

IN THIS ISSUE -- 20,000 WORD COMPLETE GIRLS' SCHOOL STORY!

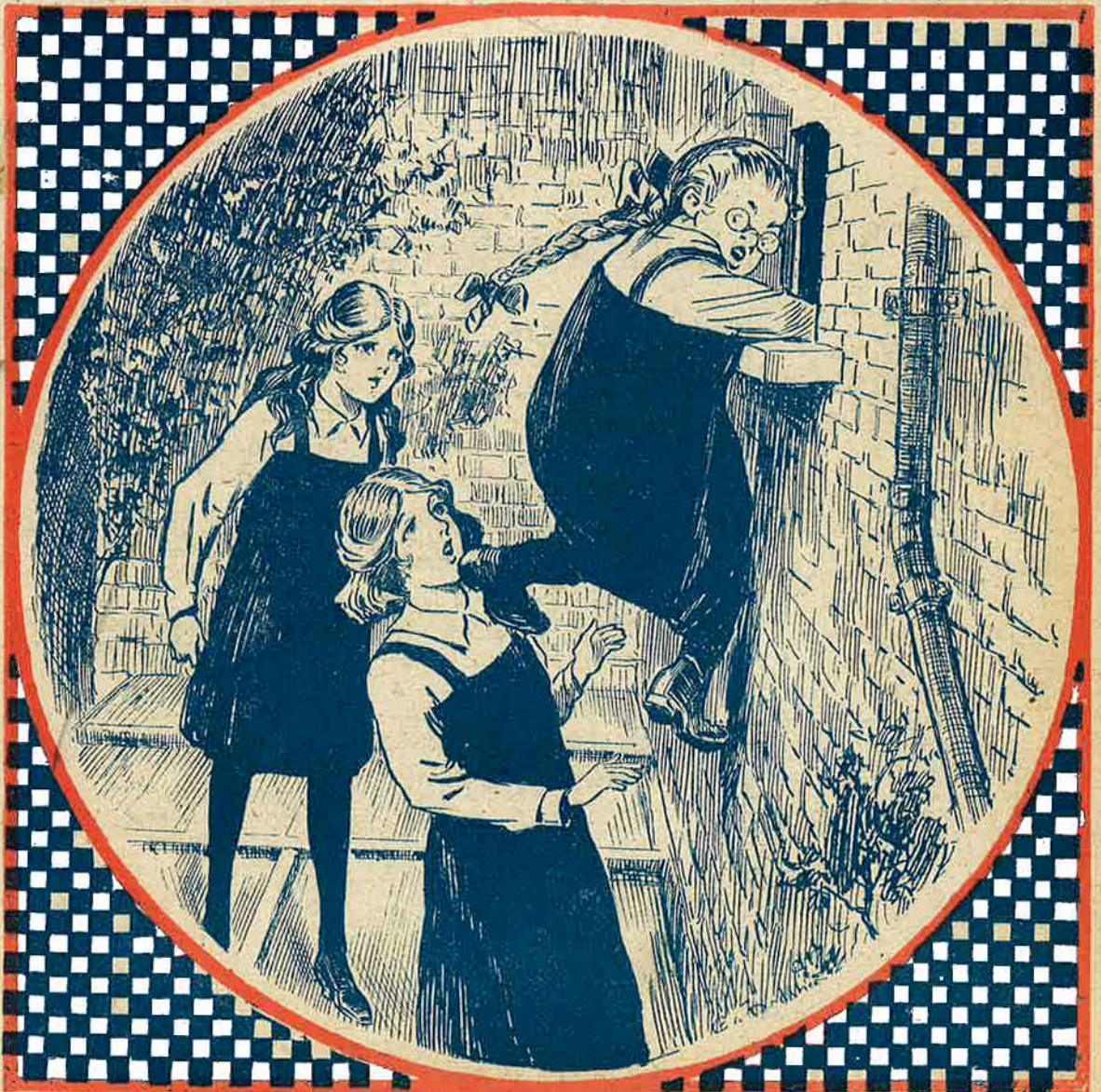
THE SCHOOL FRIEND

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

No. 11. Vol. 1.

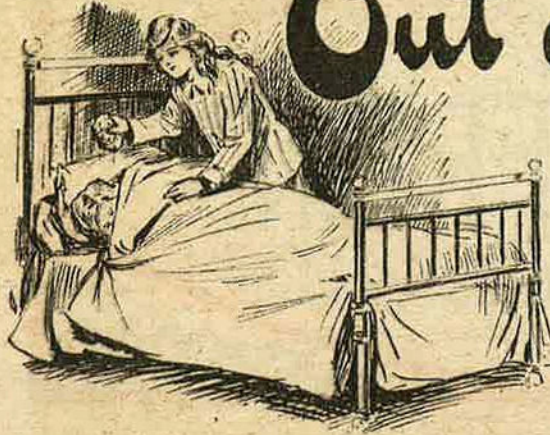
Three-Halfpence.

Week Ending July 26th, 1919.



BREAKING BOUNDS AT MIDNIGHT!

(An incident from the Long Complete Tale of the Girls of Cliff House, contained in this issue.)



Out of Bounds!

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

BY
HILDA RICHARDS.

Not Wisely, But Too Well.

“WOOOOOOH!”
Babs and Mabs of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, were about to enter their study, when that long-drawn sound of anguish came from within.

“Why, what—” began Barbara, in astonishment.

“Woo-hooop!”
“Sounds like somebody sneezed,” said Mabel Lyon.

“Oh dear! Ow! Oh! Ooooooh!”
Barbara Redfern threw the door open, and the two juniors entered Study No. 4.

“Bessie!” exclaimed Mabs.
“Ow! Ow!”

Bessie Bunter sat in the study arm-chair.

She blinked at the two girls over her big glasses with an expression of anguish in her fat face that might have moved a heart of stone.

“What on earth’s the matter?” exclaimed Barbara.

“Wow!”
“Are you ill?”

“Ow!”
“Miss Bullivant’s sent you a message,” said Barbara. “You haven’t done your lines.”

“Oooooh!”
“Bessie—”

“It wasn’t the sardines!” said Bessie Bunter, in a low, feeble voice.

“What?”

“And it wasn’t the tarts. I’m sure of that.”

“The tarts!” repeated Babs.

“Then, were only nine. They couldn’t have hurt me, could they?”

“Nine! Oh, dear!”

“And it couldn’t have been—ow!—the cake. It was only a small cake, and it was quite nice. Could it?”

“You little glutton!” exclaimed Barbara. “If you’ve eaten nine tarts, and a cake, and sausages—”

“They were all right, I tell you. It couldn’t have been them. I—I think, perhaps, it was the lobster!” moaned Bessie Bunter.

“Lobster as well!” shrieked Mabel.

“But it was nice, too. I don’t think it was that. Of course, it may have been the sardines. When I come to think of it, I think it was very likely the sardines.”

Babs and Mabs gazed at the fat junior in consternation.

Bessie Bunter’s gastronomic powers were celebrated in the Cliff House Fourth; but even those powers had a limit, and it looked as if the fat junior had passed the limit for once.

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Evidently she was feeling very bad.
She blinked pathetically at her horrified study friends.

“If it wasn’t the sardines,” she moaned, “it may have been the cream-puffs, or perhaps both together. Perhaps cream-puffs don’t agree with sardines, or perhaps the sardines don’t agree with the jam-tarts.”

“Or perhaps the lobster doesn’t agree with the lot of them!” gasped Babs.

“What else have you been eating?”

“Only some nuts and scones, and a few chocolate-creams, and some toffee. Ow!”

“Only?” murmured Mabs.

“Ow! Oh! Woodh! I’ve got a pain!” said Bessie pathetically. “I—I’ve lost my appetite, too.”

“Not really?” ejaculated Barbara.

Bessie Bunter nodded mournfully.

“Yes, I have. I—I couldn’t eat a thing!”

“Not after the lobster and the sardines, and the cake, and the tarts, and the cream-puffs, and the nuts, and the toffee? Sure?”

“Ow! Yes. Ow!”

“Couldn’t you try a little fat pork?” asked Mabel Lyon sympathetically.

“Goooooh!”

“Or perhaps some cod-liver oil?”

“Yarrugh!”

Bessie Bunter rocked herself in the arm-chair and moaned.

Even the thought of fat pork and cod-liver oil seemed to worry her, somehow, just then.

“Do you know what you are, Bessie?” demanded Barbara severely.

“Ow!”

“You are a horrid little gourmandiser.”

“Woooooh!”

“And it serves you right if you’ve got a pain.”

“Oooooh!”

Clara Trevlyn looked in at the doorway.

“The Bull’s coming!” she remarked, and vanished.

Babs and Mabs looked alarmed.

“She’s after your lines, Bessie!” exclaimed Barbara. “For goodness’ sake pull yourself together. Don’t let Miss Bullivant see you like this.”

“Ow! I can’t help being ill, can I?” moaned Bessie. “If you think I’ve been eating too much, Barbara Redfern—”

“Hush!”

A well-known tread was audible outside the door.

Miss Bullivant’s severe face and angular form appeared there.

“Is Bessie Bunter here?” Miss Bullivant looked in. “Oh, you are there,

Bessie. You have not done your im-

position?”

“Ow!”

“Why, what is the matter?”

“Are you ill, Bessie?” exclaimed the drill-mistress, with some concern.

“Nunno! Not at all!” gasped Bessie Bunter. “I’m not feeling at all ill, and I haven’t a pain! Ow! Wow!”

“Good gracious! You certainly look unwell, and you have a very unhealthy colour,” said Miss Bullivant. She glanced at the table, on which there were the remains—very slight remains—of a spread. And she understood, and her stern eyes fastened on the unhappy fat junior like gimlets. “Bessie Bunter, you have been over-eating!”

“Oh, no! I—I haven’t tasted a thing since dinner.”

“What?”

“Except the sausages and the tarts—”

“Bessie!”

“I—I think it’s the sardines that—”

“Shocking!” exclaimed Miss Bullivant. And for once Babs and Mabs agreed with the Bull. It certainly was shocking. “Bessie Bunter, you are quite ill, and you owe it to your own goodness.”

“Ow!”

“Follow me to Miss Primrose at once!” exclaimed the Bull. “I shall take you before the headmistress just as you are.”

“Oooooh!”

“It is shocking! I have never approved of meals being taken in the studies at all. Barbara, as head girl of the Fourth, you should see that nothing of this kind occurs, especially in your study.”

“Oh, Miss Bullivant!”

“You are very much to blame, Barbara!”

Babs did not attempt any defence. It was quite useless with Miss Bullivant.

But how Barbara, even as captain of the Fourth, was to see that Bessie Bunter did not eat too much, was a mystery.

Certainly nothing short of wild horses would have kept Bessie from a spread when she was in funds.

“I shall report this to Miss Primrose,” said the Bull sternly. “You may remain where you are, Bessie, till you feel better. I trust that Miss Primrose will put a stop to these orgies in the junior studies.”

And Miss Bullivant, with an expressive sniff, swept out of the study.

"You've done it now, you little donkey!" said Barbara.

To which Bessie Bunter replied:

"Woocoooh!"

Babs and Mabs left the study, and the unhappy fat junior was left to suffer in solitude.

But when they came in, an hour later, they found Bessie Bunter very much better.

She was still in the armchair, and she was still a little pale; but her first remark was:

"I say, you girls, I've been waiting for you! When are we going to have tea?"

By Order of the Headmistress!

"IT'S a shame!"

That was the general verdict in the Cliff House Fourth.

Indignation was deep and general.

Often—very often—there were differences of opinion between Marjorie & Co. of Study No. 7, and Babs and Mabs of Study No. 4; but for once they were in complete agreement.

It was a shame; it was, undoubtedly.

But the fiat had gone forth.

Bessie Bunter was the cause.

Miss Bullivant had reported the "orgy" to the headmistress.

For once the stern "Bull" had brought the headmistress to her way of thinking. And "tea in the study" was abolished in the Fourth Form for a week.

That was to be a lesson to the Fourth—as if they needed a lesson of that kind, as Dolly Jobling said indignantly.

Did Miss Primrose think they were all Bessie Bunters? Dolly wanted to know. But there it was; the fiat had gone forth.

And however indignant the Fourth might be, the order had to be obeyed.

Tea in the study was a thing of the past—and the future!

But the Cliff House juniors weren't thinking about the future; they were thinking about the present.

And, for the present, they had to give up those cosy little feeds in the studies and take their tea in Hall, under the stern eye of Miss Bullivant and the other mistresses.

Bessie Bunter, the cause of all the trouble, was most dismayed of all.

As she pathetically remarked, she never got enough to eat in Hall.

Often, indeed, she had tea in Hall, and afterwards in the study.

How was she to get on with the school tea, without tea in the study after it?

Bessie Bunter propounded that problem to Babs and Mabs, who refused to be interested.

Marcia Loftus proposed ragging Bessie Bunter; but that, though it might be satisfactory in itself, was no way out of the difficulty.

The question was, What was to be done?

"We're going to be done!" was Clara Trevlyn's gloomy opinion.

"It isn't the feeds, of course," remarked Marjorie. "We can get a good tea downstairs, if that were all—"

"I can't!" interjected Bessie Bunter.

"But it's the invasion of our rights," continued Marjorie—"that's the point. Why should we be stopped feeding in the study just because—"

"Because Bessie is a little fat pig!" said Clara.

"Oh, really, Clara—"

"It's unjust!" said Dolly Jobling. "I used to think Miss Primrose was a dear. Now I don't!"

"Oh, it's the Bull's doing!" said Barbara. "Miss Primrose has let herself be talked over. The Bull is always

annoyed at seeing anybody comfy. She really ought to be a prison wardress!"

"Are we going to stand it?" demanded Clara.

"We've got to, dear," said Marjorie Hazeldene gently. "Miss Primrose's orders, you know."

"Britons never shall be slaves!" said Clara.

"Hear, hear!"

"That applies to girls as well as boys," continued Clara emphatically. "Why, we've got votes now, even—"

"We haven't!"

"Not us personally, duffer, of course; but women have. We shall have votes, too, when we're thirty," said Clara.

"Therefore, as free and independent citizens of a great Empire—"

"Oh, my word!"

Trevlyn obstinately. "It's your business to see us through; and if you don't, I shall call a meeting of the Fourth, and have you deposed!"

"Hear, hear!" said Dolly Jobling. "That's fair play! We've got to circumvent the Bull somehow, and you've got to think of the how, Barbara!"

"But—"

"And go ahead and do it," said Clara—

"otherwise, the sack!"

"Hear, hear!" came from all quarters of the Common-room.

Clara Trevlyn's opinion was evidently shared by the rest of the Fourth.

Barbara wrinkled her brows.

"You see, there's responsibility as well as swank in being captain of the Form!"

Gwen Cook pointed out.



"I'm quite ready," said Bessie Bunter disdainfully. "I shall walk up to Miss Bullivant with a contemptuous look like this!" The fat junior curled her lip, and squeezed up her fat little nose into an expression of supreme contempt.

"As free and independent citizens of a great Empire, on which the sun never sets, we refuse to be treated like this—at least, I do!"

"My dear Clara," murmured Marjorie, "you see—"

"I see that we're not going to stand it! And I call on the captain of the Form to do something!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Barbara.

Clara pointed a severe forefinger at her.

"Haven't you been elected captain of the Fourth?" she demanded.

"Yes; but not Head of Cliff House, you know!"

"As captain of the Fourth, you've got to think of some way out. It's up to you, Barbara!"

"Oh!" said Barbara, rather dismayed. "You're skipper!" said Clara. "Well, if you're skipper, go ahead and skip! That's what a skipper's for!"

"But—"

"It's no good butting!" said Clara

"It's up to Barbara!" said several voices.

"But—"

"It's up to you, Babs. You've got to bait the Bull!" said Philippa Derwent, laughing. "You lead, and we'll follow!"

"I say, you girls—"

"Oh, be quiet, Bessie!"

"But, I say—you know, I've got an idea—"

"Whose?"

"Oh, really, Clara—I say, you girls, we can't stand it, of course—it's impossible! I'm hungry already!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got an idea. My brother Billy at Greyfriars—"

"Bless your brother Billy at Greyfriars!" said Clara crossly.

"My brother Billy told me they had a harring-out once at Greyfriars."

"A which?" ejaculated Clara.

"A harring-out. My brother Billy was the leader, of course—he told me so."

"I don't think!"

'And he stood up for their rights, you know, and led them to victory!' said Bessie Bunter. 'I'm willing to do the same. You girls back me up, and we'll soon bring the Bull to her senses!'

"Fathead!" shrieked Clara. "Suppose we seize her," continued Bessie Bunter, her eyes gleaming behind her spectacles with the light of battle.

