speak to you?"

"Certainly, my dear!" said Clara, with mock sympathy. "Come into the study!"

And she flung open the door of Study No. 7.

"Go in, Bessie!"

Marjorie Hazeldene was there at the table. She looked up, frowning.

"What does that kid want? This isn't a home for lost cats!"

"Oh, the poor thing is in great trouble!" said Clara, with a quiet wink.

"She was weeping on the doorstep, so to speak, and I took pity on her. Would you like a glass of milk and a bun, Bessie?"

"Ye-ye-yes, rather!" said Bessie, blinking through her thick spectacles.

"So would I; so would Marjorie!" grinned Clara. "But there are no glasses of milk and buns here. Only advice—free, gratis, and bad for nix. Don't cry, Bessie!"

"I—I—I'm jolly well n-n-not crying!" said Bessie. "I'm sure I'm quite happy! Only—I say, you girls—you, Clara! You had a hedgehog yesterday—"

"I've still got it, thanks! He asked to be remembered to you!"

"D-d-don't be s-silly—I mean—I say, Clara," blustered the fat-girl, feeling her way very carefully, "Miss Primrose won't allow hedgehogs!"

"Why not?"

"Aren't hedgehogs reptiles?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Marjorie and Clara together.

"Well, anyway, I—it—that hedgehog, Clara! I don't think you ought to keep it!" said Bessie. "That's not a nice pet for a girl. It will never take the prize!"

"No," said Clara, "perhaps not. Marjorie's squirrel will get the prize!"

"It won't!" said Bessie. "My parrot is going to take the prize!"

"Clara," said Marjorie, "just touch the bell, and have Bessie shown out!"

"Shown out! She ought to be shown up!" said Clara severely. "Coming here under false pretences! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Bessie Bunter! Think I want to get rid of my hedgehog and buy your mopy parrot?"

"I—ye-ye-yes, that's what I thought," said Bessie feebly. "I say, Clara, I'll let you have my parrot for three pounds ten! I know that Study No. 7 is always in funds. And think of the p-p-prize! I can take the prize easily with that parrot!"

"Then why don't you!" said Clara. Marjorie rose from the table.

"Did I see a hockey-stick— Ah, thank you, Clara!" she said.

"I s-s-say, you g-g-girls," spluttered Bessie, backing towards the door—"oh, really, you know, my parrot—"

"My Spanish nuts that I bought for the squirrel—I'm sure you ate the lot last night!" said Marjorie. "And now I'm going to pay you out for it, Bessie dear!"

"W-w-what? Wow-ow! Stop it! Yaroo! My toes!"

"Run away!" said Marjorie, flinging open the door. "Sharp!"

And once again the fat girl of the Fourth found herself in that cold, hard world of the deserted passage.

Then Freda Foote came along, and Bessie felt a fresh wave of hope.

Here, in Freda Foote, was a girl who had no pet at all!

"I say, Freda—I s-s-say, Freda!" stammered Bessie, just as Freda was turning into Study No. 3. "Do you want a pet?"

Freda looked round, in surprise, then passed into Study No. 3.

There was nobody else on hand, so Bessie rolled in behind her intended victim.

"I say, Freda," said Bessie, "do you—er—want a p-p-p—"

"A parrot?"

"Yes, Freda; a p-p-parrot that will take the p-p-prize!" Bessie almost gasped with joy at the prospect of doing a deal at last. "My parrot, Freda!"

"Oh, your parrot! You are giving him away, then?" Freda did not seem to be greatly surprised. "Well, I thought it seemed time he found a new owner. I don't know, I'm sure. I like birds, but—"

"My parrot is a b-b-beauty, Freda!"

"Anyway, one can't look a gift horse

in the mouth," nodded the other girl. "Since you are giving him away—"

"I—I—er—I'm not exactly—"
"Seeing you don't want him any longer, Bessie, I might take him off your hands," said Freda. "I'd look after him. He wants feeding up, and keeping clean, and—"

"Ye-ye-yes, Freda—I m-m-mean—or—I'm not exactly sure—"
"Not sure he is quite well?" said Freda. "He doesn't look well. I have noticed that."

"Ye-ye-yes, Freda. B-b-but that is not w-w-what I w-w-was going to say," said Bessie. "I c-c-couldn't g-g-give him away without—"

"Without his cage? No. Thanks awfully, Bessie! That will save me the expense of a new cage. When can I have him?"

"At once, Freda—that is to s-s-say, if you don't m-m-mind—or—"
"Not at all! There's time before dinner. I shall keep him in the zoo, and look after him at once."

"B-b-but," stammered Bessie, trembling with excitement, "how about the money for—"

"For bird-seed?" said Freda, with a humorous twinkle in her eyes. "Oh, I have a few coppers to spare!"

Bessie's jaw dropped. She waved her arms like one floundering in deep waters. "I—er—you d-d-don't understand, Freda!" she said. "I'm g-g-giving my p-p-parrot away—"

"Oh, I understand, and it is very kind of you, Bessie!"

"I'm giving him away f-for f-f-f-four pounds—I m-m-mean, three p-p-pounds—that is to say, two p-p-pounds ten!"

Freda stared.
"Say that again, Bessie!"

"I'm giving him away f-for t-t-tut—for t-t-tut-two pounds t-t-tut-ten!"

"How much?" cried Freda. "Really, I don't quite understand, after all! You said you were going to give me the parrot!"

"Ye-ye-yes, Freda!"
"Well!"

"And—er—you are g-g-going to give me t-t-tut-two pounds t-t-tut-ten!"

"Am I?" said Freda, with a very changed manner. "Who said so?"

"But, really—I s-s-say, Freda, you know, my p-p-parrot will take the prize!" said Bessie. "Wouldn't you like to give me two-pounds-ten for him?"

"I'd like to put you out of the window, but I haven't time!" said Freda briskly. "Two-pounds-ten for your lifeless, mouldy, wicked-looking parrot! Ha, ha, ha!"

At this moment the door opened, and Marcia Loftus came in.

"Hallo! Here's Marcia! She might like to have the parrot!" said Freda. "I'll leave you to discuss the matter with her, Bessie!"

And, picking up a book, she quietly withdrew.

Marcia gave a little chuckle as the door closed, leaving her alone with Bessie.

"Well, my fat cherub, what are you looking so sick about?" said Marcia. "What's the trouble?"

"Pup-pup-please, Marcia, n-n-nothing!" stuttered Bessie. "I only c-c-came to see Freda about my parrot!"

"About your puppy?"

"Nunno! My p-p-p-parrot!"

"So that was really your puppy I got into trouble about yesterday afternoon!" said Marcia, with a wicked gleam in her eyes. "I am glad you have owned up to me, Bessie Bunter! I always thought you or one of the others from Study No. 4 were at the bottom of that mischief!"

"Oh, really, Marcia, I—er—I think I must be g-g-going!"

"Oh, do stop! I have a little treat for you, my plump little cherub!" sneered Marcia. "I have a perfect little feast for you!"

"A feast, Marcia?" said Bessie, brightening up.

"Of smacks and pinches, and—"

"Ow! No! N-n-numno, Marcia, don't!" said Bessie. "I—I—m-m-must be going! My d-d-dinner—"

"We all dine at the same time!" said Marcia coolly. "You won't miss your dinner, because I'm going to give you your treat at once—like this!"

And with a spring Marcia seized the fat girl by one arm, giving the rolls of flesh a savage pinch.

"Yow! Stop it!" howled Bessie.

"Ow! Marcia—Yarooogh!"

"My massage treatment for fat folk!" sniggered Marcia. "Ha, ha, ha! Now the other arm!"

