

"WHOM WAS SHE SHIELDING?"

A Magnificent New 20,000-words Story of the Girls of Cliff House. Complete in this issue!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND

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

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AUGUSTA TAKES CHARGE OF THE CLASS!

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

Whom Was She Shielding?



Barbara's Black Day!

BESSIE BUNTER, the fat girl of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, was running along the study passage as hard as she could go.

"Oh, won't they be excited about this! Won't Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn be thankful that I've hurried to tell them the news!" she panted, thinking of the two girls who shared Study No. 4 with her.

And into that study she rolled a few seconds later, screaming at the top of her ready voice:

"I say, you girls! I've got some news!"

Her sensational entry did not appear to excite Babs and Mabs.

For one thing, they knew Bessie Bunter as being the worst gossip in the Form.

And, apart from that, both Babs and Mabs had good reason for feeling down in the dumps this Thursday afternoon.

On their faces were looks of depression that told of a lack of interest in everything.

Babs and Mabs, in fact, were "fed up!"

"I say, you girls!" cried Bessie, standing by the open door. "Come on—quick!"

"The school on fire!" asked Barbara Redfern wearily.

"Worse than that!" said Bessie. "Oh, I say—"

"Lost your last sixpence down a drain?" suggested Mabel Lynn.

"Of course I haven't!" declared the fat junior. "It's something more important than that. It's on the notice-board downstairs. We're to have a new Form captain at once; and, I say, I knew you'd be glad to hear it."

"Oh, did you?" said Mabel Lynn, with sudden fury.

She glared at Bessie, then shot a compassionate glance at Barbara Redfern, whose head had drooped suddenly, whilst a hot flush mantled her cheeks.

"Well, what's the matter?" exclaimed Bessie, quite indignantly. "Here I've come rushing all the way upstairs—me, a delicate girl—giving myself palpitation of the heart, all on purpose to tell you! And then—"

"You utter duffer!" Mabel Lynn almost shouted. "You—"

"Oh, really!"

"Run away!"

"Oh, but, I say, you girls! Surely you must be glad."

"Glad!" echoed Mabel Lynn.

She laughed bitterly, and with good reason, too.

Of all the girls in the Fourth Form who were Barbara Redfern's chums she was the staunchest and truest.

And it so happened that Barbara, sitting here, with her head drooping as with shame, would have been captain of the Form at this moment, but for deep, unthought disgrace that had fallen upon

her, leaving her deprived of the proud position.

But Bessie Bunter, though she was quite aware of this, could not understand at all why her item of news was the reverse of joyful.

"I'm jolly well surprised!" she cried. "I always thought you two girls were so keen about the Form. And now—"

Mabel Lynn was about to rise from her chair, with an eye on the hockey stick as a means of silencing the fat girl, but Barbara Redfern checked her.

"Here's a thing that would never have happened if Babs hadn't lost the captaincy," rushed on Bessie blandly. "And you don't seem a bit excited! Mabs, I should have thought you would have jumped at the chance of— Ow!"

"Missed her!" sighed Mabel Lynn, as she aimed a cushion at the tactless Bessie. "But the next time—"

"What you want to fling things at me for, for doing you a good turn, I don't know," protested Bessie. "Surely you'll have a shot for the captaincy, Mabs. I don't mind, you know. I mean, I— Groooogh!"

"The next time," said Mabel Lynn, as another cushion just missed Bessie's head, "you'll get a taste of the hockey stick. Run away!"

"But I wish to explain—"

"Clear off, duffer!"

"Oh, really, Mabel," said Bessie, blinking through her thick spectacles.

"I only wish to explain that you are welcome to go in for the captaincy—I sha'n't mind it. It won't affect the result, of course. I mean to have a shot at the captaincy myself. I—"

"I mean to have a shot at you with this inkpot," warned Mabel, "if you say another word!"

"Oh, really!" said the fat junior. But don't you do anything of the sort, Mabel. Because if you spoil my clothes, with ink you'll have to pay for them. I am sorry I can't stop, but I must go back. I shall be up here in time for tea.

"Mabel, stop it, you c-cat! Sit-st-stop waving that stick, you— Ow!"

"Will you or won't you—"

"Certainly!" cried Bessie, backing against the door as the hockey stick was brandished within an inch of her nose.

"Oh, really?" said the fat junior. But no doubt Babs will have cheered up by then. Babs, I hope you are not jealous because I'm going to be captain? I wouldn't wish to be, really, only you'll never stand an earthly chance of being— Ow!"

"Leave off with the stick, Mabel!" yelled Bessie Bunter. "I was only telling Babs that she can't ever expect to be made captain again. She—"

"Thump! Thump!"

"Ow, you cat! All right, I—"

"Be off with you! Clear!"

"I'm kik-kik-clearing!" stammered

Bessie at last. "You won't see me again, so they?"

And she banged out of the room, just in time to dodge another thump at her toes from the hockey stick.

Mabel Lynn threw the stick aside and resumed her seat.

"Cheer up, Babs!" she said quietly. "Other girls are not like Bessie. She is—"

The door creaked open, and Mabel Lynn glared round.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "If this isn't the fat duffer again!"

"I say," came in a very ingratiating tone from Bessie, as she showed her spectacled face round the edge of the door. "I just looked back to—"

"Run away!" exclaimed Mabel Lynn. "To make it quite clear—"

"Bessie Bunter, if you don't go—"

"Oh, certainly! But I wish to make it quite kik-kik-clear that I shall be back for tea. I— Yarooop! Ow!"

The dictionary that had whirled through the air banged against the wall, missing Bessie by an inch.

"If Babs, as former captain of the Form, would like to stand me a special tea, I have no objection—"

"How smooth—"

"—to show there is no smooth—"

Whizz!

"Yarooop! Ow, you cat!" yelled Bessie, catching a Latin grammar on the arm. "I never thought you could be so mean, Mabel!"

And out of the room she banged again, slamming the door behind her.

"Bats For Ever!"

WITH all possible speed Bessie Bunter hurried downstairs to wave a crowd of Forgetful Formers was swarming round the notice-board.

"I say, you girls—" she began.

No one took any notice of the fat girl's cry. So she started to push her way into the heart of the crowd.

"I say, you know—"

"Don't you push me!" said Dolly Jobling sharply. "Because if you push me I shall push you!"

"Oh, really!" said Bessie, blinking excitedly. "But—"

"Next time you push Fatima, Dolly," said Clara Trevelyan. "Don't push her against me; because I'm quite squashed enough. Ease off a bit, Fatima!"

"I say, though, girls! Really, I must be allowed to— Ow!"

"Who's pushing?" complained a dozen voices angrily.

"Bessie is!"

"I'm not! I— Yarooop! Do stop banging me about, you girls!" shrieked the fat junior. "I merely wish to look at the notice. I am especially keen about this—"

"Goodness! You're killing me! I can't breathe! Help! Ow!"

"Then get out of the way, Bessie! You've seen the notice!"

"Oh, really, that was only for a moment! I wish to read it again. I—"

"Really, you girls, I shall have a heart-attack, and then you'll be sorry! Your elbow is sticking into me, Dolly Jobling!"

"And your great, flat foot is standing on my toes!" retorted Dolly.

"If Bessie doesn't stop pushing," called back a tall girl in the front of the crowd, "she'll get her hair pulled!"

"Oh, really, Freda—"

"Order—order!" demanded some of the girls. "Better read out the notice, Freda!"

"Yes, read it!" chortled others.

Bessie, pushed this way and that, began to smile blandly.

"Thank you!" she beamed. "I am much obliged to you for getting Freda to read out the notice for me! I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see what there is to cackle at! Don't take any notice of them, Freda! Read slowly and carefully, please!"

"Whom are you giving your orders to?" asked Freda Foote; whilst the crowd chuckled.

"I— Really, I would not call it an order," said Bessie smoothly. "These girls are just asking you to read the notice for—er—my benefit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Listen, then, girls!" cried Freda Foote, returning her gaze to the sheet of paper fastened to the board. "Notice. The Fourth Form will—"

"Wait a moment, Freda!" said Bessie. "If Dolly Jobling would oblige by not sticking her elbow into my side, I could hear better!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Freda Foote waited for the laughter to subside. Then she began again:

"Notice. The Fourth Form will elect a Form captain in place of Barbara Redfern, the election to take place at once."

"Good!" said Bessie. "Go on!"

"What nonsense!" came the counter-cry from quite a number of the girls. "We don't want another captain! Babs is good enough for us!"

"Read the rest!" pleaded Bessie.

"That's the lot," said Freda Foote. "And quite enough, too!"

"Hear, hear!" said Marjorie Hazeldene.

"Oh, really, did you say Bessie's nothing more, Freda?" asked Bessie Bunter.

"I did!"

"Nothing about Babs being in deep disgrace?"

"No!"

"Nothing about the way she broke bounds last night, and went to the dance at Courtfield, and got found out?" exclaimed Bessie.

"As if Miss Primrose would put a thing like that on the board!" hared up Phyllis Howell. "Hasn't she made the punishment stiff enough for Babs by depriving her of the captaincy?"

"Oh, I'm quite satisfied!" said Bessie, wondering why everybody was staring at her in disgust. "It makes it clear that Babs can never be captain again, and that gives some of us a chance! But I thought Miss Primrose might have given a hint in the notice about the best girl to have in Babs' place."

"You know Miss Primrose leaves the Form to settle the matter itself!" snapped Clara Trevlyn. "We elect our own captain, and there's an end to it."

"Certainly!" said Bessie. "I only thought Miss Primrose might wish to make an exception for once. But—er—she doesn't call attention to me, Freda!"

"What as?" was the withering question.

"As a suitable captain, of course!" said Bessie calmly. "Have another look at the board, Freda!"

"Hallo! Here's another notice!" cried Freda. "And Bessie's name is mentioned!"

"Oh, really! That's better!" beamed the fat girl. "Read it, Freda! I was certain that Miss Primrose would mention my name!"

"Your name is on a list," said Freda.

"Good!" cried Bessie. "I ought to have noticed it, but I am so short-sighted. Am I put at the top of the list of suggested candidates?"

"You are at the bottom of the list for English grammar!" said Freda Foote blandly.

"Oh, really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see what there is to cackle at!" cried Bessie. "Grammar's nothing! It's character that counts with a captain! The power to command! The—er—"

Oooooo

"I! ha, ha!"

"Stop it, you girls! This is not a re—"

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No. 31.—MISS BLAND
(Fifth Form Mistress.)

spectful way to treat your future—Grocough!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, it is not the proper way to treat your future captain! Yarooop! You cats!"

It seemed the proper way to nail Bessie's plait for her, and hustle her this way and that, for it succeeded in making her shuffle from the scene at last, full of great indignation.

"Now for a bit of peace!" said Freda Foote, turning away from the board as the laughter subsided. "I suppose Bessie has some strange notion of putting up for the captaincy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the others. "Like her cheek!"

"All the same," broke out Clara Trevlyn. "I suppose we have got to take this election seriously."

"If we can't have Babs, we don't want anybody!—That's my opinion!" said Flap Derwent.

"Hear, hear!" nodded Dolly Jobling. "But somebody has got to take Barbara's place. It's bound to be you, Marjorie."

But Marjorie Hazeldene gave a shrug, frowning.

"Oh, thanks!" she said quietly. "But

if anybody gets proposing me, they will soon see what I shall do!"

There was a sudden murmur amongst the other girls, whilst they exchanged looks of understanding.

Marjorie, having said all she wanted to say, moved on.

"Half a moment, Marjorie!" pleaded Flap. "I say, you girls—all of you! Since there's no way of avoiding an election—because, of course, we can't flout Miss Primrose's order—shall we have a word with Babs for a start?"

"It would clear the air," nodded Clara Trevlyn.

"It won't be a bit of use," was Dolly Jobling's contrary opinion. "But we might try, anyhow."

"Come on, then!"

The girls trooped away from the notice-board, and a minute later were crowding into Study No. 4.

"Excuse this crush, Babs—" began Flap Derwent.

"Not at all put out," said the ex-captain of the Fourth. "Sorry Mabs and I can't ask you all to sit down! But what's all the excitement about?"

Flap concluded. Then she reddened.

She was not relishing the delicate task that lay before her.

"You say it, Marjorie!" she urged, in a whisper. "I'll come better from you."

"Nonsense, Flap!" said Marjorie. "Babs knows you are as much her friend as I am. She knows we are all her friends!"

And Marjorie Hazeldene was right.

In the whole Form, Barbara only knew of three girls who ranked as enemies, and they were not here now.

Marcia Loftus and Vivienne Leigh— they were probably engaged at this moment in giving all their attention to Augusta Anstruther-Browne, the rich girl of the school.

Augusta, a vain girl, the pampered child of doting parents, had a liking for being touched to, and she certainly had a capital pair of tonies in Marcia and Vivienne.

"I may as well tell the lot of you," said Babs quietly. "It doesn't matter who speaks for the rest. If it's anything about the captaincy—"

"It is, Babs," said Philippa Derwent. "We want you to be done with this silence that has lasted since last night! With that notice on the board, ordering us to elect a new captain, the time has come for you to speak out and clear yourself!"

"Hear, hear!" cried Dolly Jobling.

And the approving words were taken up by Clara Trevlyn, Phyllis Howell, and Marjorie Hazeldene.

"It's a jolly shame to see you in disgrace, Babs!" said Marjorie Hazeldene.

"It's not right that you should lose the captaincy!" added Clara Trevlyn.

"Out with the whole story, Babs!" exclaimed Phyllis Howell. "No keeping silent for somebody else's sake!"

Babs went white now.

"You girls can speak plainly when you like, that's certainly!" she said, forcing a smile.

"We say what we think—what we're sure of," said Flap bluntly. "And what we think is that you did not break bounds yesterday evening to go to the public dance in Courtfield. Or, if you did go, it was not for the sake of dancing and enjoying yourself."

"Now, Babs, hold up your head up!" pleaded Phyllis Howell. "You are not dealing with Miss Primrose now! All very well it was, perhaps, for you to droop your head and say nothing, when you came face to face with Miss Primrose after the adventure and were

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asked for an explanation. But let us have the real reason why you did that risky thing?"

Barbara Redfern was silent.

"It was to get some other girl out of a scrape, wasn't it?" said Flap. "There, now, I've told you what we think, and it's for you to admit that we are right."

"I cannot admit it," said Babs sadly. "I wish I could, but—oh, don't keep on about it, please! It's no use! It's not a bit of use!"

A hard sigh from Mabel Lynn drew the others' attention to her.

"Mabel," pleaded Flap earnestly, "can't you say something about it all?"

"I could, if the secret were my own," answered Mabs heavily. "But it isn't, and so—she shrugged her shoulders hopelessly—"if Babs won't tell you, then I can't!"

There was a sudden pause in the talk, during which the door opened softly and a new-comer appeared upon the scene.

It was Peggy Preston, the scholarship girl.

She raised her pretty brows in surprise as she saw the crowd in the room.

Babs looked at her, greeting her with a friendly nod and a smile.

"Hallo, Peggy!" she said.

"I'm sorry, Babs!" said the scholarship girl gently. "I didn't know you were holding a meeting. It's just on time, and—never mind, I can leave it until you are finished."

"Oh, but stop and join us, Peggy!" cried Flap, detaining the girl as she would have withdrawn. "We are trying to get Babs to end her silence. It's not good enough, we think, her losing the captaincy and suffering like this, all for another's sake!"

"I'm with you there!" said Peggy heartily. "Babs knows how I feel about the whole affair. Why don't you speak out, Babs, and clear yourself?"