"Seize the Bull?" gasped Mabel. "Certainly; and bind her, hand and foot—"

"Oh, dear!" "And lock her in the easel cupboard," said Bessie Bunter. "Then we barricade ourselves somewhere—in the kitchen would be best, as we should be handy for the pantry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And we don't give in till Miss Primrose stands a spread to all the Fourth!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle, if you like; but I think it's a jolly good idea, and I'm ready to lead you, same as my brother Billy did the Remove fellows at Greyfriars! Some people," added Bessie Bunter, with dignity, "are born to command!"

"Oh, dear!" "Probably Bessie Bunter had expected her daring proposition to make a great impression on the Fourth.

Perhaps she had expected the juniors to rally round her with cheers.

If so, she was grievously disappointed. The Fourth-Formers only shrieked with laughter.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snapped the fat junior wrathfully. "I simply want you to back me up. I'll tackle the Bull! You can rely on me to lead you. Back me up, and I'll jolly soon bring 'em to terms!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Well, you tackle the Bull, and we'll back you up!" gasped Babs. "Let's see you tackle the Bull first—only that!"

"Only that!" chirruped Clara. "I'm quite ready!" said Bessie Bunter disdainfully. "I shall walk up to her, with a contemptuous look—like this—"

The fat junior curled her lip and squeezed up her fat little nose into an expression of supreme contempt, by way of example.

That look might have struck terror to the Bull's heart—perhaps!

But the only effect it had on the juniors was to make them shriek hysterically.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, dear! You—you'll look at the Bull like that?" gasped Babs.

"Yes—just like that!" "They'll bring it in manslaughter," said Clara warningly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It will show her that I despise her," said Bessie Bunter loftily; "and then I shall say 'Cat!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Then I will rush upon her—"

"Cave!" came from Phyllis Howell, near the door. "Here comes the Bull!"

There was instant silence in the junior Common-room.

The grim features of Miss Bullivant appeared in the doorway.

Clara nudged Bessie Bunter. "Now's your chance!" she whispered. But Bessie Bunter's truculence had vanished.

"Shurrup!" she whispered hastily. "Now's your chance to walk up to her," persisted Clara.

"Be quiet!" "And say, 'Cat!'" "Shurrup!" breathed Bessie Bunter in terror. "She'll hear you."

"Bessie Bunter!" came the deep tones of Miss Bullivant.

"Oh! Yes, please!" gasped Bessie. THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 11.

"You have not done your lines, Bessie."

"Oh! Ah! Ow!" "Have you done your lines?"

"Nunno!" "I thought not," said Miss Bullivant grimly. "You will follow me to my study, Bessie, and write out your imposition under my eyes. Come!"

Miss Bullivant whisked away and Bessie Bunter followed her as meekly as a fat lamb.

There was a chortle in the Common-room as the fat junior vanished.

Evidently Bessie Bunter wasn't going to give Miss Bullivant that terrific look of contempt; she wasn't going to say "Cat!" and she wasn't going to rush upon her.

She trod in trepidation after the severe mistress, leaving the Fourth Form chortling.

Barbara Rises to the Occasion.

"PREP!" remarked Mabel Lynn. Barbara did not heed.

She was leaning her elbow on the table in Study No. 4, and her pretty chin rested in her hand.

Her dark eyes had an expression of deep, deep thought.

Babs was evidently wrestling with a mental problem, and she had no attention to bestow upon such minor matters as preparation.

Bessie Bunter was in the armchair, lugubriously sucking toffee.

Toffee was all very well in its way, but the fat junior's thoughts were dwelling upon forbidden tuck.

The headmistress' order had been in force for two days now, and there had been no tea in the study.

Certainly, the school tea was well enough in its way. It was plain but good.

And there was bread and cheese for supper, if anyone wanted it.

But Bessie had dealt with the school tea, and like Alexander of old, she sighed for fresh worlds to conquer.

The other juniors were satisfied with the fare, so far as that went; it was the invasion of their immemorial rights that they resented.

Tea in the study was an institution, and the headmistress, under the persuasion of Miss Bullivant had laid tyrannic hands upon that institution.

The juniors kindly forgave the headmistress. Even Bessie Bunter was willing to admit that Miss Primrose meant well.

The girls laid all the blame upon the interfering, officious Bull.

But whosoever the blame was laid, the fact remained—tea in the study was barred, and something had to be done.

And by the general consent of the Fourth, Barbara Redfern was expected to do it.

That was one of the happy responsibilities of the captain of the Form.

Hence the deep reflection in which Barbara Redfern was plunged, to the exclusion of prep and all other considerations.

Mabs gently tapped her on the head with a ruler, to draw her attention.

Babs woke up, as it were, with a start. "Ow!"

"Prep," explained Mabs. "Bother prep!"

"Quite so; but are you prepared to bother Miss Bellow in class to-morrow morning?" asked the practical Mabs.

"If not, I suggest getting on with it." "I've been thinking—"

"My dear girl, it's no good indulging in these novelties when it's time for prep."

"Oh, don't be funny, Mabel! Something's got to be done."

"Yes; prep."

"Br-r-r-r!" Bessie Bunter blinked up over her glasses.

"You're going to get jolly well ragged in dorm to-night, Barbara," she remarked. "I heard Clara say so. You haven't thought of anything, and the Bull's triumphing over us. It will serve you right!"

"Ring off, my dear!" said Barbara. "I've got an idea, Mabs."

"My word!" said Mabs in astonishment. "You don't say so!"

"Look here, be serious, you little duffer! I've got an idea. Tea in the study is ordered off."

"I've heard of that before."

"But what about supper in the dormitory?" demanded Barbara triumphantly. "We have supper in hall."

"Bread and cheese!" said Bessie Bunter, with a snort. "And there's not enough even of that! The Bull actually stopped me last night, when I was helping myself to cheese. She said I was eating too much. I hadn't had more than a pound of cheese—certainly no more than a pound and a half—"

"Bessie dear, you use your chin too much," said Barbara. "Give it a rest. Supper in Hall is all very well, Mabel; but it's not good enough. If we can't have tea in the study, we're going to have supper in the dorm—anything we like."

"Can't be did! Miss Primrose has given Auntie Jones orders not to serve us for a week."

"There are other tuckshops in the wide world, beside Auntie Jones' little den in the corner of the quad, Mabel."

Mabel Lynn nodded thoughtfully. "We might go down to Uncle Clegg's in Friardale," she assented. "But if the Bull saw us—"

"And she would," said Bessie Bunter. "I went there after lessons, and there was the Bull parading around. I believe she was watching."

"I thought so," said Mabel, with a nod. "The Bull's too sharp for us."

"She caught me," said Bessie Bunter dolorously. "And when I told her I had simply come there to change a five-pound note, she actually doubted my word! Isn't she a cat?"

"Well, you hadn't a five-pound note, you fat fibber."

"Just what the Bull said. She asked me to show her the five," said Bessie indignantly. "And when I said I'd left it in the study in my work-basket, she refused to believe me. She did, really! Shows a rotten, suspicious nature; don't you think so? I jolly well told her she was no lady."

"You told the Bull she was no lady?" shrieked Mabel.

"Yes, I did."

"My word! What did she do?"

"She didn't do anything. You see, she didn't hear me. I—I didn't say it till I was too far away for her to hear."

"You little duffer!"

"About supper in the dorm," resumed Barbara. "It will be necessary to smuggle in the food."

"Can't be done, I tell you."

"Not in the daytime," assented Barbara. "But you know somebody has said that difficulties are only made in order to be overcome. We're not going to Uncle Clegg's in the daytime."

"Then when the dickens are we going?"

"To-night."

"Tut-tut-to-night!" stuttered Mabel. "Breaking bounds, do you mean?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, my word!"
 "Who's afraid?" demanded Barbara.
 "Well, I'm not afraid," said Mabel, after some reflection. "But I think it's a footling idea, all the same."
 "Your thinking capacities, my dear, don't reflect any credit on this study," said Barbara kindly. "Leave the thinking to me. I'm going to break bounds to-night."

"Oh, Babs!"
 "Bob Cherry's done it at Greyfriars."
 "This isn't Greyfriars, and you're not Bob Cherry."

"I suppose that whatever a boy can do, a girl can do better?"

"Well, there's something in that," said Mabel. "Still—"

"I think it's a jolly good idea!" announced Bessie Bunter. "I'll go, if you like. You place the money in my hands, and I'll get the tuck, and—"

"And that's the last that will be heard of it!" said Mabel, with a sniff.

"Oh, really, Mabs—"

"You can't come, you little duffer!" said Barbara. "You would be frightened at a shadow, and give the whole thing away. I'm going, and you're coming with me, Mabel."

"Oh!" said Mabel.

"We shall have a whip-round in the Form to raise the cash, and we shall have a tremendous supper in the dorm—a feast of the gods!" said Barbara impressively. "That's the only way of keeping our end up. If we let the Bull gloat over us, what becomes of our prestige?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bessie Bunter. "And you can put me down for ten shillings towards it—if my remittance comes this evening."

"If we wait till your remittance comes, dear, we shall be too old to enjoy the spread. At seventy or eighty, tarts and buns begin to pall."

"Look here—"

"It's a footling idea," said Mabel; "but I'm game, if you are! We can do it in good style for the whole Form on a pound or two. That isn't much, shared among eighteen."

"That's the idea!"

"I say, you girls, no larks!" said Bessie Bunter suspiciously. "I can guess what your game is. You're going to bag the food."

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"You horrid little porpoise! You know what you'd do, you mean," said Barbara wrathfully. "Dry up! Now, let's get this wretched prep, done, Mabel, and we'll go round the studios making a collection."

"I say, you girls—"

"Ring off, Bessie!"
 Babs and Mabs set to work, and Bessie Bunter, having finished the toffee, followed their example.

Prep. finished, Babs and Mabs left the study to acquaint the Fourth with the little scheme that had been schemed.

It was received with startled ejaculations in Study No. 7, which they visited first.

"Suppose you meet a burglar?" asked Dolly Jobling.

"Burglars don't usually stroll round country lanes in the evening," answered Barbara. "More likely to meet a burglar by staying indoors, if you come to that."

"There might be a highwayman—"

"Or a pirate?" asked Babs sarcastically.

"Or a s-savage unicorn?"

"You won't have the nerve!" opined Clara.

"My dear kid, you're talking out of your hat! Put your money in this box, and don't be a duffer!"

Barbara held out the collecting-box—which was not exactly a box, but an empty toffee-tin.

Silver and coppers clinked in the tin. Study No. 7 contributed liberally, though they agreed that the scheme was decidedly "footling"—and just like Barbara!

Up and down the Fourth went Babs and Mabs, evoking incredulity and amazement on all sides—but gathering in contributions.

All the members of the Fourth contributed but one. Bessie Bunter was still waiting for a remittance, and could not appear among the contributors; but in compensation for that she was certain to come out very strongly when the feed took place.

Babs and Mabs added their own spare cash; and the whole sum was carefully counted in Study No. 4.

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY!



No. 11.

MISS BELLEW.

"Thirty-two shillings and sixpence," said Barbara, with great satisfaction. "That's nearly two shillings a head. Why, we can stand a regular Lord Mayor's banquet for that! There'll be enough to make Bessie ill again!"

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"And we shall have the laugh of the Bull!" added Barbara, with still greater satisfaction. "She won't know it—that's the pity!"

It was a pity—but it certainly would not have been judicious to let the Bull know it!

That was a gratification the Fourth-Formers were compelled to forgo.

After Lights Out!

MISS BULLIVANT saw lights out for the Fourth that night.

The Fourth Form dormitory presented precisely its usual aspect, and there was no sign to excite the suspicions of the Bull.

Miss Bullivant cast a final glance along the long row of white beds, turned out the light, and departed.

Her footsteps died away down the corridor.

Five minutes elapsed without a sound or a movement, to give Miss Bullivant plenty of time to get back to her study and Cicero—that ancient Roman gentleman being her favourite companion of an evening.

Then Barbara Redfern sat up in bed.

"You girls asleep?"
 "No fear!" came the reply from many quarters.

"Up with you, Mabel!"
 Barbara slipped out of bed.

But from Mabel Lynn's bed there came no movement; only a voice in argumentative tones.

"I say, Babs—"

"Well?"

"Thinking the whole matter out, dear, I think it would be better to stay in bed now."

"Do you?" said Barbara grimly.

"Yes, and chance our luck to-morrow at Uncle Clegg's. What do you think, Barbara?"

"I think you'd better turn out, dear."

"But don't you think— Yooop! Keep that sponge away from my neck! Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you want any more, dear?" asked Barbara, sweetly. "Don't mind me! I'll keep on as long as you stay in bed!"

"Ow! Keep off! Get away!"

Mabel scrambled out of the bed on the other side. The wet sponge seemed to have imparted great activity.

"Now get into your clothes, sharp!" said Barbara, beginning to dress in the dark. "Did you put your rubber shoes ready, as I told you?"

"Ow! Yes."

"Buck up, then!"

"I say, you'd better not go," said Clara Trevlyn. "It's jolly dark outside."

"That's because it's night-time, my dear. It's generally dark at night."

"Oh, don't be a duffer! You may meet somebody!"

"How awful!"

"We'll give you another day," said Clara generously. "We'll put off the ragging for twenty-four hours! There!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Suppose you meet a mad bull!" came from Dolly Jobling's bed.

"Suppose you don't talk like a little goose, dear! Besides, we couldn't meet a bull more ferocious than our Bull! There isn't one!"

"I say, you girls—"

"I can hear you getting up, Bessie. Get back into bed at once!"

"I'm coming!"

"You're not coming!"

"My word!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn. "I thought nothing but an earthquake would turn Bessie out of bed! Wherefore this thushness?"

"The fat little duffer thinks we're going to eat the food on the way home!" said Barbara, in tones of concentrated wrath.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you are!" retorted Bessie Bunter. "Anybody would—I mean, I know your little game! If there's going to be any scoffing, I'm going to keep an eye on you."

"Do you want me to pull your top-knot, Bessie?"

"I think very likely Miss Bullivant would hear me if you did, Barbara. Of course, I shouldn't want her to. But she might."

"You little donkey, will you get back to bed?"

"No fear!"

Barbara breathed wrath.

It was impossible to use drastic measures without the risk of bringing the Bull back to the dormitory by giving the alarm, which certainly meant the failure of the whole scheme.

Bessie Bunter was already dressing, with evident determination.

It really looked as if the fat junior would have to be "given her head," so to speak.

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"Look here, Bessie," said Barbara, at last, "you can't come—you're too silly—"

"Cat!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Cat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do be quiet!" exclaimed Barbara. "You'll have the Bull here soon! Bessie, you don't want to come!"

"I'm coming, from a sense of duty, you know."

"Oh, you little minx! Suppose we—suppose we meet a—a highwayman, or—or a wolf?" said Barbara desperately.

"You wouldn't go if there was any rick!" chuckled Bessie Bunter. "Besides, you'll want me to protect you if there's any danger. I'm as brave as a lion, you know—not like some girls!"

"I shall box your ears to-morrow, Bessie!"

"Cat!"

"You are to go back to bed at once!"

"Rubbish!"

"Suppose we hold her down and sit on her?" suggested Freda Footo.

"I'll jolly well scream!" said the fat junior. "I'm doing this for all your sakes, from a sense of duty! You might at least be grateful. I say, you girls, where are you?"

There was no reply, only the sound of a door softly closing.

Babs and Mabs were gone.

"Babs! Mabel! Where are you?"

"They're gone!" chuckled Clara.

"You'd better turn in, Bessie."

"Cats!"

Bessie Bunter rolled away hurriedly to the door. It opened and closed again.

In the dark passage the fat junior blinked round her.

"I say, you girls—"

"Hush!" came in an anguished whisper from the darkness. "You little idiot! Hush!"

"Well, I'm coming, you know," said Bessie, groping round in the gloom. "Lemme catch hold of your arm. Is that you, Barbara?"

"Yow-ow! Let go my hair!"

"Well, I'm coming!"

Barbara Redfern, exercising really creditable self-restraint, refrained from stewing Bessie Bunter along the passage.

"Come on, then!" she gasped.

And Bessie Bunter chuckled, and came.

Out of Bounds.

"**Q**UIET!" murmured Barbara. The three juniors trod softly along the passage in the darkness.

There was a deep grunt from Bessie Bunter as she bumped on the wall at the corner.

"Quiet!"

"Oh, really, Barbara—"

"Don't talk!" whispered Mabel fiercely.

"I'm not talking! You're talking! I never knew two such girls for talking!" exclaimed Bessie indignantly. "Why, you're talking all the time. As for me, I hardly utter a word. I—"

"Will you be quiet?" hissed Barbara. Snort! from Bessie Bunter.