"Help! Ooooh! Stop it! Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Does it hurt?" chuckled Marcia. "You have a double chin coming, Bessie! Let me pinch it!"

Next Thursday's
Issue of—

THE SCHOOL FRIEND . . .

WILL CONTAIN

"Out of Bounds!"

A Magnificent, Long, Complete
Tale of the Girls of Cliff House.

AND

A Splendid Long Instalment of

"The Girl Crusoes!"



"Groooogh! Leggo! Ow! Stop it, Marcia! Ow!"

"Keep quiet!" snapped the girl bully, slapping her victim across the cheek.

"Come over here by the corner! I have a little cane—I've been keeping it specially for Study No. 4!"

And Bessie was dragged, in spite of her struggles, to the far corner.

Marcia snatched up the cane and twirled it in the air.

"Ow!" screamed Bessie, wriggling in terror. "Yarooogh! Help! Marcia, you c-c-cat, stop it!"

Slash!

"Four strokes for Study No. 4!" chuckled Marcia.

Slash!

"Yoooop! Help! Help! M-M-Marcia, p-p-please— Ow!"

Slash!

There was another screech of pain from Bessie, and then a bang as the door flew open and crashed back against the wall.

"Oh, you cruel bully!" cried Barbara Redfern fiercely.

Next moment she crossed the room and snatched the cane from Marcia's nerveless grasp.

And Mabel Lynn, who had been close behind her, turned and shut the door.

The Empty Cage.

MARCIA LOFTUS let go her hold of Bessie, and stood at bay.

"What do you want?" she asked, scowling. "This is no business of yours, Barbara Redfern—or yours either, Mabel Lynn!"

"Ow, ow!" wailed Bessie Bunter, tingling with the slash of the cane. "I say, you girls— Ow! Marcia has been torturing me! I'm black-and-blue with her p-p-pinches! Yow-ow!"

"Bessie," said Babs quietly, "do be quiet! Marcia won't dare touch you whilst Mabs and I are here!"

"Two against one!" sneered the girl-bully. "You can afford to brag, Barbara!"

"I mean to do something else besides bragging, as you call it!" was the sharp retort.

"You are going to sneak about me—tell Miss Primrose? That's the sort of thing that appeals to you!" And Marcia gave another sneering laugh. "Well, I don't care! Take her the cane, and tell her! I've got my side of the story to tell!"

Babs twisted the cane until it broke. Then she threw it at Marcia's feet.

"That will show you whether I mean to tell tales!" said Barbara. "No, Marcia, I'm not that sort. But you have got to understand that we won't allow bullying!"

"I wasn't bullying! It was only in fun!"

"K-fun!" burst out Bessie, rubbing hard at her smarting shoulder. "Mum-mum-mum-my word! F-f-f-fun! I'm all b-b-black-and-blue, I tell you! I—"

"Keep quiet, Bessie!" said Mabel.

"Leave it to Babs!"

"Babs, Babs, our wonderful Babs! Ha, ha, ha!" sniggered the jealous Marcia. "Always leave it to Babs! Always let her take the lead! Upon my word, it is no wonder you are so conceited, Barbara Redfern!"

Babs gave a smile of quiet amusement.

"Why do you get in such a temper about me, Marcia?" she asked.

"Why? Because I think it is a shame the way the girls make a fuss of you! It's time somebody took you down a peg or two!" cried Marcia, giving full play to her pent-up feelings. "I'm sick and tired of hearing about Babs, Babs, Babs! What do you take yourself to be—a sort of uncrowned queen of the school?"

"Oh, no!"

"What are you, then?"

"Babs is my chum, for one thing!"

spoke up Mabel Lynn stoutly. "I'd like you to remember that! When you are up against Barbara Redfern, you are up against me!"

"And me, too!" cried Bessie Bunter, with returning courage. "I—I w-w-will not have you say nasty things about Babs! I—I am not afraid of you, Marcia Loftus! If Babs and Mabs hadn't interfered I would have h-h-hit you—h-h-hard!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" went up Marcia's scornful laugh. "There, get out of my study, Bessie Bunter! Clear out, the lot of you!"

"With pleasure!" said Bessie, putting on an air of great dignity. "I have no wish to be in the company of vulgar persons who use canes—persons who pinch you until you are b-b-black-and-b-b-blue! Ow!"

She opened the door; then faced round.

"Marcia, you are a cat!" she said.

"A c-c-cat!"

And then she was gone, banging the door after her.

"Ha, ha, ha! You are teaching Bessie to be the grand lady, like yourself!" said

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 10.

Marcia, looking at Barbara with those vicious eyes of hers. "Quite a nice idea for Study No. 4!"

Mabel plucked her chin by the sleeve. "Aren't you coming, Babs?"

"Yes, Mabs! But one moment!" said Barbara quietly. "Look here, Marcia, why are you so silly? It's worse than silly. It's ridiculous for you to carry on like this. It doesn't do you any good always showing your enmity against me. Why can't we be friends, for a change?"

"Friends—with you! Not likely!" said the bad-tempered Marcia. "I'm not a toady, like Mabel Lynn—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" burst out Mabs. "Really—"

"So it is—nothing else but toadying!" snapped Marcia. "In everything it is the same—Barbara Redfern must have the lead; Barbara must have her own way. Look at your silly nonsense over the Natural History Society! I've told you before, Barbara only got it up because she knows she will get the prize. And that will be something more for her to stick her nose in the air about!"

"What lovely language!" said Babs sweetly.

"I don't mince my words!" said Marcia.

"You certainly do not, Marcia! Well, I only thought I would make you the offer about being friends. You won't find that being enemies will cause me any trouble."

"Won't it!" cried Marcia fiercely. "We'll see about that!"

Then she turned her back on the pair, perhaps a little ashamed by now of her weakness in displaying such jealous spite.

"Come along!" said Babs to Mabs, and they went out of the room together.

In their own study they found Bessie Bunter, who received them as it were with open arms.

"I say, you girls!" cried Bessie, smiling all over her fat face. "It was jolly decent of you to chip in, you know! I—I was being brutally treated by that cut of a Marcia! If you hadn't come in, just in time—really—"

"Yes, that's all right, Fatima," said Babs. "We don't want any discussions upon that subject, thank you! What we do wish to talk to you about is a little matter of biscuits and sugar!"

"W-w-what's that? B-b-biscuits and s-s-sugar?" stammered Bessie.

"The bag that I left beside Tony's cage yesterday evening, Bessie," said Babs. "It was empty this morning. Mabs, would you be so kind as to hand me that hockey-stick?"

"Don't break it!" said Mabs very gravely, as she handed over the ominous weapon.

Bessie, in the firm grasp of Barbara, began to squirm and wriggle.

"I—really, I say you girls! Really, you know! I—or—biscuits and sugar!"

"Yes," said Barbara, emphasising each word with a sharp tug at the fat girl's plait, "biscuits—"

"Yarooogh!"

"And sugar!"

"Ow! Wow-wow! Stop it! Leggo!"

"Did you, or did you not eat Tony's biscuits and sugar?" asked Babs, thumping the hockey-stick on the floor.

"Oh, really! I—No!"

"Bessie Bunter," warned Mabel—still restraining her laughter and looking very grave—"be careful what you say, Bessie!"

"But—but, I'm telling the truth! Biscuits—yowp!—and—ow!—sugar?"

"Did you eat them, Bessie?"

"I—if it was your bag, Babs, I'm very sorry, I'm sure!" said Bessie. "I was expecting a remittance this morning. Babs, I meant to p-p-pay you for them! Ow—wow! Stop it!"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 10.

And then suddenly a thing occurred to put all thoughts of Bessie Bunter and her well-earned punishment out of Barbara's mind.