"I can't," said Babs. "I had been free to do so, don't you think I would have cleared myself last night when Miss Primrose was questioning me?"

"It's not quite the same thing," argued Peggy. "To clear yourself in Miss Primrose's eyes, you might have had to give the name of the girl you had wanted to give from disgrace. You needn't do that with us!"

"Peggy's right," nodded Flap. "Just tell us that you have been shielding another girl, and keep the name to yourself. We shall know what to do then."

"I shall tell you nothing!" said Barbara Redfern flatly. "It's awfully good of you girls, but I would much rather you went and got your teas!"

She turned and sat down, forcing a cheerful look, whilst the crowd by the door buzzed with subdued talk.

Then, seeing how hopeless it was to try further persuasion, the girls began to drift away.

All were shaking their heads and sighing regretfully as they passed out into the passage, whilst some—those who were the last to leave—looked downright miserable.

Flap and Phyllis were a couple who found it hard to tear themselves away.

As for Marjorie, Clara, and Dolly, they actually came back after going a little way along the passage, to see if Babs had, by any chance, changed her mind about not speaking.

But Babs had not, and so the three of them sauntered off again, making for their own study—No. 7—while in No. 4 Mabel Lynn and Peggy Preston were the only girls who remained with the exception of the Form.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 51.

Whom was she Shielding?

"DID you want to speak to me about something, Peggy?" Barbara Redfern asked the question as soon as the other girls had left Study No. 4.

"Oh, it was nothing particular!" said Peggy, seized with a sudden shyness. "I only thought that—that perhaps you and Mabel might be feeling a bit humpy this afternoon. And so if you would care to come to my study for tea, I'd be awfully pleased!"

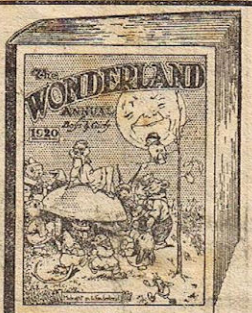
"Peggy, you're a brick!" said Babs. "But—"

"Don't refuse, please!" entreated Peggy. "Augusta is not in the study. I've got it all to myself this afternoon. That's why I was able to ask you."

"Have you laid tea?" asked Mabel Lynn.

"Yes," said Peggy. "Come along now, before the tea gets cold!"

"All right!" said Babs and Mabs in one voice, and they followed the scholarship girl to Study No. 9.



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There was a fine spread on the table. The chums sat down, and it was not long before the meal was in progress.

In quiet voices the three girls talked about this and that, avoiding the painful subject that was uppermost in their minds, and in after days Babs and Mabs always remembered that hour spent so happily at the scholarship girl's table.

They remembered it long after "spreads" of a gorgeous kind had been clean forgotten.

It was not like Babs or Mabs to gush with thanks, when the time came for them to withdraw. Yet Peggy had her full reward, for her friends showed by their looks how they had been cheered up by being with her.

"I only wish you could have stayed longer," said Peggy, following the two to the door. "But I am afraid Augusta will be in at any minute now."

Babs paused on the way out. "You still get on all right with Augusta, Peggy?" she asked.

"Oh, yes!" was the answer. "It seems a long, long while ago since Augusta had that down on me because I was only a scholarship girl! She is quite all right now!"

"I'm glad of that," said Babs. "Good-bye, Peggy!"

"And don't forget," added Mabel, "you must drop in on us for tea another day!"

So they departed, and Peggy Preston, closing the door, set about clearing away the tea-things and getting ready for prep.

She was just setting the lamp in the right position for her evening's work, when the door opened and Augusta walked in.

"What—? not started your prep, Peggy?" she exclaimed.

"Just beginning!" smiled Peggy, sitting down.

"Only just!" was Augusta's flippant answer. "Take care, Peggy! You'll be losing your wonderful reputation for hard work! You'll be getting a name as bad as mine, if you once start being idle! I'm surprised!"

"Your's isn't such a bad name after all!" laughed Peggy. "It's true you did get galled along with Marcia and Vivienne for a whole month, because you went for a mad motor-car drive instead of going to the circus one afternoon. But you've been making good since then, Augusta!"

"Have I? Didn't know I had?" said the flippant girl.

She had taken a little silver-framed mirror from the mantelpiece, and was regarding her face in it.

"I suppose it's being quiet and sedate that's spring my looks!" she said, with a dash of cynicism. "I used to be so pretty when I was bad!"

"Oh, Augusta, why do you say these foolish things?" sighed Peggy.

"When you grow up, Peggy you'll be a good school marm!" said Augusta.

"Meantime," laughed the scholarship girl, "I'm your study-mate, and I like to feel that I'm your friend, too!"

Seriously, though, Augusta, it's whispered in the school that Miss Primrose is very pleased with you—since last night!"

A rather false laugh came from Augusta.

"Because I got back to time on that special pass Miss Primrose granted me?" she said. "Of course, all the girls thought I would be a couple of hours late in returning from my friend's home in Courtfield! I expect Miss Primrose herself was a bit uneasy! But—"

"You made good that time, Augusta," nodded Peggy. "Getting back to school in time has done you heaps of good in the eyes of the whole school. Pity that just when you are getting back your good name, Babs Redfern has lost hers!"

"Oh, Babs Redfern—yes!" said Augusta, in a sudden dull tone. "You're sorry about her, of course!"

"Who isn't?" said Peggy quietly. "We are all so certain she is suffering in silence, to shield somebody else, although we can't think whom it is!"

There was a sudden pause.

Augusta's flippant tongue had failed her for once.

"I suppose, Augusta," Peggy went on, after a moment, "you can't suggest what's behind it all? But, of course, if you had any idea who it is Babs is shielding, you would have spoken out before this!"

Augusta, still silent, slammed some books over her end of the table, then drew up a chair.

"Bother the prep!" she burst out. "How sick I get of the everlasting lessons! I can't work now! I wish I had some where to go!"

"Why you have only just come back!" said Peggy.

"I was only having tea with Marcia and Vivienne," said Augusta. "No great treat in that! I'm sick of the whole show, Peggy!"

"Well, sit down and have a shot at the work," coaxed the scholarship girl. "I'll help you, if you like. What is it, Augusta—French? I love French!"

Peggy Preston rose, coming round to Augusta's end of the table.

But now the door opened, and a head poked in.

"Augusta, can you spare a minute?"

It was Marcia Loftus.

She withdrew at once, and Augusta went out and found her loitering in the passage.

"Have you heard, Augusta?" whispered Marcia in a gleeful whisper. "The election for the captaincy, you know?"

"What about it?" was the irritable question.

Before answering, Marcia led her friend to Study No. 3, where Vivienne Leigh seemed to be expecting them both.

"Back again?" Vivienne greeted Augusta, with a fawning smile. "I guessed you'd come along with Marcia! What do you think of the latest news, Augusta?"

"I haven't heard it yet," was the careless answer. "Something about the captaincy?"

Marcia Loftus, closing the door, came close to the swell girl.

"The election is to-morrow, immediately after morning lessons," Marcia said, in a low voice. "And, Augusta, now's your chance!"

"What?"

"How would you like to be captain of the Fourth, Augusta?"

"Me? Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Augusta harshly. "What nonsense! When I'm like you and Viv, still under a cloud over that motor ride! I—captain of the Fourth!"

"Would you like the position, Augusta?" said Marcia Loftus slowly.

"Oh, well—"

The rich girl shrugged her shoulders. But beneath all the diffidence there was lurking a vain desire for position and power.

"It's your chance, and you ought to take it—you must!" urged Marcia.

Vivienne Leigh nodded in agreement.

"My chance!" echoed Augusta. "You're talking nonsense! I'm practically a new girl! I've been in disgrace! And I don't know that I'm so popular, either!"

"Never mind!" said Marcia. "Doesn't matter a bit! You can get the captaincy, Augusta, for the simple reason that no one else is going to take it!"

"No one?"

"Nobody worth reckoning with," said Marcia. "I only heard five minutes ago, Marjorie Hazeldene will refuse! So will Flap Derwent! Mabel Lynn—you can see her consenting to take the position that Babs has lost! And it's the same with all the rest!"

"So there you are," chuckled Marcia. "Of course, Vivienne and I will keep out of it. We shall propose you, and you'll get the captaincy on the spot!"

"Something to write home about at last, eh?" grinned Vivienne. "But we are keeping it dark for the present, of course!"

"Oh, rather!" nodded Marcia. "You never know! There might be a counter move if we let it get about before the election comes off! But we can keep a secret—you've good cause for trusting us to keep a thing dark—oh, Augusta!"

The swell girl moved irritably.

Hers was a good-looking face, but at this moment its beauty was marred by a frown.

"I—I must think about it," she said at last. "Would you"—she paused—"would you think it a bit rotten if I did? I mean—oh, you know!"

"Take the captaincy while you can get it," said Marcia. "And never mind about Barbara Redfern, if it's her you are thinking of! Look what it means for you. For me and Viv, too, come to that! Once you are appointed captain, you might get the three of us let off the rest of our gating!"

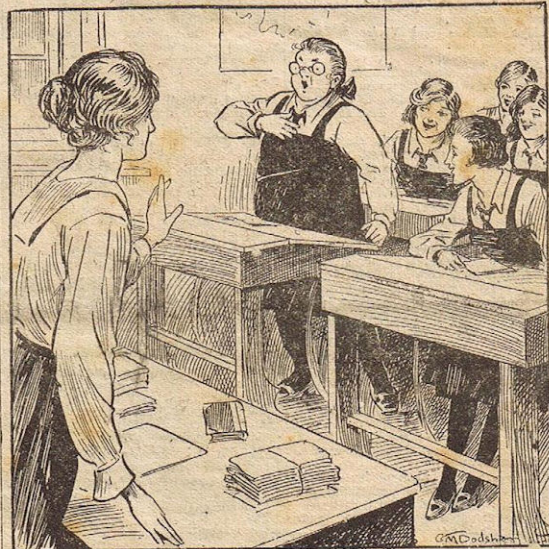
"As for Barbara Redfern," chimed in Vivienne, speaking in a still lower voice, "it served her right!"

"Served her jolly well right!" agreed Marcia. "You know it did, Augusta!"

Redfern meant well by me, I suppose. She found out that I had gone to the dance, and she also discovered that Miss Brock was going to be there, so that I looked like being caught, unless I was warned in time. But she need not have taken upon herself to break bounds and cycle down to warn me. She's too interfering—and this has taught her a lesson!"

"Then why consider her feelings over the captaincy?" said Marcia Loftus in a wheedling tone.

"I won't," answered Augusta, with a sudden nod of decision. "It did serve her right, and I wouldn't mind telling her so! Now I must go back and to my prep, or the future captain of the Fourth Form will be in great trouble! I say, it's good of you girls to have put me up to this—"



THE BOMBAST OF BESSIE! "Please sit down!" said the Form Mistress. "But I prefer to stand, Miss Bellow!" said Bessie Bunter. "I wish to stand as captain! I beg to propose, second, and carry unanimously that I'm captain of the Fourth!"

Put the whole thing in a nutshell. Yesterday evening you get a pass from Miss Primrose, on the excuse that you wanted to visit a family friend of yours, a Miss Brock, in Courtfield. And you used that pass to go to the dance at the Assembly Rooms! You got back to the school without being found out! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't laugh so loud!" snapped Augusta, with a glance to the door.

"But it was so very funny!" chuckled Marcia. "Miss Primrose thought you a very good girl for being back at the right time. She hadn't a scrap of suspicion about the dance! She quite thinks you spent a pleasant evening with an old maid! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes," grinned Vivienne. "And it was Barbara Redfern who got into all the trouble—serve her right, too!"

Augusta's frown deepened.

"There's no need to keep on about it," she muttered curtly. "Barbara

"Not at all," said Marcia. "It'll be a treat to have a captain who is a pal!"

Augusta Anstruther-Browne walked back to her own study very slowly, lost in thought.

When she re-entered the den her study mate was also looking thoughtful.

Peggy Preston had both elbows on the table, and was chewing the end of a penholder, whilst she stared absently at the lamp.

"Hallo!" said Augusta. "Is that my French you are going at?"

Peggy nodded.

"But I'm hung up for once," she smiled ruefully. "Truly sorry—how does one say 'I am truly sorry' in French?"

"One doesn't say it—at least, I don't, ever," said Augusta, with a short laugh. "Not even in English! Mistake to say you're sorry, Peggy!"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 31.

"Oh, do you think so?" was the answer. "I don't. One is often sorry. I'm sorry now, truly sorry—for Babs!" And after that Augusta was silent once again.

The Election for Captain.

At twelve o'clock next day Miss Bellow, the Fourth-Form mistress, gave a quiet order for all the girls to keep their seats in the classroom. A rattle of excitement went through the Form.

The appointed hour for the election had come!

All over the big room heads were laid together in whispered talk.

Barbara Redfern was looking pale, but calm.

Mabel Lynn, sitting next to her, was openly miserable.

Marcia Loftus and Vivienne Leigh were trying not to smile with the sense of coming triumph.

Angusta Anstruther-Browne, very carefully dressed, and certainly looking very pretty, was pretending to be bored.

Miss Bellow rapped her desk at last.

"Silence, please!"

She paused a moment, sending a roaming glance over the room.

Bessie Bunter went on gazing to the long-suffering girls on either side of her.

"So don't forget, you girls," chattered Bessie. "If I am elected captain—"

"Bessie Bunter, you are talking!" said the Form-mistress.

"Nunee, Miss Bellow," faltered the fat junior. "Please I was only asking a few girls n-a-net to propose me, because—"

"What fibs!" came softly from a half a dozen voices. "She's been worrying you to death, asking us to vote for her!"

"Yes, yes, Miss Bellow," said Bessie, standing up in a flutter of excitement, "although it would give me much pup-pup—"

"That will do, Bessie!"

"Much pup-pup-pup-please to be k-i-k-i-k—"

"Sit down, Bessie Bunter!"

"Much pleasure to be k-i-k-i-k-captain—"

"This is not the moment for election addresses," Miss Bellow said, repressing a smile. "Save your breath, Bessie, until you are called upon to return thanks for being elected!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, thank you, Miss Bellow!" beamed Bessie. "I am glad you feel so certain that I shall be k-i-k-i-k-i-k—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us have silence, please, girls!" said Miss Bellow, waving Bessie to sit down.

"This matter of the Form captaincy should not take long to dispose of, because you have had due notice of the election, and, no doubt, you have decided how to give your votes!"

Miss Bellow paused, evidently expecting a pleasant buzz of enthusiasm.

But none came!

"May I say one thing, at the start," she went on, with a sudden look of sad nerves. "Some of you—most of you—must be very sorry that the need for this election ever arose. There can be none more sorry than I am. The girl who was your Form captain—she had my perfect confidence!"

All eyes were upon Babs now.

There she sat, sitting very erect and still, staring straight in front of her.

"Under Barbara Redfern, I am bound to say that things always went very well," Miss Bellow resumed. "The Form stood as an example to other forms

in its zeal for work and play. The sports record was excellent. But, girls, you know what happened to compel Miss Primrose to make a change in the leadership!"

Miss Bellow gave a quick glance to Babs.

The mistress had no wish to humiliate her one-time favourite by harping on the disgraceful incident of last Wednesday night.

But Babs seemed unmoved, the hard look in her white face almost suggesting callousness. And the sight of that look did not please Miss Bellow. She frowned.

"Possibly," she said sternly, "it seems hard and unjust that one single offence should have to be paid for so dearly. But I must remind all of you, and Barbara herself, that the offence was so disgraceful, it would have meant expulsion for any other girl to commit it!"

One of the listeners made a sudden rustling movement of impatience.

