

"BESSIE BUNTER'S INVENTION!"

A Long Complete Story of the Girls of Cliff House School. By HILDA RICHARDS.

No. 146. Vol. 6.

Week Ending February 25th, 1922.

The School Friend

Every

2^d

Thursday.



BESSIE AT WORK ON HER INVENTION!

An incident from the magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, contained in this issue.

Also in this issue:

"JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!"

An Enthralling School Serial. By JOY PHILLIPS.

Numerous Extracts from the

"CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY!"



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 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,—Nancy Bell is not one of the nicest girls in the Fourth Form at Cliff House. In fact, she and Marcia Loftus share the doubtful honour of being the least popular girls in the Form. And thus, when I tell you that next Thursday's magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Cliff House is entitled

"NANCY BELL'S SECRET!"

By Hilda Richards,

you will probably surmise that Nancy's secret is a guilty one. And you will not be wrong. In this story Nancy has many anxious moments. Certainly she deserves them, and you will have very little sympathy for her. In fact, as you read into the story, you will wonder whether her guilty secret will ever become known to the Fourth-Formers. You will certainly want it to be, for through Nancy a certain girl in the Fourth, of whom you are all very fond, is made to suffer. But Nancy is a crafty girl, and is ever ready to adopt any scheme that will save her from exposure. Do her schemes succeed? This is a question I am not prepared to answer just now. The answer will appear in next Thursday's story, so mind you do not fail to read it.

There will be another splendid long instalment of

"JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!"

By Joy Phillips,

in our next issue, which will also contain many more interesting extracts from

"THE CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY!"

In fact, I consider next Thursday's extracts the best that have appeared for some time. The titles themselves suggest this. Here is the list: "Lucky Escapes"; "How Do You Get Your Ideas?"; "If I Were a Boy," by Clara Trevlyn; "My Advice to Plump Girls," by Bessie Bunter; "Our Latest Adventure," by Bunny of the Second Form; "Third Form Pranks"; "Is School

Worth While?"; "How to be a Good Japer," by Freda Foote; "Mid-Term Concert"; "Angelica's New Shoes!"

If you fail to secure this issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND, you will miss a real treat, so take my advice and order your copies of next Thursday's issue at once.

A MAGNIFICENT GIFT.

No reader of the SCHOOL FRIEND should fail to secure this week's issue of the "Schoolgirl's Own," our Companion Paper, for with this issue is presented a

SUPERB COLOURED PLATE

of H.R.H. Princess Mary and Viscount Lascelles. This plate measures twelve inches by eight, and is without doubt a superb picture. You must secure it, and have it framed and hung on the walls of your own room. It will brighten up your room wonderfully. Do not delay a moment, but go round to your newsagent at once and secure a copy of this week's issue. If you wait a day or two there is every possibility of your being met with those disappointing words "Sold Out!"

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"Babs, Mabs, and Bessie" (Barry).—Plates of your favourite characters may be presented later. The matter of an Annual is under consideration. Ruth Preston is coming to Cliff House later. I will certainly pass on your compliments to Miss Richards.

"Patience" (Willenhall).—Most of the information you require will be given in future extracts from the "Cliff House Weekly." There are several maids at Cliff House. No; the two characters you mention are not in any way related. Cliff House is electrically lighted.

Miss D. Hamilton (Long Branch, Ont.).—It interested me to learn which characters are your favourites. I cannot promise at present to introduce a Canadian girl into the stories. I will see

if, in the future, I cannot run a competition in the SCHOOL FRIEND suitable for readers overseas to enter.

"Constant Reader of Both Papers."—I will bear in mind your request. There is a good deal of probability that, in the future, the girls of Cliff House and Morcove Schools will meet. I shall not forget your last suggestion.

"Babs" (Burton-on-Trent).—A plate of Stella Stone may quite probably be presented later. Glad you liked "The Girl Who Chose Riches!" so much.

"A Lover of the SCHOOL FRIEND" (Woodford Bridge).—Many thanks for your interesting letter. I will pass on your compliments to Miss Richards and Mr. Dodshon. Yes, to certain Cliff House girls in the Upper Forms shorthand and typewriting are taught. I will see if Peggy Preston cannot play a prominent part in future stories. But she played quite a prominent part in the stories of Augusta Anstruther-Browne, did she not? The matter of an Annual is under consideration. The girls may pay a visit to Bessie Bunter's home in the future.

"Little Miss Mischief" (Shepherd's Bush).—You are right. I was not at all surprised to learn that Bessie Bunter is your favourite character in our stories. You will like immensely the present series dealing with her.

"Les Chinois d'Étaples."—A story in which Clara Trevlyn takes the leading part may appear later. I cannot promise to introduce a girl of the appearance you suggest. At your age, eleven, you would most probably be placed in the Third Form at Cliff House. Your list of favourite characters interested me greatly.

"Lol-Pop" (Northampton).—The dates of the girls' birthdays may be published in the SCHOOL FRIEND later. I will bear in mind your suggestion.

Your Sincere Friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

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Bessie Bunter's Invention!



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

By HILDA RICHARDS.

Bessie Bunter's Spill!

WHI-I-I-IR!

"Tinkle, tinkle! 'See Bessie Bunter anywhere, yet?' called Barbara Redfern, turning her head for a moment to speak to the Fourth Form cyclists following her.

"Not a sign!" said Augusta Anstruther-Browne, who rode by Peggy Preston's side.

"And I've been keeping my eyes open for distant splashes, or violent commotions in the hedges!" chuckled Clara Trevlyn. "She simply can't be out yet!"

"It's funny!" said Babs, drawing alongside her chum, Mabel Lynn. "Bessie said that she'd come down and meet us on the way back, didn't she?"

"Positive!" nodded Mabs. "She only had half-an-hour's detention to do. Considering the time we've been in Courtfield she ought to have reached the town before we left it. And Bessie was so emphatic about what we must get for cookery that I wonder she hasn't been to see that we've carried out her instructions!"

"Quite so!" laughed Babs. "Bessie doesn't like to be away when we're buying eatables as a rule!"

"Especially for cookery!" said Mabs. It was a source of wonder for all the Fourth Form girls who were now cycling back from Courtfield to Cliff House School, laden with many little bags and parcels.

The Cliff House Confectionery Club had received a great impetus on this Wednesday afternoon on account of an advertisement to which Dolly Jobling, the honorary president, had drawn their attention. The advertisement offered quite valuable prizes for inventive school-girl cooks—and that was sufficient for the Cliff House girls.