The door opened, and Marjorie Hazeldene & Co. burst upon the scene.

"Babs!" cried the new-comers excitedly. "Oh, Babs!"

"Hallo!" said Barbara, with great politeness. "To what are we indebted for this visit from Study No. 7?"

"Babs," cried Marjorie Hazeldene, "I know that your study and ours are sort of rivals over this pet-keeping business. I meant to beat you if I could over that prize. But a serious thing has happened—at least, I am afraid it is serious. And I'm sorry for you, Babs!"

"All three of us are sorry!" spoke up Clara and Dolly together.

Babs and Mabs looked surprised.

"When did you last see to your marmoset?" asked Marjorie.

"Directly after morning school," said Babs. "Why? Is he queer—is he ill?"

"He's gone!" cried Marjorie. "He's not in his cage, and the door is wide open! That is what drew our attention to him—the open door of the cage."

"Gone!" echoed Mabel Lynn in blank dismay.

Barbara said nothing. She flew from the room and down the stairs, reaching the Cliff House "zoo" with whirlwind speed.

And there a single glance bore out all that Marjorie had said.

The cage door was open, and Tony was gone—how or where perhaps nobody would ever know.

He had vanished, and with him had vanished Barbara Redfern's chance of winning the prize!

Her Guilty Secret.

LATE that evening Marcia Loftus left her study, and went upstairs to a dingy attic under the tiles.

It was dark in the attic, for the one tiny window was grimed with the dust of years.

After making sure that she had not been followed, Marcia closed the small door, then lit a candle.

As the yellow flame burned up steadily in the stuffy air, the girl tiptoed across to the darkest corner, and knelt down.

She pulled a bit of sacking from a small basket, and held the candle closer.

Peering through a hole in the wicker-work, she saw a pair of bright little eyes gazing wistfully.

"Still alive!" the girl whispered to herself. "I suppose I must feed him. But what am I to do with him? I can't let him starve!"

She pushed a few bits of biscuits through the tiny hole, listened to the lively rustling of the wisps of hay as the marmoset moved about, eating hungrily, and then she put back the covering of sackcloth.

Rising to her feet, she blew out the candle, and groped her way to the door.

Her heart was in her mouth as she stole from the dingy place that held her guilty secret. For the hundredth time in the last few hours she shivered with dread.

It was a mad thing that her jealous spite against Barbara had prompted her to do. If the thing came to light she would be expelled from the school.

And the worst of it was, she had yet to find a means of getting rid of the stolen pet in such a way that her guilt would never be known.

It had been an easy thing to take the little creature from its cage at a moment when no one else was on hand in the "zoo."

Marcia had done this a few minutes

after Barbara had seen to the pet, round about midday.

And it had been easy to smuggle so small a creature upstairs to the attic, without being noticed. But now—

What was she to do with the pet?

The question had worried Marcia all that afternoon and evening. It was to keep her wide awake to-night.

She was afraid to let the poor thing loose in the open. It would either die a lingering death from exposure or hunger, or it would find its way back to its owner.

And yet it would be madness to keep it day after day in the attic. How awful if somebody caught her in the act of stealing up there to feed the thing!

Marcia could tell by the talk that was going on in the school how she would be despised for her cruel action, if the truth came to light.

The general opinion was that the pet had worked his own escape. He was only a tiny little monkey, and monkeys were always so "cute."

All the same, the girls were very sorry for Barbara. Apart from the ruined chance of winning the prize, it was horrid to have lost such a pretty, valuable pet.

And Barbara herself was very gloomy. She would not listen to the suggestion that she would get some other pet.

Nothing else could console her for the loss of Tony. She had been so fond of him.

But Barbara, in spite of her loss, slept better than Marcia that night.

The guilty girl remained wide awake for hours, asking herself over and over again the same desperate question:

"What was she to do now?"

Once or twice she thought of taking Vivienne Leigh into her confidence.

But she decided that Vivienne could not help her, and the whole business was so dark and ugly, it would be best not to tell her.

Such downright malice and cruelty might prove too much for Vivienne.

So another day came to Marcia, and it found her more uneasy than ever. She had a sense of being suspected.

It was as much as she could do to force herself to visit the hidden pet, between breakfast-time and first school.

Tony was still alive—and how hungry he seemed to be!

Marcia felt that she must be starving him, he was so eager for food.

It was such a difficult, risky business, this stealing up to the attic to feed the pet.

She told herself desperately that there must be no more of it.

She must get rid of Tony somehow at once. But how?

And then suddenly an idea came to her.

At first she shuddered; it all seemed so cruel. But afterwards she argued with herself that it was going to be the best thing for the little creature itself.

"It's not happy; it can never be happy in a cage," she reasoned. "It will be better out of the way for ever."

So the poor thing's fate was decided, and after that it was only a question of awaiting the right moment.

Marcia's chance came that evening. The girls had been in class all the afternoon, and directly after tea there was a rush for the open air.

The "zoo," too, was a scene of bustle, all the members of the society, with one exception, being busy with their pets.

That one exception was Barbara. Poor Babs felt it was more than she could bear to see other girls so keen and happy with their different pets, whilst she had only an empty cage to remind her of the bitter loss.

She wandered off alone, not wishing to

depress others by her own sadness. And at that same moment Marcia, finding the coast quite clear, stole upstairs to the attic.

When the guilty girl came creeping down again, five minutes later, she had the basket in her hands. But the basket was wrapped in brown paper, and it attracted no attention.

Marcia passed out of the school grounds slowly, but as soon as she was clear of the gates she quickened her steps.

She felt that, unless she hurried on and got the deed done, her nerve would fail her.

By a roundabout way she came at last to the river-bank.

It was a quiet spot here, the broad stream flowing through the meadows, with here and there an overhanging tree to cast dark shadows on the water.

Marcia went along the bank, searching for the right place.

It was not easy to find. In parts the river was very shallow; at other points the banks zigzagged; and here and there she found tricky little eddies.

What she wanted was a broad, deep part of the river, with plenty of weed, where the basket would sink, and be lost at once for ever.

Her search brought her at last to a little rustic bridge over the stream, and here seemed to be exactly the right spot.

From the centre of the bridge she could drop the basket into the water instead of having to make a chance throw.

She stepped to the middle of the wooden bridge, leaned over the handrail, and looked down.

A few yards farther down-stream there was a very deep bit of water, with long streamers of weed.

She reached over and outwards, swinging the cage at arm's-length.

And then suddenly there was a rending crack, a plunging splash, and Marcia Loftus herself was in the racing current, shrieking as she floundered down-stream.

"Help—help! I'm drowning! Help!" Everything seemed to mock at the girl, filling her with a paralysing terror.

How could she expect help, when she had chosen this spot because of its loneliness?

And the sight of the covered basket drifting on the surface—that, too, was a mockery.

She had forgotten to put in the stone that would make the thing sink.

It was floating away on the water, whilst she—she herself was to meet the fate intended for the pet!

"Help!" Her screams were shrill with mad terror. She could not swim.

Everything was impeding her—wet skirts, slimy weed; they were all dragging her down.

Her head went under for a moment, rose again, and was covered once more by the suffocating waters.

For the last time, it seemed, she was going to have a single moment in which to raise a faint, despairing cry:

"Help!"

And then, when all was indeed nearly over with the drowning girl, and her swirling senses were giving out, she felt saving arms about her, dragging her slowly from the clinging weed.

She could do nothing for herself except cough and splutter out the water that choked her lungs.

There was a horrible spell of utter backness, whilst her eyes remained shut.

Then she opened them, to find herself lying upon the grassy bank, with the face of another girl close to hers.

"Babs!" she gasped. "You—it was you who got me out!"