It was Augusta.

She seemed to be growing fidgety with all this talk about the gravity of Barbara Redfern's guilt!

The Form-mistress continued:

"If any other girl had gone to the public dance at Courtfield without permission she would have been expelled next day from the school! But it was Barbara Redfern who committed the escapade, and her previous good record pleaded for her. The offence had to be punished, however, and so we find her deprived of the captaincy, and now it is for you girls to find another leader!"

The mistress paused, scanning the class once more.

"Will one of you propose a name for the captaincy of the Fourth-Form?" she said quietly. "That will help us to make a start."

Nobody spoke.

Miss Bellow thought this was merely a little shyness at the commencement.

"Come, come!" she smiled. "Somebody propose a name!"

Her glance came to rest on Marjorie Hazeldene, and suddenly Clara Trevlyn stood up.

"If Marjorie Hazeldene was willing," said Clara Trevlyn, "I would have liked to propose her, please."

"That's better," said Miss Bellow. "Marjorie, Hazeldene, you will be willing to accept office, of course?"

"No, Miss Bellow."

"What?"

"I am sorry," Marjorie rose to say firmly, "but I can't take the position that Barbara Redfern has lost!"

"Why not?"

"She is a friend of mine, and—"

Marjorie paused helplessly.

Miss Bellow looked puzzled.

"Marjorie, it is meant to imply that you think Barbara should still be captain?"

"Yes, Miss Bellow, since you ask it!"

"Then you hold that Miss Primrose did wrong in depriving Barbara of the captaincy?"

Marjorie shrugged her shoulders.

"Miss Primrose always tries to be fair," she said, "and Barbara's guilt seemed proved. But I feel that Barbara could never have gone to the dance for the sake of enjoying herself!"

"Your faith in one who has always been your friend does you credit," said Miss Bellow gravely. "But Barbara was expressly asked by Miss Primrose if she had any excuse that would clear her. She was asked if she was shielding anybody. She would not answer, and her looks condemned her as guilty."

"I am aware of that, Miss Bellow."

"And, in spite of it all, you will not

allow yourself to be proposed as captain?" Very well! Another name, please!"

Again there was a buzz of talk, with a good deal of head-shaking.

But no name was proposed.

"What does this mean?" asked Miss Bellow, raising her brows. "I myself could easily name half a dozen girls of equal merit. But, of course, I have no power to propose anybody. It is for you girls to settle the matter yourselves."

Another pause.

"Come, come!" exclaimed the mistress, still unmuffled. "How about Mabel Lynn and Philippa Dorwent, Clara Trevlyn, Phyllis Howell, and—yes, Peggy Preston? We are far from being short of worthy candidates!"

Then up popped Bessie Bunter, her red face shining with excitement.

"Please, Miss Bellow—," she began.

"Well, Bessie?"

"I should like to propose—"

"You would like to propose one of the names I have hinted at?"

"Yes—I mean, no, Miss Bellow! It is no use pup-pup-proposing any of those girls, because they all feel the same as Marjorie!"

"Oh, indeed!"

"Ye-ye-yes, Miss Bellow," Bessie stammered, whilst the deep silence of her schoolfellows showed that she had spoken the plain truth for once. "B-but, please, Miss Bellow, I should like to pup-pup-pup-propose—"

"Some girl who really is willing to stand!"

"Ye-ye-yes, Miss Bellow! Please, I should like to propose m-u-m-m-u-m—"

"Propose whom, Bessie?"

"Myself!"

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

Bessie blinked round upon the girls.

"Blessed if I see what there is to chuckle at!" she fumed. "It's your jealousy again! If you had any decency one of you would propose me! Babs!" she called to the ex-captain. "Will you propose me?"

"Sit down, duffer!" cried some of the girls.

"I shall not sit down!" declared Bessie Bunter. "I think I've got the right to stand as captain! You're a lot of cats to be like dogs in the manger!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Bellow handled the situation with her usual good-humour.

"Of course, Bessie, you are free to propose yourself. Any girl can propose herself. But you must get someone to second you."

"Oh, really, Miss Bellow," said the fat junior, "I second myself!"

"What?"

"I propose and second Bessie Bunter—"

"That won't do at all, Bessie!"

"Oh, really, Miss Bellow—"

"Bessie, you are only hindering the meeting," said Miss Bellow gently. "Please sit down!"

"But I prefer to stand, Miss Bellow! I wish to stand as captain! I beg to propose, second, and carry unanimously that I'm captain of the Fourth!"

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

"Look here, you girls," cried Bessie, "before I sit down, will you all please give three cheers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Three cheers for the new k-i-k-i-k-i-k—"

"Three kicks, did you say?" chuckled Freda Foot.

"Not at all!" said Bessie Bunter. "Three cheers, I said, for the new k-i-k-i-k-i-k-captain of the Fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie waved her hands like a band-conductor.

"Hip, hip!" she began. "Hip, hip

"Kik-kik-kik!" chimed in the Fourth-Formers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And it was a full minute before Miss Bellew could restore order to the meeting, for the girls were almost doubled up with merriment.

Bessie Bunter had sat down at last, her little eyes blinking with indignation. "We must come to some decision without delay," said Miss Bellew. "The Form cannot go on without a captain, and— Yes, Marcia Loftus! What is it?"

Marcia Loftus was standing up.

"If you please, Miss Bellew," she said calmly, "I beg to propose Augusta Anstruther-Browne!"

Their New Captain.

A GASP of amazement ran through the room.

Marcia Loftus' action had come like a bombshell.

"Augusta!" echoed a dozen voices.

"Oh!"

Miss Bellew rapped for silence.

"Very well!" she said briskly.

"Marcia Loftus proposes Augusta Anstruther-Browne. Does anybody second her?"

"Yes!"

And up rose Vivienne Leigh.

"I second Marcia's proposal," she said.

"We are getting on," nodded Miss Bellew.

She looked straight at the girl who had been proposed.

"Augusta, are you willing to stand for election?" she asked.

The rich girl shrugged her shoulders. She was outwardly quite calm, acting her part cleverly.

"I don't suppose for a moment anybody wants me to be captain, except Marcia and Vivienne," she said. "But if nobody else will take the job, then I don't mind doing so."

It was a simple, modest sort of speech that impressed Miss Bellew favourably.

"Now, are there any more proposals?" asked Miss Bellew.

The class remained silent.

"Very well," said Miss Bellew, "as there is no other candidate Augusta Anstruther is unanimously elected captain of the Fourth Form."

"But, Miss Bellew—"

It was Philippa Derwent who had risen.

"Well, Philippa!" said the Form-mistress.

"How is Augusta unanimously elected, Miss Bellew?" asked Flap.

"Because no other candidate was proposed," said Miss Bellew. "You had ample time in which to propose other candidates. You did not do so, and, therefore, Augusta's election takes place. In default of other names, formally proposed and seconded, Augusta becomes captain of the Fourth Form."

"Oh!" gasped the girls.

"Silence, please! If the result of the election is not quite what you hoped for, you have only yourselves to blame!"

"But, Miss Bellew—"

"Sit down, Philippa! You, too, Clara—"

"Oh, but please—"

"Sit down, girls—all of you!" said Miss Bellew. "You have the result of the election, and it is now my duty to congratulate Augusta Anstruther-Browne on her success! I do so with pleasure!"

The words, so sincerely spoken, were followed by dead silence.

"I will see you alone in a few minutes, and will take you to Miss Primrose," concluded the Form-mistress, gathering some books and papers together. "But before we all disperse, girls, I think you might give three cheers for your new captain—Augusta Anstruther-Browne!"

"Hoovey!" roared the voice of Bessie Bunter. "Oh, really, I say, you girls, come on! Hip, hip, hip—Come on!"

Silence—a breathless silence, as if the whole class was frozen!

"Oh, really!" pleaded Bessie. "Think what a fine captain Augusta will make! Think—"

"Sit down, duffer!"

Bessie blinked all round the room.

"Well, I'm blessed!" she gasped.

"But it's all right, Augusta! I shall give you my support! My position in the

"What do you mean?" she sneered. "It was perfectly fair!"

"You've let us down, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" flashed Phyllis Howell. "You knew why nobody else would stand for captain."

"I feel less disgusted with Marcia and Vivienne than I do with Augusta herself," said Marjorie Hazeldene, with calm frankness. "I suppose it's the sort of thing we might have expected from Marcia and Vivienne! But that you, Augusta, should have consented to stand—"

"Did I seem keen about it?" flashed Augusta, with a toss of her head. "I only consented—"

"You took advantage of our loyalty to Babs!" cried Flap hotly.

"Well," shrugged Augusta, "I am captain now, and if you don't like it you can lump it!"



WHAT IS WRONG WITH BABS? Just by the threshold of the room Peggy and Mabs passed, and looked back. Barbara Redfern had buried her face in her hands.

school—I say, my position in the—

"Ow!"

"Grroooh! You cats! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the girls, as Bessie's position suddenly became a lowly one on the class-room floor.

For, in her excitement, she had fallen off the end of her seat.

"Our business is at an end," said Miss Bellew, turning towards the door.

"Dismiss!"

She herself was gone from the room in a moment, and then the whole Form let loose its pent-up feelings.

"Shame!" cried Flap Derwent furiously.

She was glaring across at Augusta, who had risen to go, with Marcia and Vivienne on either side of her.

Marcia Loftus faced them all, a sickly smile on her white face.

"That's the way to talk to them!" chuckled Marcia.

Angry frowns spread over the faces of the Fourth-Formers, and several of them commenced to hiss.

Marcia Loftus laughed again.

"Come along, Augusta!" she said.

"Miss Bellew is waiting for you to go with her to Miss Primrose! Come on, Vie!"

The three moved towards the door, drawing the crowd after them.

The hissing was still going on.

The whole house must have echoed with the jeering cries of contempt from the hostile throng that followed the new captain and her satellites into the hall.

And all this time, in her seat in the class-room, Barbara Redfern was still sitting there with a stony look in her eyes.

Mabs was with her, and also Peggy

Preston. They were on either side of her, looking as if they longed to put comforting arms about her.

"Babs!" whispered Mabel Lynn, with something like a sob. "Oh, Babs, what can I say?"

"Nothing!" was the dull answer. "You—you and Peggy, don't stay here. There's nothing to be said. I am going to hear it. I must bear it."

"No!" urged Mabel Lynn desperately. "It is too awful, Babs! It's a shame that you should suffer like this! I shall end by speaking out!"

"Mabs, if you betray my secret, I shall never forgive you!" Barbara said, turning whiter than ever. "You know we have talked and argued, and I have made it clear why I am keeping silent!"

Peggy Preston looked at Mabel Lynn then. The girl was drooping her head in utter despair.

"Oh, how I wish I knew why you are silent, who it is you are shielding!" sighed the scholarship girl. "You have not confided the secret to me, Babs! If only I get a chance and find out, for your own sake I shall tell everybody!"

Mabel Lynn sighed. "You never will find out now, Peggy!" she said hopelessly. "No one will ever know!"

There was a long pause. Those three girls were all who remained in the class-room. After a time Barbara Redfern spoke in a dry, hard voice.

"You two go away and leave me!" she pleaded. "I'm best left alone for a bit!"

"Come away to the study, Babs!" coaxed Mabel Lynn.

But the ex-captain of the Fourth shook her head.

"There will be no peace there!" she said. "Bessie will be with us! Let me be. Oh, leave me for a bit!"

For a moment both girls stood gazing at her in mute compassion. Then, exchanging glances, they rose quietly, and crossed towards the door.

Just by the threshold of the room they paused, and looked back.

Babs had buried her face in her hands. But she was not crying—no!

A Bid for their Favour.

SO Augusta it was who had risen at a bound to the proud position of captain of the Fourth! Augusta Anstruther-Browne, the very girl for whom Barbara Redfern was suffering in silence!

If only the Fourth-Formers had had the merest suspicion that it was the rich girl, their new captain, whom Babs was shielding, paying so dearly for her silence!

But Mabel Lynn was the only girl who shared Barbara's secret, and Mabs had been reluctantly bound to silence also.

All the same, the feeling was far from being friendly towards the new captain. Even when the first heat of indignation had passed off, there remained a smouldering sense of contempt for the swell girl.

The only allowance that could be made for her—and some were fair enough to make it—was that she was a fairly new girl, and, therefore, she could not be expected to feel so strongly about Babs as others did.

Yet Peggy Preston was a no older scholar than Augusta.

The two girls, in fact, had arrived on the self-same day. And Peggy had shown in unmistakable manner that she felt as sorry for Barbara's loss of the

captaincy as did old friends like Mabel, Marjorie, and others.

According to custom, Augusta must enter upon her duties at once, and she was not blind to the fact that she looked like having anything but an easy job.

But, as she had said, the position had come to her. Miss Primrose had confirmed and even approved the appointment, and if the Fourth didn't like it they could "lump" it!

Augusta, however, had no wish to be in a state of war with her schoolfellows.

Her vain nature cried out for popularity.

Her guilty secret was quite safe, of that she was sure.

And as for the first feeling of disgust at her having accepted the position, she hoped soon to dispel all that by making a bid for the girls' support!

She would have liked to wait just a day or so before taking the first step. But there was really no time to lose. On the morrow—Saturday—the Fourth were to meet a team from the local Grammar School, on the hockey-ground, and it was the Form captain's duty to arrange about players.

So, with the hearty approval of Marcia and Vivienne, she decided to give a study tea, issuing one general invitation to the Form by means of the notice-board.

Augusta's purse was as full as ever.

She handed over a couple of pounds to her toadies, leaving them to buy the necessary eatables at Uncle Clegg's tuck-shop.

And when Marcia and Vivienne came back from their shopping, they were almost staggering under burdens that scented the Fourth Form passage like a pastrycook's shop.

That was at half-past four, Marcia Loftus and her cronies having made the trip directly afternoon classes were over.

By a quarter to five the table in Study No. 9 was a sight to behold.

Peggy Preston made herself scarce during all the grand preparations for the tea-party.

Peggy's position was an awkward one. She knew no more about Augusta's real guilt than any of the other girls.

To Peggy it seemed a case of being very sorry that the rich girl had acted with such bad taste in accepting the captaincy; that was all.

On the other hand, she felt Barbara's position most keenly, and so it was no joke to be sharing this study with the new captain, especially with Marcia Loftus and Vivienne Leigh so much in evidence.

For those two girls Peggy detested as a couple of despicable toadies. And she let them know it, too!

Augusta made no comment on Peggy's absence during the laying of tea. She counted upon her turning up at the appointed time, along with the rest of the Form.

But five o'clock came round, and there was no Peggy.

"We're a few minutes fast, perhaps," said Marcia, showing an uneasiness that Augusta was too proud to betray.

"And most of the girls will be making themselves extra tidy," added Vivienne. "It's such a special occasion, you see."

Augusta said nothing. She cast a glance over the table, then eyed herself in the mirror on her mantelpiece.

Down stairs a bell rang for the usual tea that was provided in Hall.

"That must be five o'clock, anyhow," said Augusta.

And here they come!" chuckled Marcia Loftus, breaking into smiles of obvious relief. "I knew they would!

All stuff their making such a fuss at the election this morning!"

Doors of other studies were opening. There were voices and footsteps in the passage.

"Well," said Vivienne Leigh, giving a last admiring glance to the grand spread, "if this doesn't make them forget all about Barbara Redfern, and if they don't give three cheers for the new captain, then—"

"Hush!" warned Marcia Loftus. The door opened.

"Er—oh, I s-s-say!" burst out the cackling voice of Bessie Benton. She rolled in and beamed at the loaded table. "Mum-mum-mum-my word, what a spread!"