It had been more than sufficient for Bessie Bunter when Dolly discovered the advertisement! She had waxed really eloquent on the subject. Her failure to appear, after more than an hour's shopping, "just to see that they had got everything necessary," caused quite a worried expression to steal over Barbara's pretty face.

"Hope she hasn't been scorching, and had a spill, Mabs!" she said suddenly.

Mabel Lynn shook her head at that.

"No; it's something else, I'm sure," she answered. "Bessie's just the clumsiest and most awkward girl possible on a bike, but she's never had a serious accident yet. There must be some special fate that looks after fat girls!"

"Hope so!" said Babs, and she relapsed into silence. They were coming to a corner, and Babs tinkled her bell vigorously, knowing that Bessie Bunter might quite possibly come scorching

round and collide with them all. But Bessie did not. And even when they had turned the corner they could see no sign of her fat figure coming towards them.

"Must have had a puncture!" said Babs.

"Or found that her old machine wouldn't go at all!" smiled Mabs. "I wonder how she rides it as she does. The Bull may even have sent her back to clean it—and not before it's time, either!"

"Very possible, too!" Babs had to admit.

She still kept her eyes open for Bessie, but with less expectation now. And, as it happened, Babs was to look quite in vain for her fat study-mate. Bessie was on her bicycle, but she was not on the Courtfield road at all.

And Bessie knew it now, to her intense disgust.

It was Bessie's fault, of course. She frequently did stupid things, and she had done a particularly stupid one this afternoon. Eager to get to Courtfield as quickly as possible, she had taken what she considered to be a "short cut."

The short cut had taken Bessie almost as far from Courtfield as she was when she started!

"Bother it!" grumbled Bessie, when she had turned, and was driving at the

pedals again. "Bother it! Now I don't suppose I'll meet them at all!"

Bessie was feeling very annoyed, as that breathless speech showed. But annoyance was not much use. Bessie was tired, and her bicycle squeaked from lack of oil and other attentions. She found it as much as she could do to go at a very moderate speed.

Ting-a-ling!

Bessie Bunter did not turn her head when she heard a bell ring behind her. She drove at the muddy pedals, and considered, with dismay, all the mistakes that Babs & Co. might have made. Cookery was a very serious subject to Bessie.

Ting-a-ling!

"Hallo, Bessie!" called a voice.

Bessie looked up at last, just as Nancy Bell came sharply to her side.

"Ow!" gasped Bessie, and her front wheel wobbled alarmingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed Nancy Bell. "Did I scare you, you silly booby?"

"Scare me!" gasped Bessie. "Oh, really—when I'm such an accomplished rider, too! Like your cheek to think that you could scare me!"

Nancy Bell chuckled again. She was mean by nature, and loved leg-pulling—if it could be done in a spiteful fashion.

"You nearly went in the ditch!" said Nancy.

"I didn't! And—and it would be your fault if I had, too!" said Bessie indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha! There you go, admitting it!"

"I can ride better than you can, any day!" said Bessie recklessly.

"All right!" said Nancy. "Let's see you! We'll have a little race!"

She drove at the pedals and spurred forward.

Bessie Bunter tried to do the same thing. But Bessie's machine was not a spurter—except downhill! It had had too many tumbles, and had cried too long for oil, to move Bessie Bunter's heavy body at any great speed.

"Come on!" chortled Nancy, looking over her shoulder.

"Whew! Puff! Oh dear!" gasped Bessie, going redder and redder. "Tisn't fair—you got a start! You let me—puff!—say 'Go!' next time! Whew!"

Nancy Bell slackened speed, and allowed Bessie to catch her up. It was a very simple matter to pull Bessie's leg, and it amused Nancy very much. She rode along by her side, and teased her about the way she rode, and her expression, and everything else that she could think of.

It was all done in the spiteful way that came so easily to Nancy. The heightening colour in Bessie's fat cheeks



Next Portrait:
THE GIRL WHO IS
ADMIRING.

ticked her immensely. Bessie was as conceited about her riding as she was about everything else that she did, but she did not deserve that.

"I'll show you what I can do in a minute!" puffed Bessie, at last.

"Fall off!" jeered Nancy. "That's about all you'll ever do, you silly fat booby! The kids in the Second would beat you!"

They had come at last to the top of the hill that led down to the outskirts of Friardale. Bessie Bunter was getting really defiant now.

"I'll race you now!" she puffed.

"Race! Ha, ha, ha! It's a hill!" chuckled Nancy. "You're afraid of it! You'll get off and walk down!"

"Walk?" gasped Bessie.

"Yes, of course! You daren't ride down a little hill like this! You haven't got enough pluck!"

"I'll jolly well show you!"

"Rats! You daren't!" said Nancy scornfully.

"Will you have a race?" hooted Bessie.

"I'll dare you to ride down as fast as you can!" said Nancy.

"All right! You watch me!"

Bessie Bunter drove recklessly at the pedals, and her machine squeaked forward at quite a respectable speed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nancy Bell shook so much with her laughter that she nearly fell off the machine. She had no intention of racing Bessie. Her "chaff" had merely been to egg Bessie on to some stupid recklessness, and it had succeeded. Bessie was certainly moving rapidly now!

Splash, splash!

Scr-r-r-runch!

Bessie Bunter's extra weight told on a down grade, in spite of the condition

of her bicycle. She held grimly to the handle bars and stared short-sightedly ahead. A faint glow of triumph came to her as she listened in vain for any pursuing wheels.

Bessie did not know that Nancy was not racing at all, but merely coasting gently along in her wake, ready to jeer at her again when she overtook her in Friardale.

Splash, splash!

Tingle-ting-a-ling!

Bessie Bunter rang her bell vigorously as she saw something ahead. Her distance vision was not good, but it looked as though a man was pushing a barrow in the same direction that she was herself going.

But for the thought of Nancy Bell and the truly reckless state that her ill-natured taunts had brought her to, Bessie would have applied her brake.

Ting-a-ling!

She could see it now as she swooped rapidly forward. An old man, with tottery step, was pushing a hand-cart loaded high with boxes and baskets. But he was keeping to the side. Even Bessie's somewhat erratic steering should be sufficient to allow her to pass.

She gave a last ring and swerved to her right to pass the barrow.

At the same moment the barrow itself was veered suddenly to the right!

What happened then was too breathless for Bessie to remember.

Crash!

Jangle!

Sma-a-a-ash!

"Yaroooooh!"

Bessie Bunter shrieked with alarm.