"Yes, Marcia, that's all right," said Barbara quietly. "Lucky for you I happened to be roaming about!"

Marcia closed her eyes again, and groaned. Then she sat up, with a wild look towards the river.

"Oh, Babs," she gasped, "what have I done? The basket—your pet—"

"They are on the grass there behind you," said Barbara, in the same quiet voice as before. "It was easy to get them from the water. They floated against the bank."

Marcia glanced around, then burst into tears.

"Don't cry!" pleaded Barbara. "You have got yourself into a nice mess, Marcia, but Miss Primrose needn't be told everything. This was an accident, Marcia—"

"It was not an accident—my bringing the basket here!" sobbed the guilty girl. "Oh, Babs, you—you must see what it means! I was going to drown your pet! I stole it from the cage! I—I— Oh, dear!"

"Marcia"—Barbara laid a hand on the weeping girl's shoulder—"Miss Primrose won't be told about Tony. As for me, I am quite ready to forgive you, and I hope this has taught you a lesson!"

"It—it has!" groaned Marcia. "I owe you my life! I will never be so hateful again! I promise!"

"Then no one in the school, except Mabel Lynn, shall ever know," said Barbara. "I will keep my promise. I hope you will keep yours."

"I—I will!"

And so the word was spoken. Marcia had promised never to do such a thing again; but she had made promises in the past, and broken them. Would she break her latest promise?

Bessie's Bid for the Prize.

MARCIA LOFTUS' return to the school, in her dripping clothes, caused a great sensation.

She was put to bed at once, and that night it was feared she was going to be very ill indeed.

The Friardale doctor came up in his car more than once, and each time he ordered perfect quiet for the girl, as she seemed to be suffering from shock, as well as a chill.

Miss Primrose had suspected this, and had not bothered the victim for any explanation, resting content with what Barbara had to say.

Barbara, in spite of her wetting, due to the heroic rescue, was little the worse for her adventure.

And the story she told saved Marcia from the possibility of any punishment later on.

As for poor little Tony, he certainly was a great deal upset by his voyage down stream in the basket.

He had not got at all wet, for the basket had floated all the time it was in the water.

But the fright left him very shaky and off his feed.

So for Barbara there came a spell of great anxiety for the pet. She could not bear the thought of his dying.

She meant to make a fight for his life. What is more, she meant to get him quite well, if possible, in time for the great show.

Mabel Lynn did all she could to help her chum, and between them they worked wonders.

By special permission, Tony was allowed to be kept in the study, so that he could have quietness and no risk of a fresh chill.

He spent most of his time sleeping, with a cover over his cage, so that even

the girls who visited the study saw very little of him.

But they were glad to hear that he was going on all right, and soon the talk was all as to which of the rival studies would take the prize.

For Marjorie Hazeldene, with her tame squirrel, was a great rival to Barbara's Tony.

Another pet who vanished from the "zoo" during the next few days, was Bessie Bunter's parrot.

About this time there was a great deal of mystery.

Bessie Bunter took him away one morning, and after that nobody, not even Babs or Mabs, saw anything of him!

Bessie said at last that she had put the parrot in a quiet, secret place, so as to get him ready for the prize-giving. She had made up her mind that he was to get the prize.

She was, she said, giving him special attention, and that prize was already as good as won!

So at last the great day came.

All anxiety about Marcia was now over, although she was still kept to her sick-room, and so Cliff House had nothing to check its joyful spirit.

Directly after morning school the Cliff House Pet Club assembled at the "zoo," and for a whole hour there was a final fussing about over the various pets.

Then, as soon as dinner was over, the girls mustered again at the conservatory, whilst the rest of the school crowded around outside to see the fun.

The first cheer came when Barbara Redfern marched upon the scene, carrying Tony in his cage. Tony was quite well at last, and looked very pretty; and again the argument arose.

Marjorie with her squirrel, or Barbara with her marmoset—how was the decision to go?

Another cheer—a rather decisive "Hooray!" as Bessie Bunter came rolling into view, lugging her great cage, which was still covered with a bit of baize.

Bessie was panting for breath, for the cage was a big load; but she tried to be as dignified as possible.

With a proud smile on her fat face, she set down the cage next to Barbara's, then took off the baize cover.

"My word!" exclaimed all the girls, in great amazement. "What a change in Bessie Bunter's parrot!"

"I told you I meant to get the prize," said Bessie loftily. "I always knew I had the best pet. I wouldn't have sold Polly for ten pounds!"

The murmur of surprise went on.

"Quite a new set of feathers!"

"And so bright and clean!"

"It's not like the same parrot! Who ever would have thought it possible?"

"That's what comes of taking care of a pet!" said Bessie, with another proud smile. "He was only moulting a little a few days ago. Now he is p-p-prime!"

"But why doesn't he move?" asked Barbara. "Has he got the mopes, Fatima?"

"M-m-mopes! He's on show, and behaving himself!" said Bessie. "He means to get the prize—don't you, Polly?"

"Rather!" came from the cage. "I'm all right! I shall get the prize! I shall get the prize!"

"Wonderful!" said one or two girls, who really thought the parrot was speaking.

But now there was a stir at the other end of the "zoo," as Miss Primrose and her staff came upon the scene.

"Well, girls," smiled the kindly head-mistress, "the time has come for me to inspect your little collection and award the prize for the best-kept pet. I will

go all round the place, then return to those cages that deserve special attention."

There was a murmur of approval, then silence.

With an air of deep interest Miss Primrose passed down one side of the exhibition, followed by her assistants, and came back up the other side.

As was expected, she had given an extra glance to Barbara's Tony, Marjorie's squirrel, and Bessie Bunter's pet, and none of the onlookers were surprised to see the lady judge return to those three cages.

"So little Tony is quite all right again, after his escapades?" smiled the headmistress. "I am very glad of that, Barbara."

"Thank you, Miss Primrose!"

"Considering the upset you had with him, I think you deserve special credit over the exhibit. And you, Marjorie Hazeldene—your squirrel is a little dear, and the cage looks perfect!"

Marjorie murmured her thanks at this compliment, and again the buzz of discussion arose amongst the girls at the back.

Barbara or Marjorie—which was it to be?

"And here is Bessie Bunter's parrot," went on Miss Primrose, pausing before the cage. "A great improvement since I saw him last, Bessie! You, too, have done wonders. But why is he so quiet?"

"Quiet, Miss Primrose?" blurted out Bessie. "Polly isn't quiet! You hear him t-t-talk!"

And to the amazement of those present, they heard a voice come from the cage.

"Good afternoon, Miss Primrose!" said the voice. "Welcome to the Cliff House Pet Club's Show! I hope you are well! I hope you are going to give me the prize!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the onlookers.

"Extraordinary! Most clever!" cried Miss Primrose. "You have taught him that little speech, Bessie?"

"Ye-ye-yes, Miss Primrose—I mean, n-n-nunno! He learnt it himself!"

"Made 'up that speech? Oh, impossible!"

"I—er—really, I didn't quite mean that," faltered Bessie, feeling she had gone too far. "Sp-sp-speak up, Polly!"

And again the voice came:

"If you will please give the prize to Bessie Bunter, Miss Primrose, I shall be very happy! She is very proud of me, and she wouldn't sell me for pounds!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And then a queer thing happened. Something alighted with a screech and a plop on the glass roof of the conservatory.

Those present looked up, and there was another parrot, a very shabby old parrot—Bessie Bunter's parrot, beyond all doubt!

"But—but what does it mean?" cried Miss Primrose, starting back a step. "Bessie, do you see what is up there? Surely you have not two parrots?"

"The place is swarming with parrots!" moaned the Bull. "It is awful—awful!"