And, without waiting to be welcomed by the proud hostess, down she plumped into the nearest seat, drawing a plate towards her.

"My word! This is topping!" exclaimed Bessie. "Swiss roll—cream buns—chocolate cake—no end to it all! I—I say, when do we begin?"

"When the others turn up!" snapped Marcia Loftus.

"The—the others?"

"Yes, the rest of the Form!"

"I—I see," said Bessie. "I—I forgot anybody else was coming."

She looked past the open door into the passage.

There was no sign of the other guests. But Bessie was on her best behaviour.

She waited patiently for a full minute—a wonderful length of time for her.

Then she had an alarming thought.

"I say," she said uneasily. "Don't you think these cakes and things are getting stale?"

"Oh, fire away!" said Augusta curtly.

"Certainly!" said Bessie. And she did!

"Munch, munch, munch!"

"They are not stale yet," said the fat junior, as she made haste to sample the delights of the table. "But they soon would be if you didn't—"

"Munch, munch, munch!"

Marcia and Vivienne looked at her with a sort of loathing.

As for Augusta, she fell to pacing the room, completely ignoring the existence of Bessie Bunter.

"It doesn't look as if anybody else is coming," said Bessie, eating away as fast as she could. "Never mind! It makes all the more for us, doesn't it?"

She put a cream bun on her plate, whilst Marcia and Vivienne went out into the passage, looking up and down it.

"No one there?" said Bessie cheerfully, when they came back. "I say, Augusta, why don't you three sit down?"

"Oh, never mind us," said Augusta, looking rather white. "Stuff away!"

"I would like to," said Bessie, piling two lengths of Swiss roll and four chocolate cakes on to her plate. "But I must study my digestion, you know! It's all jealousy on the part of those girls not to come. Never mind, Augusta, you've got me!"

Augusta Anstruther-Browne was biting her lip now.

Presently she went out into the passage, and Marcia Loftus and Vivienne followed her there, leaving Bessie all alone.

"Oh, really," Bessie said to herself, whilst her greedy eyes roamed the table.

"It is a shame to see such a lot of stuff going begging! I—I think that door would be better shut. I feel a draught."

And next moment she had got up and pushed the door to.

Then she returned to the table, but not to sit down.

Standing with her back to the door, she started grabbing eatables as fast as

her hands could handle them, stuffing the rich pastry out of sight.

An eight-inch length of Swiss roll went into her dress-pocket.

Jam tarts were crammed away behind her overall, which was fed at the waist, and their presence was so unnoticeable, she thought it safe to go on adding to the store.

"Jam sandwich! Just make a nice snack before bed!" she chuckled to herself. "Lobster patties—good! I'm jolly glad all the other girls have stopped away! I never do get a look-in when I'm one of a party! That's the worst of being so polite and shy!"

She took up a huge square of rich, iced cake, and weighed it in her hands. "Oh, dear!" she murmured sorrowfully. "It's a pity, but I can't manage this! And yet I think I must!"

And she did!
Somehow or other the square of cake was rammed on top of the other piled-up cakes behind the overall.

"Oh, really, though!" said Bessie. "Even now I haven't tried those nice macaroons! I simply must have a couple!"

Out shot her greedy hands towards the dish.

One hand was conveying a macaroon to her mouth, whilst her other hand busied itself by stowing a second macaroon behind the overall.

And then—
Crash! went the door, banging back against the wall, as Augusta rushed into the room with cries of fury.

"You wretched little thief! Oh, you horrid little cat!"

Speeding the Parting Guest!

"Ow, Augusta! Ow, don't!" yelled Bessie Bunter, spinning giddily at the new captain pushed and pumelled her. "I say, really, you know—"

"Sneak!"

"Ow!"

"Thief!"

"Augusta, stop it! I—I wish to explain!" spluttered the fat junior.

"Explain!" cried the new captain furiously. "Can you explain where all those things have gone, you greedy little glutton? Look here, Marcia, we only turned our backs for a minute, and she's eaten half the stuff!"

"Smack her face!" said Marcia-Loftus spitefully. "Let her see what it's like to steal the new captain's cakes!"

"Oh, really, Marcia—" began Bessie Bunter.
"Pull her plait!" chimed in Vivienne Leigh.

"Ow! Stop it, Augusta!" yelled Bessie, as the rich girl tugged at her hair. "Leggo! I say, you know—Really, I must explain! I—I think you owe me an apology for this!"

"What?"
"You—you said I could stuff away, you know! But I didn't like to do that, you know! I—I'm not greedy, Augusta! I wasn't stuffing when you came in, now was I?"

"You've taken half the things that were here!" blazed Augusta. "You were laying your hands on everything when I came in!"

"Nunno!" cried Bessie. "You are mistaken! I—er—I was only examining your china cups, Augusta! I am rather a good judge of china! I—I thought them pretty cups!"

"Don't you try your fibs with me!" snapped Augusta.

"Oh, really, I couldn't fib!" said Bessie indignantly. "Your cups—we've

got some like those at Bunter Court, We—"

"What have you done with all the cakes?"

"Kik-kik-kik-cakes!" faltered Bessie, trying to look innocent.

"She's got them stowed away somewhere on her!" said Marcia Loftus. "Why, look, she'd padded out with them!"

"Simply bulging with them!" said Vivienne Leigh.

"N-unno, really!" wailed Bessie, starting to back round the room. "I—er—you must be aware that I am rather inclined to be—er—plump! That's why I never eat much!"

"Bessie—"
"I have to keep my flesh down, you know!" said Bessie, trying at the same to keep all the cakes up.

For they were flopping about behind the overall, causing it to sag in a very suspicious manner just above the waist-line.

Augusta gave her one long, terrifying look, then swooped.

"Take that, you little cat!" she exclaimed.

"Yarnoop! Oh, how—how mean of you, Augusta!" cried Bessie Bunter. "After the way I voted for you, too! I think you owe me another apo—Ow!"

Crash!
And Bessie subsided to the floor, after another savage push.

"Get up!" ordered Augusta fiercely. Bessie got up, and, as she did so, a whole pastry-cook's shop, as it were, cascaded to the floor!

"Oh, really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Marcia and Vivienne, enjoying Bessie's affected surprise.

"Get out of this!" Augusta said, still as savage as ever.

"Oh, really—er—Certainly!" said Bessie. "So that's where the things were that you missed, Augusta! On the floor all the time! I knew I couldn't have eaten them! I was positive that you would!"

"Open that door, Marcia!" hissed the new captain.

Marcia obeyed, and next moment the figure of Bessie Bunter went shooting headlong into the passage.

"And take that with you!" said the rich girl, firing a whole Swiss roll after the departing guest.

"Certainly!" said Bessie, grabbing up the pastry. "Any other things you don't happen to want? Those jam-pulls, or the cream-buns, or the—"

Augusta herself had banged shut the door, and now she turned upon Marcia and Vivienne snappishly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't kick up that cackle!" the new captain said fiercely. "I'm not in the mood for laughter! Not a single visitor, except that greedy glutton!"

Her todies became grave in a moment. "Well, cheer up!" said Vivienne Leigh. "This won't last, of course. It's more jealousy than anything else!"

"That's it," nodded Marcia Loftus. "The girls will have come to their senses by to-morrow. Meantime, what about some tea for ourselves? What about all this stuff?"

"Give it to the pigs!" was Augusta's scornful answer. "I don't want any tea! I'm wild! Clear the muck away! The sight of it sickens me!"

So Marcia and Vivienne, seeing how things were, kept a discreet silence, and quietly set about clearing the table.

Only once did Augusta speak again, and that was to tell them sharply not to leave the stuff in her study.

If they did not care about throwing it away, they could take it to their own den.

The todies, of course, chose the latter course. Picking up all the entables into paper bags, they made off with the rich store, sitting down to sample it as soon as they were alone together in Study No. 5.

Augusta, meanwhile left to herself, flung into a chair, her face full of a stullen look.

She was still sitting there, scowling at her thoughts, when the door opened, and Peggy came in.

"And where have you been?" Augusta asked curly.

"With Babs and Mabs," was the quiet answer. "I had tea with them."

Peggy said no more.

Neither did Augusta.

But both girls looked as if they were thinking hard.

More Trouble for Babs!

EARLY next morning the new captain of the Fourth awoke to all the anxieties of her proud position, and to none of its joys.

She had had a bad night.

There had been something very solid in the way the Fourth had ranged itself against her yesterday.

The fiasco of that study tea rankled!

And here was Saturday morning, and no team fixed for the match to be played that afternoon!

The question of who should play had been standing over since last Wednesday night, the Form being without a captain.

But, with Augusta's election yesterday, this hitch should have been wiped away.

With the goodwill of all the girls, and the advice of the former captain, five minutes should have enabled the new leader to get out a team worthy of representing the Form.

But the goodwill was not there; and, as for seeking Barbara's help, that, of course, was out of the question.

Marcia Loftus and Vivienne Leigh began the day by offering all sorts of advice to Augusta, but they only got their heads snapped off in return.

And then Marcia and Vivienne turned snappish, too.

They also had passed a bad night—not with worrying, but with indigestion!

For it had been a glorious feed that they had enjoyed out of the cakes and pastries removed from Augusta's study, and both todies had shown appetites almost worthy of Bessie Bunter herself.

After breakfast Augusta steeled herself against expected snubs, and approached the best-known hockey players in regard to the team.

The result alarmed her.

Somehow or other all the recognised players had fair reason for declining to play.

Some were not well enough; others had exam work to attend to; others, again, were spending the afternoon visiting the shops in Courtfield for the purpose of buying wool for jumpers and other much-needed aids to industry.

"Then we can't make up a team, that's all!" said Augusta, losing her patience as she got the last refusal from Flap Derwent.

Flap turned round to fire a parting shot as she walked off.

"If you can't make up a team, that's your fault, and you are no captain!" she taunted Augusta. "The Form has never failed to turn out a good team yet!"

But—
"You wanted the job! Now you've got it, and you can make the best of it!"



DISCOVERED! Bessie Bunter rose to her feet, and as she did so, a whole pastrycook's shop, as it were, cascaded to the floor. "So that's where the things you missed were, Augusta!" said the fat junior.

"But I do mind! I object!" cried Bessie, glaring round in the direction from which the sopping missile had come. "It was Marcia—"

"How do you know it was I?" flared up Marcia, who really had flung the sponge. "You be careful, Bessie!"

"I object to wet sponges!" said the fat girl. "I've got water on my head now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind!" said Augusta again.

"No, never mind," said Marcia. "A little more water won't hurt! You always did have water on the brain, Bessie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Marcia!" flared Bessie, standing up. "The next tat-tut-time you throw something—"

"Make it a book—eh?" grinned Marcia. "This lovely hefty dictionary—what?"

"You throw it!" cried Bessie warningly. "You just throw it!"

And Marcia threw it!

She poised the dictionary carefully, and took aim.

"Marcia, stop!" hissed Augusta desperately. "Bessie, sit down, you—"

Whizz!

"Ow!"

Crash-h-h-h!

Bessie Bunter's further howls were lost in a tinkle of broken glass and one great roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The book had missed the fat girl's head, sailing clean through the classroom window!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Missed her!" chuckled Marcia. "Better luck next time! Where's another book? Ah, here we are! Thanks!"

"Put that book down!" cried Babs, jumping up. For it was from her desk that Marcia had grabbed the missile.

"What's the matter?" sneered Marcia, still holding the volume. "Can't a girl borrow a book without such a fuss?"

"Put that book back!"

Marcia's only answer was a teasing laugh.

There was no hesitation about Babs.

She reached over, snatched at the book, and smote Marcia a harmless but effective blow with it, on the top of her head.

"Ha, ha, ha! Serve you jolly well right!" chorused the class. "Bravo, Babs!"

"Silence!" Augusta entreated once again. "Sit down, Barbara Redfern! I'll report you!"

"Oh, oh!" protested the Form.

"I'm in charge!" the new captain said fiercely. "And—"

She stopped, noticing that all eyes were suddenly turned upon the door.

Miss Bellew was there—had halted in shocked surprise as she came quietly into the room.

"What a disgraceful scene!" was her stern comment.

She came towards her own desk.

"Augusta, you've been having trouble? I wondered whatever was the matter as I came along. I heard— Why, it is one of our windows that is broken!"

"Yes, Miss Bellew," faltered Augusta. "Someone threw something!"

"Who was it, Augusta?"

"I—I don't like to say," was the nervous answer.

Miss Bellew was ruffled.

"Nonsense!" she said. "This is not tale-telling! You were left in charge by me, and it is your duty to report the girl

So the morning classes began, and Augusta hated the lessons more than ever.

The problem of how to get a team together came between her and the work.

She had let her pen come quite to rest on the blank sheet of an exercise-book, whilst her mind wandered away in its misery, when Miss Bellew called softly: "Augusta!"

The new captain came to herself with a start.

Miss Bellew beckoned to her, and with a sudden uneasy feeling, Augusta left her seat and joined her at the desk in front of the class.

The sudden summons from the Form-mistress had set the girl's heart beating with a nervous dread.

Not a moment of her waking hours but what she was thinking, apart from all other worries, what would happen if something came to light after all.

Supposing, after all, suspicion fell upon her in connection with that escapade from which she had emerged with such seeming success last Wednesday evening!

Supposing it was guessed that she, and no other, was the girl whom Babs had shielded, the very girl for whom Babs had suffered!

But it turned out that Miss Bellew only wanted Augusta to take charge of the class for a few minutes.

The headmistress had sent for Miss Bellew, and the latter had naturally picked upon the new captain as the most suitable preserver of order during the enforced absence.

"You have a chance of showing your personal influence over the Form," said Miss Bellew, in a low voice, and with a

smile of encouragement. "Make the best of it, Augusta!"

Then she was gone, and in a moment the whole class was lounging with talk.

It was only the usual thing, of course. But this morning the chatter was fast and furious.

Laughter sounded in merry peals, and Augusta felt sure that all the whispered jokes were at her expense.

"Silence!" she ordered furiously.

"Beg pardon, miss?" said Flap gravely. "Did you speak?"

"I said you are to be silent!"

"Yes, miss!" said Flap, with such mock meekness that the whole class screamed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Augusta strode to and fro, shaking with anger.

"Will you keep order?" she cried.

"It's your place to do that!" cried Clara Trevlyn. "You're captain, you see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then Augusta banged a hand upon the mistress' desk.

"Silence!" she repeated. "How often am I to speak?"

"Not often, I hope," said Clara Trevlyn wearily. "One gets so tired of hearing your voice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Plap!

The soft sound of a sopping sponge striking a hard objective was followed by a loud howl.

"Yaroon!" yelled Bessie Bunter. "You cat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bessie Bunter," said Augusta fiercely, "be quiet!"

"Oh, really, it's not fair!" protested Bessie. "Some cat threw a sponge—"

"Never mind—"

who smashed that window! It has got to be paid for by the culprit!"

"I—I didn't see who it was!"

There was a buzz of whispering.

"Girls, go on with your work!" cried Miss Bellew sharply. "Now, Augusta, unpleasant as it may be for you, there is no help for it. Tell me the name of the girl who has been misbehaving!"

"Several were misbehaving," was Augusta's reluctant admission. "But it would have been all right, if—"

She paused.

"Give me the name of the worst offender!"

"Barbara Redfern!" said Augusta softly.

"Barbara!"

The Form-mistress faced the class.

"Stand up, Barbara Redfern!" she commanded.

"You are reported for causing disorder during my absence! You have smashed a window!"