She hardly knew where she was or what had happened. Her eyes were tightly shut. Every movement that she gave seemed to cause a fresh scrunching and cracking sound from under her.

"Oh, my—my goodness!"

It was that broken cry, in a quavering, high-pitched voice, that caught Bessie Bunter's ear at last. She opened her eyes and looked fearfully up.

A trembling old man, with long, white beard and twitching hands, was gazing at her. The horror in his frozen look caused Bessie abruptly to forget her own troubles. She turned her eyes, looked, and understood.

Her heart seemed to stop beating.

She was lying amongst the baskets and boxes that littered the road. Under her, and around her, and everywhere were shattered—eggs! The road seemed to be yellow with their yolks. Streams of yellow poured from the boxes. There was a fresh cracking at every movement that Bessie made!

"Mum-mum-my w-w-word!" gasped Bessie.

She realised what had happened. She must have flown off her bike and swept across the barrow. The barrow had overturned and she was amongst the wreckage.

Her eyes went back in a horrified stare to the white face of the old man.

"Something up!"

"Yus! The barrer's gorn over!"

There were cries in the street and several men came rushing up. Foremost amongst them was the plump and important figure of P. e. Tozer.

"My word! You've 'ad a smash-up, to be sure, Gillis," exclaimed the constable. "Eggs, too! Phew! It's Miss Bunter, too!" He fingered a podgy note-book. "I must 'ave your statements about this at once!"

Strong hands were lifting the dazed Bessie Bunter from the wreckage and standing her on her feet. Even then, poor Bessie needed support,



SIGHTS TO BE SEEN IN THE STUDIES!



Described by MARJORIE HAZELDENE.

OUR studies are sometimes described as our "dens," and not entirely without reason. We cannot, of course, retire into them and growl at any intruding mistress or monitress—as Katie Smith once suggested!—but we can do many things that we cannot do anywhere else.

Decoration of the Common-room, for instance, is forbidden, and very wisely, too! I'm sure that it would lead to no end of quarrels, for nearly every girl would want it to be done differently. We can't decorate the Form-room. For that matter, I'm afraid that very few of us are interested enough to decorate it, except at Christmas, and for great rejoicings.

But our studies are, more or less, our own. The school furniture provided is very simple, and allows any amount of change to be made. And it is made in some cases!

I must deal first of all with Meg Lennox. Meg is fashionable. At present she has a craze for jazzy cretonnes. You'd hardly think there was any school furniture in her study unless you made a very close examination! The tablecloth and the chair coverings and the cushions and the curtains match, and really look very nice. It's a camouflage that spreads to everything, and I now hear that even the picture-frames are to be covered with the same material. The only objection that I can see is when Meg tires of the cretonne. She will have a job in front of her to change it all!

Katie is allowed a special corner in the study. Meg would like to curtain it off, but she is not allowed. In that corner are two of those baked-clay "mountains" that Katie once described for the "Cliff House Weekly." Now they are simply covered with cardboard figures depicting all sorts of terrible or romantic figures that have caught Katie's imagination in her reading. There can also be seen two spears and a bow and arrow—mementos that Katie brought back from South America after the adventure of her life. Yes, Katie's corner is really worth seeing, and she thinks of new ideas every day!

Lady Hetty Hendon's study presents a queer contrast. No. 3 is very richly furnished indeed, for that was her first action on coming to Cliff House. And not only is there Hetty's furniture, but Augusta has many things there as well. The things do not tone at all well, but it seems to please Hetty, and she is fearfully proud of what she calls the "boodwah."

Phyllis Howell and Flap Derwent have not made No. 5 as "distinctive" as some studies, but they have some fine sporting prints, and, of course, a collection of really good sports gear. There are several photographs of Flap Derwent's Tasmanian home, and little nicknacks that speak of a Colonial at once.

There are Irish and Welsh notes in the decoration of Study No. 8, of course, for Bridget O'Toole and Lucy Morgan live there. They have not, however, done anything to make the study particularly striking.

No. have we in No. 7, I'm sorry to say. I wanted at one time to make it very dainty, with pretty little cloths and really good lace curtains. It was impossible! You know what Clara is like, and you know that there isn't a girl to match Dolly Jobling at clumsiness and being generally untidy. So I can't say anything about No. 7, except that anyone can see that Clara and Dolly use it quite a lot!

You know a lot about No. 4, I expect; but there is one novelty that I can write about. That is Bessie Bunter's calendar, on which are an amazing collection of queer and puzzling signs. When it first went up we simply couldn't make anything of it. Was it marked in that manner to indicate the birthdays of relatives? asked someone. Many suggestions were put forward, but they were all wrong! Absolutely wrong, it proved!

When Bessie told us the real meaning of her specially marked calendar, we gasped to think that we had not guessed it before. It was just a guide to the menu, she said. A star meant Irish stew, and a star surrounded by spots meant that there were dumplings as well. A circle meant boiled pudding. A square meant roast beef and vegetables, and the usual bread-pudding that always follows. Bessie probably used that sign to denote that it was "a square meal."

I should like to have made this article longer, but space forbids. But perhaps another day I can describe Peggy's really tasteful efforts in No. 9, the funny pictures in Freda's study, and the atmosphere of sheer toil in No. 1, where Annabel Hichens "looks after" Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell.

"You first, Gillis!" said the constable. But the old man seemed hardly to understand that he was being questioned. His faded blue eyes were wet with tears. His twitching lips voiced disjointed and broken words.

"All my eggs—everything I had. I paid my last penny for them! Fifteen pounds! They're gone! Not one left—not one whole one! It means ruin!" The constable laid a strong but not unkindly hand on his shoulder.

"Now, Gillis, pull yourself together!" he urged. "It's no good crying over spilt eggs. I know how you feel. What happened?"

The old man stared at him dazedly. "I—I don't know," he quavered. One of the men spoke up. "I saw it, constable," he said. "The young lady ran into the barrier, but I must say as it wasn't really 'er fault. She rung 'er bell."

Tozer fixed Bessie with a glittering eye.

"Rung your bell, eh?" "I—I—I—" stuttered Bessie. "Coming down pretty fast, but not faster than the young ladies usually does!" put in another man. "She rang 'er bell, but the old man didn't seem to 'ear, and 'e turned 'is barrow to go into the yard over the road. I think she must 'ave 'ad a side-slip then, constable."

"You turned your barrow without looking round, did you, Gillis?" asked the constable, scribbling. "'Gainst all the traffic rules of Friardale, you know!"

The old man stared at him. Tozer repeated, in a louder voice.