"Miss Bullivant, pray be silent!" said Miss Primrose. "Now, Bessie, I must have an explanation. This parrot in the cage—whose is it? And how dared you make an exhibit under false pretences?"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 10.

Bessie was going red and white by turns.

"Oh, really, Miss Primrose, I—that is to s-s-say, really—My parrot—"

"Bessie Bunter—"

"M-m-my parrot—" Bessie waved her hands, floundering. And, in waving her hands, she suddenly knocked against the cage.

Then another surprising thing happened.

The parrot in the cage fell off his perch. He fell upside down, and he remained upside down, without a sign of life!

"My goodness!" cried the Bull, aghast. "He's stuffed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded the crowd, as the truth flashed upon them at last. "Oh, the cheek of Bessie Bunter! It's a stuffed parrot in the cage! It's the one that was in the window at Uncle Clegg's, at Friarale! Oh, Bessie, you fraud! Trying to get the prize like that!"

"Fraud is the right word for this imposition!" said Miss Primrose sternly.

"Bessie Bunter, what have you to say for yourself?"

"Oh, really, Miss Primrose, I—"

"Go!" ordered the headmistress sharply. "Take this abominable thing away! I will bestow a fitting punishment later on! Take the cage away! As for your real parrot, how did it turn up on that roof?"

As if in answer to that question, the laughing face of Clara Trevlyn was suddenly seen above, as she popped her head out of the window.

"Ha, ha, ha! Do please forgive me, Miss Primrose!" called down Clara.

"We—Marjorie and Dolly and I—we had to take a hand when we suspected what Bessie was up to. Study No. 7 wasn't going to be tricked by a girl from Study No. 4! Marjorie and Dolly and I—we know where to get hold of the live parrot, and so—"

"That will do, Clara Trevlyn!" cried Miss Primrose, repressing a smile. "So you see, Bessie Bunter, your attempt to gain the prize under false pretences has come to naught. Go! I will see you later!"

And Bessie, clawing hold of the huge cage, staggered away, the crowd laughing derisively as they jostled her from the place.

"And now about the prize, girls," said Miss Primrose. "It seems to be a keen contest between Barbara Redfern, of Study No. 4, and Marjorie Hazeldene, of Study No. 7. I should feel inclined to say that they must divide the honours; but one thing weighs with me. Barbara has had a great deal of extra trouble—"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the crowd.

"Her pet was missing for a day or so, and it is due entirely to Barbara's great care that it is here to-day, looking so well and happy. In these circumstances, I think I may fairly award the prize of a silver-backed hairbrush to Barbara Redfern!"

"Babs has it!"

"Babs takes the prize!"

"Hurrah!"

One of the first to press forward and seize the prize-winner's hand was Marjorie Hazeldene.

"Well done, Babs!" cried Marjorie.

"It's a blow to Study No. 7 that you have beaten us like this! But we live to fight again!"

Miss Primrose, moving away, smiled as she overheard this fine remark.

"That is the spirit!" she said. "Miss Bullivant, I gave you the prize to take care of. Thank you!"

And then, as the headmistress took the silver-backed hairbrush from her assistant's keeping and passed it to the blushing Babs, there was a fresh round of cheers.

The giving of the prize closed the formal part of the afternoon, and in a few minutes Babs and Mabs were free to leave the crowded "zoo" and seek a little peace and quietude in their study.

"You heard what Miss Primrose said about Marjorie?" threw out Mabel Lynn, when the two girls were alone. "I wonder what she would say if she knew the truth about Marcia?"

"She never will know, so don't alarm yourself," said Babs quietly. "Come on, let's have an early brew of tea, and then—Hallo! Do I hear the fairy step of Fatima?"

The door opened, and Bessie Bunter showed a very sad face as she rolled into the room.

"Out of this!" cried Babs and Mabs together. "Run away!"

"W-y-what? I say, you girls—"

"You little fraud!" exclaimed Babs. "You're a disgrace to Study No. 4!"

"B-b-but w-y-what have I done? I say, you girls, if people are going to be so particular about prizes, they should print particulars!"

"Hark at her!" cried Barbara. "Oh, Bessie!"

"You never said the pets were to be live pets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And," said the fat girl of the Fourth, flopping into a chair, "I shall always consider that I won that prize! But, anyway, we got it—Study Four! And, of course, you are going to stand a feed, Babs? I'd stand one myself, only I haven't received my remittance!"

The two girls looked at each other.

"Shall we let her stop to tea?" asked Mabel.

"Might as well!" said Babs, breaking into smiles. "After all, we owe Bessie a few thanks for the fun she gave us over the puppy that wasn't there! Ha, ha, ha! To this hour, I believe the Bull still fears there is a puppy up the chimney!"

Bessie watched with greedy eyes as her friends began to lay the table.

"So do I," she said. "I reckon I did that rippingly! But, I say, you girls, ventriloquism is jolly dry work!"

"You shall have all the tea you want," said Babs. "A proper study feed! After all, Bessie Bunter, there are worse girls than you!"

"Only," chimed in Mabel Lynn, "they are rather hard to find! Ha, ha, ha!"

THE END.

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

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF A SPLENDID ADVENTURE SERIAL!

The Girl Crusoes!



By JULIA STORM.

The Chief Characters in this Story are: HILDA, PAT, and JOE, three plucky school-girls,

MISS STRONG, a brave, good-natured school-mistress,

MISS WHIFFEN, a nervous schoolmistress, and

MADEMOISELLE LA TOUCHE, whom the girls call Touchy, and who is even more nervous than Miss Whiffen.

The Utopia, a great Australian liner, is stopped on its voyage across the Pacific Ocean by a powerful German cruiser. The German officer in charge orders every man on the Utopia to leave the ship, and then sails away, leaving a band of schoolgirls and several schoolmistresses on board the Utopia, without a single man to work the ship.

A tremendous storm comes up, and Miss Strong and Hilda, Pat, and Joe take charge of the steering-wheels, and set the ship running straight before the storm. For two days and nights, whilst Miss Whiffen and Mademoiselle la Touche and the rest of the girls are lying in their cabins, they stick to their task, and at length steer the vessel into a lagoon, and discover, to their immense satisfaction, that land is at hand.

"It's a desert island!" said Joe, as she slips into her berth, thoroughly exhausted after her exertions. "We'll call it Diamond Island!"

Later on the girls start to explore the island, and make some very surprising discoveries. One night Hilda, Pat, Joe, and Miss Strong go out to sea and come across a boat containing two black girls in an exhausted condition. They take them back to the ship and nurse them back to health. Chrissie and Melita, the black girls, very soon become firm friends of the Girl Crusoes.

One afternoon the girls go for a picnic, and mademoiselle is surprised when she comes across a yellowish rock.

(Read on from here.)

Mademoiselle Meets With an Accident.

"WHAT is zis earths?" asked mademoiselle.

"It's a find, mademoiselle," replied Joe, picking up a crystal and tasting it with the tip of her tongue. "It's sulphur—raw sulphur. There is enough sulphur here to make us all rich. See, there are shiploads and shiploads of the stuff, and it is not far from the sea. All they would have to do would be to build a little railway up this valley, and there you are!"

Mademoiselle shrugged her shoulders.

"My dear girls," she said, "in zis island we 'ave everything. We 'ave coconuts, we 'ave beeg feeshes, we 'ave ze orange, ze banana, ze sugarcane; but what shall I do when we 'ave left no more ze face-powder? 'Ow shall I pro-

tect my so delicate complexion from zis sun and ze reflection from ze lagoons?"

Joe laughed, and her white, even teeth showed like a string of pearls against her dark face.

There was no doubt about it. The intense reflection of the sun from the surface of the lagoon was having its effect on all their complexions.