However, she refrained from talking, and the three juniors pursued their way in silence, treading cautiously.

At the end of the corridor was a little back staircase, leading down to a passage with a window at the end.

The girls stole softly down the stair, to the lower passage, and stopped at the window.

Barbara quietly unfastened the catch, and pushed up the sash.

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They were on the first floor of Cliff House now, and outside the window were the leads of a low out-house.

"Careful now!" whispered Barbara.

She drew herself lightly over the sill, and dropped upon the leads.

The night was dark, with a few stars glimmering in the sky, and a fresh wind blew from the sea.

"Now, Mabel!"

Mabs dropped beside her leader.

Getting out was a slower process for Bessie Bunter. She had more weight to carry.

"You help me!" she said, in a shrill whisper. "Don't be cats!"

"You've only got to drop from the sill," said Mabs.

"Give me a hand, then!"

"Oh, all right!"

Bessie clambered out backwards, clinging to the window-frame.

Her feet lashed out, and there was a suppressed howl from Mabel.

"Yow!"

"Wharrer rarrer?" gasped Bessie.

"You silly idiot! You've kicked my chin!"

meaned Mabel.

"I really wish you wouldn't put your chin in the way of my feet, Mabel. You're always doing something clumsy."

"Why, you—you—"

"Hush!" murmured Barbara.

Mabel Lynn suppressed her feelings.

Bessie Bunter clung to the window-sill with her fat hands, and swung her feet to find the leads underneath.

But her little fat legs did not reach far enough, and she gave a gasp.

"I say, you girls, there isn't anything under me! Yow-ow! I'm hanging over space. Yow-woop! I shall be k-k-killed!"

"Drop! It's only a few inches."

"I c-c-can't! I believe you want me to break my neck! Yow-ow!"

"It's only two inches under your feet."

"Yow-ow! I shall be kik-kik-killed!"

"Help her down, Barbara!" said Mabel. "She's nearly dislocated my chin!"

Barbara grasped the fat junior.

"Now let yourself go!" she whispered.

"I've got you!"

"Are you s-s-sure?"

"Yes—yes; quick!"

"B-b-but I can't feel anything under my f-f-feet!"

"You'll feel something on your silly head if you don't do as you're told!"

breathed Barbara.

"Oh, dear! I—I can't let go! I—I shall fall! Yoop!" gasped Bessie Bunter, as Babs jerked her away from her hold on the window-sill.

Bessie's feet touched the leads, which were not more than a couple of inches under her toes.

But she did not stand on them.

She reeled over, and caught Barbara wildly for support, and dragged her over, too.

They landed on the flat leads together in a heap.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Barbara sat up, breathing fury.

"Quiet, you fat imp! Quiet!"

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"Will you be quiet?"

"Oh dear! I—I gasped Bessie. "I—I can't go any further! I—I've sprained my backbone—all through you, Barbara Redfern."

"Do you want me to pitch you down head first into the garden?" asked Babs, in concentrated tones.

"Yaroooh!"

"Then shut up! Help the little idiot down, Mabs, while I close the window."

Barbara drew the lower sash down,

leaving it sufficiently ajar to be opened easily when she returned.

Bessie Bunter was blinking uneasily on the edge of the low-leaded roof.

Mabs slipped down into the garden. It was an easy drop from the outhouse.

"Now then, Bessie—"

"I—I can't!"

"For goodness' sake, either come on or go back!" hissed Barbara.

"I'm not going back."

"Then come on!"

"I—I c-c-can't!"

"Shake her!" came Mabs' furious whisper from below. "Shake her—hard!"

"I won't be shook—I mean, shaken! Yaroooh!"

"Quiet, you little idiot!" murmured Barbara, in despair. "We shall have half Cliff House after us at this rate! It's an easy drop, Bessie. I'll hold you."

"Mind my specs!"

"Yes, yes."

The fat junior was persuaded to drop at last.

She found it quite easy, and Barbara followed her, and the three girls stood in the garden.

Bessie Bunter gave a grunt.

"That was easy enough!" she said. "Blessed if I can see what you girls were making such a fuss about! For goodness' sake let's get on, and don't waste any more time!"

"Why, you—"

"Shush! Come on!" whispered Barbara.

The three girls stole quietly through the garden.

They did not make for the quad, but cut across the headmistress' private garden, which had a gate on Pegg Lane.

The gate was locked, but it was easy enough to clamber over it, even for Bessie, and they were quickly in the lane.

"Safe as houses!" said Barbara, with a deep breath of relief. "Now, let's get along to Friar Dale! Put it on!"

They ran.

Bessie Bunter kept pace with Babs and Mabs for about a minute and a half. Then she slacked down.

"I say, you girls—"

"Come on!"

"I'm rather out of breath. Better walk, I think," said Bessie.

"Do you want to be out all night?" demanded Mabs. "Look here, we'll go ahead, and you can meet us coming back!"

"Yaroooh!"

"What's the matter now?" gasped Barbara.

"I won't be left!" howled Bessie. "I believe you want me to be murdered by a highwayman!"

Mabel Lynn glanced back.

"We're far enough from Cliff House to shake her, without her row being heard," she remarked.

"Oh, good!"

"Yah! Keep off! I—I'm coming!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "Look here, I'll tell you what! You two can join hands and carry me, if you like."

"Oh, my word! Do you think we're a pair of steam cranes?"

"Oh, really, Mabel—"

"Walk as fast as you can," said Barbara. "And if you speak again, I'll shake you—hard! Mind that!"

Grunt!

But the adventurers were far enough from the school for Bessie to be shaken without the alarm being given, so the fat junior did not speak again.

In deep silence the three girls hurried on.

Cliff House to the Rescue.

BARBARA REDFERN'S heart was beating rather fast now. And Mabel was looking about her in the shadows with glances that were far from easy. Bessie Bunter, fortunately, was too busy gasping and groaning over her exertions to think of the terrors of the lonely night. From the distance they could hear the low murmur of the sea on the shingle. Round them were dark fields, with trees that sighed in the wind. At that hour there were few pedestrians in the lanes, and the girls were glad, for it was strictly necessary that the reckless expedition should be kept a secret.

"Are you s-s-sure it's not a—a highwayman?"
 "Oh," murmured Mabel breathlessly, "what duffers we are! Come on!"
 The horse sedately watched them over the hedge, as they ran on.
 Bessie Bunter cast many blinks backwards, not at all sure that it was only a horse.
 She kept tight hold of Barbara's arm.
 "I—I say, you girls, ho—he—he's following us!" gasped Bessie.
 "Fathead! He can't get out of the field."
 "I can hear him!" moaned the fat junior.
 "I—I say, let's hide somewhere! I can hear him!"
 "Hush! Somebody's coming!"
 The three girls stopped.

He stopped there, to look up at the signpost beside the lamp.
 The three juniors watched him in silence.
 They intended to let him pass and get clear, before they emerged from cover.
 The gentleman in the topper seemed in no hurry, however.
 He set a pair of gold-rimmed glasses straight upon a rather podgy nose, and blinked up at the sign.
 Time and weather had rather obliterated the sign, and the light from the lamp was by no means brilliant.
 "Huh! What does it say?" The fat gentleman was muttering to himself, and in the deep silence his words came clearly to the hidden juniors. "Disgraceful state



"It's only a horse," said Barbara Redfern. "Are you s-s-sure?" stuttered Bessie Bunter. "Are you s-s-sure it's not a—a highwayman?"

But the solitude had its displeasing side.

Planning the escapade in the warm, well-lighted study was one thing; actually carrying it out, in the dark, lonely lanes, was quite another—as Babs realised, a little late.

It dawned upon Babs' mind that the venture was a reckless one, not to say foolhardy, and it is very probable that she wished herself back in the Fourth Form dormitory as the girls moved further and further from the school.

But nothing would have induced her to admit it.

There was a sound of a sudden movement at a hedge close by, and the three girls suddenly stopped, their hearts in their mouths.

"Ow!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "What's that?"

A dark object rose into view over the hedge within a few feet of the girls, and they stood frozen.

But the next moment Barbara broke into a breathless laugh.

"It's only a horse!"

"Oh!" gasped Mabel.

"Are you s-s-sure?" stuttered Bessie.

Footsteps were audible on the quiet road, but they were in advance, not behind, as Bessie had fancied.

"It's only somebody going to Pegg!" murmured Barbara. "Listen!"

The juniors were nearly at the cross-roads, where a solitary lamp gleamed in the middle of a path of grass.

Someone was coming from the direction of Friardale.

"A—a—a highwayman!" muttered Bessie through her chattering teeth. "I—I say, let's hide! Suppose we get kidnapped!"

"Better take cover!" said Mabel, in a low voice. "It might be some horrid tramp!"

"This way—quick!" whispered Barbara.

Babs drew her companions into a gap in the hedge beside the lane.

There they were completely hidden in the shadow.

Breathlessly, they watched for the pedestrian to pass.

A fat gentleman, in a gleaming silk hat, with a coat-collar turned up about his ears, came into the radius of light from the road-lamp.

for a sign to be in! Is that the way to Pegg, or is that not the way to Pegg? Huh! I shall not get to the Anchor to-night at this rate! Huh!"

"I say, shall we tell him the way, Babs?" whispered Mabel.

"No! He'll soon find out—it's on the sign. We mustn't be seen."

"Pegg—ono mile!" muttered the fat gentleman, making the sign out at last.

"Oh, good! One mile! Huh! Why—what—what—"

He gave a sudden jump; and Barbara and Mabel, in their hiding-place, jumped, too.

A rough-looking figure had suddenly appeared in the radius of the lamp—a man with a dark, bloated face, in tarry trousers and an old jacket.

The girls did not know him by sight, but they could guess that he was one of the long-shoremen who hung about the fishing-village.

And, to judge by his face, he was coming home from the Cross Keys after indulging rather freely in the refreshing liquors sold at that establishment.

He carried a knobby stick under his arm, which slid down into his hand as he

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came to a halt in front of the startled gentleman.

"Hallo, gov'nor!" he said gruffly.

"G-g-good-evening!" stammered the fat gentleman, backing away a pace. The long-shoreman did not look prepossessing.

"Stranger 'ere—wot?" pursued the long-shoreman, staring at him.

"Yes, my man."

"Can you spare a chap something to 'elp him on his way?"

The fat gentleman, evidently alarmed, backed away still further, and the ruffian followed him up.

There was a threatening look on the man's face.

"I will give you a shilling, certainly," stammered the flustered gentleman.

"I reckon a shilling won't be much good to me, gov'nor. Make it a quid!"

"Certainly I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"P'r'aps you'd rather I took it?" suggested the long-shoreman.

"You had better keep your distance, my man!" said the fat gentleman, grasping his umbrella. "You will get nothing from me!"

"We'll see about that 'ere, gov'nor!"

The ruffian came closer, and the alarmed gentleman backed further away, the concerted movement bringing them nearer and nearer to the hiding-place of the three breathless girls. "Now, then, old gent, I got no time to waste on yer! And over the dibs, and sharp!"

Barbara squeezed Mabel's arm. Mabel set her teeth, to keep back the gasp of affright that nearly escaped her.

Bessie Bunter seemed petrified. The mere sight of the hulking ruffian, and the thought that they might have met him on the road, terrified the three girls.

They watched the scene with breathless horror.

"Keep off, you scoundrel!" gasped the fat gentleman, as the long-shoreman made a spring towards him.

The next moment he was struggling in the ruffian's grasp.

In horror, the girls watched the brief struggle, and saw the fat gentleman dragged down into the road, the ruffian's knee planted on his chest.

The dark, stubby face looked savagely down, and the cudgel whirled in the air.

"Now, then, you old fool, will you hand over the dibs?" panted the footpad hoarsely.

The man underneath did not speak, but he was still struggling feebly.

The ruffian's eyes glinted savagely, and the cudgel was about to descend in a brutal blow, when Barbara sprang out of the hedge.

The girl could not see that savage blow struck, and, without thinking of her own danger, she ran out to intervene.

In an instant she had grasped the raised arm of the ruffian and dragged it aside.

The blow missed its mark, the cudgel clattering on the hard road; and the long-shoreman, utterly taken by surprise, pitched over in the schoolgirl's grasp, and rolled beside his victim.

The cudgel slipped from his hand as he rolled, and Barbara, with quick presence of mind, snatched it up.

"Good heavens!" gasped the fat gentleman.

He scrambled dazedly to his feet.

The ruffian was on his knees, and was springing up, his face inflamed with rage.

Barbara, scarcely knowing what she did in her terror and excitement, struck out with the cudgel, and the footpad howled and lurched back.

The next moment the fat gentleman had caught the cudgel from the girl's hand, and was running at the dazed ruffian.

But the long-shoreman did not wait.

He scrambled back, dodged, and ran. His heavy footsteps pounded away up the lane towards Pegg.

The fat gentleman was left flourishing the cudgel and shouting:

"You rascal! Come back! Rascal! Scamp!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Barbara.

The footpad's echoing footsteps died away in the night. Evidently he had had enough. Mabel ran to Barbara, who was panting for breath, her face very white.

In the hedge, Bessie Bunter was uttering shriek after shriek.

A Surprise for Uncle Clegg!

"MY dear child!"

The fat gentleman lowered the cudgel, finding that his assailant was gone. He

turned to Barbara Redfern with amazement in his face, and kindness and gratitude also.

"My dear child, how can I thank you for coming to my help?" he exclaimed. "You have saved me from serious injury. Dear me, what is the matter?"

Shriek! Shriek!

Bessie Bunter was going strong. "Help! Yoop!—Thieves! Murder! Fire!"

"Bless my heart!" said the fat gentleman, blinking round in amazement.

"What—who—how—"

Barbara Redfern ran into the hedge and caught Bessie by the arm.

"Yaroo! Help! Leggo!"

Shriek! Shriek!

"You little idiot!" panted Barbara. "Be quiet! The man's gone long ago! It's all over! Be quiet!"

"Oh, is that you, Barbara. I—I thought it was the murderer!" gasped Bessie.

"Oh, you duffer! He was only a silly long-shoreman!"

"Oh, dear! I—I've been so frightened!" stuttered Bessie. "I—I mean, I haven't been frightened, of course. You—you're sure he's gone?"

"Quite sure."

"Of course, I wasn't frightened—I'm as brave as a lion, really. I was simply calling for help for your sake, Barbara. I was afraid you might be hurt!"

"B-r-r-r!"

"I was just going to rush out and knock him right over, you know. Another minute, and I should have smashed him—quite smashed him. I'm sorry he's gone, you know—really!"

"Oh, be quiet!"

The fat gentleman was eyeing the three girls in amazement.

It was plain that, grateful as he felt for the help extended to him in the hour of need, he was perplexed at finding three schoolgirls on that lonely road at such an hour of the night.

But Barbara, though glad enough that she had rendered help to the stranger, was only anxious now to get away before questions could be asked.

"That is the way to Pegg, sir," she said, pointing down the dark lane.

"Now we must hurry away."

"One moment, my dear child!" exclaimed the fat gentleman. "You have acted very bravely—very bravely indeed. But it is not safe for you to be out of doors, in this lonely district, so late."

"That is all right, sir," said Barbara hurriedly.

"If you are going to Pegg—"

"We're not going to the village, sir—Friardale."

"I should be very pleased to see you as far as your home, and protect you, my child," said the fat gentleman.

Barbara suppressed a smile. After

what had happened, it really seemed that it was the fat gentleman who was more in need of protection than his rescuer was.

Bessie Bunter chimed in before Babs could speak. Now that the danger was over, Bessie was quite herself again.

"Oh, we don't live at the village, sir!"

Mabel squeezed her arm as a warning. But the fat junior was oblivious to warnings.

"Yow! Wharrer you pinching me for?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Babs.

"Then you are going on some errand to the village?" asked the puzzled gentleman.

"That's it, sir," said Bessie, with a glare at Mabel. "I'm taking these girls to Friardale, you see. I'm jolly glad we were on the spot to help you. I was just going to rush forward—"

"But, my dear children," said the fat gentleman, "I really cannot let you go alone, at this hour!"

Barbara groaned inwardly.

The kind stranger meant well enough, but Babs was only anxious to get away.

"It's all right, sir," she said hurriedly. "We—"

"I say, let him come," said Bessie Bunter. "He can carry the stuff for us. It will be jolly heavy, you know. We— Yoop! Wharrer you treading on my feet for, Barbara Redfern?"

"It's all right, sir!" gasped Mabs.

"Quite all right," said Barbara.

"Straight along to Pegg, sir. We—we've got to hurry."

"I say, you girls—"

"Good-night, sir!"

"But, really, my dear children—"

But Barbara was apparently deaf, for she ran on, holding Bessie Bunter by the arm, so that she had to run, too. Mabel followed.