"Turned the—barrow?" muttered the old man. "I—I suppose I did. I be that 'ard of 'earing some days. I was hurryin' to get to market in time. Oh, I dunno what I did!"

Just then a girl on a bicycle came down the hill at very moderate speed. Bessie Bunter, scared, and needing the support of a friend more than she had ever done before, gave her a trembling hail.

"Nancy! Nancy Bell! I—I say! See—see what you've made me do!" Nancy Bell rode past.

She did not even turn her head. She went on as though the road had been clear and there was nothing to attract her attention.

And that was craven Nancy, too scared to do anything but get away as quickly as possible from the result of her taunting!

"Dunno as you wants Miss Bell, Miss Bunter!" said P.-c. Tozer, staring curiously at the fat girl. "I'll 'ave your statement now. You was riding the bike now on the other side of the road?"

"Y-y-yes," quavered Bessie; and Tozer scribbled.

"You rang your bell when coming down the hill?"

"Y-y-yes. Tut-tut-two or three times."

"How did the accident happen?"

"I—I ran into the bib-bib-barrow!" chattered Bessie.

It was impossible to get much more than that from Bessie. She was obviously moved by the old man's grief, for the shock still seemed to have stunned him. She also wanted to make a statement tearfully deploring the waste of so many good eggs. But that did not help the inquiry.

It was from the two or three on-lookers that Tozer gleaned the most authoritative information. One thought that it was Bessie's fault, but the others said that Gillis was to blame. An accident might have been avoided by a skilful cyclist, they said, but Gillis should

CLIFF HOUSE LEGACIES!

(We fondly imagine that the following WILLS are drawn up, signed, witnessed, and sealed, and safely hidden by their owners in diverse nooks and crannies!)

To a girl who can prove that she has infinite patience—that she can stand worry without end—that she can receive regular contributions from such people as Frances Barrett, Angelica Jelly, and Elsie Brane, and still do nothing desperate—that she can turn a deaf ear alike to printers, contributors, and, most of all, to would-be contributors—to such a girl, if such there be, do I bequeath the editorship of "The Cliff House Weekly!"

(Signed) BARBARA REDFERN.

To a girl who thoroughly, whole-heartedly, and implicitly believes, with Shakespeare, that "the play's the thing"—to a girl to whom acting is the one obsession, who lives to act, and acts to live—to such a girl, if such there be, do I leave my nine hundred and ninety-nine theatrical costumes!

(Signed) MABEL LYNN.

Oyez! Oyez Oyez! To my beloved friend, Barbarer Redfern, I hereby leave my whole stock of provisions—viz., 2 stail jam-tarts, wun sardeen, wun harf of wun mintz-pye, and a porshun of caik. May these help to give her a good figger like my own! To my beautiful parrit Polly I leave my spectacles, in case his site should fail him in his old age. To my dear chum, Mable Linn, I bekweeth both Polly and spectacles. To Clarer Treverlin I leave my shoes, and may her feet never grow less! To Marjory Hazledean I do leave my check overcoat, and to Dolly Jobberling I leave instrukschuns on how to boyle worter without burning it!

(Signed) BESSIE BUNTER.

To my dear chum, Clara Trevlyn, I hereby bequeath full instructions on how to express one's self without using slangy terms.

(Signed) MARJORIE HAZELDENE.

As Piper, the porter, is always grumbling that his ladders are never long enough for whatever scaling job he happens to be on, I hereby leave him all my ladders in all my stockings!

(Signed) CLARA TREVLYN.

To Miss Plummy, our cookery mistress, I do hereby bequeath three large frying-pans, well ventilated with holes in the bottom; four saucepans, smartly perforated in bottoms and sides; and one gas-range, tastefully stained with goodly viands of many kinds, and with half the gas holes stuffed up!

(Signed) DOLLY JOBLING.

To the world in general, and people mentally afflicted in particular, I hereby bequeath my repertoire of jokes.

(Thine) FRED A FOOTE.

To all serious believers in the manifestations of the supernatural I hereby bequeath all my articles on spooks; all the results of my tireless researches—that is, nothing; and, verily, all the spooks I have ever met, heard, or read about!

(Signed) GWENDOLINE COOK.

To any girl who wishes to be able to keep everything in her head—who would like to be able to remember exactly wherever she puts everything, and recollect every promise she has made—to this girl I do hereby bequeath MY MEMORY!

(Signed) AGNES WHITE.

have looked where he was going, especially at the bottom of a hill.

P.-c. Tozer was very important as he closed his book and surveyed the unfortunate, bedraggled figure of Bessie, still dripping with egg!

"Must caution you to ride more carefully in future, Miss Bunter!" he exclaimed. "You must 'ave been goin' faster'n what you ought to; but I don't think you'll 'ear any more of this. Gillis is to blame—I shall 'ave to say that in my report of this occurrence. You can go on now, Miss Bunter."

"I—I kik-kik-can go?" gasped Bessie, who had been fully expecting to be locked in the police-station for such a heinous offence.

"Yes. But if you can go somewhere and change your clothes first—"

"I—I'll g-g-get back to sis-sis-sis-school, th-thanks," stammered the fat girl. "I—I'm awfully sis-sis-sorry! Oh, dear! All those eggs!"

The bicycle that had known disasters before was still rideable. But Bessie hardly knew what she was doing as she pedalled back to the school. Fifteen pounds worth of eggs ruined—and she had caused it! Never before in all her life had Bessie Bunter found herself in quite such a predicament!

The Grief of Bessie Bunter!

"NANCY, you can't mean it!" "You're trying to pull our legs!"

The Fourth-Formers who were gathered in the quadrangle seemed to have difficulty in believing the report that Nancy Bell had just brought back to the school.

"It's true. The silly idiot's got herself into a fine old scrape this time!" Nancy Bell answered. "She went racing down a hill on her bike and smashed into a barrow. She's broken all the eggs—thousands of them, I should think!"

"Has—has Bessie hurt herself?" said Babs, a catch in her voice.

"Hurt? Oh, she didn't look very much hurt!" Nancy answered. "I don't think she's come to any harm. The eggs have suffered more than Bessie."

Mabel Lynn broke in suddenly. "But why didn't you stop to see if you could do anything?"

"Me?" said Nancy, with assumed indignation. "I should think so! She'd have dragged me into it somehow. I know your old chum too well for that. She'd have said that she was having a race with me, or something like that!"

"Perhaps she was!" said Mabs.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 145.