Joe and Pat, who exposed themselves most to the sun, were burning nearly black.

The other girls were not so bad, as they kept more in the shade of the decks of the ship.

And mademoiselle had preserved her complexion wonderfully by a careful use of her parasol, and of sun-hats, and of face-masks and glycerine.

Her supply of glycerine-and-cucumber had run out.

But Joe had earned her gratitude by bringing out a further supply from the ship's stores.

"You leave your complexion to us, mademoiselle!" she said. "There are a few pots of stuff left down in the barber's shop, and when they are gone I'm sure that Diamond Island will turn up with something of its own in the complexion-cure line."

Mademoiselle shook her head hopelessly.

"It is no good to cry over spilt milk," she said. "In a leetle while I shall no longer take trouble to preserve my face. I shall go black. And I shall be frightful. The people will laugh to me when we are saved from zis island, and zey will say: 'Voila! Who is zis French niggair?'"

Mademoiselle took a step or two down the sulphur slope, which led to the stony bed of the dry river.

"Sulfur! 'E is good for ze complexion!" she said with inspiration. "An' it is good also for ze pauvre chien. We will take lump of sulphur to make 'im a present to M. Togo—to put in 'is drinking-water—eh?"

She stooped to pick up a specimen lump of sulphur as a present for Togo, the dog.

Then the girls gave a cry, and mademoiselle gave a faint scream, for of a sudden the steep slope on which she stood gave way, and mademoiselle started to slide down a stiff slope of a hundred feet, amidst an avalanche of sulphur.

Downhill she rolled, surrounded by a great cloud of golden dust, and the girls stood helpless and horrified at the crest of the slope, for at the foot of the

sulphur-slide there was a nasty drop on to the river bed of nearly fifteen feet, over a stiff little cliff of jagged lava.

But, luckily, mademoiselle fetched up before she rolled over this, sitting up to her waist in sulphur-dust and rubble, looking up and calling appealingly to the girls.

"Queek, girls!" she cried. "'Elp, or I shall be smozzer in zis sulfur!"

The girls crawled carefully down the slope, keeping away from the spot where mademoiselle was sitting, for they had no wish to bring another avalanche of sulphur down on top of her.

They got within reach of her.

Then, joining hands, they made a living chain, and Joe, leading the chain, reached out to her, pulling her up from the sulphur bed.

She was frightened, but, luckily, unhurt.

But she had lost one of her elegant Parisian shoes, which was buried now deep down in the sulphur rubble.

They pulled her, hopping, off the dangerous slope.

It was hopeless to look for the shoe, and there seemed to be nothing for it but to carry mademoiselle back to the canoe, or for her to hop all the way down to the shore, which was nearly a mile away.

As a matter of fact, mademoiselle's shoes were silly things to come ashore in.

They were dainty, light Parisian foot-gear, that would stand no chance on the rough rocks and the rugged country which spread round them in all directions.

Even the shores of the lagoon were death to stout boots, with their jagged coral rocks and sharp, shingly beaches.

So it may be imagined that mademoiselle's shoes were being used up at the rate of a pair a day.

When the girls had got her clear of the sulphur slide, mademoiselle seated herself and ruefully regarded a very dainty little foot, beautifully clad in the finest of silk hose.

"What shall I now do?" she asked helplessly. "I 'ave lost my little boot! I shall 'ave to do—what you call 'im?—'op it to ze canoe."

But Pat was full of resource.

"You sit where you are, mademoiselle, for a little while," she said. "There are breadfruit-trees here. I don't see why we should not find a boot-tree in the neighbourhood."

And Pat climbed up the hill, and was

soon lost amongst the belt of trees that crowned the slope.

Joe followed her up, and they were heard moving amongst the scrub.

"I've got it!" cried Joe. "The very thing! Come along, Pat! We'll soon fit mademoiselle up with a pair of shoes, or a dozen pairs, if needs be!"

Joe was busy at work hacking a great slab of bark off a stubby little palm.

It was a soft, thick bark, tough, yet pliable, and almost like a sheet of stout rubber.

And it was not long before the two girls came downhill together, Joe carrying this natural sole leather, whilst Pat carried a good, long skein of the never failing hisbiscus fibre, the natural string of the Pacific islands.

They set mademoiselle's fairy foot on this, and Pat, with a bit of chalk, drew its outline on the bark.

And mademoiselle looked on in wonderment and admiration.

Whilst she waited, the two ingenious girls fashioned her out a sandal for her unshod foot, that would serve her really just as well, and perhaps rather better, than the dainty little pair of shoes in which she had come ashore.

And when the sandal was cut out, Pat neatly threaded it with strings of the tough fibre, making a lashing that at the same time was easy and efficient.

"There you are, mademoiselle," she said, as she tied this natural footgear to the French mistress's dainty foot. "There's a good Diamond Island shoe, made whilst you wait at the Diamond Island Shoe Store. Now, see if you can walk in it!"

Mademoiselle could walk in it, and the sandal proved so efficient, that she insisted on Joe and Pat making her another for her shod foot, and on taking off the shoe she was wearing.

She shook her head when this job was completed.

"You English!" she exclaimed. "Truly it is not wonderful zat you rule nearly ze whole world. You want a shoe, an' you get 'im out of ze tree! You want boil egg, an' you boil 'im in volcano! I shall have no more fear for my complexions. If I shall want ze face foods you shall find 'im for me in zi desert. Vraiment of all peoples, you are ze most wonderful!"

And, having paid this compliment to the British race, mademoiselle led the way as the party scrambled up the hill-slopes to the place where they had left their tea-basket.

They packed this up, and Joe went down to her natural oven, where she placed her breadfruits to cook.

The heat of the lava, at this place, had done its work as effectually as any baker's oven.

Steeping down, she drew out loaf after loaf of this natural bread.

The rhinds of the breadfruit were split and browned like the outside of a crusty loaf, whilst the pulp within had baked up to the exact consistency of new bread.

Joe had performed another miracle. She had not only got tea without matches, but she had raised new bread out of a desert.

The girls took the loaves under their arms, and with the help of a few Fan-bone, and a few lengths of cord, Joe and Pat, and Dumpling, loaded themselves with a goodly assortment of the ripe breadfruits.

They carried these Chinese-fashion, slung at each end of their bamboo-poles, for they had already found that is quite the best way of carrying weights when the pole is properly balanced.

A Chinese carries everything balanced at the end of a pole in this fashion, even if it be only a small parcel.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 10.

And, as the girls stepped out for the beach, carrying their loads of the golden fruits, they declared that a shouldered bamboo was as good as a wheelbarrow.

The shadows were lengthening in the magnificent Valley of Fountains as they made their way to the beach, and the wonderful hillsides and cliffs were full of pearly-blue shadows, which told of approaching evening.

They stowed their loads of breadfruit in the canoe, and they put mademoiselle into the canoe as well, so that she should not wear out her new shoes.

They knew that mademoiselle would be no good at the rather horrid job of cutting up the great skate.

Joe and Pat and Dumpling undertook this fishmongering, and no light task they found it.

Pat stood on the back of the great fish, sawing out great fillets with her sharp knife, and these Joe stripped off, whilst Dumpling rolled them up neatly in great, green leaves of a palm which grew ashore, tying each parcel of fish neatly with hisbiscus fibre, in a style that would have done credit to a smart fish-shop.

"Faith!" muttered Pat, as she sawed at the slabs of fish. "It's meself that's glad I'm not in the fishmonger's line! I wouldn't like to be cuttin' up cod an' countin' bloaters all day for me livin'!"

The fish was beautifully fresh and firm, and the girls knew that it would keep well, for the leaf they were using as wrapping is esteemed throughout the islands for its wonderful property of keeping food sweet and good, even in the hottest weather.