"My dear, dear little girls," exclaimed the fat gentleman, quite distressed. "It really is not safe for you! Besides, I have not yet thanked you for rendering such valuable aid."

But the three juniors of Cliff House had vanished into the darkness of the Friardale road, and the old gentleman broke off.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured.

"What a very remarkable meeting! I am really very much astonished—very much so indeed! If I were acquainted with the parents of those three little girls, I should certainly caution them about allowing their children out of doors so late at night. I think I should, indeed, speak to them very severely. Bless my soul!"

But the Cliff House girls had vanished, and the old gentleman, shaking his head very seriously, started up the dark lane towards Pegg, keeping a wary eye open for the long-shoreman, in case he should reappear.

Barbara and Mabel did not stop running till Bessie Bunter, who was out of breath, fairly hung upon them, and compelled them to slacken.

"You—you—you cats!" gasped Bessie.

"Hold on! Stop! You're trying to make me fall over—you know you are! Ow! Cats!"

Barbara glanced back.

The cross-roads were a quarter of a mile behind, and the light of the lamp was lost in the distance.

"All serene now!" said Barbara breathlessly. "Don't hang on me, Bessie—you're not a feather-weight!"

"Ow! I'm out of breath! Ow!"

"Thank goodness we're clear of him!" gasped Mabel. "I thought every moment Bessie was going to blurt out some thing about Cliff House, and give us away."

"That would have been a nice kettle of fish," said Barbara. "He seemed quite a nice old gentleman, and very concerned about us; and he might have called at Cliff House to see if we'd got home safe."

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bessie. "I never thought of that!"

"That would have been a give-away, if you like," chuckled Mabs. "Just like Bessie to let it out—she nearly did! Luckily he's a stranger in the district, so he couldn't recognise us, and he can't guess that we belong to Cliff House School."

"I've seen somebody like him before, though," said Barbara thoughtfully. "There was something familiar about his face. But we sha'n't see him again, thank goodness. Here's Friarale at last!"

The village street was quiet and deserted.

Uncle Clegg's shop was closed, but there was a light to be seen in the window of the parlour behind.

"I—I say, Mr. Clegg will be surprised!" murmured Mabs. "I—I wonder if he will serve us."

"Lot of good thinking of that now!" remarked Barbara. "He's got to serve us. Come on!"

Barbara rang resolutely at the bell beside the shop-door.

Through the glass in the upper part of the door, the girls saw the parlour-door within open, and Uncle Clegg came through the shop.

Mr. Clegg carried a lamp in his hand, the light of which illuminated a surprised and crusty face.

"Who's there?"

"It's me, Mr. Clegg!" answered Barbara, ungrammatically but persuasively. "Please let us in."

Uncle Clegg peered through the glass, blinking with astonishment at the sight of two pretty faces and one extremely fat one.

Then there was a sound of opening bolts and chains, and the shop-door swung open.

"Miss Barbara!" exclaimed Uncle Clegg.

He was not looking crusty now, though very surprised. Even Uncle Clegg, who was generally considered a hard case, had a soft corner for the bright-eyed Barbara.

"Yes, Uncle Clegg," said Babs. "We've come rather late, but I'm sure you'll serve us, won't you?"

Mr. Clegg eyed the girls very dubiously.

"I 'ope you young ladies ain't out of school without permission?" he said.

"Oh, Mr. Clegg!" was Barbara's reply.

That was rather a non-committal answer.

Uncle Clegg gave a short grunt; but he stood back for the girls to enter the shop.

Possibly he was not averse to doing good business at any hour, and certainly he did not like to refuse Barbara. And perhaps, in the circumstances, he deemed it wiser to ask no questions.

He set the lamp on the counter, and Babs rattled off the list of the articles required.

Two bags had been brought for their conveyance, and the bags were speedily stacked full.

Thirty-two shillings and sixpence were expended to the last penny. And Uncle Clegg was quite smiling by that time.

It was really a "shipping order" for the village tuckshop.

Babs and Mabs packed the bags, pausing every now and then to smack Bessie Bunter's fat hands as they came towards the provender.

Bessie was willing to pack; but she would not have packed the tuck into the bags.

The consignment was packed away at last, and Uncle Clegg let the three girls out, shaking his head very solemnly after them, as he closed and chained and bolted the door.

"I say, you girls—" began Bessie Bunter, outside the tuckshop.

"Come on!"

"Hadn't we better have a snack?"

"Hurry up!"

"Cats!"

And Barbara and Co. hurried out of the village; Bessie Bunter, snackless and wrathful, and her eyes glistening angrily behind her spectacles.

Something Like a Feast!

BABS and Mabs looked round them rather nervously as they left the village behind. They did not want to meet again the kind old gentleman in the gold-rimmed glasses, and still less did they want to meet the long-shoreman.

The mere thought of that unpleasant character made them shiver.

"We've been silly duffers!" Babs murmured. "We oughtn't to have come out of bounds at all."

"Has that just dawned on you, dear?"

"I say, you girls—"

"We'd better cut back across the fields. That awful man may be about the lanes," said Barbara.

"I'm tired!" announced Bessie Bunter.

"Like to sit down here till morning?"

"I don't think I can walk back to Cliff House without a snack."

"Make yourself comfy under the hedge, then. This way, Mabs!"

Barbara crossed a stile into a field footpath, and Mabel followed.

Bessie Bunter did not adopt the suggestion of making herself comfortable under the hedge. She followed.

By field paths, and, with their hearts in their mouths most of the time, the three girls reached the Pegg Road at last, near Cliff House.

They passed nothing more dangerous than a cow, from which, however, they fled as if it had been a tiger.

They were thankful when they found themselves, at last, at the garden gate, and clambered over.

"Thank goodness!" gasped Babs, as she dropped into the garden.

Even the adventurous Barbara acknowledged that the expedition had been foolhardy; but now it was safely over, she was prepared to march into the Fourth Form dormitory in triumph, as if breaking bounds at night was a mere bagatelle.

Study No. 4 never made mistakes, or, at least, never admitted that it made them.

The three girls crept through the dark garden to the outhouse at the back of the school building.

Barbara climbed first to the leads, and drew up the bags.

Then Bessie Bunter had to be helped up. With Barbara pulling from above, and Mabel pushing from below, the fat junior was hoisted upon the leads, where she landed like a very fat fish, gasping.

Babs cautiously pushed up the sash of the window. All was dark within, and there was no sound.

It was evident that the absence of the trio was not suspected by the powers.

"All serene!" murmured Barbara.

She clambered in; and then again there was a hoisting operation.

How many stones Bessie Bunter weighed, Babs and Mabs did not know; but she seemed to weigh about a hundred and fifty just then.

However, Bessie was landed at last, in a breathless condition, and an indignant frame of mind.

"You've pinched my arm, Mabel!"

"Bless your arm!"

"You knocked my chin, Barbara—"

"Bother your chin!"

"If you call that civil—"

"Quiet! Come on!"

"Ow! Oh! Ow!"

Bessie Bunter leaned against the window, with a moan. Babs and Mabs turned back.

"What's the matter now?" asked Barbara, with suppressed wrath.

"I—I feel faint!"

"Well, come on!"

"I—I'm so faint! I—I don't think I can move! It's hunger, really!" moaned Bessie. "Something to eat would revive me!"

Barbara breathed hard.

"You won't tuck in here, you little fat duffer! Come at once!"

"I say, you girls, what's the good of taking it all to the dorm? Let's have a feed first! They'll never know! I—I say, don't go away while I'm talking! I say, Babs—Cats!"

Babs and Mabs were going, and the fat junior followed in great wrath, apparently overcoming her faintness.

They trod cautiously along the passage, and up the little staircase, and reached the Fourth Form dormitory.

All was dark and silent within as Barbara softly opened the door.

"All asleep!" she murmured.

The three girls stole in, and the door was closed. Barbara struck a match, and lighted a candle-end.

Gwendoline Cook sat up, and rubbed her eyes.

"Oh, you're back!" she exclaimed sleepily.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" smiled Barbara.

"Got the food?" came Clara's voice.

"Oh, rather!"

"And you haven't been caught!" said Mariorie. "Bravo!"

"My dear kid, Study No. 4 never gets caught out! Wake up, my children, and come to supper!" said Barbara.

The Fourth were very quickly all awake.

With one accord they turned out of bed, and there were murmurs of satisfaction, as the bags were emptied.

Another candle was lighted.

In the flickering glimmer the feast was spread, and the girls gathered round to enjoy it, seated on beds, or on pillows and bolsters on the floor.

The surprise with which the Fourth greeted the safe return of the expedition with the tuck was really hardly flattering to Barbara and Co.

But it had to be admitted that Study No. 4 had managed well.

Whether the dormitory feast was good for youthful digestions, was a question the juniors did not stop to consider.

They knew that they enjoyed it, and that was enough for them.

Meat-pies and cakes and tarts were handed round, and were washed down with copious draughts of ginger-beer.

It was probable that there would be nightmares before morning in the Fourth Form dormitory; but that was only a detail.

During the feast the story of the expedition was told, amid many breathless exclamations from the juniors.

"Well, you were duffers to go!" commented Freda Foote. "Suppose that horrid man had gone for you?"

"I should have fainted!" said Annabel Hichens, with a shiver.

"I dare say you would!" assented Barbara drily. "I'm not the fainting sort, luckily."



"My dear kid, you're talking out of your hat," said Barbara Redfern. "Put your money in this box, and don't be a duffer!" The girls dropped their money into the box, in spite of the fact that they thought very little of Barbara's scheme.

"What rot!" said Bessie Bunter, with her mouth full. "I wasn't frightened in the least!"

"You were yelling loud enough!" remarked Mabs.

"Oh, really, Mabs—"

"Shrieking like anything!" said Barbara.

"I was calling for help," said Bessie Bunter, with dignity. "It was that that frightened the man off."

"Your voice?" asked Freda Foote.

"Well, I'm not surprised."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mean that!" snapped Bessie Bunter. "But he saw I was about to rush on him, and bolted."

"No wonder he bolted, if you were about to roll on him! The poor chap would have been turned into a pancake!"

"I said rush on him, not roll! As soon as he saw me, he fled!"

"That's not surprising, either. I felt like that, when I first saw you," remarked Freda.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't think you ought to show your jealousy like that, Freda. It's not my fault I'm the only really good-looking girl at Cliff House."

"Oh, my word!" said Freda, "Pass Bessie that cake, Marcia. She's earned it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie Bunter snorted, but she took the cake.

"Now's that what I call a jolly good supper," said Barbara, at last, "and we've beaten the Bull. That's better than the supper."

"Yes, rather."

"All gone?" asked Bessie Bunter.

blinking round, "I say, you girls, you don't give me much chance. Those crumbs had better be cleared up, I think, or they'll suspect something in the morning."

Bessie Bunter, having given that excellent advice, turned in.

"Suppose you help to clear up!" exclaimed Marcia Loftus, warmly.

"Oh, really, Marcia—"

"Lend a hand, you fat slacker."

Snore!

Bessie judiciously fell asleep, and the clearing up fell to the others.

The candles were blown out, and the girls clambered into bed.

They were feeling very satisfied. The Bull had been defeated—although she was unconscious of her defeat.

But there was troubled sleep in the dormitory that night—especially for Bessie Bunter.

An hour or so later Barbara awoke suddenly.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!" came from the darkness.

Barbara sprang up in bed.

"Who's that? What's the matter?"

"Oh! Ow! Yow! All right," gasped Bessie Bunter, waking up. "I—I suppose I was dreaming! I—I thought somebody was taking tarts away from me."

"You little duffer! Go to sleep and be quiet!"

Snore!

More than once, during the night, girls woke up, and wondered whether there was a storm at sea. But there wasn't!

It was only Bessie's snore rumbling through the dormitory—greatly invigorated by the midnight feast.

And that musical sound lasted till the rising-bell rang out in the morning.

Run For It!

MISS BELLEW, the mistress of the Fourth, glanced rather curiously at her hopeful pupils, at the breakfast table that morning.

Midnight feasts might be very enjoyable, and the defeat of the Bull more enjoyable still, but there was no doubt that the loss of sleep had its effects, and most of the Fourth looked a little pale.

Bessie Bunter had a slightly sea-green look; though her appetite was not affected at all.

The other girls made rather a light breakfast, but Bessie was going as strong as ever.

"You do not look well this morning, Bessie," Miss Bellew remarked, in her kind tone.

Bessie blinked up. She never jet a chance slip.

"I'm not quite well, Miss Bellew, please. I—I think it would do me good to take a walk this morning, instead of lessons."

"I hardly think so," said Miss Bellew, "But if you do not feel well, I will telephone for the doctor—"

Bessie made a grimace. She did not want to see the doctor.

"The fact is, Miss Bellew, please, I'm as well as anything," she said, at once. "Right as rain, in fact. I—I really never felt better in my life."

"But you just said—" exclaimed the puzzled Miss Bellew.

"Not at all. I—I mean, that—that was only a figure of speech, you know. I—I don't want to see the doctor. I—I mean—"

"That will do, Bessie," said Miss Bellew, severely.

Miss Bullivant looked round from another table, grimly.

Probably, had she been in Miss Bellew's place, she would have inquired further.

But the unsuspecting form mistress let the matter drop at that—much to the relief of her pupils.

The juniors noticed in the Form-room that morning, that Miss Bellew was unusually good-humoured.

She was always good-tempered, but on this particular morning she was evidently in unusually cheery spirits.

Miss Primrose looked in during morning lessons, and was heard to say to Miss Bellew:

"You will bring him to lunch with me, of course."

There was a good deal of curiosity in the Fourth after that; the girls were naturally interested to know who "he" was.

"She's expecting a visitor, I suppose," Barbara remarked to Mabs, as they left the Form-room after lessons. "A relation, very likely. What price getting some flowers for her study?"

Mabel nodded.

"Good idea!" she assented. "I wonder who it is, though."

"I say, you girls—"

"Let's ask Bessie," said Barbara, laughing. "Bessie knows everything—it runs in the Bunter family."

"Oh, really, Barbara! Some girls keep their ears open," said Bessie Bunter loftily. "Miss Bellew's expecting her brother. I happened to hear her mention it to Miss Bullivant yesterday. He's been abroad for years—an ambassador, or a consul, or something, somewhere."

"Isn't it queer how Bessie happens to hear these things!" remarked Freda Foote, sarcastically.

"It was quite by chance, of course—they didn't see me near the door—I mean, I wasn't near Miss Bellew's door at all—"

"And you didn't have your ear to the keyhole?" smiled Freda.

"Certainly not! It wasn't necessary, as the door was half-open—I mean, I wouldn't do anything of the kind. I'm surprised at you, Freda—shocked, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Well, if Miss Bellew is expecting a brother from abroad, she will like to have some flowers in her study," said Barbara. "We can get them in Pegg. Mabel. Come on!"

Babs and Mabs walked down to the little fishing village together.

There were few shops in Pegg, and most shopping had to be done in Friar-dale or Courtfield, but there was a nursery garden close by the village.

The two girls made their purchases, and came back through the rugged old street of Pegg.

As they were passing the Anchor, a fat gentleman in a shining silk hat stepped out of the inn porch.

Barbara caught her companion's arm suddenly.

"Mabs!" she gasped.
It was their acquaintance of the previous night.

The old gentleman stood outside the inn, looking towards the sea, not seeing the two startled schoolgirls for the moment. They stopped dead, in blank dismay.

That kind old gentleman was almost as welcome to their sight as the long-shoreman would have been.

It was important—awfully important—for it to remain a dead secret that they had been out of bounds at night, of course—and to add to their dismay, they caught sight of Miss Bullivant in the distance, taking her walk before lunch on the shore.

If that kind old gentleman recognised them—and spoke—and the hawk-eyes of the Bull fell upon them—

"Run for it," breathed Mabel.
Two graceful figures dashed by the fat gentleman, and he started, and looked after them.

He had only seen them in the glimmer of the road-lamp the previous evening, and probably he did not recognise the backs of their heads.

The girls hoped so, at least, as they ran on.

They left the fishing village behind, and came out breathlessly into Pegg Lane.

"What an escape!" gasped Barbara. Mabel looked back.
"Babs! He's following us!"
"Wha-a-t!"

Barbara's startled eyes swept towards the village.

There, turning out from the straggling village street into the lane, was the fat, silk-hatted gentleman—coming directly towards them.

"Oh, dear!"
The girls ran on again, faster than before. They arrived breathless at the gates of Cliff House.

Taking cover in the old stone gateway, Barbara peered out into the road, her heart beating fast.

"Is—is he there?" panted Mabel.

"He's coming!"

"Goodness gracious! What does he want?"

"He's coming, anyhow," breathed Barbara.

The two girls peered out together, in great alarm.