"What? When I was behind, coming down the hill with my brakes on!" cried Nancy. "I tell you, it's her fault—entirely her fault! She was boasting about how fast she could ride, and, although I warned her to be careful, she wouldn't listen. I saw all that happened, and I tell you it was her fault!"

"I believe you know more than you say, coming rushing back like this!" cried Barbara Redfern. "You tell us you passed by and didn't stop—"

"Because the policeman was there!" interposed Nancy. "I've told you that once. If I'd stopped I should have only made it worse for Bessie. I had a better view than anyone of what happened. I don't like to boast, as a rule, but I did her a good turn by not stopping to tell the policeman what I saw!"

Babs was already turning away. "If this is true, girls, we must go down and see Bessie at once!" she exclaimed. "Goodness knows—pshaw!"

And there was a startled silence from everyone as they looked.

a horrified voice. "Bessie, you must have made a mistake! Fifteen shillings, perhaps—"

"It might be pounds!" interrupted Mabs gravely. "Don't you know, Babs, that that's how the old fellow earns his living? He goes all round the farms buying up eggs, and sells them in the market. And Wednesday is his day."

"Smashed them—they're all in the road!" groaned Bessie, two fat tears running down her chubby cheeks. "I say, it's such an awful waste, and—the poor old chap looked so upset, too!"

"It's your own fault!"

The girls stared at Nancy Bell, startled by that blunt and unexpected interruption.

"Yes, you can look—it is!" Nancy exclaimed.

"You—you jolly well dared me, Nancy!" stuttered Bessie.

"There! I guessed it!" cried Mabs.

"And you wouldn't stop when I called to you—"

And now—fifteen poundsworth of eggs smashed! Oh, it can't be true!"

"I—I believe all of them were!" groaned Bessie. "The—the old policeman said it wasn't really my fault, and—and he blamed old Gillis for not looking where he was going—"

"Oh, if it was like that, you can't blame yourself, Bessie," said Babs, in a relieved tone.

"Of course not!" added Mabel Lynn. Nancy Bell was staring.

"Said—said it wasn't your fault?" she exclaimed. "Oh, then, I have saved you, after all, Bessie, little as you deserve it!"

"Saved her—how?" ejaculated Babs.

"Why, it was Bessie's fault!"

"What?"

"I saw her crash right into the barrow! And any other girl in the school could have swerved out of the way—anyone but Bessie!"

"I don't believe that!" said Babs indignantly.

"Nor do I!" said Augusta Anstruther-Browne. "If Tozer's gone into the matter and decided that it wasn't Bessie's fault, it isn't likely that we shall believe you!"

"Just as you like!" sneered Nancy.

"But I saw!"

"You caused it all!" retorted Babs. "You dared Bessie—I'm sure of that, although you deny it now. You didn't try to lend her a hand at all! I think it's all perfectly horrid of you! Now come into the school, Bessie, and try and get some of that egg off you. You'll have to change everything!"

Bessie Bunter suffered herself to be led into the school, and allowed Babs and Mabs to remove her sticky outer garments. Freda Foote could not help observing, under her breath, that at a fancy-dress dance Bessie in her present state would take first prize as a human omelette. She certainly was an extraordinary sight.

But even a wash and a change of things did not seem to dispel the fat girl's gloom. She could not forget the frozen expression on the old man's face. She kept on telling Babs and Mabs that he said that he was ruined.

"It's awfully sad for him, Bessie, we know," Babs told her. "I know the poor chap, and I understand how you must feel about it all. But you can't do any good by worrying like that!"

"If—if I'd only thought that he—he was gig-gig-going to tut-tut—"

"But you didn't, and that's how accidents always happen!" said Babs.

"Look here, Bessie, we'll see if we can think of some little way of helping the poor old chap over it!"

"If—if I could only pay for the eggs!"

"What—fifteen pounds?"

"There might be a remittance for me—"

"But not for that amount, or anywhere near it," said Babs. "Even if we all clubbed together I don't think we could raise as much as that. Still, we'll see—"

"But I did it! If—if I hadn't been on the horrid old bike he—he'd still have the eggs!"

Babs and Mabs stared at Bessie Bunter in some dismay.

This was a different Bessie from the one they had known at one time. She was suffering qualms of conscience. At one time Bessie would have been glad to wriggle out of the scrape, and think no more about it. Now—perhaps also being impressed by the waste of so much delicious food—she was thinking in a very different way.

Bessie Bunter regarded it as a "moral debt"—one that she was not forced to pay, but would pay if only she were able.



BESSIE BUNTER'S SPILL!
kets and boxes that littered the road everywhere were—

"Mum-mum-my word!" Bessie Bunter was lying amongst the baskets. And under her, and around her, and shattered eggs!

Bessie Bunter had just come in through the gates, wheeling her cycle.

Never before had such an eggy person been seen as Bessie looked just then. Her bicycle was yellow, and her dress was yellow, and broken pieces of shell and drips of yolk still fell from her as she moved!

There was no doubt that Nancy had not pulled their legs.

"Bessie!" cried Babs, and went running forward.

The fat girl propped her bicycle dismally against the wall.

"Oh, I say! I—I've had an awful accident, Babs!" said Bessie tearfully.

"You'll never guess what I've done! I—I've smashed a lot of eggs!"

"Nancy's been telling us," said Babs. "But—"

"Fifteen poundsworth!" said Bessie, in a hollow voice.

"Wha-a-t?"

"And they—they all belonged to that old fellow Gillis. He—he says he's ruined. I say, whatever shall I do?"

"Fifteen poundsworth!" said Babs, in

"What's that you're saying?" Nancy nearly shouted.

"Wh-what am I saying?" Bessie repeated. "Oh, really! I hope you're not going to deny that you dared me to ride down the hill!"

"Of course I do!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"You wanted to race down, and I wouldn't do such a foolish thing!" said Nancy Bell falsely. "Don't try and deny it! You remember quite well that I told you it was dangerous—"

"You! As though you'd ever worry to tell anyone anything like that!" said Clara Trevlyn scornfully.

"I—I sus-sus-say, Babs! She's fibbing, you know!" said Bessie tearfully.

"She—she called me a silly booby, and—and said I daren't ride down the hill! I—I thought she was jolly well going to race."

"Oh, how can you tell such stories?" cried Nancy.

"I think you're the one who's telling stories," said Babs angrily. "It's just the very sort of thing you'd do—taunt Bessie, and get her to do something silly."

But fifteen pounds was a huge sum, especially for Bessie Bunter.

"I say, cheer up, Bessie!" said Mabel Lynn. "Why, look, there's a picnic hamper outside Miss Steel's study! I wonder if she's going to invite us all down for tea!"