The green parcels were handed into the canoe, and packed carefully, and mademoiselle looked on with approval with the neatness and taste with which this Pacific fish-shop was managed.

"Voila, girls!" she exclaimed. "You 'ave ze resource of ze British, an' ze daintiness of ze French nation. Any lady would be glad to carry 'ome one of your pretty parcels from your feesh-shop!"

And whilst the girls were still at work on the fish, the first of the nightly flight of gulls came heading in from the deep sea, to take up their roosting quarters for the night in the lagoon.

It was wonderful to see how these lovely birds spied from afar the feast that was in store for them.

They came flying up over the hazy sea in long lines, and soon they were whirling and circling and screaming in a white, hungry cloud over the girls' heads.

"Hi, hi, hi!" the gulls seemed to shout. "Here's fish!"

And they circled closer and closer to the girls' heads till mademoiselle, who had started giving little cries of admiration at this wonderful sight, grew quite alarmed.

These were no ordinary English kittiwakes, or black-headed gulls; but great, fierce, deep-sea pirates, with a wing-spread of four or five feet.

And they were as greedy and bold as pirates, too, as they came flying and swooping round in narrowing circles, hardly moving their great white wings, screaming and whistling in their impatience to get at the rest of the great fish, and to strip it clean from the bones.

One huge, old gull, with his glittering eye fixed on Pat, miscalculated his distance, and came too close.

"Avrah now, Misher Gull!" said Pat, dodging the great pinions. "Take that for yez impudence!"

And she dealt the astonished bird a box on the ear, if gulls can be said to have an ear, which rolled him over in the air.

Never was a gull more taken aback.

With an indignant squawk, the great bird rolled over and flew off as hard as he could travel.

But he was the only one of that great, white, whirling cloud, lit to a wonderful rosy pink by the rays of the declining sun, who departed from the coming supper.

"Patreccia—Patreccia!" pleaded mademoiselle from the canoe. "Do not irritate ze gull, or zey will attack you. You 'ave now secure enough feesh. Leave ze rest to ze lovely bird for zeur suppaire!"

Pat nodded, and wiped her knife. "I think we've got enough fish off that fellow to start us half a dozen fried-fish shops. Now we'll leave the rest to the birds!" said she.

She stepped away from the remnants of the giant skate, and immediately the horde of hungry birds swooped down on it in a great, white, fluttering and struggling mass.

Some gulls secured a morsel of the fish, and, rising, started to carry it off home to their nests.

But there were other pirates in the air. No sooner were these off with their burdens than their slow flight was sighted by the real pirates of the air.

Woosh!

With a magnificent swoop, a great white, frigate bird swooped down on one slow-flying gull, giving a harsh and threatening cry.

And the gull, with a squawk of fear, dropped the lump of fish he was carrying in his beak.

It never reached the water.

With another magnificent swoop the lovely bird-pirate caught the plundered morsel in mid-air, and in a second was climbing again to the height of a thousand feet, ready to swoop down again to rob another gull of his coveted morsel.

The girls watched this piece of sheer robbery performed half a dozen times.

"There, now," said Pat, watching the magnificent flight of the frigate birds with admiration. "Who would think that such lovely birds got their livin' by highway robbery like that? They ought to have a gull policeman on this beat! Now, girls," she added, taking a paddle, "it's time we were getting back to th' old ship! We'll push off!"

They pushed the canoe off into deep water, and their luck was in, for a light breeze had sprung up, blowing along the lagoon in exactly the opposite direction to that which the wind had been blowing when they had started.

So they had a fair wind back to the ship.

The sail was hoisted, and the canoe began to ripple along in fine style over the mirror-like surface of the lagoon, which, in this light, looked like a great sheet of mother-of-pearl.

Joe sat up in the stern, wielding the steering paddle.

She was beginning to appreciate the usefulness of this great native canoe which, though it would hold fifty warriors, was as easy to handle as a skiff.

The sun began to dip as they rippled softly over the smooth lagoon, rounding the bend in the coast which brought them in sight of the enormous hull of the Utopia.

And enormous she looked from this level in the sunset light, with her huge, towering upperworks and her enormous funnels.

Already the lights were beginning to twinkle out along her upper deck.

"We shall arrive in good time for ze suppaire!" said mademoiselle. "An'

we shall invite all ze girls to ze grand suppare of ze fish!"

"And the chips!" put in Pat, from the bows of the canoe. "Don't forget the chips, mademoiselle!"

"An' ze chivv!" corrected mademoiselle.

Then there came a sudden, low whistle from Pat, who was crouching well up in the bows, peering over the lagoon.

"What is it, Pat?" asked Joe, in a low voice, for it was plain that Pat had sighted something floating on the still water.

"We'll take something more than fried fish home to supper as we don't make a noise!" said Pat, under her breath. "There's a real turtle floating out yonder, not a mock turtle!"

She pointed slightly away to port in the direction of the reef, and there, sure enough, floating like some half-submerged mine, was a huge sea-turtle, which had apparently drifted in through one of the openings of the reef.

"Now, that's just what we are wantin' for Melita and Chrissie!" said Pat. "A good bowl of real turtle soup is what those two girls want to build 'em up, and get 'em over their convalescing. We'll have that chap, Joe!"

Pat quietly picked up the harpoon as she spoke.

"Right!" replied Joe, in a low whisper. "Keep still, girls! Not a sound from any one of you! Maybe the turtle is asleep. They do catch them that way on the water sometimes!"

Joe had shifted the course of the canoe now, and was steering straight down on the turtle before the gentle breeze.

"Don't try to harpoon him, Pat!" she called. "You are not good enough with it to spear him. Get a noose ready, and slip it over his shell."

Pat nodded, and slipped a noose into a coil of stout line, making a sort of running bowline.

"Get it over his shell and over his fore flipper, and you've got him!"

Pat stood ready as the boat glided slowly down on the turtle.

It was evidently not disturbed by their approach, for it did not dive as the canoe bore down on it.

But just when they were within a few feet of it, it struck out, and made an ineffectual attempt to get below the surface.

But Pat deftly threw the noose over the ends of its shell, and tightened the line.

The huge creature was lassoed neatly, and brought alongside the canoe, where Pat made it fast with yet another noose.

"Hurrah!" cried Joe. "You lassoed him splendidly, Pat. He must have been asleep!"

But Pat, who was leaning over the gunnel of the canoe examining her capture, shook her head.