The fat gentleman, with his gold-rimmed glasses glistening in the sun, was walking directly towards the gates of Cliff House.

Babs caught Mabel's arm.

"Keep out of sight!" she whispered, "Perhaps he's going to pass—he may be going to Friar-dale."

Mabel shook her head.
"He's after us, Babs!"

"B-b-but why should he be after us?"

"I—I don't know. What's he coming here for? He—he may be idiot enough to want to thank us, or something, for helping him," groaned Mabel. "It will be an awful show-up! Run for it!"

"He can't know we belong to Cliff House," muttered Barbara, with a scared look. "And—and he wouldn't be likely to tell Miss Primrose we were out of bounds—after we helped him, too."

"He's coming here, I tell you. Run!"

The two juniors ran across the quadrangle. They took cover in the porch of the School House, and looked out, greatly alarmed. And their hearts thumped as they saw the fat gentleman just entering at the school gates.

Not Dangerous.

"I SAY, you girls!"

Barbara grasped Bessie Bunter's arm, and dragged her into the shelter of the porch, much to the fat junior's surprise and wrath.

"Yow-ow! Leggo!"

"Keep out of sight!" panted Barbara.

"Wha-at for? Wharrer marrer?"

"He's there!" gasped Mabel.

"Eh! Who?"

"The man we saw last night," whispered Barbara. "The fat man. Oh dear! Keep out of sight! He mayn't recognise us; but he's jolly certain to recognise you, if he sees you!"

"Oh, I see!" Bessie Bunter nodded complacently. "Yes, I fancy anybody would recognise me. My distangy look, you know."

"Your—your what?" stuttered Barbara.

"My distangy look!" said Bessie, with dignity.

"Oh, distingue— Ha, ha!"
In spite of the seriousness of the situation, Barbara could not suppress a chuckle.

It was pretty certain that Bessie Bunter, once seen, would be recognised again, but not because of her distinguished look.

It was more likely to be due to her circumference.

"Look here, Barbara, I don't see what you're cackling at."

"Keep back!"

Barbara peered out again.

"He—he may only have stopped to look at the place," murmured Mabel.

"What's he doing now, Babs? Keep back, Bessie!"

"He's talking to Piper at the lodge."

"He may go on."

"Now he's coming this way."

Barbara drew her head in suddenly.

"Oh dear!"

"What on earth's this game?" asked Marjorie Hazeldene, coming out with Clara and Dolly Jobling. "Are you playing hide-and-seek?"

Barbara groaned.

"We're playing hide, and that old bounder is playing seek, I'm afraid," she said. "It's the man—the mau last night—"

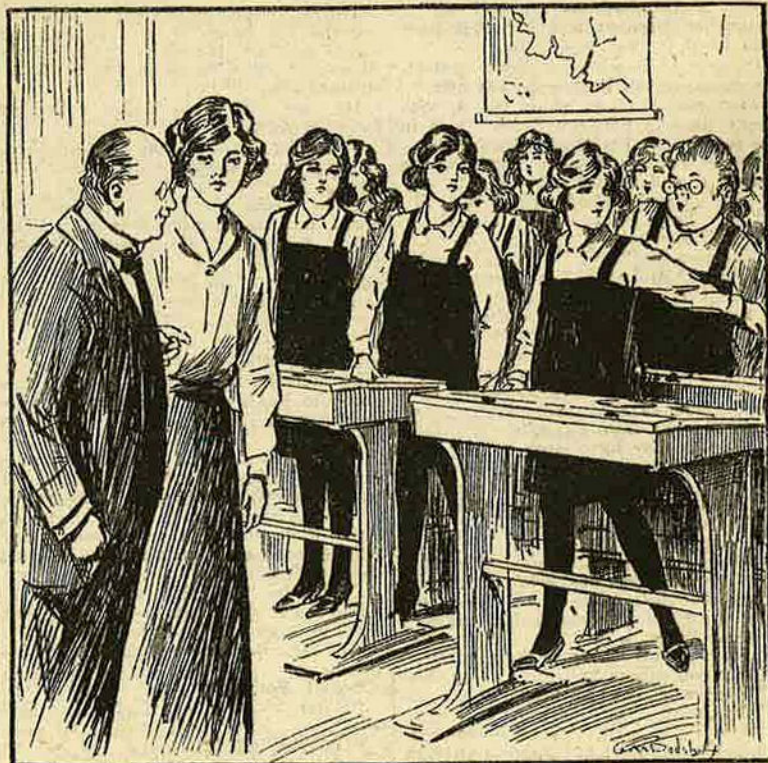
"The footpad?" exclaimed Clara.

"No; the other man—the man we helped. I—I believe he's coming here to speak to Miss Primrose. He can't want anything else. Isn't it awfully mean of him?"

"Take cover—quick!" said Clara.

"Perhaps it isn't so. Cut off to your study. He can't follow you there, anyway."

"Come on, Bessie."



Babs squeezed a little behind Marjorie, and Clara kindly moved a little so as to screen Mabs. Dolly Jobling caught a quick glance from Marjorie, and pulled Bessie Bunter a little back. "Wharrer pulling me for?" exclaimed Bessie.

Babs and Mabs grasped Bessie Bunter's arms, and ran her into the house. There was a yelp from the fat junior.

"Leggo! I've dropped my toffee."

"Come on!" hissed Mabel.

"My toffee—"

"Never mind your toffee now," Barbara panted. "Come on! He'll be in, in a minute."

"I tell you my toffee—"

"I'll give you some more toffee," murmured Barbara, in an agony. "Will you come on, you duffer?"

"If you call me names, Barbara Redfern—"

Babs and Mabs dragged the fat junior by main force to the staircase. Bessie uttered a loud howl of protest.

Outside the porch, a shining silk hat and a pair of gold-rimmed glasses glimmered in the sun.

Barbara caught a glimpse of them.

"Quick!" she breathed.

Bessie Bunter was rushed up the staircase at a speed that took her breath away.

There was nearly a collision on the landing, where the juniors met Miss Bellow coming down. They stopped just in time.

"My dear girls," said Miss Bellow reprovingly, "you should not—"

"Yaroooh! Leggo!"

"Bessie!"

"I won't be rushed about!" howled Bessie Bunter. "Besides, I've lost my toffee!"

"Really, Barbara—" began Miss Bellow.

But at that moment she glanced over the banisters, and saw the fat gentleman just entering the hall below.

Leaving the juniors at once, Miss Bellow hurried down the lower stairs, apparently to greet the visitor.

Babs and Mabs dragged Bessie Bunter on to the second flight, only an instant before the fat gentleman glanced up.

Another moment and he must have seen them.

In spite of Bessie's breathless protests the chums of the Fourth did not halt.

They rushed on to Study No. 4, with Bessie panting between them. Once in the study, they breathed more freely.

Bessie Bunter plumped down in the armchair, and spluttered.

"Ow! Cats! Yow! Cats! Wow!"

"You little idiot!" panted Barbara. "If he'd seen us—"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Babs and Mabs laid the flowers on the table. The flowers were rather rumpled in the hurried flight, but the juniors were not thinking of that.

They were thinking of the fat gentleman below, in great trepidation.

"What on earth has he come here for?" muttered Barbara. "He followed us all the way from Pegg."

"He—he may have been coming here anyway," suggested Mabel hopefully. "He may not have been following us."

"Why should he come here, then?"

"Blessed if I know."

"I say, you girls—"

"Oh, do be quiet, Bessie! He must have guessed that we belonged to the school, and he's come to tell that some girls were out of bounds last night!" groaned Barbara.

"He couldn't be so awfully mean!" said Mabel, aghast.

"Then what does he want?"

"Oh dear!"

"I say, you girls, if it all comes out, remember I hadn't anything to do with it," said Bessie Bunter warmly. "You will have to explain to Miss Primrose that you fairly dragged me out with you last night."

"What?" shrieked Barbara.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 11.

"I was against the whole thing; you know that, Barbara. You know I urged you not to go, and you pressed me to come, and—"

"You horrid little duffer!" exclaimed Mabel indignantly. "It would be all right but for you. The man mightn't recognise us; it's you that makes all the danger. If you hadn't come—"

"Oh, really, Mabel, if that's all that thanks I get, I jolly well won't come another time, I can tell you! What would you have done with that footpad, I'd like to know, if I hadn't been there?"

"Oh, you—you—you—"

Marjorie Hazeldene looked into the study. Babs and Mabs fixed their eyes upon her in terrified inquiry.

"Is he—has he come in?" gasped Babs.

Marjorie nodded.

"Yes; he's come in."

"Has he gone to Miss Primrose?"

"No; he's talking to Miss Bellow in the hall."

"Reporting us to her!" said Mabel hopelessly. "The game's up! What an awful bouncer!"

"No," said Marjorie. "You don't catch on. He's not here after you. He doesn't know anything about you, so far as I can see. He's—"

"He's what—who?"

"Miss Bellow's brother."

"Miss Bellow's brother!" shrieked Barbara blankly.

"Yes," said Marjorie, laughing. "He's not after you, my dears—not thinking of you; he's come here to visit Miss Bellow. I heard him speaking to her in the hall. He's staying at the Anchor in Pegg. He's come to lunch."

"Oh!" gasped Babs.

Barbara fanned herself.

Her relief was almost too great for speech.

The fat gentleman had not been following the juniors at all, and he had not come to Cliff House to report their escapade to Miss Primrose, from an overstrained sense of duty!

He was only Miss Bellow's brother from abroad!

"Oh dear!" said Mabel. "Then—then, so long as we keep out of sight it's all right."

"Yes," said Marjorie, laughing. "I don't know whether he's staying in Pegg long. Anyway, I didn't hear him say anything about you, and he can't know you belong to Cliff House. Keep out of sight and it's all serene!"

"Thank goodness!" breathed Barbara.

"It's all right!" said Marjorie. "You remember what Miss Primrose said to Miss Bellow in the Form-room. He's going to lunch with her. He won't be in the school dining-room. Right as rain!"

"Marjorie, old girl, take these flowers to Miss Bellow's study, will you? I can't go there. Don't mention my name. That little idiot spoke to me by name last night when the man was there. Say they're from the Fourth, if Miss Bellow's there with him."

"Right-ho!" said Marjorie.

She took the crumpled flowers, set them in order a little, and left the study.

"I say, Barbara—" began Bessie Bunter.

"Well, Fatima?"

"What about the toffee? You said—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Well, I'm going down for my toffee, then— Yaroooh!"

Bessie Bunter roared as she was hurled into the armchair. Barbara glowered at her.

"You'll stay there till dinner!" she said. "And if you move I'll sit on your head!"

"Cat!"

But Bessie did not move.

Hide and Seek.

BARBARA & CO. slipped down cautiously to the dining-room when the bell rang.

Miss Bullivant was taking the head of the Fourth-Form table, Miss Bellow being at lunch with Miss Primrose and with her brother from abroad.

The Bull's grim face at the head of the table was not, as Mabs remarked, an appetiser; but the chums were very glad that Miss Bellow was not there with the fat gentleman.

Both Barbara and Mabel glanced round uneasily at the sound of footsteps; but Bessie Bunter seemed to have forgotten danger.

The dinner was absorbing all her attention.

Fat gentlemen were not likely to occupy Bessie's mind when there was anything to eat about.

After dinner Babs and Mabs did not make for the quad as usual.

They thought it too probable that Miss Bellow might be showing her brother about the school.

They made for the stairs, and they took Bessie Bunter with them. The fat junior held on to the bannisters.

"I'm not going up!" she announced.

"Not unless there's toffee, Barbara. You made me lose my toffee. You know you did! I'm not going up till I've got some more toffee!"

"Marjorie dear, you might get some toffee and bring it to my study," said Barbara.

"Right-ho!" said Marjorie, with a smile.

"Come on, Bessie!"

"How much toffee, though?" Bessie wanted to know.

Down the passage a voice was heard.

"A very remarkable and disconcerting experience, indeed, Miss Primrose! I was attacked—actually attacked with violence—by a rough-looking person who, I fear, was under the influence of intoxicating liquor."

Barbara gasped.

"Quick!"

Even Bessie Bunter understood the necessity of flight. The three juniors fairly tore up the staircase.

As they came breathlessly on the first landing, a semi-bald head showed below the bannisters, and the rich voice of the fat gentleman continued:

"A dreadful character, madam—dreadful, indeed! And, strangest of all, I was assisted, at quite a critical moment, by a little girl."

Barbara & Co. escaped on to the second flight. But the rich voice still came from below.

"A very nice little girl, madam! Extraordinary, was it not? I should be very glad to see that little girl again and express my gratitude. It was real most odd to find such a little girl out such an hour of the night."

"How very odd!" came Miss Primrose's voice.

"Have you been to the police, Henry, asked Miss Bellow's voice.

"I telephoned the particulars to Cliff from the Anchor, Ada. Prob'ly the ruffian will be punished."

"And what became of the little girl?"

"I really do not know. She left very suddenly, with her companions, of them a pretty little girl with fair hair and the other a very stout girl—"

markedly stout girl. In fact, a girl who was so remarkably fat that it was almost absurd!"

Barbara & Co. fled to Study No. 4.

"Little girl!" said Barbara. "Of all the duffers! Who's he calling a little girl?"

"A very nice little girl!" grinned Mabs.

"The—the duffer!"

Barbara was by no means pleased by the description.

It was not a compliment to a member of the Fourth Form at Cliff House to be described as even a "nice" little girl!

But to the old gentleman, probably even the Fifth-Formers would have seemed little girls; perhaps even the high and mighty Sixth!

"Little girl!" repeated Barbara, with deep indignation. "I'd give him little girl! Little girl, indeed!"

"I say, I think that man's mad!" said Bessie Bunter. "He can't be quite right in the head. Look at Mabel! I call her skinny. Anyhow, who could say she was fat? She's not fat."

"Certainly I'm not fat!" said Mabs warmly.

"Well, he said you were," said Bessie. "You heard him. He said Barbara had a pretty girl with her and one who was absurdly fat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're not absurdly fat, Mabel. You're not fat at all. I think he must be off his head."

Babs and Mabs shrieked.

Evidently Bessie Bunter took it for granted that she was the "pretty girl" who had been with Barbara.

Only she couldn't account for the old gentleman speaking of Mabel as fat!

"Blessed if I see what you're cackling at!" said Bessie, with a stare. "I think he's mad. He must be, to say that Mabel's as fat as all that. Fat-headed, if you like!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They're taking him round the school," said Marjorie, coming in at the door. "Here's your toffee, Bessie! You kids had better keep in the study till lessons."

"What ho!" said Barbara.

Like Brier Fox in the story of Uncle Remus, the three juniors lay very low, keeping in the study with the door shut.

But presently the door flew open, and Clara Trevlyn's startled face looked in.

"Run for it!" gasped Clara.

"What's the trouble?"

"They're bringing him up! They're going to show him the studies, I think!"

"Oh, my word!"

Barbara & Co. dodged out of the study, and fled.

They made for the upper staircase, and they escaped just in time. The voice of the fat gentleman reached them from the Fourth-Form passage.

"Delightful! What very charming surroundings, Miss Primrose, for the dear little girls! And these are the studies. Bless my soul! How they remind me of my own school days. Charming!"

Babs and Mabs and Bessie Bunter plunged into the dormitory, breathless.

"I—I say, they can't bring him up here, I suppose!" gasped Mabs. "If—if they do, there's only the chimney for us!"

"Oh dear!" moaned Barbara. "I wish Miss Bellew's brother had stayed abroad. I wish he'd go back abroad! I—I wish he was made consul or ambassador in Timbuctoo or Cochin-China! Oh dear!"

"Hark!"

There was a footstep outside, and Mabs cast a wild glance at the chimney.

Bessie Bunter plunged under the nearest bed.

Babs and Mabs followed her example, and the three girls were out of sight when the door opened.

"Well, my word! I thought they were here!" It was Clara Trevlyn's voice.

"Where have they got to, I wonder?"

"Only Clara!" gasped Mabs.

Clara jumped.

"Why—what—where—"

Three ruddy faces looked out from under three beds, and Clara stared at them blankly. Three dusty juniors crawled out into view.

"Well, my word!" ejaculated Clara.

"Where is he?" asked Barbara in a tragic whisper.

"Ha, ha! He's gone downstairs! I came up to tell you!" chuckled Clara. "It's all serene; you can go back to the study."

"Oh dear! We'll stay here till the bell goes for lessons, I think!" gasped Barbara. "I—I wish they'd give him an appointment at the North Pole! Oh dear!"

And it was not till the bell rang for classes that the worried juniors ventured out of the dormitory.

Face to Face.

BABS and Mabs and Bessie Bunter made their way to the Form-room in fear and trembling.

Fortunately, the ubiquitous fat gentleman was not sighted on the stairs or in the passages.