But Boker, the page, suddenly appearing at that moment, explained.

"A little puppy came in that, Miss Lynn," he said. "It's for Miss Steel. They say it's a real fox-terrier, and she's paid twenty pounds for it!"

"Tut-tut—twenty pounds!" gasped Bessie Bunter.

"Yes. Pedigree dogs do cost that, and even more," nodded Babs. "But I should be afraid to have a valuable pet like that myself."

"How about my parrot?" said Bessie. "He's worth more than a puppy any day!"

"Er—yes," said Babs tactfully.

"Let's get to Study No. 4, and think about tea," said Mabs.

But Bessie walked with them with a very abstracted gleam in her eye. Babs and Mabs could not understand it at all. And when Study No. 4 was reached, the behaviour of their fat chum positively worried them.

Bessie Bunter stationed herself before the parrot-cage, and stared at her famous but bedraggled pet, and didn't seem to hear a word they said.

"Tea!" said Babs, for the third time.

"Would you like buttered scones?" asked Mabel Lynn.

"Poor old Polly!" Bessie murmured.

Babs and Mabs exchanged a glance, and stared at Bessie Bunter. There was something the matter. Something would have to be done.

"What's the worry, Fatima?" asked Mabs, with attempted levity. "Has he grown a new feather?"

Bessie Bunter blinked through her thick, round spectacles.

"Poor old Polly!" she said. "You'll be sorry to lose him, won't you?"

"Eh?" said Babs.

"After he's been such a faithful chum to us all this time, and—and such a ch-ch-cheerful companion!"

"I say, Bessie," said Mabs, in alarm, "don't start blubbing again! What ever's worrying you now?"

"Always been a good pal to us, hasn't he?" whispered Bessie.

"In—in his way," said Babs guardedly.

"So—so ch-ch-cheerful, too! And—and the way he—he used to flap his wings when I came in in the morning!"

"Yes; but—"

Bessie Bunter gave a sniff, and unhooked the parrot-cage. She placed it on the table, and blinked at the green occupant. Polly chose that moment to scratch himself vigorously with one claw, and dislodged three feathers in the process. Bessie watched them with a gloomy eye.

"It's going to be very hard for Babs and Mabs to lose you, as well as me!" said Bessie.

Babs gasped.

"Lose him!" she exclaimed. "Bessie, if you think he isn't well, I may say that Polly has never been noisier—I mean, healthier—in his life!"

"It isn't that," said Bessie. "Poor old Polly's got to leave No. 4, and after being here for such a time! Polly, have a last look round!"

Polly showed complete indifference by attacking his seed with great vigour.

"He's only pretending!" sniffed Bessie. "Polly really feels it as much as I do, and he's trying to be brave. Oh dear! It's g-g-got to be done. Come on, Polly!"

Bessie Bunter lifted the parrot-cage and bore it from the study.

Babs and Mabs looked absolutely bewildered.

"She can never be thinking of giving him to poor old Mr. Gillis, surely?" exclaimed Babs.

"You'd think even Bessie would have more sense than that," Mabs nodded. "Oh, I suppose she's got some funny idea in her head! Perhaps she's going to give him away, so that she saves the cost of his seed."

"Better see which study she's gone to," Babs said, and crossed to the door.

But she looked into the passage quite in vain. All the study doors were shut, and Bessie's voice was not audible. The fat girl and her pet had disappeared!

A Parrot for Sale!

TAP, tap!
Miss Steel's usually severe face had relaxed into an almost genial expression as she fondled the fox-terrier pup on her lap, when there came a knock on the study door.



JUST LIKE DOLLY!—Babs and Mabs stepped aside, and Dolly Jobling went whizzing along the passage with a frying-pan that blazed like a beacon! "Another little error of judgment!" chuckled Mabs.

"Yes!" said the Fourth Form mistress, with some irritation.

The door opened to admit Bessie Bunter and a large cage. Something in the cage gave a shriek that nearly made Miss Steel jump out of her chair.

"Goodness gracious!"

Bessie proceeded to close the door, a more doleful expression than ever coming across her face.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Miss Steel. "That parrot—surely you have not brought that bird here, Bessie, knowing—"

The fat girl gave the parrot an affectionate blink.

"I—I've decided to part with Polly," she said lugubriously.

"Part with Polly?" said Miss Steel faintly.

"That's right, Miss Steel," said Bessie huskily. "I know you've often envied me having such a fine parrot. I've seen you look at him, when he's been hanging on his hook, and guessed you'd love to have him!"

"Bessie!"

"So I—I've decided to sell him," said Bessie, in a hoarse whisper. "I'm going to let him go very cheap, because I—I want the mum-mum-money. I—I'm only going to ask fifteen pounds."

"Fifteen pounds?" said Miss Steel dazedly.

"Fifteen pounds of soap!" put in the parrot, in a gruff voice, and chuckled. "He, he, he!"

"Bessie," gasped Miss Steel, "have you taken leave of your senses?"

Bessie Bunter jumped.

"To come here, making such a—a ridiculous suggestion!"

"R-r-ridiculous!"

"Positively absurd! You must know that I dislike parrots intensely. Even if I did, I have bought this puppy—"

"Not much to look at!" said the parrot disdainfully.

"Goodness gracious!"

"I—I know you've bought the puppy, Miss Steel," said Bessie persuasively.

"But he isn't worth twenty pounds at all. You can easily send him back, and

buy my parrot, and you'll save five pounds."

"Dear me!"

"Besides, think what an ornament he'd be in your study, and how everyone would envy you! When you had some friends to tea, Polly would be sure to say something nice, like—like—"

"I don't like your bonnet!" suggested the parrot.

Bessie Bunter jumped.

"It doesn't fit round the shoulders!" went on the bird. "You ought to put some buttons in the front. He, he, he!"

The puppy growled, and struggled to go in search of the impudent but uncanny voice.

"Is this a practical joke, Bessie Bunter?" cried Miss Steel.

"J-j-joke?" stuttered the fat girl.

"To come here, making this insulting and absurd offer, when you know perfectly well that I detest parrots, and have never liked them! I think—"

"It's a gramophone!" said the parrot, in a bored voice.

"What did you say, Bessie?" thundered Miss Steel.

Bessie Bunter jumped.

"Oh dear! It—it wasn't me! It was him, Miss Steel! Pip-Pip-Polly forgot himself. It's just his pip-pip-pip—"

"Pip-pip-hooray!" finished the parrot. "Bessie, go out!" cried Miss Steel. "I shall not speak again!"