"No, no!" cried the whole class. "No, Miss Bellew!"

"What!"

The Form-mistress turned for an explanation to Augusta.

"You gave me to understand that Barbara Redfern—"

"I didn't say she broke the window!" said Augusta feebly. "I—I said she was one of the worst offenders. And so she was!"

"Oh, I see! Barbara Redfern—"

"Yes, Miss Bellew?"

"You admit that you caused a disturbance?"

"I didn't begin it, Miss Bellew," said Babs. "But I admit that I did take a part in it at the finish."

"You will do me fifty lines by Monday morning!" said Miss Bellew.

Babs sat down. Augusta went to her seat. A stir ran through the class, then there was deep silence.

But to the new captain of the Fourth it seemed like the silence before a storm.

Captain—in Name Only.

IF Augusta Anstruther-Browne had made any attempt to mix with her Form fellows after school that morning she would have received the full measure of their disgust.

But she gave the girls no chance to show what they thought of her for having landed Barbara Redfern with those fifty lines.

It was not that Augusta feared the lash of scornful tongues.

She simply had not time to show herself in the usual haunts of the Fourth Form, being forced to scurry round in quest of a makeshift team drawn from other sections of the school.

It had come to that in the end.

Not a single player could she get from her own Form; and, if the match was to be played at all, her team must be made up of such girls from the Fifth as would be gracious enough to come to her rescue, with fill-ups drawn from the Third.

It was a humiliating, galling position for a Form captain to be in.

Augusta's pride had made her covet the post of captain, and that very pride she had got to swallow now over the hockey match.

She could make herself very nice to other people whenever she chose, and, of course, she was very tactful in the way she canvassed the Fifth for volunteer players.

All the same, her having to ask assistance from girls outside her own Form told its own story, and the Fifth let her know it.

Girls who had any reputation on the hockey field absolutely refused to figure

in the match, and in the end Augusta only got two promises of help.

Fine help it looked like being, too, for both of the willing girls were notorious duffers with the hockey-stick.

As for the Third Form—

Augusta shuddered to herself when she got back to her study just before dinner at the mere recollection of the "awful kids" she had interviewed.

And she herself, the Form captain, had got to play in the match.

Not enough that she had been forced to go round begging for help.

The dreadful team of makeshifts that had been got together, she herself must lead it on to the field.

So humiliating was the prospect, for one whole minute she felt tempted to back out of the match, somehow.

But it was no use pleading a headache, or any other excuse.

She would be a bigger object of ridicule than ever, if she turned coward.

"There's Marcia, and Vivienne, too," she said to herself desperately. "They'll help me to save the situation. We three—we must play up for all we are worth.

Then, if we manage to win, it will be our turn to smile."

This course—the only possible one—she explained to her two toadies after dinner in their study.

"It's going to be a bit of an ordeal," she confessed. "But you two girls will stand by me, of course? You must!"

"My dear Augusta," said Marcia, "nothing would give me greater pleasure. But—the fact is I twisted my ankle coming upstairs just now, and so—"

"You are not going to play!" cried Augusta, turning white.

"How can I possibly play?" was the retort.

Augusta turned then to Vivienne Leigh.

"Have you had an accident, too?" she asked.

Vivienne coloured.

"That's sort of hinting that Marcia and I want to leave you in the lurch," she said. "Nothing of the sort! We—"

"Are you going to play, Vivienne? That's all I want to know."

"I want to play—you might be sure of that," was the mumbled reply.

"But—" Tishoo! "Another sneeze! I'm sure I've got a cold coming. And it's a raw sort of day."

"You are not going to play!"

"How can you expect me to play," flared up Vivienne, "when it may be influenza?"

"It may be influenza," said Augusta cuttingly. "But it looks far more like another complaint that I know. All right!"

And she walked out of the room.

Her own study was deserted when she got there.

Peggy Preston's hat was absent, along with its owner, and it was evident that the scholarship girl had left the School House in company with the majority of the Form.

Augusta sat down, suppressing a hard sigh of vexation.

On the table in front of her was a list of the names for the makeshift team. Her eye fell upon it, and she winced.

Presently the chimes warned her that it was only fifteen minutes to the time for play to start.

She got up wearily, snatching at her hockey-stick, then flung it back into the corner, and sank down again.

"Sick of it! How sick I am of the whole business!" she fumed. "This



BESSIE SCORES FOR THE OTHER SIDE! "Goal—goal—goal!" yelled Bessie Bunter, waving her hockey stick proudly. "I got that goal! Hooray! We're winning!"

dead set against me! It couldn't be worse if the school knew about what I did that night."

Yet even as she uttered that bitter thought, she realised how incorrect it was.

For this was a quiet moment when she had time to think of the enormity of her guilt.

No worse, if the whole school knew! Oh, it would be a thousand times worse! Not a question of any dead-set against her, then. It could mean one thing only—expulsion!

With a sudden shudder of abject misery, she covered her face with her hands. Nor did she lift her head again until the chimes sounded once more.

Two o'clock!

A startled gasp broke from her.

In a flutter of dismay she jumped up and seized the hockey-stick, peeped in the mirror, and made a grimace at her reflection, and then quitted the study.

The passage was empty. No sounds of life came from any of the other studies. But it was no relief to her to miss meeting other girls.

Sooner or later they would make their presence felt—as lookers on at the hockey-match, most likely.

So at last she got to the House door, and there in the open stood her team for the match.

Such a team, too, even to look at, let alone what their play would be.

"What the goodness!" Augusta exclaimed, eying them all with ill-concealed horror. "Couldn't you all turn out alike?"

Without waiting for any answer to this scathing comment on the team's motley appearance, the swell girl spoke to the one Fifth-Former who had turned up.

She was a very lanky girl, and her lankiness made the Third-Formers look all the more juvenile.

"Where's your friend?" she asked.

"Amy Barlow?" said the Fifth Form girl gloomily. "Oh, she hurt her hand with a knife at dinner!"

Augusta pursed her lips. Then she glared at the rather awe-struck lot of Third-Formers.

"A pretty lot you look, to be sure!" she jeered at them. "Oh, well, I must make the best of it! Look here—any listening?"

"Yes, please, Augusta Anstruther-Browne!" they chorused, making a great mouthful of her name.

"I don't know whether you have ever played before—"

"Oh, yes, Augusta Anstruther-Browne!"

"Anyhow, you've got to play this afternoon!" said the rich girl. "If you play well, I'll give you a pound note to spend amongst yourselves!"

"Oh, thank you, Augusta Anstruther-Browne!"

"And if you win—if you back me up—you shall have two pounds!"

"Oh, Augusta Anstruther-Browne!" chorused the youngsters again. "Thank you ever so much!"

"You wait until you've earned it before you thank me!" muttered Augusta grimly. "Come on! Come on, you!" she added, turning to the meek and gloomy Fifth-Former. "You can walk with me, if you like!"

The Fifth-Former, who rejoiced in the name of Angelica Jelly, had caught the complaint from the sheepish Third-Formers.

"Oh, thank you, Augusta Anstruther-Browne!" she said.

And so they marched away for the field.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 31.

☞ The Match of the Season.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The shout of laughter went up from all the girls who had mustered on the Cliff House sports ground, for the purpose of watching the hockey-match.

"Here they come—look!"

"Oh, dear! Oh, my word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Louder and louder rose the laughter, as Augusta Anstruther-Browne walked on to the field, at the head of her motley procession.

"Is that the team, really?" cried Dolly Jolbing, with affected amazement.

"More like a waxwork show than real life!" said Clara Trevlyn.

"All made to run about!" cried Freda Foote, imitating a street-vendor. "One shilling the set!"

"Ho, ha, ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Flap Derwent. "They are one short!"

"Not at all," said Phyllis Howell. "That lanky girl, Angelica Jelly—she counts as two!"

"But then," argued Flap, "if the lanky girl counts for two, half a dozen of those Third-Formers ought only to count as one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So the jests and laughter went on, whilst Augusta drew ever nearer.

The visiting team was on the field, waiting for her side to turn up; but there was not much comfort in that.

The new captain had only escaped one evil—that of having her comic turn-out standing around to be poked fun at—to meet with a worse ordeal in the form of an immediate commencement of play.

And what a formidable team the Grammar School looked.

Previous matches against Cliff House had taught the visitors to have a wholesome respect for the Fourth Form.

The name of Barbara Redfern was one that had come to be associated with invincibility.

And it was a team led by Barbara Redfern that the Grammar School had counted upon being up against this afternoon.

Judge of their blank amazement, then, when they beheld a new Cliff House captain coming into the field, followed by the most deplorable lot of objects that ever set foot upon a hockey ground!

"Hockey!" said the Grammar School captain, under her breath. "The only hockey they've got about them is in their sticks!"

Then she nodded and smiled as Augusta came up to her and shook hands.

"We are strangers," said the Grammar School captain. "Quite a surprise for me! I—I didn't know—"

"Oh, I have only been captain of the Fourth since yesterday!" shrugged Augusta.

"Only since yesterday!" Oh, that accounts for it, perhaps!" murmured the other girls, with another glance at the weird turn-out.

Augusta jumped at the excuse.

"Yes," she said sullenly. "I haven't had time to arrange anything!"

"Of course not! Well, I congratulate you on your good luck in being made captain!"

"Don't call it luck," said Augusta, with a forced smile. "My misfortune, more likely!"

"As bad as that?" The Grammar School leader laughed. "I say, though, what's happened to Barbara Redfern?"

"Oh!" Another shrug. "She's hanging about! You'll see her for a certainty in the crowd!"

But Augusta was in error there.

Neither Babs, Mabs, nor Peggy were amongst the Fourth-Formers who had come down to revel in the fun that the match promised to offer.

At the present moment the three chums were out walking.

They had arranged to finish up by meeting Marjorie in Friardale village, and Flap and Phyllis had said they would very likely turn up also, at Uncle Cleggs' tuckshop, a little later on.

"You are one short," the Grammar School captain remarked to Augusta.

Augusta shrugged her shoulders again. "Oh, it doesn't matter!" she said. "Let's begin! It looks like raining before we have—"

Augusta's dejected words were cut short by a sudden terrific roll of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, dear—ha, ha, ha! Oh—oh, I say! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammar School girls looked amazed.

Then, as their eyes followed the direction in which Augusta had turned to gaze, the bewilderment changed to merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the visiting team. "Is this the missing player?"

"Missing Link, more likely!" called out Freda Foote, from a little way off. "Hooray! Where's the band? Give her a cheer, girls!"

"Hooray! Bravo, Bessie! Now we are certain to win!"

For Bessie Bunter it was. The old familiar figure, but in what a strange, remarkable get-up!

A woollen jumper of the most hideous colour encased Bessie's plump figure.

It was much too small for her, that jumper, and it looked as tight as a sausage-skin.

On the other hand, the gloves she wore were far, far too big. They were, in fact, a pair of wash-leather housemaid's gloves, borrowed for the occasion from the kitchen.

What with the tight jumper and the floppy gloves, if it had not been for the hockey stick she carried, Bessie Bunter might easily have been mistaken for a female bover.

Augustus was glaring—simply glaring—at this unwelcome volunteer.

"What do you want?" she stormed, as Bessie rolled towards her, beaming cheerfully. "I never asked you to play."

"Oh, really, Augusta, it's quite all right!" said Bessie, pulling off her gloves and putting them on again. "I couldn't dream of letting you get a licking!"

"Can you play?" asked the new captain witheringly.

"Oh, certainly!" was Bessie's cheerful answer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't take any notice of those cats!" said the fat girl. "It's their usual jealousy. I—My word! When did I do that?"

Bessie was gazing down at her gaudy jumper, which had burst at one place near the bottom edge, leaving a strand of wool floating loose.

"That must have been when I put it on," said the fat girl.

She pulled at the strand, and a whole yard of wool came away as she did so.

"Oh dear! I say, here—Whoa!" There was no end to that strand of wool.

Bessie pulled and pulled, and still it came, whilst the onlookers started to cackle with more laughter.

"Don't pull yourself to bits on the field, Bessie!" cried Dolly Jolbing.

"Oh, really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see what there is to cackle at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie glared at her chief derider, Dolly Jobling.

"If you are going to play, then come on, Bessie," fumed Augusta, stamping about.

"All right, Augusta. But that cat's laughing at me! Wait just a moment. I say, Augusta, hold this," said Bessie, handing the new captain a handful of wool which had been drawn from the jumper. "I'm going to pull Dolly Jobling's hair!"

So saying, the indignant junior strode towards Dolly, never noticing that the strand of wool was still "running out."

And Augusta was hardly aware that she held one end of the line, whilst Bessie was at the other. With frowns and impatient gestures, the new captain was busy telling her makeshift team where to take their places.

"Look here, Dolly Jobling—" said Bessie, coming up to her in a very truculent way.

"Hallo! Is it really you, Fatima?" chuckled Dolly. "We hardly knew you in that get-up!"

"Oh, really!"

"So they keep you on a string now, Bessie?"

"Look here, Dolly Jobling—"

"Better look there!" said Dolly, pointing.

Bessie looked.

"Oh, really—er—my word!" she gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat girl followed with her horrified eyes the whole length of wool, from where she stood to where Augusta was wandering about, absently holding the first few yards of it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Er—what shall I do?" gasped Bessie, finding that her tight jumper was fast unravelling itself. "I say—"

"Run back, duffer—quick!" urged Clara Trevlyn.

"You think— Yes, of course, certainly!" said Bessie, acting on the advice.

And back she trotted towards Augusta, never noticing that Dolly had now caught at the wool.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fresh outburst of laughter brought Bessie to a stop.

She turned round, winding herself up in the wool.

"Oh, I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop it! I'm all coming undone! Where's my jumper?" raved Bessie, gasping for her head. "Help!"

Roars of laughter went up, whilst the fat girl, getting more and more panic-stricken, spun round and round, until she looked like a huge oocoon.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Augusta! Help!"

Augusta, turning at last to take in the whole situation, made a furious rush at the fat girl.

"You silly duffer!" she exclaimed, starting to push Bessie angrily. "Get away with you, do!"

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

"Don't be cross with her, Augusta!" cried Flap Derwent. "She's your best player!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whiter than ever with suppressed rage, Augusta freed the helpless Bessie from her bindings of wool, and then at last the match was begun by the two captains bullying off.

If only Augusta's followers had had half her amount of grace and skill it

would have been a bad look-out for the visitors.

For Augusta was a first-class player, and it would have been foolish for any of the Fourth Form onlookers to try to belittle her part in the ensuing game.

Flap Derwent & Co., however, had neither inclination nor need to fall back on Augusta's play as a source of merriment.

Fun, and no lack of it, was furnished by the remaining members of the team, including Bessie Bunter.

For Bessie, in spite of her half-unravelling jumper, was taking a great part in the game.

It was she, in fact, who was the first to send the ball flying into goal.

"Goal—goal—goal!" yelled Bessie, above all the outburst of other voices.

She waved her stick proudly.

"I got that goal! Hoorsay! We are winning! I— What's that?"

"Duffer!" hissed Augusta.

"Oh, really, Augusta! Don't be jealous, now! Just because I made that beautiful shot—"

"Beautiful shot! That's our goal, you duffer!"

"What? Oh, really—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good shot, Bessie! Well played!" came the mocking cries of the onlookers. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Augusta could have wept with the humiliation of it all.

Although it was Bessie the crowd was laughing at, yet, of course, the whole horrible fiasco was a thing that would be for ever associated with her—Augusta's name.

Not only amongst the Fourth Form at Cliff House, either. The rival team from the Grammar School—what sort of a captain would they think her, after this!