They fervently hoped that he had gone away, and was safe again at the Anchor.

If he stayed much longer at Cliff House, Babs felt that it would turn her hair grey.

They were glad to get into the Form-room.

Mademoiselle Lupin took the Fourth in French for first lesson that afternoon.

Miss Bellew was to come next, and as she would be on duty then for the remainder of the afternoon Barbara considered it probable that her brother would have left.

She hoped so, at least.

If the fat gentleman stayed to dinner there would be more dodging after lessons—and the chums of the Fourth were not by any means enjoying that game of hide-and-seek.

Babs and Mabs did not give all their attention to Manzelle and French irregular verbs.

Footsteps in the corridor outside distracted their attention more than once, but they passed.

French was over at last, and Mademoiselle Lupin prepared to depart.

The door opened to admit Miss Bellew.

As the figure of the Form-mistress appeared in the doorway a rich voice was heard without, to the utter consternation of Babs and Mabs.

"I shall be very pleased indeed, my dear Ada, to see your little pupils in their class! Very pleased indeed!"

Barbara looked at Mabel, and Mabel looked at Barbara, in blank horror.

He was coming in!

Before they had time to collect their wits the fat gentleman followed Miss Bellew into the Form-room.

He blinked benevolently at the class through his gold-rimmed glasses as the girls rose respectfully to their feet.

Babs squeezed a little behind Marjorie, and Clara kindly moved a little so as to screen Mabs.

Dolly Jobling, catching a quick look from Marjorie, pulled Bessie Bunter a

little back, so as to screen her as much as possible.

"Yow! Wharrer you pulling me for?" came from the fat junior.

"Bessie!" said Miss Bellew severely.

Barbara suppressed a groan.

There had only been the faintest of hopes that Bessie's ample form could be screened in any case—and it was gone now.

The fat gentleman glanced in her direction, and the juniors saw recognition dawn in his face.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bellew.

"All up!" murmured Mabel. "Bessie's fault, as usual! Oh dear!"

Miss Bellew glanced in inquiring surprise at her brother. The fat gentleman was staring at Bessie.

"My dear Ada," he exclaimed, "this is very remarkable! This is one of the little girls I told you of."

"What-a-at?"

"That is the—ahem!—plump little girl I mentioned to you, who was with the brave young lady who assisted me last night. My dear child," continued the benevolent gentleman, "where is your companion, whom, I think, I heard you address as Barbara last night?"

The Fourth Form stood rooted to the floor.

Miss Bellew's face was a study.

"I—I say, Babs, it's all up!" whispered Bessie Bunter, in a whisper that could be heard all over the Form-room. "He knows us!"

"Henry!" gasped Miss Bellew. "You—you must be mistaken!"

"Not at all!" said the fat gentleman, with a really sublime unconsciousness of the consternation he was causing. "There are the other two little girls—the one with the dark hair—"

"Barbara Redfern!"

"And the fair-haired little girl—"

"Mabel Lynn!"

"How very pleased I am to see you again!" said the kind old gentleman, coming nearer to the class, and smiling benevolently at the horrified juniors. "This is a real pleasure! Last night you left me so hurriedly that I had no time to express properly my gratitude for the aid you rendered me. I am very, very glad to see that you reached home safely."

The Fourth stood dumb.

Babs and Mabs stared at the old gentleman as if he had been the famed Gorgon, and had turned them to stone with his glance.

"Barbara! Mabel! Bessie!" Miss Bellew's voice was really terrific. "Come out before the class at once!"

"It wasn't me!" shrieked Bessie Bunter. "I wasn't there Miss Bellew! Barbara will tell you so if you ask her! He—he—he's quite mistaken in thinking he saw me. I was fast asleep all the time. I never even thought of breaking bounds, and I never went to the tuckshop, and we never had a feed in the dormitory, and I didn't have the nightmare after it!"

"Come out here at once!"

Babs and Mabs were going out already, and Bessie Bunter followed them, with a gasp.

The fat gentleman was conscious by this time that there was something thunder in the atmosphere.

He blinked at the juniors, and blinked at his sister.

"My dear Ada—" he began.

"You saw these three girls out of the school last night, Henry, after ten o'clock?"

"Certainly! I— Bless my soul, I— The hapless old gentleman trailed off helplessly.

"Barbara! You broke school bounds last night after lights out?"
 "Oh dear! Yes!" murmured Barbara.
 "Where did you go?"
 "To—to Uncle Clegg's, please."
 "For what purpose?"
 "To—to get some tuck."
 "Bless my soul! Henry, you must excuse me for a few minutes—these girls must be taken to the headmistress at once!"

"But—but, my dear Ada, I really did not intend— Bless my heart! I—I—I seem to have— Oh dear! My dear Ada—"

But Miss Bellew was shepherding the three juniors out of the Form-room, with a stern, grim face.

The fat gentleman blinked after her, in great distress, and wiped his spectacles and put them back on his nose, and then wiped them again.

He realised what he had done at last. "Oh dear! Bless my heart! This is most—most distressing! Oh dear!"

Then the fat gentleman hurried out of the Form-room after the delinquents.

"Well," said Clara Trevlyn, with a deep breath, "of all the chumps!"

"Of all the duffers!" murmured Marjorie.

When the fat gentleman reached the headmistress' study three woeful juniors were standing there in a hapless row, while Miss Bellew was explaining to Miss Primrose.

Mr. Bellew broke in almost breathless with distress at this disaster he had brought on his rescuer.

Miss Primrose signed to the three girls to wait outside the study.

Babs and Mabs and Bessie Bunter quitted the study, and the door closed on them. From within came a murmur of voices.

The three juniors looked at one another dolefully.

"Fancy his giving us away, you know!" mumbled Bessie Bunter; "Awfully mean, I call it! Oh dear!"

"He didn't mean it, I suppose," said Mabel.

Barbara made a grimace.

"That won't help us much now," she said. "We're bowled out! I—I wonder what we're going to get?"

"Oh dear!"

"I—I say, you girls, you'll own up that it was all your fault, you know. That's the least you can do. After pressing me to come, as you did—"

"Oh, be quiet!"

The headmistress' door opened at last, and Miss Bellew signed to the juniors to enter. They trod into the dreaded apartment, with thumping hearts.

Miss Primrose fixed a stern gaze upon them.

"Barbara, this is a very serious matter. I trust that you realise that?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose," said Babs meekly.

"Mr. Bellew is very much distressed at being the cause of your reckless action becoming known. For that reason, and also because you appear to have acted very bravely, and saved Mr. Bellew from serious injury, I have decided—"

The headmistress paused.
 "Yes, Miss Primrose?" murmured Barbara hopefully.

"To take a lenient view of that matter—"

"Oh, Miss Primrose!"

"I shall therefore pardon you—"

"Thank you, Miss Primrose!"

"But," said the headmistress, in an awful voice, "if anything of the kind should ever occur again—"

Miss Primrose left that sentence unfinished.

Apparently, there were no words expressive enough to convey what would happen if anything of the kind occurred again.

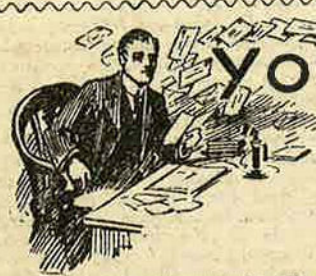
"Please, Miss Primrose, we're very sorry!" said Barbara penitently.

"Very well. You may return to your Form-room!"

Barbara & Co. were looking quite merry and bright when they came back to the Fourth. Their luck had held good, after all; but, as Babs said to Mabs, and Mabs said to Babs, it was likely to be a very long time before they were again caught Out of Bounds.

THE END.

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



Your Editor's Corner.



Write to me as often as you like, and let me know what you think of "The School Friend." All readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope, may be sure of receiving a prompt reply by post. All letters should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The School Friend,' The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"PEACE CELEBRATIONS AT CLIFF HOUSE!"

By Hilda Richards.

The above is the title of next Thursday's magnificent, long, complete tale of the girls of Cliff House. Peace Celebrations! Surely these two words are sufficient to prove to you that our next story will be a splendid one. At any rate, it is not my intention to go into details. All I am going to do is to give you the chapter headings, in the order in which they appear in the tale. Here they are:

- An Idea for Peace Day!
- Bessie Puts Her Foot in It!
- No Luck for Bessie!
- Parts for All but Bessie!
- Selecting a Dress!
- No Sale Recorded!
- Bessie's Free Buffet!
- In the Cupboard!
- The Unwanted Vocalist!
- Fancy Dress at Last!
- Muzzled!

I feel sure that after reading the above chapter headings you will simply long to read our next story. That you will enjoy it I have not the slightest doubt. You will enjoy, too, the next instalment of our splendid adventure serial,

"THE GIRL CRUSOES!"

By Julia Storm,

for in this instalment there are many exciting incidents and any number of surprises. By the way, I want to urge upon you all to place a regular order for the "School Friend" with your newsagent.

Just lately I have received a number of letters from readers, who, upon applying for a copy of the "School Friend," have been met with those disappointing words "Sold out!" You can always avoid disappointment

by taking the precaution of ORDERING IN ADVANCE!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

- "A Southampton Boy Reader."—Many thanks for your letter, and for all the complimentary things you say about the "School Friend." You will be glad to hear, I feel sure, that I have received hundred of letters from boy readers.
- E. Ward (Birmingham).—Very pleased to hear you are so fond of Bessie Bunter, and that you like Mademoiselle la Touche. I hope you will send me your full address next time you write.
- "Morag."—Glad you hold such a high opinion of the "School Friend." Your sketches are really quite good, and I must compliment you on them.
- Winifred Mackintosh (Plumstead).—Delighted to hear that you consider the "School Friend" is topping. Any number of readers have used the word "topping" to express their opinion of our new paper.
- "A Loyal Girl Reader."—It is my intention to publish the portrait of every girl in the Fourth Form in our portrait gallery. I quite agree with you that the "School Friend" supplies the needs of hundreds of schoolgirls, who have always longed for a paper of their own. You ask me whether it is possible to publish a "School Friend" Annual. Well, that is a question which I cannot answer at the present moment. I shall have to give the matter very careful consideration.
- L. J. Brodwick. — I will carefully consider your suggestion.
- Muriel M. (Sandown).—I am greatly obliged to you for all the nice things you say about the "School Friend." I hope you will remain a staunch supporter of our new paper for many a long day.
- Albert E. T. (Hull).—Glad you hold such a high opinion of Bessie Bunter. Everybody has a good word to say for Bessie.

- "Nab."—I have taken careful note of your remarks, and will see what can be done in the matter.
- "A Friend."—The characters you mention may probably be introduced into a future story.
- "Gussie and Montie."—Your opinions are not shared by the majority of my readers. I do not think anybody could wish for a better Form captain than Barbara Redfern.
- "A Reader."—See reply to "A Friend."
- "L. C." (Blackpool).—Very pleased to have your letter, and to learn that you think "The Girl Crusoes" is unique and interesting. It is proving very popular.
- E. Thomas (Formley).—The question of running a competition is under consideration.
- "Eileen."—You are wise to have placed regular order with your newsagent. It is really the only way in which to avoid disappointment. You ask me whether Bessie Bunter is ever ill through over-gorging. Well, all I can say in reply is that if she isn't, she deserves to be.
- "Loyal Reader."—Delighted to hear that you thought so highly of "Barbara Redfern Secret." It is quite possible that I shall publish a story on similar lines within a short space of time. Supposing Marjorie Hazled was the leading character in this story, would you be pleased?
- "An Enthusiastic Reader" (Stockport).—I am afraid it is absolutely impossible to publish the "School Friend" twice a week. The answer to your question concerning Hilda Richards is in the affirmative.
- "Flora, Grace, and Hilda."—Very glad to hear that Barbara Redfern is your favorite character. Yes, the Cliff House do play tennis matches. Is Cliff haunted? Well, you will have to wait the winter for the answer to this question. Ghost stories always seem very much in place in the summer. What do you think?

YOUR EDITOR

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 Made-moiseille 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 capture a turtle, which they take back to the ship.

(Read on from here.)

The Black Girl's Warning.

Pat sought out her chum, Melita, who was still reclining outside her bed, like some black princess.

Melita gave a cry of delight at the sight of her red-headed friend.

She was still absorbed in the contemplation of her black face in the hand-mirror which Pat had given her.

All the afternoon she had gazed raptly into the mirror.

"Love to you, Missy Pat," she said, in greeting. Then she pointed into the mirror. "Me too lovelee!" she added.

"You are a bit of a bud, aren't you!" said Pat, seating herself on the edge of the bed. "You are a sort of black pearl—a stove-polish beauty. But you wait a bit! We will do something with your hair presently, and you'll look twice as lovely as you do now."

"Number One Big Mary fella, she say me get up all well plenty quick bimeby!" said Melita.

Pat nodded. She understood Melita's queer jargon perfectly.

Number One Big Mary fella was Miss Strong. Plenty quick bimeby meant "to-morrow." Too much plenty quick bimeby meant "at once."

"We'll have great times when you get up, Melita," said Pat. "You are coming to school with the rest of us, an' Miss Whiffen is going to take you in hand to make a perfect little la-ady av ye."

And Pat imitated Miss Whiffen's accent to the life.

"Me show you catchee plenteo fish," said Melita. "Me show you makee bow an' arrow. Me show you makee plenty nice thing. You catchee more Likant-en-Kap."

Pat nodded.

She knew that Melita meant the great fish which was now frying for supper, the Likant-en-Kap, or Queen-of-the-Sea-Bottom. And Melita told her a story of how old King Tamasee of Samoa had met his death from the foto, or barb, of one of these skate tails being wrapped up in his sleeping-mats.

And Melita told her, as well, how these barbs of the tail were used in making spear and arrow-heads, when there was no iron available; whilst from the rest of the tail were made whips, like whips of rhinoceros hide, of terrific cutting power.

"Makeum plenty too much bad whip of tail belong big fess," said Melita, rubbing her shoulders with a grimace. "Ole mars'r. belong me; him whack us too much along whip like dat!"

"You don't mean to say that your master whacked you with one of those awful things?" demanded Pat, horrified.

"Him German," replied Melita, as though that accounted for everything. "Me mo' better to-morrow," added Melita. "An' you see, to-night come storm belong Karaka; to-morrow bimeby come turklee."

The black girl pointed to the east, which in her dialect was called "Karaka."

There was not the slightest storm in the sky, though the light breeze which had held till sunset now died away, and the air was growing close and heavy.

"You mean there is going to be a storm, and after that the turtle will come ashore?" asked Pat.

Melita nodded.

"Plenty storm come to-night," she

answered. "Wind, him not much. Sky-fire, him plenty!"

By which Pat understood that there was going to be a great thunderstorm, without much wind, but with much lightning.

"Turklee, him no come ashore when storm makee noise," added Melita. "Him come afterward."

Pat called to Joe.

"Here, Joe," she said. "Melita says we are going to have a big thunderstorm to-night, and that the turtle will come on the beach to-morrow night. She has been trying to make me understand that this turtle we have caught is the advance guard of whole hosts of turtle. We shall have to do something about catching them."

Joe nodded.

"I don't see any signs of a storm coming," she said. "But if Melita says we are going to have one, I expect she is right. She knows the weather signs better than we do. It means that we are going to have a performance with made-moiseille and Whiffy in the night, if the storm comes. They both hate thunderstorms. Don't say a word to either of them, though, or they'll start getting nervous about it at once."

Melita seemed to understand perfectly what they were saying.

"Beautiful doll lady, she too much fright along storm!" she said grinning. "Look, missy!"

She pointed to a lot of gossamer threads spun by a species of small spider, which had drifted from the woods ashore to the ship.

These threads were spun from the stanchions which supported the boat-deck, and from the electric bulbs in the roof lights along the deck, shining like little filaments of silver.

"Him always makee net when storm come," said Melita.

The girls looked at this weather-sign curiously.

"If the big turtle hordes are coming ashore to lay their eggs," said Joe, "we shall have to get ready for them; and I don't think it is going to give us much work to rebuild that great square of coral rock walls, which runs into the lagoon by the mouth of the Happy Valley. I've often wondered what it was. It looked to me like a fish-pond; but there were too many holes in the wall for keeping fish in. I know now what it was. It was a turtle-pen, where the people who used to live in the valley kept a stock of live turtle. The top is a bit broken down by

time and weather. All we shall have to do is to rebuild the crown of the wall, so that our turtle cannot swim out over it at high tide."

"And when are you going to do it?" asked Pat.

"We shall have to get through some of the work to-night," replied Joe. "We must do it when the tide is right."

"You are a one for work, Joe!" said Pat admiringly.

"We've got to work," answered Joe.