"Hooray!" shrieked the bird.

"Bessie Bunter, go—instantly!"

"But—but—"

"Have you heard the pews?" said the parrot, in a dramatic whisper. "What news? Ah-h-h-h-h! The old squeeceire has been—"

"Bessie, I shall cane you if you do not take that bird away!"

"The old squeeceire——" recommenced the parrot.

"Do you hear?"

"The old squeeceire——" shrieked the parrot.

Miss Steel started to rise, and Bessie Bunter, unable to get into the conversation, fled. But she did not acknowledge defeat so quickly. Her fat red face and gleaming spectacles appeared round the edge of the door just as Miss Steel was sitting down again.

"He's better than a dog, Miss Steel!"

"Bessie!"

"Dogs can't talk, and my parrot can. He's cleverer than a dog——"

"Fifty lines!"

"Yes, fifty times, Miss Steel——"

"I said fifty lines!" thundered Miss Steel.

"Oh, really——"

"One hundred lines, Bessie! And another twenty-five—that is, fifty for being——"

The door closed with a sharp click. Bessie Bunter could understand that argument.

"Better try another street!" said the parrot's dismal voice from the passage.

Miss Steel placed the puppy in her chair, and picked up a cane. She waited for Bessie Bunter to come back with just one more argument. It was very fortunate that Bessie Bunter had dejectedly decided that Miss Steel could not appreciate cleverness, and had a heart like granite.

"She's a cat!" said Bessie, as she returned indignantly to Study No. 4.

"Isn't Polly going, after all, Bessie?" asked Babs, looking up.

"Not now," said Bessie. "I wouldn't let such a cat have my dear old Polly if she came on her bended hands and knees and——"

"But who is this cat?"

"Miss Steel, of course!"

Babs and Mabs gasped in unison.

"You—you've been to Miss Steel and offered to sell Polly?"

"Yes. And I only asked fifteen pounds! He's much better-looking than that horrid little puppy, too!"

"You duffer!"

"You goose!" said Mabel Lynn.

"Oh, really! When I'd decided to let my old friend go——"

Babs came to the fat girl's side, and placed a comforting arm on her shoulders.

"Bessie, I can see what's in your mind," she said. "You're worrying again about that damage. Don't take it to heart so much. They may even be insured. And if not—well, I should think that the farmers will help him to bear the loss, anyway. Hang your parrot up, and do try to think of something else!"

"We haven't had tea yet," Mabel Lynn exclaimed. "Surely you're hungry, Bessie!"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 146.

The door whirled open before Bessie had time to reply.

"What, aren't you cooking?" cried Dolly Jobling's voice.

"Bessie Bunter's worrying about her accident," Babs replied. "We've told her that she won't make things any better by brooding on it. She's got the silly idea in her head that she can raise fifteen pounds quite easily——"

"Well, mightn't she?" cried Dolly.

"What?" said Babs.

"My hat! Haven't you thought about it?" ejaculated the toffee expert of Study No. 7.

"Thought about what?"



MY OLDEST POSSESSION!

A Number of Fourth Formers tell Philippa Derwent what, to the best of their belief, is the article they have had longest in their possession.

BARBARA REDFERN.—A small brass locket. It was given to me by a passing gypsy when I was but a few weeks old. It is a very plain, cheap thing, but at home we half-believe it holds a secret! We have never been able to open it, though we can hear a faint, peculiar rattle when we shake it. Some day, when our curiosity becomes too much for us, we will burst it open, but at present we haven't the heart!

MABEL LYNN.—I believe, an old, worn, torn, faded book, entitled: "Acting For Beginners." I would give something to know when and where I got this! It seems strangely full of half pleasant, half sad memories for me!

BESSIE BUNTER.—My oldest possession? Polly, my beautiful parrot, is my oldest possession; he's two hundred years old tomorrow, I believe! Oh, you mean, what possession have I had longest? Well, the answer's still Polly! The beautiful, lovable creature came and bit my nose with his beak when I was a week old. Mum said that as nobody else would have him—I mean, that as he took to me so instantaneously, I could have him.

FREDA FOOTE.—A passion for perpetrating puns!

KATIE SMITH.—Stevenson's "Treasure Island," a ripping adventure book, given to me on my first birthday—for future reading, of course!

MYSELF.—A tiny notebook, useless for writing in, with pencil to match, presented to me for goodness only knows what reason at the age of three months!

CLARA TREVLYN.—The pair of shoes which first encased my feet. I must admit they are surprisingly on the large side, considering!

DOLLY JOBLING.—A small, imitation cookery set. This it was that first induced me to take up my well-known pursuit!

AGNES WHITE.—Good gracious, I've forgotten all that happened for a long time after I gained my oldest possession—whatever that might happen to be!

Dolly Jobling drew a deep breath. "Oh dear! I don't know what can be the matter with some girls!" she sighed. "Here we went specially to Courtfield this afternoon to buy things to try experiments in making new sweets! When Clara told me that Bessie was so upset I thought it would be the first thing that she would think of."

"I'm not very interested in sweets," said Bessie gloomily. "When I think of all those lovely eggs—hundreds of them——"

"Chump!" cried Dolly, and caught hold of Bessie's shoulder. She whirled her to the table, and pointed to the open page of a weekly paper. "Look at that! Have you forgotten all about it?"

"Oh dear!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "Fancy not thinking of that!"

And Babs and Mabs said much the same thing.

It really was remarkable, considering that it had been the only thought in their minds at the start of the afternoon. But they all glanced through the advertisement now with quite a new interest.

It ran as follows:

"OF INTEREST TO SCHOOLGIRL COOKS!"

"We are convinced that at many schools inventive schoolgirls make sweets for themselves from little known, or even original, recipes.

"In order to put a really new sweetmeat on the market, we offer

"A PRIZE OF TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS (£25)

to the girl who sends the recipe for, and a sample of, what we consider to be the daintiest and most appetising sweetmeat of her own manufacture. Toffee, chocolate, jelly, nougat, or noyeau may be made. The only condition is that one of the coupons printed below must be sent with each entry, and all entries must be received by the morning of the published date of the termination of this competition.

"FLAVOUR & FAVOUR, LTD., SMALLTOWN, KENT."

"Twenty-five pounds!" gasped Bessie. "And—and I'd forgotten that!"

"It's a gift for a girl like you, Bessie!" ejaculated Babs.

"Of course!" cried Dolly Jobling. "Mind, I'm going to try and invent my new toffee, but I do consider that Bessie stands a better chance than I do!"