The match went on—a hopeless game from the start, and a foregone victory for the visitors.

Augusta played as she had never played before—better than ever, that is to say.

She was making that personal effort, not with any faint hope of fighting through to victory, but just to show the rival team that she, at any rate, was no duffer with the hockey stick.

As for the rest of her team, the more zeal it displayed, the worse were the blunders it committed.

In the second half, when the score was five, nil—five goals to the good of the Grammar-Schoolers, and not one to the Cliff House team—Bessie simply ran amok amongst the whole field of players.

There were times when the ground was strewn with the victims of Bessie's mad dashes, and her random blows with the stick.

Knocking over the members of her own team she showed a perfect genius.

Again and again there was a roar of laughter as one of those tiny Third-Formers went down before the jumping onrush of the fat player.

Again and again, too, Bessie herself went sprawling headlong as she made a suicidal rush at a skilful Grammar School girl.

The ground was sticky, and towards the finish Bessie and her unlucky jumper went sliding with mud.

But there was a great deal of wild cheering from the onlookers, and that seemed to sustain her, exhausted though she was.

Cheers were cheers to Bessie, derisive or otherwise.

And when at last the match came to its laughable finish, with a score of fifteen goals to nil, it was a perfectly proud Bessie who came panting from the field.

The home team had lost, but what a personal triumph for her!

"You never saw play like that before, anyhow!" she yelled at Dolly Jobling.

"Never," said Dolly. "Thank goodness!"

"What? Your jealousy again!" said the fat junior. "If there had only been a few more players like me, we should have got ten times as many goals!"

"Ten times nought is nought!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop your cackling, the lot of you!" said Bessie. "I've played a good game, anyhow, and I reckon the Form owes me a tea! I say, you girls— I say, wait a moment!"

She ran after them as they were moving off, all chuckles and laughter.

"I see you are going down to Friar-ale," said Bessie smoothly. "I'll come!"

"Oh, will you?" said Flap, with mock eagerness. "How nice of you!"

"Not at all!" cried Bessie. "If you'll just take my hockey-stick upstairs, one of you—"

"Anything else we can do for you?" asked Phyllis Howell sweetly.

"Certainly!" said Bessie. "Er—these gloves of mine. If you wouldn't mind taking them to the back kitchen, and—"

"Anything else?" said Dolly Jobling.

"Don't be afraid to ask, Fatima!"

"Oh, really, it's nice of you to say that!" said the fat girl. "I knew you only meant it for fun, before the match began! Yes, I would like a wash!"

"Shall we take your hands to the pump?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

"Oh, really, thank you! It's— What did you say, Clara?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you say you would take my—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see what there is to cackle at!" hooted Bessie. "I can't very well come down to Uncle Clegg's with you like this! I should spoil all the flavour of the jam-tarts and cream-buns that you are going to stand me, I say, you girls—"

They were moving on again.

"Oh, I say, you know! One moment! If I come down like this—"

Flap Derwent turned round then, tapping Bessie on the shoulder.

"If you come down looking like that," she said grimly, "we'll give you in charge!"

"Oh, really—"

"Either that," said Phyllis Howell, "or wash you in the horse-pond!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you cats!" cried Bessie Bunter.

"After the way I've played to-day! Played like a heroine, I have! Look here, you girls, I say—"

Bessie Bunter found herself speaking to the empty air.

The Fourth-Formers had hurried on, and the fat junior was just going to send a shout of disgust after them, when she saw Augusta.

The new Form captain was alone, having lost no time in saying good-bye to the visitors and then dismissing her rueful-looking team.

She was going towards the School House with a slow, dejected step, her eyes upon the ground.

Bessie Bunter hurried after her.

"Er—ahem!" coughed the fat girl, falling into step with the downcast leader of the defeated team. "Er—I say, Augusta!"

"Oh, it's you!" was the snappish remark, as Augusta gave her a scornful glance.

"Yes, Augusta! I—I am standing by you, you see! Through thick and thin, Augusta! You and I," said Bessie,

"we played a great game! And—er—I don't know how you feel, but it's given me an appetite!"

"You would like some tea?" asked Augusta.
"Oh, really, Augusta, it's awfully kind of you! I—I shall be delighted! I was not dreaming of asking you to invite me to tea, although, of course, you must be very grateful to me for coming to your rescue over the match!"

Augusta stopped dead.
"Is it tea you want, Bessie?" she inquired.

"Oh, really!" said Bessie. "Tea or coffee—I don't mind."
"Then if it's tea or coffee that you want, and not a snack on the face," said the new captain of the Fourth sourly, "you had better get out of my sight—sharp!"

"Oh, really—" gasped Bessie.
And she stood there with jaws agape, staggered by the base ingratitude of mankind in general and Form captains in particular, whilst Augusta strode on into the silent School House.

On the Rack.

JUST inside the house door, Augusta came face to face with Stella Stone of the Sixth Form.

"Hallo!" nodded the chief mistress—for such was Stella's high position in the school.

"She stopped, treating Augusta to a severe look.

"What's all this nonsense about today's match against the Grammar School?" she asked. "You've been beaten, Augusta!"

"Look at the team I had!" pleaded the new captain of the Fourth sullenly.

Stella smiled.
"From reports that are floating around, it was better not to look at the team you had, she said. "You did not score a single goal!"

"It was—a horrid fiasco!" blazed Augusta. "I ought not to have tried to play the match, that's what it means! We had no team at all!"

"Why was it?" asked Stella bluntly.
Augusta shrugged her shoulders.

"Everybody let me down—even Marcia and Vivienne, two of my best friends," she said bitterly. "If this is what it means, being captain of—"

"You have followed a popular leader of the Form; that's the simple meaning of it all," said Stella, with a little touch of compassion. "Here, come along with me, kid! I'm having an early cup of tea in my den. I can't see you looking like this!"

Augusta smiled with delight.
"Thank you, Stella!" she said. "I—'d love to come!"

But how soon she regretted the eager acceptance of the invitation.

There was a coziness about Stella Stone's study that made Augusta feel very contented when she first entered the room.

She sat down wearily, with a sigh of relief. It was like being in some welcome harbour of refuge.

Then, over the cups of tea and the dainty little cakes, Stella Stone talked, and the talk was like coals of fire upon Augusta's guilty head!

Stella meant well.

As head girl of the whole school she was only trying to give a little comfort and helpful advice to a younger girl, who had jumped into a rather difficult position without much experience.

But every word—how it seemed to scorch and sear Augusta's guilty conscience!

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"You are all right, Augusta," said Stella, with a graceful nod of approval.
"You are making good! Have another cake!"

Augusta took another cake; but it was like ashes in her mouth.

"We mustn't take too much notice of what's happened to-day—the girls refusing to play for you. Because that's what it amounts to," said Stella. "They are fond of Barbara Redfern, and that excuses them a good deal. I am fond of Barbara myself, you know. But, of course, her loss of the captaincy was a perfectly just punishment for what she did!"

Just punishment!

If only Stella knew the secret, thought Augusta, how differently she would talk!

"It was a particularly disgraceful thing that she did, you see," went on the chief mistress, sipping her tea, "to go and break bounds, and visit a public dance, just for the sake of doing a daring, reckless thing! It would have meant certain expulsion for any other girl. If you had done a thing like that, Augusta, you wouldn't be here now!"

"I—I'm quite aware of that," said Augusta, forcing a harsh laugh.

Next Thursday's
Issue of

THE SCHOOL FRIEND . . .

WILL CONTAIN

"For Barbara
Redfern's Sake!"

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

AND

A Splendid Love Instalment of
"The Island School!"



"But you are all right," went on Stella, setting down her cup. "You were reckless once—over that mad motor-car ride, you know. But you are making good, and that's everything. Miss Primrose is very pleased with the way you acted that night—the same night that Barbara got into deep disgrace!"

She stood up, and, of course, Augusta rose as well.

"So keep smiling, kid," Stella said encouragingly. "All your troubles are behind you! You've got nothing to fear! The more the Form gets to know you, the more they'll like you. Shake hands, kid!"

It was a friendly grasp, though slightly limp, that Stella gave the girl; but it was as much a mockery and a reproach as the kind words had been.

Augusta blundered out of the room somehow, and presently she found herself sitting alone in her own den.

It was loneliness, and Peggy was either not yet back, having stayed for tea at Uncle Clogg's in Friarale, or else she was enjoying the meal somewhere in the house, along with her friends.

Augusta frowned when she thought of

Peggy getting so friendly with Babs and the others.

At the same time she was glad to be alone. She wished she could lock the door, and be alone for the rest of this wretched day.

Round and round in her head went the well-meant words that Stella had spoken.

Just punishment that Babs had been deprived of the captaincy!

Nothing for her, Augusta, to fear!

Oh, if only it could have been like that, indeed, instead of just the reverse!

That Barbara's was the most undesired punishment any innocent girl had ever suffered, was never out of Augusta's mind for a single moment these days.

And as for her, Augusta, having nothing to fear—

A terrible, uneasy dread came upon her now, causing her to get up and pace about the room.

The sense of impending exposure as the real culprit of last Wednesday night was very strong in her. She couldn't get rid of it.

Babs—no, Babs would never tell!

Neither would Mabel Lynn, who, Augusta was certain, had been bound to silence by her cousin. But there were others who knew—Marcia and Vivienne—and was the secret safe in their keeping?

It took Augusta a long time to shake off the dread of exposure, the unspeakable disgrace of it, and the expulsion that must follow.

But at last, reminding herself what utter toadies Marcia and Vivienne were, and how easily their silence could be bought, if ever it came to a question of their threatening to speak out, she did manage to stop the trembling that had seized her.

Turning on the light—for she had been brooding in the dark—she sat down at the table, and flung open her books in readiness for the hateful prep.

Then Peggy Preston came in, with her quiet, brisk step.

She just looked at Augusta, as if ready to speak if Augusta spoke to her.

But Augusta did not speak.

Peggy put out her own books, and sat down at the other end of the table.

"Augusta!" came at last, in the old gentle voice.

"Well?"

"You can leave me to do your French again."

"It's not French! It's algebra!"

"A—the same to me," said Peggy.

"Algebra's easy. Hand over your book, and I'll do it presently."

"Oh, it doesn't matter."

"Please," coaxed Peggy. "I'd like to."

Augusta went on writing for a moment. Then she pulled open a drawer in the table, and carelessly flung a book across to the scholarship girl.

"All right, then! There you are!"

"What's this?" exclaimed Peggy, twirling the pages of the book.

"You'll want that for the algebra," said Augusta, going on with her writing.

"Not at all," said Peggy. "You've made a mistake, Augusta! This is not algebra at all. It's—oh!"

The startled cry made Augusta glance up quickly.

Next moment she had blundered to her feet, making a swooping grab for the book.

"Give it back, Peggy!" she exclaimed.

"This instant!"

"No!"

Peggy, too, was on her feet. She had stepped away sharply from the table, knocking over her chair as she did so.

Her face was full of a strange, wild look.

Her left hand pressed the book to her chest, whilst her right hand held something—a pink card—that had fallen from between the pages.

"Peggy, you cat!" cried the other girl hoarsely. "Give that to me! It's nothing—nothing!"

"It's a dance programme!" said Peggy in a breathless voice. "And there's a date on it—last Wednesday night!"

"Give it to me!" shouted the rich girl. "I won't! Never! Augusta, stand still!" exclaimed Peggy. "Don't you come near! If you do, I'll call out. I'll fetch the whole Form here!"

There was a sudden awful silence in the room.

"The Assembly Rooms, Courtfield. Public Dance!" Peggy read out from the card. "The dance that Babs is believed to have gone to! And you went, Augusta! Oh, it's you—it's you, she has been shielding!"

The rich girl tried to speak, but she could not.

Her hands made a feeble gesture of entreaty.

"Peggy—oh, give me back that card!" she gasped out at last.

"And leave Babs to go on suffering in silence?" said the scholarship girl sternly.

"Leave you to go on enjoying the place that she lost, all through saving you from being found out and expelled! Never!"

"Peggy!" came the imploring cry. "Peggy—think what it means for me!" The look of loathing in Peggy's eyes only grew more intense.

"Did you think what it meant for Babs?" said the scholarship girl quietly. "Babs, with her fine record, and her proud position as captain of the Form! You let her be punished and disgraced for what you yourself had done! She tried to save you—oh, I see it all—and you rewarded her like this!"

Augusta half turned away. "It is as if," said Peggy slowly, "as if you had been out of your depth, and Babs had plunged in to save you. It is as if you had let her go under after she saved you—had let her drown before your eyes!"

"Don't—don't keep on about it!" cried Augusta desperately. "What are you going to do? Peggy, you and I have been—sort of friends—haven't we? We've shared this study together! What are you going to do, then?"

"I'll tell you," was the sudden calm answer. "I'm going to give you twenty-four hours in which to make a dean breast of it all, before the whole school!"

And without another word, Peggy Preston marched from the room, taking the dance programme with her.

Some of the old life and gaiety was abroad in the house that night.

In the Fourth-Form studies girls were laughing and talking over the famous hockey match, and Bessie Bunter's part in it.

Bessie herself was writing home to tell her parents of her wonderful prowess with the hockey stick, adding a hint that such strenuous "phissikkle ekerserise" demanded nourishing food, so would they send a postal-order by return?

Babs and Mabs, sitting on either side of the study fire, looked a little brighter this evening.

To Augusta, hearing all the distant laughter and talk, as she sat alone in her study, it seemed as if the Fourth were getting along very nicely, in spite of their having a captain who was leader in name only!

And soon—
Soon they would have still greater cause, surely, for all their high spirits!

When Peggy Preston's ultimatum had expired, and they knew—what then?

Twenty-four hours!
And the time was passing swiftly!

THE END.

(Another long, complete story of the Girls of Cliff House, entitled "For Barbara Reaver's Sake!" in the issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND on sale Thursday next. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)

WHO'S WHO AT CLIFF HOUSE

THE . . . ISLAND SCHOOL!

A Magnificent New Story,
dealing with the Further
Adventures of the Girl
Crusoes.

By **JULIA STORM.**

The Chief Characters In This Story Are :

HILDA, PAT, and JOE, three plucky school-girls.

EDITH FOSTER, GLADYS KNOX, and LILY PARSONS, three snobbish girls.

MELITA and CHRISSE, two jolly black girls.

MISS STRONG, a brave, good-natured school-mistress.

MISS WHIFFEN, a nervous mistress, and

MADemoiselle LA TOUCHE, a French mistress, whom the girls call Touchy.

In previous instalments it was described how the girls and their mistresses left Australia

on board the Southern Cross, bound for Diamond Island, where it was their intention to continue their schooling.

All went well until they neared the island. They went to bed, and were just dropping off

to sleep, when the ship struck a reef. The girls turned out and lent their assistance in

lightening the ship. At length the vessel



TOGO ATTACKS THE BLUE PIG! The dog caught the pig with a rush, and with a mighty plunge they both disappeared into the basin of the fountain.

dream of putting it in a box. I shouldn't be at all surprised if it isn't one of those lovely mats of pink-and-white that the natives make out of sea-bird feathers. They are so wonderful, minty, cost no end, for they take a year to make!"

"Or it might be a string of pearls from the lagoon," suggested Dumpling. "I think Quashy is an awfully nice native," she added, "but do wish he wouldn't call me Miss Pudden!" That horrid Edith Foster and her set will get hold of the name, and if they do they'll never leave it alone.

And from the veranda opened a great dimmed-hall, cool and shady, and paved with polished marble. In the centre of this hall a fountain, fed by the streams of the hills behind, the Happy Valley, tinkled musically, cooling the air with its spray.