"It's no good our getting the great run of sea-turtle for the year, and then just turning them on their backs to die in the sun. We have got to keep some of them prisoners, and they've got to be kept under proper conditions."

Pat nodded. She knew that the great body of the sea-turtle would come ashore, perhaps for one or two nights, to lay their eggs in the warm coral sand.

Then off they would go to sea again, and such a chance of laying in a big stock of the most valuable food would not occur again for months.

"Right!" she said. "We'll start work after supper. It's useful that we've got that bit of railway-line ashore. We can lay a little string of metals down the sand to that wall at the old turtle-pond, and, with a few bags of cement and sand, we'll mix up the mortar, and we'll build up the wall with lumps of coral rock and the broken bits of lava from the cliffs."

"It's going to be hard work," said Joe. "Share, it's not hard work that I'm afraid of," replied Pat. "But I don't want to get caught in the thunderstorm that's comin'. I'm sure Melita is right. I can feel the air gettin' thick and heavy, as if 'twas the inside of a cupboard."

"We'll have a good supper," said Joe, "and plenty of strong coffee, and that will set us up for the job. I am sure Miss Strong will give us permission to go ashore, and get on with the job, seeing how important it is."

Miss Strong was consulted. She made no demur, but looked at the tide-table they had made of the rise and fall of the water in the lagoon.

"I will come with you, girls," she said. "And we will leave mademoiselle and Miss Whiffen on board to look after the smaller children. We must only take the bigger and stronger girls for this work. It will be heavy and tiring. And we must not get caught ashore by the storm. I am sure Melita is right, though the sky looks so clear and bright. One can feel the electricity in the air."

The night was growing warmer and warmer as they all sat down to supper at the long table on deck.

The candles wilted and guttered in the heat, and yet their flames burned straight up without a flicker in the still air.

Archibald, the parrot, sitting on the rail, voiced the sentiments of the whole party, when, with a solemn croak, he exclaimed:

"My word! Ain't it 'ot? I wish I could take my feathers off!"

Melita gave a squeak of fear as she heard Archibald speak.

She had never heard a parrot talk before.

"Wah!" she cried. "Bird, 'um talk!" "That's all right, my dear," said Pat soothingly. "It's only old Archibald!"

"Um got debble in 'um stomach!" said Melita, trembling, unable to account any other way for the talking parrot.

Archibald turned a cunning eye on her as she reclined on her white bed, mirror in hand.

"My word! Ain't you a beauty!" he said, in clear, distinct tones. "I don't think!" he added.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 11.

This was too much for Melita.

With a yell, she slipped into her bed, pulling the clothes over her head, whilst Chrissie, in the adjoining bed, followed her example.

And neither of them would show their heads again till Archibald was taken from the rail, and chained to his perch in the first officer's cabin.

The Storm.

GREAT was the excitement on board the Utopia when the news spread amongst the girls that a party was proceeding on shore that night to build up the walls of the old turtle-pond in the lagoon, in anticipation of the great run of turtle that would come in on the rising tide the following night.

For this was the turtle moon—the full moon which comes at the height of the season, when the turtle come ashore from the deep sea to lay their eggs in the warm coral sand.

The moon had not yet risen when the shore-party was assembled on deck, with long rows of hurricane-lamps, which they had brought from the lamp-room of the liner.

These were already filled and trimmed, and the girls lit them and closed down the glasses as they were ranged along the deck.

The boat and the canoe were brought to the gangway as well as the big life-raft, which the girls were using to raft stuff ashore from the ship for the building of their house in the Happy Valley.

And on the raft were placed lamps and picks and shovels, as well as a dozen barrels of Portland cement, which Joe had destined for the building up of the damaged walls of the turtle-pond.

This was no small job, for the walls of this enclosure, built out into the lagoon by the former inhabitants of Diamond Island, had been planned on a large scale.

The walls were a good three feet thick, and in the deepest part of the pond, which was furthest out in the lagoon, were nearly twelve feet high.

The top of this wall, which was built of piled coral, was submerged at high water, for time and the weather had broken the coping down.

So nearly two feet had to be added to the wall all round, or any turtle they might catch and put in the pond, would escape on the top of the next high tide.

But Joe had formed her own ideas on the building-up of this wall. She had found in the hold a large number of small sacks, tightly baled in hundreds, of the size and quality which are used by soldiers for making sandbags.

It was her intention to fill these with a mixture of coral sand and cement, and to lay them on the top of the wall.

Then she knew that when the tide rose and wetted the mixture in these sacks they would set and bind together in one mass of solid cement, far stronger than the original wall.

The canvas of the sacks would rot away, leaving solid lumps of stone modelled in the exact shape of the sack, but each bound to its neighbour in one solid mass which the sea would not break down.

All the girls were clamouring to go ashore.

But Miss Strong would only select the bigger and stronger of her little flock.

The night had grown intensely hot, and she knew that the rapid work of construction would be of a hard and trying nature.

So, much to their disgust, the smaller

girls were left on board, under the charge of mademoiselle and Miss Whiffen.

Mademoiselle would not have gone ashore for anything.

She dreaded those dark, silent woods ashore, with the tall, ghostly lines of the cocoa-palms that fringed the beach, and the strange crashings and crackings which sounded from them at intervals.

A cocoon falling with a thump from a tall palm on a dark night was sufficient to send mademoiselle into hysterics.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, rolling her fine eyes. "I should be too frightened! I do not see why you girls should go to risk yourselves to build up one stupid old wall in dis hurry!"

"If we don't build up the stupid old wall, mam'selle," replied Joe, "we shall lose the big run of turtle, and you won't have any delicious turtle soup, or fried-turtle, or turtle-pie, or any of the thousand-and-one nice things that you can make out of fresh turtle. The turtle won't stay ashore to be caught and killed and boiled down into turtle soup. And how would you like to live all the time on bully-beef?"

Mademoiselle shook her head. She hated bully-beef.

"I do not love ze ox out of ze tin!" she said. "But I do weesh that you girls an' Miss Strong should not go to ze shore. I have feelings in my bones zat we are going to have ze lightnings an' ze thundaire!"

This was true enough. Mademoiselle's highly-strung nervous system had already detected the signs of the brewing storm, which Melita had foretold by the gossamer webs of the small spiders, and which the barometer in the chart-room was already recording.

Yet the night was still fine and starlit, and the lagoon and sea both lay as still as a mill-pond, save for the everlasting thunder of the oily swells on the outer reef of the lagoon.

Soon all were ready. The girls descended into the boat and canoe, each carrying a lighted lantern to help them at their work ashore.

And a very pretty sight they made as they pulled off for the shore, with the laden raft of construction material in tow.

The light of fifty lamps in these boats was reflected in long, glittering lines on the lagoon.

And no sooner did oars and paddles strike the warm water than another illumination was set up.

In the dark shadow of the ship ripples of phosphorescence, more brilliant than anything they had ever seen in this line, shone like waves of liquid fire.

Wherever a paddle touched the warm, sticky water, it left a track of pale blue flame, and even the drops that fell from the paddle-blades glittered like jewels of living fire.

This high state of phosphorescence of the water was also a sign of the coming storm.

They had barely got half-way to the shore when, all of a sudden, the surface of the lagoon lit up in a great sheet of milky blue light, caused by millions and millions of these tiny, phosphorescent lamps rising to the surface.

The girls gave a cry of wonderment and admiration as they found their boats floating on what looked like a sea of fire.

They extinguished the lamps in the boats that their eyes might not be blinded against the wonderful spectacle.

The huge black hull of the Utopia seemed to be afloat on a sheet of pale blue flame, and the reflections of the water lit up her stern and sides in patches of wavering blue light.

"Faith!" exclaimed Pat, resting on her paddle in the canoe. "That's th'

most ligitant sight I've ever seen in me life! It beats the Crystal Palace fireworks!"

Some of the girls were a little frightened by this wonderful display.

But Miss Strong explained to them that it was only a beautiful natural phenomenon, born of the weather conditions.

"It'll scare mademoiselle into fits, all th' same!" muttered Joe. "She won't like bein' left in charge of the ship with the water all round sparkin' up like a searchlight!"

But it so happened that mademoiselle did not see this display.

She had retired to her cabin, and was busy trying to repair the ravages of the sun on her complexion.

And the girls left on the ship were so taken up with the wonderful sight that they did not dream of calling her.

The weird light faded out as quickly as it had arisen, and all was dark again as they reached the shore.

And the four girls on the ladders had their work cut out to keep pace with the bags of cement and sand as they were hurried down to them.

The moon rose like a great red ball from the dark sea, and helped them with its light.

It was the season of the neap tides, and the tide fell lower than they had ever seen it, so that they were able to get their ladders against the outer wall of the pen, and to run their little track of portable railway where, in the ordinary course of things, there were three or four feet of water.

And by this rush of work they succeeded, by eleven o'clock at night, in raising the outer wall of the pen by over two feet in lines of neatly-stacked sandbags, which, as soon as they were wetted by the rising tide, would set into a hard cap of cement.

They had done better than Joe had hoped.

The boat was sent back to the ship

sleep in an ould cabin that's as hot as th' inside av a gas-oven!"

"I think the storm is going to hold off for a few hours, girls," said Miss Strong, looking up at the sky, "and we shall be able to get the great part of the work done. Though I don't like the look of those cloud-tops which are showing under the moon yonder out in the east."

She pointed out to sea, where the tops of some great rounded clouds, like the crests of distant mountains, rolled up from the horizon.

These were miles away, but there was no doubt, to judge from their shape, that they were true thunder-clouds.

But the night was as still as possible. The great fronds of the tall cocoa palms hung limp and lifeless against the sky without the slightest movement.

The only sound they could hear was the deep, organ-like note of the surf upon the outer reef and the splash of an occasional fish in the smooth lagoon.



The girls gasped and sputtered as they bent to their oars, but in spite of the fact that they were soaked to the skin, they stuck to their task.

The hurricane-lamps were lighted and strung out along the beach where the girls were going to work, in long lines, which gave the palm groves the appearance of an illuminated garden.

It was about a quarter of a mile from the spot where they had landed to the place where the turtle-pen was built.

They had already covered this quarter of a mile with their portable railway, and it did not take them long to divert a section of this so that it lay along the great wall left bare by the tide.

Then, up the beach, Joe set the girls to work filling up the bags with a mixture of cement and sand.

And as soon as these were filled they were piled on the truck and run down the wet sands to the outer edge of the turtle-pond.

Here ladders had been reared against the great wall—handy little ladders of bamboo, light as feathers—and Pat and Joe, Hilda and Dumping, mounted on these, lifted the sacks as they were brought down to them, and piled them on the top of the wall.

The girls worked splendidly, filling the bags and tying them up.

with the raft in tow for more bags of cement and more bales of sandbags.

It came back with the required material and huge jugs of lemonade and great piles of sandwiches, which the thoughtful Miss Whiffen and mademoiselle had out for the working-party.

It also brought an imploring message from mademoiselle that they should finish their work as speedily as possible and return on board the ship, as she was sure the thunderstorm was coming on.

But there were no signs of a thunderstorm as the merry group of girls seated themselves on the wall of the turtle-pond and made a night picnic by the light of the red moon and the hurricane-lamps.

The air was growing closer than ever, and they were greatly refreshed by the cool lemonade, for the cement dust, flying from bags as they handled them, had filled their eyes and throats and hair with the fine powder.

"Faith!" exclaimed Pat. "It's these jobs of night navy-work that suit me down to the ground. More especially when there's lemonade and sandwiches! This is better than tryin' to get to

"Jam-sandwich!" exclaimed Joe, opening a neat white-paper parcel which mademoiselle had sent from the ship. "Really, I think that mademoiselle is splendid! Fancy her sending a lot of navvies jam-sandwich!"

"I'm goin' to reward mademoiselle again wid another little surprise in the course av th' next few days," said Pat.

"What is that?" asked Joe. "Another string of pearls?"

"String av pearls!" ejaculated Pat, with contempt. "What's th' use av a string av pearls when there's lashin's av 'em at the bottom av th' lagoon in the great oyster-beds, only waitin' to be fished up? No, my dear; me friend Melita is goin' to be allowed a run ashore to-morrow, an' she tells me that she's got th' recipe for th' finest complexion cream that's known to the belles av the South Seas. An' she's going to put up for mademoiselle a dozen pots. But not a word about it, girls. That's got to be a great secret. Now we've eaten everythin', so we'll get to work again. An' we don't knock off till th' risin' tide drives us out av it!"

Again the girls started with undiminished vigour.

Huge piles of dry coral-sand were mixed up and blended with the Portland cement.

The new bags were filled up and tied with tough strips of hisibiscus fibre, and were run down on the truck to the wall.

They had turned the corner of the outer wall now, and were working up towards the beach.

The tide had also turned, and the water was rising.

But they pushed the truck through the warm water, and hoisted the filled bags on top of the wall.

Presently, as they worked, there sounded a deep, distant rumble of thunder, far away out to sea.

Pat granted.

"Here comes the storm!" she said. "Melita was right. It's comin' from out of the east. But it won't come for some time yet. You peal was a long way away, and there was no lightnin'."

"The band will start playing on board ship!" replied Joe, as she hoisted a bag on top of the wall. "Touchy will start getting nervous as soon as she hears that!"

"If Touchy is wise, she will have turned into her little bunk, and she'll be fast asleep," replied Pat, as she slung a bag in place on top of the wall. "There's wan thing the rain will do—it'll soak these bags nicely, and they'll settle down into a good, hard capping o' concrete before the tide rises to 'em. Fresh water is better for 'em than the salt."

The rising tide was swirling round the foot of their ladders now, and the girls pushing the truck down to them loaded with the bags had to tramp through the water till they were nearly knee-deep.

But the work was proceeding rapidly. As the tide rose, they gradually worked inshore, raising the crest of the stone dam to one level.

Pat looked with great pride upon the neat, level rows of bags on top of the wall.

"My word!" she exclaimed. "That's a job that would do credit to a good firm o' builders an' engineers! Our turtle won't know themselves when they find 'emselves shut in such an iligant prison!"

Another distant rumble of thunder sounded through the night, and the blue gleam of a flash of lightning from below the dark line of the horizon flickered in the sky.

Pat looked over her shoulder seaward. "I want to get all this wall finished before we run for it," she said. "I don't want to be beaten by an ould thunderstorm, and the capping will set better if it all goes down at once."

"Do you think we ought to be going on board, girls?" called the voice of Miss Strong, from up the beach. "The storm is coming up!"

Pat looked up at the sky.

It was still calm and starlit overhead, save for a few long wisps or streamers of vapour which were floating up from the eastward.

"We'll give it another half-hour, madam!" she said. "I don't think it will be up till thin."

And she and Joe and Hilda worked furiously to complete their task, whilst up out of the east rose a huge, rounded cloud, blotting out the stars.

Now and then a fitful breeze would play amongst the drooping fronds of the cocoa groves, which gave out a dry rustling sound, as though the trees were praying for the rain that was to come.

And for the full half-hour Pat and the

girls stuck bravely to their work till the perspiration poured down their faces, slinging bag after bag with mechanical regularity in their right places.

They kept pace with the rising tide fill at last the work was complete.

The great wall of the turtle-pen had been raised to the full level of the highest tide of the lagoon, and stood clear and neat in the moonlight, crowned by its regular capping of white bags, which, as soon as the rain or tide fell upon them, would set into a solid block of concrete.

"That's a good job done!" said Pat, surveying the work with great pride. "Now, madam," she added, "I think we had better make a run for the boats, and get on board. That ould cloud is rising up to the moon faster than I thought he would!"

This was a fact. The huge, rounded outline of the towering cloud had nearly touched the lower rim of the moon, and as the girls knocked off work and shouldered their shovels, a vivid flash of blue lightning ripped it like a curtain from the crest to the horizon.

There was no clap of thunder, but the fronds of the palms moved uneasily, as though whispering, "It's coming! It's coming!"

"Leave the lamps along the shore where they are, girls," said Miss Strong, "and pile your shovels here, above high-water mark; then hurry for the boats!"

The girls needed no bidding to hurry.

The sight of that enormous black cloud, which had risen so rapidly from the horizon, almost to the zenith, had scared them.

They rapidly piled their shovels, and flitted at a run across the sands to the spot where the canoe and the boat were pulled up at the edge of the rising tide.

They did not wait to tow the raft off to the ship.

The girls surrounded this, and hauled it well up above high-tide mark.

Then they jumped into the boat and the canoe, and pushed off for the ship.

That huge cloud was hurrying up with tremendous speed, for it swiftly blotted out the moon and all light before the boats had crossed half the distance to the ship.

They could see the lights sparking here and there on the great hull, but the night had become as black as pitch.

Of a sudden, a jagged flare of lightning split the sky, and the great hull of the Utopia seemed to leap out from the darkness, silhouetted against a flickering background of light.