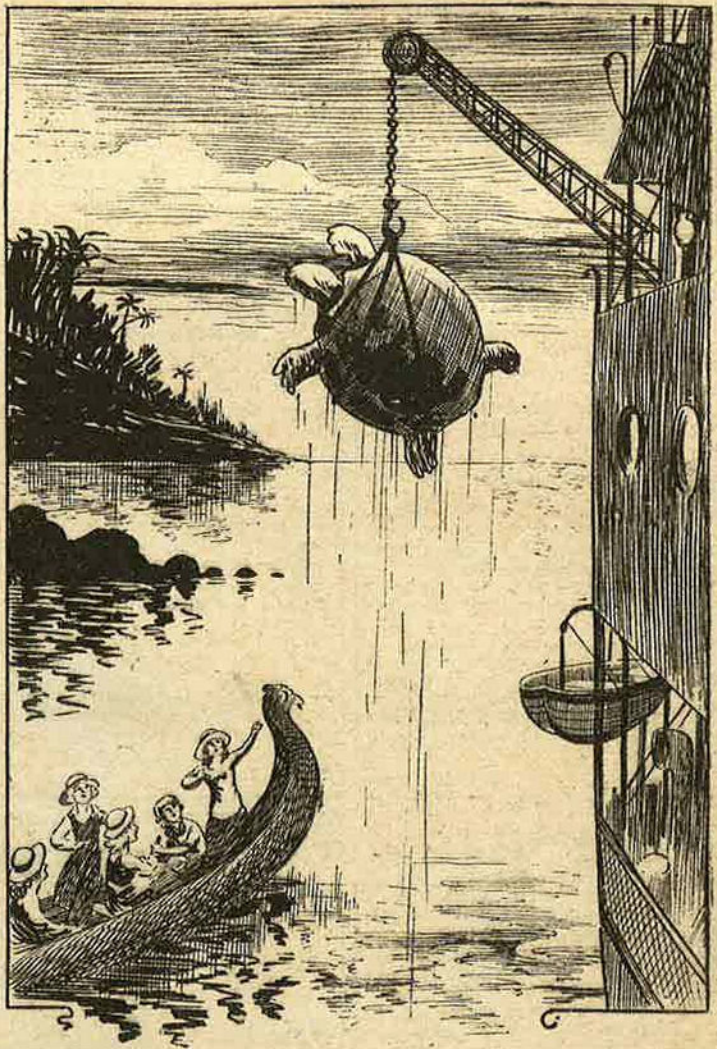
"It wasn't that, Josephine, my dear," she said. "He couldn't get away, that's all. It's the limpets on 'er barnacles that were too much for him."

"We shall have to take him in tow till we get him alongside the steamer. Then we will send down a wire rope from the handcrane on the fore-castle, and lift him on board."

The captured turtle was veered out astern at the end of the towline, and the girls, taking the paddles, paddled away vigorously to help the sail.

They soon found that dragging this great weight behind the canoe retarded her speed wonderfully, and it was nearly dark when they came alongside the great liner.

The girls were lined up along the rail of the hurricane-deck, looking down on



The turtle weighed nearly three-hundred weight, and the girls in the canoe realised his size and weight as the wire rope of the crane whined through the sheaves, and the turtle went swinging up against the stars that were beginning to show in the sky, waving his flippers helplessly.

them, and calling to them to know what they had discovered on their expedition.

"Wan at a time, girls!" called Pat, looking up at their black shapes silhouetted against the lights of the upper deck. "If you want to know what we've been doin', we've caught a skate as big as a four-post bedstead, we've found a tame volcano, a soda-fountain, a sulphur-mine, and more fountains than there are in Trafalgar Square; we've made mademoiselle a pair of shoes out of a boot-tree, an' we've caught a turtle to make you all some turtle soup. An' there are fried fish and chips for supper to-night!"

The girls gave a shrill cheer when they heard the wonderful results of this little afternoon cruise.

The canoe was brought alongside the companion-ladder, and mademoiselle was helped out to hurry up the long flight of steps to her cabin, where she could make her toilette after the fatigues of the afternoon.

But the girls took the canoe with the huge turtle in tow forward under the great overhang of the bows of the Utopia.

Here there was a little crane, or derrick, which was used in the handling of

the enormous anchors of the ship, and from this was lowered a wire rope and slings to lift the turtle on to the 16's's head.

The slings were made fast round the shell of their captive.

Then Joe and Hilda were landed on the companion-ladder to superintend the hoisting in of their catch.

He weighed nearly three hundred-weight, and the girls in the canoe realised his size and weight as the wire rope of the crane whined through the sheaves, and the turtle went swinging up against the stars that were beginning to show in the sky, waving his flippers helplessly.

They got him up all right thirty feet above the water, and, swinging him in-board, lowered him on deck.

And here they left him, a prisoner on the fore-castle.

Then the canoe was safely moored astern, and the girls joined their companions to tell them the story of their adventurous afternoon.

(Another magnificent long instalment of this splendid new serial in next Thursday's issue of "The School Friend." 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.—It often happens that a title of a story is sufficient to prove that the tale will be an interesting one. I think that this is the case in regard to the magnificent, long, complete story of the girls of Cliff House, which is due to appear in next Thursday's issue. It is entitled—

"OUT OF BOUNDS!" By Hilda Richards.

and a more exciting story has not appeared in the SCHOOL FRIEND. It is not every girl who would have the pluck to break bounds at night, but Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn are very anxious to undertake the task. Bessie Bunter insists upon accompanying them.

Why does Bessie insist upon joining Babs and Mabs in their midnight escapade?

For what purpose do the chums of Study No. 4 break bounds?

Do they have any trouble with Bessie?

Do they return safely to the school, or do they meet with a strange adventure?

What do they bring back to the school with them?

Why are all the girls awake upon their beating, and why do they not all go to sleep immediately?

Why should Babs and Mabs be anxious to dodge a certain gentleman who arrives at Cliff House the next day?

Why do Barbara and Mabel keep a close eye on Bessie Bunter?

Why does Mabel Lynn say "All up!" when the gentleman visitor comes into the classroom during afternoon lessons?

Well, I am afraid I have asked you a lot of questions, and I doubt whether you can answer any of them—at any rate, not until you have read next Thursday's splendid story of the girls of Cliff House. The answers to all the above questions will appear in "Out of Bounds!"—a story that I am sure you will thoroughly enjoy.

There will of course be another grand long instalment of

"THE GIRL CRUSOES!" By Julia Storm.

in this Thursday's issue. This instalment will be absolutely packed with exciting incidents. A terrific storm takes place, and the girls have some thrilling experiences as it passes away. Melita, the black girl, is taken for a ride on the Deesville Railway. But it does not turn out an enjoyable ride. Something happens, and— Well, I will not tell you anything more, as, by doing so, I might spoil your interest in this instalment.

STILL KEEPING UP.

In our last issue it was my pleasure to report that during the previous week I had received more letters than in any other week. Now I am sorry to have to report that this record has not been broken; but as, last week, the number of letters received only fell short of the previous week's total by three, I do not think I have cause to grumble. But, all the same, I do want to break that record. Therefore, I am appealing to all those

readers who have not yet written to me to hurry up and do so. I want to hear from all of you, and to receive your candid opinions of the SCHOOL FRIEND.

BESSIE BUNTER.

Practically every reader who writes to me has a special word to say for Bessie Bunter. Some readers say she is a "scream," others state that she is "the limit," whilst many inform me that the fat girl of Cliff House sends them into roars of laughter. Bessie is very popular with you all; there is absolutely no doubt about that. She cannot boast of her good looks, neither is she good-mannered, all the same, she is very amusing, and so long as she sends you into roars of laughter, we must gloss over her many failings. Do you agree with me?

Now, I am confident that any girl, whether she is at school, or whether she has left school, has only to read one story of Bessie Bunter to want to read many more. So, will you all do me the favour of introducing Bessie Bunter to any of your friends who have not made her acquaintance? I am sure your

friends will be very grateful to you for doing so.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Barbara.—I was delighted to have your letter, and to learn that you are such a staunch supporter of the SCHOOL FRIEND. Space will not permit of giving you a reply to your letter; but if you care to send me your full name and address, I will certainly do so.

Nancy.—Your suggestion is still under consideration. I am afraid some little time must elapse before I can do as you suggest, but I think it quite possible that I shall be able to introduce a feature on the lines you mention in a few months' time.

Lola Lolita.—Thanks for your nice letter. I do not wonder that you like Bessie Bunter. I must say she is not the sort of girl one would like to have as their friend, but there is no doubt that she is very amusing. In fact, the general opinion amongst my readers is that it would be a difficult matter to find a more amusing character.

Your Sincere Friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

IN THIS ISSUE, 20,000 Words Complete Girls' School Story!

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THE SCHOOL FRIEND

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BREAKING BOUNDS AT MIDNIGHT!

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