They were not long in fading their dormitory—a long, cool room, floored with polished wood, and with little white beds covered with mosquito-curtains.

From the long French-windows of this room, which opened out on to the veranda, they could obtain a glimpse of the lagoon, and see over the tree-tops of the Happy Valley.

Each window was glazed, and fitted with wire-zinc shutters against mosquitos. There were also Venetian shutters against the sun, and, outside all these, were the hurricane shutters, which were only closed when the hurricanes came blowing up the valley from the sea in the season of great gales.

But now all was calm and delightful. There were no mosquitos stirring, and the windows of this lovely room were set wide open to the sea breeze that came playing over the palm-tops, heavy laden with scent of clove-blossom and the other spice-trees that were in flower in the valley.

"I think it is a lovely room," said Dumpling, looking round her. "And it's bewitching," she added, "since we are all together, and are not shut in with Edith Foster or any of her friends! I should hate that!"

Their boxes and bags were already placed in their dormitory, and they started to unpack into the neat little camphor-wood wardrobes with which the great airy dormitory was provided.

Mr. Pipes seemed to have thought of everything. These wardrobes had been made on the island by Japanese craftsmen, and the girls could not restrain a cry of pleasure when they opened them, for the interior of each wardrobe was lettered with their own names done in black letters on a lining of the wonderful gold lacquer, of which only the Japanese have the secret.

And inside each wardrobe was a tiny little chest, fitted with cunning little drawers, as beautifully finished as an English chest. "How beautiful!" exclaimed Pat, when she had opened her wardrobe and had found her name "Patricia" inside the door, wonderfully carved with wreaths of lotus and decorations of bamboo, in a great, dark, shining, and gold lacquer. "My word! It is a fairy godmother wardrobe! I shall never be able to live up to it! Fancy me stowing away my old gym skirt with the patch in it, and the stockings with the tatters in the heels, and them, in such a magnificent little box!"

Pat was overwhelmed. "We never had anything like this in Old Otreland!" she exclaimed. "There, my wardrobe was an old orange-box covered with a faded chintz to keep the dust in." And her sister, Alicia, she had a corn-bin out as the old stable!"

"Well, you've got to live up to it now," replied Joe severely. "I can assure you that you are not going to allow you to make your usual rag-bag of this lovely dormitory. There's your wardrobe, and there's your bed. You will keep your dresses in the wardrobe, and I don't want to find your heekey-boots in my Sunday hat-box—so there!"

Thus Joe, who knew Pat's habits of spreading all over a Venetian, lectured her friend, sitting on a stool on the edge of her white, dainty bed, listened meekly, nibbling the end of her pigtail pensively.

"I know I'm awfully untidy, girls!" she explained apologetically. "But I can't help it. It was born in me. Now, on the other hand, my sister Alicia—"

"Now, never mind about your sister Alicia!" exclaimed Joe. "Get your things put away neatly, and don't leave them scattered all over the floor like a rummage sale!"

Pat sighed, and proceeded to hunt out her effects. "After a while she spoke. "Joe dear," she said softly, "would you like to exchange me one pair of those black wool stockings as you wear for three pairs of open-work stockings that I don't want to keep?"

"All right!" replied Joe, throwing over the desired pair of stockings. "Now where are these open-work stockings?"

"Joe's face was a study when Pat threw her over the three pairs of open-work stockings to which she had referred. If absence of toes and heels constitute open-work stockings, these indeed were of the openest of open-work, for not a toe or a heel was left in the hosiery.

"Here? What?" began Joe. "Surely, you are fond of darning. Joe dear!" she threw a twinkling in her eyes. "And if there's anything I hate more than anything, it's darning!"

Joe's remarks on this change of stockings were cut short by the shrill whistling of Quashy's engine, as the little train of trucks leading into the Happy Valley.

"Here comes Quashy!" exclaimed Hilina. "Let us see if he smashes into the end of the big school-room again!"

But Quashy drove more carefully this time. He ran to a standstill a good dozen yards from the great gap he had punched in the end of the school-room, and, descending from his engine, he brought the scattered trucks to a standstill on the railway.

"Look-a!" exclaimed Melita, who, leaning over the balcony, was absorbed in the train. "Quashy, him brought a nice present belong Mammyproddie!"

And, sure enough, when he had unloaded mademoiselle's luggage, Quashy carefully lifted out of one of the trucks a parcel which she had carefully covered with a parcel awning, and he had pinned up over the rays of the sun.

It was a box, a beautiful box of wood, shaped like a large handbox. The inside was delicately carved in South-Sea patterns, and it was worked in sweet-scented Tan Rowers, a sure sign that it was a gift of reconciliation.

Melita was greatly excited by the sight of the box. "She saw that it was a fine 'Lokki,' and must therefore contain a line present.

Quashy seemed a bit uncertain where to go. He did not like to go up to the steps of the pae-pae, which were taboo, and he could not approach the back door of the school, as this part of the building was still in the hands of native workmen.

And to none of these would Quashy entrust a parcel so precious as that which he carried. But Melita soon settled his doubts. She put both hands to her neck, and let loose untold howls of cat, which aroused every echo in the valley, and which scared up a whole flock of white-and-pink parrots, which were feeding on the nuts of a palm in the valley.

"Melita!" exclaimed Joe, in shocked tones. Melita looked round in surprise at her friend at the sound of this reproachful utterance of her lover. "What for you call me Me-lee-tah—all cross?" she asked ruefully, mimicking Joe's pronunciation of her name to the letter. "I wasn't cross!" urged Joe. "But, Melita, you can't shout like that! It's not lady-like!"

"Innis isn't she no spout!" asked Melita, wondering. "So never!" replied Joe firmly.

"But 'spose Innis lady she never sing out, how can she makee call?" demanded the bewildered Melita, who was always tumbling up against these puzzling conundrums. "You're a beauty!" replied Joe. "Or she calls up on a telephone."

Melita shook her head helplessly, but her shout had its effect.

"So never!" cried the girls leaning on the balcony, calling thirty feet above him, and carrying his precious box in his arms, he approached the slope of the pae-pae which the veranda overhung.

"Me got present belong Mammyproddie!" he exclaimed. "You takee present belong Mammyproddie?"

"All right, Quashy," replied Joe. "Wait a minute. I'll throw you down a line, and if you will tie it to the handle of the box we will pull it up here, and I'll see that mademoiselle gets it all right. She is lying down now, having a rest after her shake-up in your train. But she shall have it when she wakes!"

Joe went to her box and produced a coil of stout fishing-line. She dropped the coil to the gratified Quashy, who tied the line to the handle of the flower-trashed box. Then she pulled it up the veranda, whilst Quashy, shaking hands with himself as a token of his obligation to them for these good offices, towed three times for luck, and returned to his engine, greatly relieved in mind.

Then, putting on steam, he hunted his little train out of the valley, and rattled off once more to the coco-groves on the shore to bring up another few loads of nuts to the copra-press.

"Now, I wonder what's in the box?" said Pat. "I'd give anything for a peep!"

But Melita shook her head, and pointed to a seal of pink native wax across the cord that bound the lid of the box. "It smells perfectly lovely with the flowers and the sandal-wood," said Joe. "I will just creep along and pop it into mademoiselle's room."

Taking the box, which was fairly heavy, Joe tiptoed along the corridor, and tapped at the door of mademoiselle's room.

But she got no answer. Mademoiselle was quite tired out by her work of the previous night, and by her adventure in the train.

She was fast asleep. So Joe opened the door of the room, placing Mademoiselle's window with its mosquito-curtain was slumbering peacefully, and Joe, placing the lovely box on a chair by her bedside, withdrew as softly as she had entered.

When she returned to the dormitory, and went on with her unpacking, which she wanted to finish before lunch, so that they could have all the long afternoon to themselves to revisit their old haunts, and make their acquaintance with the flowers with their little kingdom of Diamond Island.

And her chums, following her example, worked with a will on this dull job. Unanimously they had elected Joe as captain of the new dormitory, and she was by a long way the most tidy and methodical of their number, and, by the rules of the Island School, the captain of each dormitory was responsible for the neatness and smartness of the room.

"We've got to keep right up to the mark, girls!" said Joe, looking round the long, airy room with great satisfaction, when the unpacking was over. "We shall have to take in four of the new girls when they come, and four of the native girls, and we want them to see everything shipshape and Bristol fashion—and not 'all up at Harwich,' as the saying goes."

But there was one of their number who would not sleep on the neat, little white-camellid iron bedstead, which was provided for her.

This was Melita. Melita could not get on with a bed at all, and, by a special dispensation, she was to be allowed to sleep on a rug, according to the rules of the school, on a layer of mats.

And Melita was busy now, arranging a huge roll of beautiful white mats, which were kept rolled up during the daytime, and only laid out at night.

And Melita had provided her own pillow. It was the most extraordinary pillow in the world, for it was a Japanese pillow of carved wood wrought of ivory ebony, and standing about six inches high.

It had a curved space for the neck, and Melita slept with her neck in this, so that she should not disarrange her carefully dressed hair.

It took Melita four hours to dress her hair neatly, and, like the coiffure of a Japanese lady, when it was done, it was supposed to last for a week.

Melita, however, declared that she could not sleep in a European bed, would nevertheless sleep quite tranquilly with her head resting in this awful pillow, which was about as comfortable as a bed of nails.

She did not worry about mosquitos. Mosquitos, which, sitting down on her friends, raised bumps like small pigeons' eggs, could bite Melita all day long, with the trouble of her, for she had a mosquito-proof floor-roller.

long residence in the swampy lowlands of her native Solomon Islands.

Melita was just arranging her bed to her satisfaction, when from mademoiselle's room came a piercing shriek.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Joe, turning pale. "What on earth is the matter with mademoiselle?"

She rushed along the corridor and tried to open the door of mademoiselle's room.

But mademoiselle had locked it.

Inside the room she could hear a scuffling. "Dw!" screamed the voice of mademoiselle. "Help, help!"

"What is it, mademoiselle?" cried Joe.

"What is it?"

"'Eet is a peeg!" screamed mademoiselle.

"A pig?" gasped Joe.

"A blue peeg. 'A leetle peeg, an' 'e is all blue!" exclaimed mademoiselle.

Joe looked round seriously at her friends who had joined her.

"Mademoiselle says that there is a blue pig in her room!" she exclaimed anxiously. "She must be delirious!"

"Inside the room mademoiselle had heard these remarks.

"I am not in delirium, dear Joe," she urged. "I am quite in all my senses, and I do assure you, upon the word of honour of a true French lady, zat zere is a blue pig who run about my room, and who squeak."

"If you are not in a delirium, mademoiselle, where are you?" asked Joe.

"I stand on my bed. I dare not jump to ze floor. Ze blue pig 'e run all round ze room!" exclaimed mademoiselle. "E is too frighten. And I 'e too frighten. We are both frighten—ze blue peeg and I."

"Faith, mademoiselle!" called Pat, her eyes twinkling. "I don't see anything in a pig to be afraid of. And even if 'e pig being blue—faith, I've seen our outst pig at home look blue enough when 'e'd pushed his head in his bucket an' found there was nothing left in it!"

Mademoiselle was sitting on her bed, summoning up her courage to make a rush for the door and to unlock it.

The blue pig, which had jumped out of the box which used to hold her, was apparently quieted down now, for as mademoiselle had ceased to scream he had ceased to squeak in concert.

Joe peeped in at the keyhole of the room and got a glimpse of this ferocious animal.

It was a tiny little pig.

But mademoiselle was not suffering from delirium.

The pig was really a bright blue, and this was caused by the fact that it was delicately tattooed all over its pink body.

"Here, Melita!" called Joe. "Come and see what was the present in the box!"

Melita applied her eye to the keyhole, and gained a glimpse of the pig.

"Hoo!" she exclaimed in respectful wonderment, her eyes rolling. "Him chief pig! Him tattoo all-ee same chief! Him swell pig!"

Then Melita's face expressed wonder that mademoiselle should be raising a fuss over what was a delicate and appropriate present.

"Tell Mammypoodle! She no fright-nong lil pig!" she said. "Him plenty good pig. Him too nice present before anyone!"

And, indeed, Melita could not understand why mademoiselle should be screaming over this peace-offering any more than over an expensive box of chocolates.

She regarded the pig as an elegant and tasteful present, and she knew that a week or more of hard labour had been necessary to tattoo those delicate blue patterns all over the little pig, till he looked more like a pillow-pattern plate than a living animal.

But mademoiselle did not seem at all in love with this lovely present.

When she had opened the box, and the blue pig had leaped out into her arms, she had received a shock from which she had not yet recovered.

Now she was standing on her bed, regarding the blue pig with doubtful eyes as he ruminated round the room trying to find a way out.

"Look here, mademoiselle!" called Joe through the keyhole. "I can see the pig. If you will only get over to the door and unlock it we will catch 'em in ze back of ze—"

But mademoiselle was not going to trust herself on the floor with the pig.

But she jumped from the bed on to a chair, and standing on the seat of this, she caught hold of the back and started to rock herself across the polished floor of the room in little short jumps.

"Volla, girls!" she exclaimed. "I come to ze door! I ride my own ze back of ze—"

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chair! And who was it zat did send me zat peeg?" she demanded.

"If you please, mademoiselle," answered Joe, "it was I who put the box in your room. It was a present from Quashy, who was dreadfully upset because you were so cross with him!"

"Ah, zat rascal Quashy!" exclaimed mademoiselle, still jumping across the floor in a steely, suspicious fashion on the chair. "First 'e try to fright me to death in 'is mad railway train! Zen 'e try to fright me to death wif his peeg blue! Imagine to yourselves what 'e is like, dear girls, to awse from profound slumbers, to open 'a beautiful box, out of which jump a blue pig. It is most distressing to ze nerve!"

Joe giggled as she watched mademoiselle laboriously jumping her chair in its aerobatic progress across the polished wood floor.

The blue pig, alarmed by the eccentric progress of the chair, had discreetly taken refuge under the bed.

"Hat!" exclaimed mademoiselle, breathlessly. "Soon I shall release the door, zen you shall catch zis horrid peeg and take him away! Zat absurd Quashy! What 'e tink dat I shall want wif a blue peeg?"

"It is an awfully lucky thing to have, mademoiselle! You could lead him about on the end of a blue satin ribbon, with a Cambridge bow round his neck!" suggested Joe from her side of the door.

Mademoiselle gave an exclamation of horror.

"No!" she declared. "Zat leetle peeg 'e shall be made into ze-ro's pork! He shall be giv to ze butcher, an—"

Her words were cut short by a dismal howl from Melita, who plumped herself down on the floor, covered her head with her handkerchief, and, lifting up her voice, let loose a doleful Solomon Island death wail.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Pat. "And what's the matter wif ye now, Melita?"

"Hoo-hoo!" yelled Melita. "No killee pig! No killee pig! Him chief pig! Him chief pig! Him all-ee same man! No killee. S'pose killee pig come dreadful bad luck, come hurrican's! Come fe! Come smallpox! Come measles! Come fluenza! Come eberrint!"

And Melita's howl was answered by a crash and a cry on the other side of the door.

Mademoiselle, disturbed in the final jump of her chair by Melita's outcry, had overbalanced, and had fallen in the doorway, tumbling over the head of the chair, and falling with a heavy thump against the door.

"Him no luck pig!" exclaimed mademoiselle in stifled tones, as she struggled to free her hands and knees and unlocked the door.

"Zat peeg, 'e is Jomah peeg! He bring bad luck! Behold I 'ave bump my little 'ead!"

And mademoiselle, nursing her left eye, pulled open the door.