There was a rush and a roar up the lagoon, and they saw a white line of foam advancing over the smooth water towards them, as they rowed and paddled their hardest for the gangway of the ship.

As Melita had foretold, this was not wind, though it sounded as though a tremendous squall was sweeping down on them.

It was rain that was rushing towards them—the edge of a tropic shower that thrummed and roared through the still air like the edge of a vast cataract.

It was on them before they reached the ship—such rain as they had never before experienced.

It fell straight down from the sky as though it were being poured out of a bucket.

It hit them with a warm, drenching shower, like the fall of a shower-bath.

The girls gasped and spattered as they bent at their oars.

In a second they were wet through. They could feel the water rushing in streams down their backs.

They were confused and stunned by

the downpour, and by the dazzle of lightning which came with it.

Bang! Crash!

One second the night was pitch-dark. The next, it was bright as daylight with the tremendous flashing of the lightning.

They could hear mademoiselle screaming dismally up on deck, between the tremendous peals of thunder.

Mademoiselle had rushed out at the first fall of the storm, to get Melita and Chrissie out of their beds and into a cabin.

The timbers and planking of the boat-deck above had shrunk a little under the rays of the tropic sun, and the water was therefore descending in trickling showers upon the two black girls, whose beds were placed on the hurricane-deck, open to the air.

But mademoiselle's nerve had failed her.

All she could do was to throw waterproof coats over the two white beds, and to rapidly open two smart parasols, which she gave to the black girls.

Then, clapping her hands to her ears, she had rushed into the music-room, to shut out the storm.

The girls, dazed and stupefied by the roar of the storm, brought the boat and canoe alongside the companion-ladder in some sort of mix-up.

One by one, they climbed out on the ladder, and scurried up to the deck like drowned rats.

Only Joe and Pat and Miss Strong did not allow themselves to be awed by this fearful storm.

Bending their backs under the rain, they helped girl after girl from the boat to the grating at the foot of the ladder.

Lily Parsons, the perfect little lady, was so confused and frightened by the hammering of the storm that she tumbled into the water between the boat and the ship.

But Joe speedily hauled her out again, and as she was wet through before she tumbled in, she was not much the wetter for a thorough sousing.

The three, bending under the weight of the storm, made the canoe and boat fast before they climbed up on deck.

At the top of the companion Pat came to a standstill, with a shout of laughter.

For there, sitting up in bed, under a rose-pink parasol, entirely unmoved by the clatter and roar of the elements and the din of falling rain on the deck above, was Melita, contemplating herself by the light of the electric deck-lamp and the help of her hand-mirror.

"Hallo, Melita!" shouted Pat, at the top of her voice, to make herself heard above the roar of the rain. "What on earth are you up to? The water is streaming through on you! Why don't you get into a cabin for shelter?"

But Melita only shook her head as she gazed rapturously into the mirror.

"Me too lovely!" she said, contemplating the effect of the pink sunshade behind her black, frizzy mop of hair.

But Chrissie was frightened, and crying.

Her sunshade, which mademoiselle had given her to keep off the trickle of water that was falling from the ceiling of the deck, was only a dark blue.

They quickly moved her to the shelter of a cabin, and shifted the rather unwilling Melita to the other berth in the same cabin.

Then the cheerful, soaked working-party all crowded into the cabin for hot coffee, to keep away the effects of their drenching.

They dragged mademoiselle in there also.

They slapped her hands, and slapped

her back, and bade her cheer up as the ship seemed to quiver under the tremendous peals of thunder.

And, somehow, mademoiselle seemed to be reassured by the cheery surrounding of the galley stove.

She consented to drink some hot coffee, which Pat assured her was some protection against lightning and thunder, and as good as any lightning-conductor.

But she firmly refused to go to her cabin, which opened out on deck, and which was lit through the venetian shutters of the windows by the blinding flashes of lightning.

So the girls slipped off to change into dry clothing, and, returning, kept mademoiselle company through the height of the storm, which was really a tremendous spectacle whilst it lasted.

Ashore they could see by the vivid lightning flashes, the crests of the coco-palms writhing and twisting and tossing their great fronds in the torrents of rain.

The flashes of lightning seemed to spatter on the hills behind, and to play about the tall, steel masts of the ship.

Whilst at the end of the signalling-yard on the foremast, a great luminous ball of light burned like a great globe—St. Elmo's fire as it is called by the sailors.

In spite of themselves, the girls were awed as they flattened their noses on the glass panes of the portholes of the music-room, and looked out at the wonderful scene.

"There's wan good thing!" said Pat comfortingly. "This rain is just what we wanted to set our bags of cement. They will all be as hard as stone by to-morrow mornin'!"

The storm lasted about an hour.

Then it passed over the island, and died away in distant rumbles of thunder, and, finally, to a dead silence.

The moon shone out again in a clear sky, and it seemed impossible to imagine that such a racket had happened in so short a space of time, for it was not yet one o'clock in the morning.

The air was fresh and invigorating now, rain-washed, and full of ozone, and a gentle breeze crept in from the sea.

Ashore they could see glitterings of light everywhere as the rays of the moon caught the wet foliage. And from all the dry, stone beds of the gullies that ran down from the hills came the musical tinkling of running waters.

Mademoiselle was coaxed off to bed, and assured that the storm was over for the night, and would not come on again.

Pat and Joe leaned on the rail of the silent ship, listening to the tinkling of the running waters ashore.

They had never seen Diamond Island look more fairy-like and unreal as it did at this moment, with the slight mist of the rain rising from the warm earth, and the silver moonlight playing upon the fresh-washed foliage.

It was all too beautiful for words.

They stood watching the moonlit scene spellbound, unwilling to go to bed and leave it, though they were nearly dropping from weariness.

All of a sudden, up by the fore-castle of the ship, there sounded a tremendous crash.

Pat gave a gasp, and seized Joe's arm.

"Goodness! What's that?" she demanded.

Then a dismal squeak sounded from mademoiselle's cabin.

"I did tell you dat dere was goin' to be more 'understorms!" cried mademoiselle's voice accusingly.

"I know what it is!" exclaimed Joe. "It's that old turtle of ours! The thunderstorm made him lively, and he has crawled to the break of the fore-castle, and tumbled down into the well-deck!"

They hurried down the ladder, which

led from the hurricane-deck to the well-deck, and, sure enough, there lay the unhappy turtle, killed by the fall.

Joe gave a sigh of relief.

"I am glad he has killed himself!" she said. "I did not fancy the job of killing him. And we've got to make him into soup to-morrow morning, anyway."

"And it's to-morrow morning now," yawned Pat. "Let us quiet Touchy down again, and go to bed."

They accordingly quieted down Mademoiselle Desreea la Touche, who was again getting up and rapidly dressing, under the impression that the dreaded thunderstorm was coming on again.

Mademoiselle, in her agitation, had got her stockings on inside out, and had pulled on her rest cap the wrong way about in her hurry to get out of her cabin, and into the lighted refuge of the kitchen once more.

"What is it, girls? What is it?" she cried, from her cabin. "I get up—quick!"

"No need to get up at all, mademoiselle," replied Joe cheerfully. "It's only the old turtle tumbled off the fore-castle head, and broken his neck—that's all."

And mademoiselle allowed herself to be comforted and soothed.

The girls gave her a dose of sal volatile to soothe her nerves.

Then they staggered off to their own cabins, half asleep as they stood with sheer weariness.

And, in another ten minutes all was still on the great ship, which lay fast asleep on the glass-smooth lagoon, her sides still shining with the moisture of the great storm.

The Railway Accident.

THE following morning broke beautifully clear and fresh, and everybody was revived by the cool breeze which had set in from the sea in the wake of the storm of the night.

Joe's first job for the morning was to cut up the turtle, and she was deliberating how she would start this puzzle, when a voice spoke behind her:

"Aloha, Miss Joe! Love to you!"

It was Melita's morning greeting.

Melita, well and strong again, was up and dressed.

Melita's toilet and dressing was a very simple matter.

She could not be bothered with the tapes and buttons and hooks of the pretty dress which had been given to her.

She had simply taken the sheet from her bed, and had wrapped it round her, draping it gracefully like a Roman toga.

And, by the way of ornament, she had managed to unscrew the brass knob from the end of her bedstead, which she had tied round her neck with a bit of string.

It was plain that Melita valued and admired this brass bed-knob, just as much as mademoiselle valued the little necklace of peridot which she habitually wore.

She would have preferred that knob to any costly string of pearls.

It was large, and it shone and twinkled brightly in the morning sunshine.

"My word, Melita!" exclaimed Pat, making her appearance on deck.

"You've got a nice neck ornament there! If we don't keep an eye on you, you'll be stealin' the ship's steam-whistle, and wearing it for a charm!"

How are you this morning, Melita?"

"Good, Missee Pat!" replied Melita, grinning delightedly from ear to ear at the sight of her friend.

"An' plwat are yez goin' to do wid th' ould turtle?" asked Pat.

"We've got to take him to pieces, somehow," said Joe, rather diron-

solately. "How do you prepare a turtle for soup, Pat?"

"Faith, I don't know!" replied Pat. But Melita apparently knew.

She asked Joe by a sign for the use of her knife, and set to work to take the turtle to bits in a most scientific and workmanlike fashion.

Pat looked on in admiration.

"Be jabers, Melita!" she said. "Av you were only civilised, instid o' bein' a poor savage, ye'd make a fine hand in a ham-an'-beef shop!"

And in an incredibly short space of time, Melita had prepared the turtle ready for cooking.

The dismembered turtle was collected in dishes and copper stew-pans, and, by the time the girls had made their toilette, and mademoiselle had appeared on deck looking rather sleepy after the disturbances of the night, there was a delicious smell of frying turtle steaks rising from the galley skylights.

And when the turtle was served up at breakfast with rashers of bacon, all the girls agreed that the more turtle they could catch and keep the better, for turtle steaks were quite the nicest breakfast dish they had ever tasted.

The rest of the turtle was being stewed down into turtle soup and turtle jelly, and he was so large that he filled the four largest copper pans in the galley.

Miss Strong herself superintended the cooking of this monster of the deep, making what Pat described as a sort of turtle jam, which was poured into pots and put in the cooling-room for farther use.

Then, breakfast and the turtle having thus been despatched, the working party for the shore was piped away.

But before they could start they had to bale out the boat and the canoe, both of which were more than half-full of rain-water from the torrential storm of the previous night.

Pat set to work with a bucket, and followed up the bucket with a wash-bowl, heaving the water out of the half-water-logged craft.

"My word!" she exclaimed. "Av it had kep' raining for another hour our boats would have sunk wid th' rain-water in 'em!"

Pat had finished baling out the boat, and was going to start on the canoe, when a sudden cry from mademoiselle made her stop baling.

"Patreccia! Patreccia!" called mademoiselle, waving her parasol at the top of the companion-ladder.

"Oui, mademoiselle!" replied Pat, looking up in some surprise.

"Do not throw away all zat lovely rain-water!" pleaded mademoiselle. "I want 'im!"

"What for mam'selle?" asked Pat, suspending baling operations.

"For ze complexion!" urged mademoiselle. "Ze rain-water, 'e is matchless for ze complexion!" she added.

"Right, mademoiselle! How much will you have?" asked Pat. "A bucketful, or a tankful?"

And mademoiselle was so delighted, even with a bucketful of the water which had fallen into the canoe; that Pat took the trouble to carry her up six bucketfuls, which she poured into a large water breaker, and put outside mademoiselle's cabin.

"Mademoiselle is mad on her complexion," said Pat, as she finished her water-carrying. "But when we get ashore I'm going to find a little complexion cure that'll put her to rights!"

At last boat and canoe were baled out, and the working party assembled in them and rowed ashore.

They took two new passengers this time, Melita and Togo.

Both of these were wild with delight at the notion of getting ashore again. Melita was a bit afraid of Togo, who was a very different dog from the small lap dogs which are the only representative of the canine species on her native island.

"'Im too big dog! 'Im bite?" asked Melita, looking doubtfully at Togo.

"Never bites anything but his breakfast, my dear!" answered Pat. "Share, he's th' most amiable dog that iver walked on four legs, an' wagged 'how d'ye do?' with his tail!"

And Melita timidly patted Togo's head, and was greatly pleased when he at once sat up and begged on the floor of the canoe.

"'Im sit allee sance me!" she said. "'Im-man!"

And she could not be persuaded that so intelligent a dog could be anything but a man, who had been bewitched by evil spirits, and turned into his present shape like some prince of fairy tale.

The ship, when she got outside it, and saw its enormous size, was also a source of the greatest wonderment to Melita.

She called it the "big canoe." She had seen steamers in the distance from the coast of her native island, and had also heard talk of them.

She was firmly persuaded that a steamer was a huge canoe, which carried an obliging fiery djagan in its stomach, who drove it along by wagging his tail, and who blew out fire and smoke from the pipes.

She was smiling, with wonderment again, when they got ashore on the coral beach, and she there found the little stretch of railway with its wheeled waggon.

Melita had never seen any sort of wheeled conveyance in her life, and when the girls told her to get into one of the little tip-trucks and to have a ride, she was very doubtful about doing so.

But partly through curiosity, and partly through overpersuasion, she at last climbed into the truck, and the girls commenced to push her along the beach.

At first all went well. Melita grinned nervously but happily, as the car bumped and rattled over the rather uneven rails under the shade of the cocoa palms at the fringe of the beach.

"'Him walkes walkes too much!" she said, as the car gathered speed as it got on a slight slope or dip on the rock shelf on which the rails were laid.

"Don't be nervous, Melita!" said Pat. "One of these days you'll probably get a ride on a real railway-train. Then you'll most likely want to cuddle the engine! Look here, my dear, I'll come 'an travel wid ye, so ye won't be frightened!"

And Pat, taking a run and a leap, jumped on to the little truck, which was beginning to travel quite fast.

With a sudden spurt of speed, it ran away from the girls, who had been pushing it, and Joe, running after it, caught her foot in one of the steel sleepers, and measured her length on the ground.

The lay of the ground was downhill here, and Pat, squatting in the hopper, smiled reassuringly to the scared Melita as the little car ran away with them down the slope.

"Don't be afraid of it, me dear!" said Pat. "'Tis but a bit of a down grade. We'll come to a bit of a slope up presently, an' then we shall stop!"

But Pat had forgotten that, the night before, when they had been busy repairing the turtle pen, they had split their main-lines of railway up to the Happy Valley and, putting in a pair of points,

had run their spur-line down the beach into the lagoon, in order that they could carry the material which they were building into the walls of the turtle pen.

So, instead of following the main-line and coming to a standstill on the slope, the car switched off with a fierce wobble, and followed the line down the sharp slope of the beach, putting on a rapid ton of speed as it ran down towards the water.

The girls gave a cry of consternation as they saw the little truck gather speed and go dashing down the beach.

Pat gave an uneasy smile which she saw what had happened.

She knew that it was too dangerous to jump out.

She, being used to wheeled conveyances and bicycles, might manage it safely; but Melita, to whom all wheeled things were strange, would probably come a nasty cropper on the beach, which was cut up by ugly little ridges of coral rock.

So Pat decided to sit tight as the

truck flew on, heading down the spur-line for the water.

"Can ye swim, dear?" she asked. Melita nodded. She understood all right.

"Pat, me girl, I think ye'll have to swim when we reach the terminus as this branch as the Diamond-Island Railway!" said Pat coolly. "We are reaching th' Lagoon View Station, where it's all change for th' shrimps an' the starfish! Hold tight, my dear, an' don't put yer head out at th' window!"

Melita needed no instruction to hold tight as the truck ran down the inclined road to the water.

There was a rush and a burst of spray as it struck the lagoon.

It ran into deep water and toppled over, throwing the two girls out in a huge splash of foam.

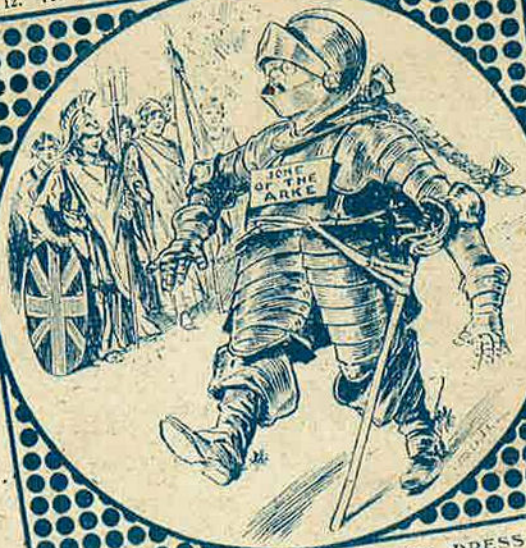
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