At the same moment there was a rush and a blue dash.

The blue pig had seen its chance, and, making a bolt for the door, dashed past the girls, turning over Joe in his progress.

Pat tried in vain to catch him by his curly blue tail.

But he was off like a whirlwind, and from the big dining-hall, where the girls were assembling for lunch, rose cries of excitement and consternation, accompanied by the crashing of chairs and tables.

The girls, followed by mademoiselle, ran through the corridors and into the hall.

The blue pig was raising round the hall at full speed, with Tozo the dog in hot chase.

Shouts were raised for Quashy.

But Quashy was far away with his troublesome little engine and trucks, gathering up a load of coconuts in the groves along the coast.

There was a piercing squeal, very much like the whistle of Quashy's engine, as Tozo, closing in on the racing pig, nuzzled him by the ear.

Tozo was very angry at the sight of the pig.

He had never seen a blue pig before in his life, and strongly resented it.

So he caught the blue pig with a rush, and with a mighty plunge they both disappeared in the basin of the fountain that was set in the marble floor of the dining-hall, sending a great wave of water and goldfish rushing across the marble flags.

Then mademoiselle's heart turned towards her gift.

"My peeg! My peeg!" she cried, clasping her hands. "'E will be killed! Who will save my leetle blue peeg?"

"There!" exclaimed Pat. "Isn't that just like her! One minute she is squeaking because someone sends her a blue pig, the next minute she is squeaking because the blue pig tumbles into the fountain!"

And with a run and a jump Pat leaped in the fountain to the assistance of her new pet.

(Another magnificent long instalment of this splendid new serial in next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)

FOR BARBARA REDFERN'S SAKE!

Look Out
For
This Cover
on Next
Thursday's
Issue!
Order Your
Copy
in Advance to
Avoid
Disappointment.



No. 52, Vol. 2, Three-Halfpence, Week Ending December 5th, 1919.



BESSIE BUNTER'S EXTRA TURN!

Your Editor's Corner

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

My dear Readers, Twenty-four hours in which to confess! Will Augusta Anstruther-Brown go so? Well, for the answer to that question, you must, of course, read next Thursday's magnificent, long complete tale of the Cliff House girls, entitled,

"FOR BARBARA REDFERN'S SAKE!"

By Hilda Richards.

This story is full of excitement. When you read it you will find that Augusta is as defiant as ever, that Peggy is still determined to clear Barbara Redfern and to enable her to regain her old position as captain of the Fourth, and that Babs is as determined as ever to shield the wayward Augusta, and to suffer her disgrace in silence.

There are many surprises in this story, many of them pleasant ones, and I would urge every one of you not to fail to read it. If you do you will miss a real treat, for next Thursday's tale is, without a doubt, one of the best that has ever been published.

There will, of course, be another splendid long instalment of

"THE ISLAND SCHOOL!"

By Julia Storm.

In our next issue. To make sure of securing your copies of this fine number, do not forget to order your copies in advance. No reader can afford to run the risk of meeting with disappointment next week.

OUR NEW PICTURE OFFER.

Once again I am offering a magnificent picture to those readers who send along the names and addresses of six of their friends who are non-readers of our paper. I want as many of my readers to take advantage of this offer as possibly can. But, remember, only names of non-readers must be sent. No picture will be given to readers who send the names of girls or boys who are already readers of the "School Friend."

By the way, if any readers who applied for one of our first pictures did not receive their prizes, will they, please, write to me? A number of pictures have been returned through the post for various reasons. Therefore, some readers have not received the plates to which they are entitled. I do not want any reader to forfeit the prize which they have justly earned.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Readers should bear in mind that letters cannot be answered on this page within a month from the day of receipt, as we go to press four weeks in advance of publication.

"Book Lover" (Stretford).—I will endeavour to do as you suggest next year. Kate Smith is fourteen years of age, Fanny Smith is twenty, and Stella Stone seventeen. A new mistress may arrive later on.

"A Bessie Reader".—The ghost story is coming about shortly. In fact, this tale will be somewhat on the lines you suggest. You are quite correct in regard to Bessie's brother. Babs is not related to the boy you mention. I quite agree with you that Bessie would look very funny with bobbed hair.

"The Girl Guide" (Brechin).—A Scots girl will probably arrive at Cliff House next year. Guide you consider the "School Friend" is a grand old paper.

"Daisy's Lady".—Portraits of the girls you mention have recently been published. There is one in a neat pot in the Fourth Form. There will be twenty-six numbers in volume two.

"Babs" (Sittingbourne).—Bessie's parents are certainly not poor, but I do not think they are as rich as Bessie would have us believe.

"Zoodlum" (Hessle).—Sorry I could not print the whole of your non-de-plaine, but space is very limited, you know. Where does Bessie live? Well, she stays at Bunter Court, but I am very much afraid we cannot believe her. Philippa Derwent is related to the boy you mention. I certainly did not write to your friend in the way she suggests. I think she must be joking with you. The fact that she refuses to show the letter she is supposed to have received from me should prove this.

"Friend" (Llandr. R. and L. H.), and Annie Ambler.—Glad you think so highly of our stories. I hope they will always make a strong appeal to you.

Ada Sumner, Ethel R., "Vega," Lizzie Ratcliff, Theresa Kingston, Nellie James, Ada Francis, Edith, Addict, Daisy Buttress, Hilda Hesketh, Esme Grege, Nellie Pilgrim, and L. Pope.—I was delighted to have your letters, and to learn that you like to become regular readers of the "School Friend." I hope you will remain so for many a long day.

Florie Durrell (Walthamstow).—I am not sure whether Peggy Preston has any brothers. Peggy is fourteen years of age.

Margaret Taser (Birmingham).—I was very pleased to hear from you, and to learn that you think so highly of the stories in the "School Friend." I hope you will continue to make them your own.

Phyllis (Norwich).—Glad you were so delighted with your picture. The ghost story will soon be published.

"A Faithful Reader" (Devonport).—Your letter did not reach me. In fact, I was delighted to have it, and to learn that you are such a staunch supporter of our paper.

"Stella" (High Wycombe).—I will endeavour to publish a story later on describing how the girls spend Sundays. Most of the girls have bicycles. Boker and Piper occasionally mend punctures for the girls. Space will not permit of my supplying you with the names of all the girls at Cliff House. Glad you like our cover designs.

"A Gravesend Girl Guide".—The Girl Guide story will be published either at the end of January or the beginning of February. Sorry you do not care for Bessie Bunter; she is exceptionally popular with the majority of my readers. Babs is not related to the boy you mention. The story introducing the Third Form will be published directly after Christmas. I cannot promise definitely to publish "The Girl Crosses" in book-form. The matter is under consideration.

"Celia" (Cardiff).—I will endeavour to publish a picture of Bessie Bunter with her hair unplaited in a few months' time. Babs has a younger sister. You will make her acquaintance in the next issue.

"Avril" (Sheffield).—I am sorry to have to disappoint you, but the issue you require is out of print. Glad you were so pleased with your picture.

"The Girl" (Llandr.).—I was delighted to hear that so many of your friends have become regular readers of our paper. No doubt you have noticed that I have started to republish the portraits shortly after you require it will be published in "Who's Who at Cliff House."

"Girle" (Liverpool).—Glad your friends have decided to take in our paper every week. The same I hope they will remain loyal readers for many a long day. I am glad, also, that you liked your picture.

Clarice Penton. I will consider your suggestion to send you a portrait of a young lady in which a French girl arrives at Cliff House.

"Daisy, Dick, and Dorry".—I do not think there is much likelihood of Bessie Bunter getting thinner, and of her refusing food.

"The Girl" (Llandr.).—I am glad you hope whether she will ever have another pet. None of the girls in the Fourth Form have

sisters in lower Forms. How many volumes of the "School Friend" will there be? Hundreds, I hope.

"Babs and Marjorie" (Willesden).—I will endeavour to introduce the characters you mention later on. Glad you think so highly of our cover designs.

Horothy Neave (Long Melford).—I quite agree with you that Barbara and Mabel are nice girls. They are immensely popular with all my readers. I am delighted that you are such a staunch supporter of our paper. I hope you will remain so.

"Doris" (Leobtotwood).—A story dealing with Bessie Bunter (falling in love may be published next year. The matter of publishing "The Girl Crosses" in book form is under consideration. You are not correct in your surmise concerning Miss Hilda Richards, but you are with regard to Miss Julia Storm. By all means write to me again.

"Snowdrop" (Densbury).—I quite agree with you that on account of her gossipy nature, Bessie Bunter deserves the name of the "school crier." The pets will appear again later on. I am sincerely glad that by this time you have fully recovered from your illness, and are out and about again.

Margaret Taylor.—Many thanks for your nice letter! I am glad you have decided to become a regular reader of the "School Friend," and I trust that you will remain so for many a long day.

J. M. S. (Braintree).—I was very pleased to hear from you, and to learn that our stories continue to meet with your approval. Yes, a ghost-story will appear in a fortnight's time. Stories introducing the Fifth and Sixth Forms have already been published. Stories dealing with the Third Form are due to appear shortly in "Who's Who at Cliff House." There are five forms at Cliff House.

"Three Girl Guide Sisters".—Glad you consider there is no paper to compare with the "School Friend." A girl with a little may arrive at Cliff House in the New Year.

"Vera and Marjorie" (Gravesend).—I cannot say definitely whether Marcia Lotus will ever be expelled. It all depends upon how she behaves in the future. You are wise to have placed a standing order with my newsgate.

"A Satisfied Reader".—Yes, Bessie plait her own hair. I will consider your suggestions for stories.

"Thoughtful".—I must agree with you that were Bessie Bunter left out of the stories, they would cease to be funny. Bessie has many faults, but we cannot afford to do without her.

"Scotch Mary M.".—You do not tell me sufficient about the slight quarrel between you and your friend for me to advise you. Perhaps you will write to me again, enclosing your full name and address.

"Joan" (Greenwich).—A drawing of Cliff House will be published later on. Glad you liked your picture.

"Eve" (Dorsetfield).—I am glad you do not like any other paper so well as you do the "School Friend." I cannot promise to issue a Fourpenny Library. You are not correct in your surmise concerning Miss Hilda Richards.

"Val and Glady's" (Lowwafeld).—I was very pleased to hear from you, and to learn that you are such enthusiastic readers of the "School Friend." I hope you will remain so. I am sorry, but I cannot see my way clear to adopt your suggestion just at present.

"Lillie" (Searborough).—I am glad you liked your picture. I will introduce the characters you mention in a future story.

"Ivy Grey" (Coventry).—Babs is not related to the boy you mention. I quite agree with you that Marcia is a very good name for Bessie Bunter.

"A Lovel Reader" (Wakefield).—Delighted to hear that you were so pleased with your picture, and that you are having it framed. I am not surprised that you do not like Augusta.

"Bookworm Marion" (Bromley).—Your suggestion for a story shall be carefully considered. Our "Christmas Number" will not be an coloured one. Cliff House is in Kent. I cannot say whether Bessie is as fat as her brother.

"Lily, Whinnie, and Ruth"—Babs is not related to the boy to whom you refer. Glad you are all such enthusiastic readers. May you remain so.

"Whinnie Carmie (Kilmarnock).—Is there really such a place as Bunter Court? Well, Bessie says there is, but you know what she is for exaggerating, don't you?

"Molly and Joan" (Kilgley).—I do not think Miss Potter treats the Dunces as she did the Cliff House girls, which is just as well for Gertrude Thomas and her chums.

"Edna" (Spenny Moor).—I am afraid it is absolutely impossible to publish the "School Friend" twice a week. The answer to your question is in the negative.

"Dot" (York).—The "barring-out" stories appeared some time back. In them was described how the Fourth Form, led by Barbara Redfern, rebelled against the tyrannical rule of Miss Potter, who took Miss Primrose's place for a short time.

"Gloria".—I cannot promise to publish a story in which Bessie Bunter is the heroine, for the simple reason that heroes are not in Bessie's line. I am sorry, but the issue you require is out of print. Peggy Preston is no longer poor, but she is still a scholarship girl. Nobody has claimed that, so now he belongs to Philippa Derwent. The girls are taught music and dancing. Cliff House is on the coast. Babs is not related to the boy you mention. A ghost story will appear in a fortnight's time. Peggy Preston and Bridget O'Toole are each fourteen years of age. Augusta is fifteen. Marjorie still has her pet squirrel.

"Lillian Edith" (Weston).—Yes, there is a friendship between the characters you mention. Babs is not related to the boy to whom you refer. I do not edit the papers you mention.

"Dolly".—Send me your full name and address, and I will let you have the information you require.

"Rosamond" (Jersey).—I much regret copies of the "School Friend" were sent to you in error. I am, however, glad that you have read every story that has been published, and I hope that it will be many a long day ere you miss a single issue.

"A Chelsea Reader".—The characters you mention are not twins. There is about a year between their ages. I do not edit the paper you mention. A drawing of Cliff House will be published later on. Babs and Mabs each have sisters. You will meet Doris Redfern the week after next. I cannot promise definitely to publish a portrait of Miss Hilda Richards. Write to me as often as you like.

"R. C. (Crediton).—Glad you liked your picture, and that you intend to have it framed.

"Phyllis B." (Abingdon).—The answer to your first question is in the negative. I cannot see my way clear to publish an enlarged number at Christmas. The ghost story appears the week after next.

"Joan" (Cattford).—I was very pleased to learn that all the newsgirls in your district have sold out of "School Friends" by one o'clock on Thursday. That shows how popular our paper is in Cattford. The answer to your question is in the negative.

"Two Loyal Readers" (Portsmouth).—I am afraid I cannot publish a "School Friend" Annual this year, and neither can I see my way clear to publish a story dealing with mesmerism. The notices of all the mistresses at Cliff House will be published later on. None of the girls in the Fourth has a sister in a higher Form.

"Grace" (Cleckhaston).—Bessie is Billy Bunter's sister. The girls in the Fourth Form are between fourteen and fifteen years of age. A story dealing with the Fifth Form has been published. The Third Form will be dealt with in January.

"Molly" (London).—A story introducing a snow fight is coming along shortly.

"Spot".—I do not think Bessie Bunter has a sister. A story on the lines you suggest may be published next year, but I cannot promise definitely to accede to your request.

"Vivienne of South Africa".—I will consider your suggestion with regard to introducing a girl from South Africa.

"Kitty" (Walthamstow).—I can see that you were very fond of our Barring-Out tales by the fact that you ask for more stories of this nature. I shall have to see what can be done in the matter.

"Valerie" (Plymouth).—The Cliff House badge will be published next year. Your handwriting is excellent for a girl of your age.

"Janie, Maggie, and Elsie".—You say you would like the Cliff House girls to wear panama hats next summer. Well, they probably will.

"Jean" (Broadstairs).—Babs is not related to the boy you mention. The characters to whom you refer may appear in a future story. Bessie says there is such a place as Bunter Court, but I do not think we can believe her, do you? Your suggestion for a story shall be carefully considered.

"M. W. M.—A story on the lines you suggest may be published next year. A group of all the girls in the Fourth Form may appear in a future issue.

"Babs" (Cockbrook).—I cannot promise definitely to introduce a thin girl into our stories. Your suggestion shall, however, be carefully considered.

"Finn" (Hawtenshall).—I note what you say concerning a Scots girl, and I will bear your remarks in mind.

"Phyllis" (Carrib).—As I have frequently stated, I do not think there is much prospect of Bessie Bunter getting thinner, and of her forgetting her meals.

"Marion" (Hull).—Mr. and Mrs. Bunter may appear in a future story.

Your sincere friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

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After Many Years!