Bessie Bunter's eyes gleamed.

"I—I say, supposing I won twenty-five pounds!" she ejaculated.

"Yes. You could give away fifteen if you wanted to, and still have ten of them left!" said Mabs.

"And if you try for that competition—why, it's the best thing you can do!" Babs added. "You can't guarantee that you'll win, of course. There may be hundreds of other entries. But, on the other hand, that was quite an accident that happened in the village. Even if you don't succeed you'll have done your best for old Mr. Gillis."

Bessie Bunter's eyes sparkled more brightly than ever.

"Rather, Babs! I say, have you got the cookery things here, Babs? Mabs, just pass them out of the cupboard, please! Dolly, if you don't mind lending me your frying-pan, to save me time over washing mine——"

"But we haven't had tea yet!" said Babs and Mabs together.

"We'll have tea later."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"After I've invented my new sweet."

"We're going to have tea now, and make sure of it!" said Babs decidedly.

"Everyone else has had theirs while you've been running round the school with your old parrot"

"But we could wait——"

It was most extraordinary to hear such remarks from Bessie Bunter at tea-time. Dolly Jobling stood with wide eyes and mouth agape, for she had never heard Bessie refuse tea before ever since she had been at the school. But Babs and Mabs were already beginning to finish off the table and get the things all ready, and Bessie gave them a vague blink or two, and then seemed to understand.

"I suppose a snack won't hurt," she muttered. "Anyway, I've had a jolly exhausting afternoon. But I—I want to try some cooking as soon as possible, you know."

And she did.

Bessie Bunter was no longer tearful and depressed. When tea was cleared away she banished all thoughts of preparation from her mind with great cheerfulness, and set herself to cookery.

At supper-time the results were apparent.

There was nothing strikingly new, but that is about all the criticism one could make of Bessie's selection. There were saucers on the hearth and on the table and on the mantelpiece, and in each saucer there was something that Bessie Bunter had made and sampled. In a handkerchief on the table was a collection of all of them, and Bessie said that she was going to take that collection to bed, eat them there, and "muse" upon the various flavours.

From which it will be seen that Bessie Bunter was not taking the matter of the competition in a jesting spirit.

And the rest of the school was soon to learn that.

Her Dominating Thought!

"ATTENTION, everyone! I do not wish to have to speak again!" The underlying threat in that statement, made by Miss Steel on the following morning, should have been enough for everyone.

It was not enough for Bessie Bunter. The change in Bessie had already caused a lot of comment in the Form. And not without reason. She had neglected her prep, and done cookery instead. She had been "lined" for not being in bed in time last night, through talking cookery instead. It seemed now that Bessie's thoughts were still on her "favourite subject," in spite of the fact that Miss Steel's mind was dwelling upon subtle truths evolved by old Euclid.

Barbara Redfern certainly thought so. "Bessie, wake up!" she muttered, nudging the fat girl.

"Eh? Oh, really, I am awake!" said Bessie.

"You're not attending, dear!" "Yes, I am. Even—even if I didn't it wouldn't matter," said Bessie easily. "I'm jolly smart at Euclid, you know!"

Miss Steel, hearing the whispering, turned at that moment and checked the conversation. Bessie Bunter attended to her words, just as long as her eyes were fixed on her, and then her mind sailed away again where it had been before—in the realms of cookery.

Bessie allowed that to happen because she evidently did not understand Miss Steel.

The Fourth Form mistress was not as blind as Bessie imagined her to be.

"Two sides of a triangle are together greater than the third side," said Miss Steel, her eyes roaming round. "Can anyone offer me proof of that?"

Several hands were raised, but not the hand of Bessie. The fat girl was at that moment looking about as intelligent as the toffee of which she was thinking.

"Bessie Bunter!" rapped out Miss Steel.

"Ow!"

"Could you prove it, Bessie?"

"I—y-y-yes, I could do it all right, Miss Steel," said Bessie, with a vague assurance that did not deceive the mistress.

"What was my question?"

"You—you said that if a—a—"

"Yes?"

"That—that if there were two sides of a piece of toffee—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

An involuntary shriek came from the Fourth-Formers. They could understand how toffee had become involved with Euclid in Bessie's mind.

"Bessie," cried Miss Steel angrily,

"You were not attending! If you do not listen I shall punish you. I have said nothing about toffee!"

Bessie Bunter blinked sharply, and assumed a very attentive and zealous expression for about two more minutes.

But Bessie was not interested in isosceles triangles, or the sizes of an angles, or squares, or anything like that.

Bessie Bunter's mind began to dwell upon the abilities of a certain frying-pan, to the exclusion of all else.

Miss Steel was quite aware of that as she went on with her lesson. But the Fourth Form mistress was rather clever at masking her feelings until she was ready.

She asked questions here and there with great impartiality, but did not appear to think of Bessie.



MY VERY LATEST POSSESSION!

Philippa Derwent again interviews a number of the Fourth Formers.

BARBARA REDFERN.—A long article on "Hobbies," by Angelica Jelly!

MABEL LYNN.—A new gown for my part as Lady Macbeth.

BESSIE BUNTER.—A packet of seed for my beautiful parrot, Polly.

CLARA TREVLIN.—A sudden extension of the ladder in my stocking!

DOLLY JOBLING.—A hole in the bottom of my frying-pan.

FREDA FOOTE.—A wonderful new riddle. It begins "Why does a chicken—"

VIVIENNE LEIGH.—The latest book on ballet dancing.

PHYLLIS HOWELL.—Just the girl I want to see. Flap! Give me your hockey subscription, dear, and put that down as my latest possession!

MYSELF.—This interview with Phyllis!

PEGGY PRESTON.—A letter from home.

ANNABEL HICHENS.—A new hearth-brush, and some scrubbing soap.

KATIE SMITH.—The very latest adventure story published. I've just been to the station to buy it.

MEG LENNOX.—Those fashion patterns—they've arrived at last!

AGNES WHITE.—My latest possession is something I've just bought in the village, but I forget for the moment what it is!

Bessie sat at her desk, her fat face perfectly blank and expressionless, save for the glimmer of excitement that showed behind her thick, round spectacles.

"Now, supposing," said Miss Steel suddenly, "that you were asked to prove that the square on this greatest side was equal to the squares on the other two sides. How would you do it? Bessie Bunter!"

"Eh?" gasped Bessie, and looked suddenly wise again.

"How would you do it, Bessie?"

"Oh, with—with just an ordinary frying-pan, Miss Steel."

"What!" gasped Miss Steel.

"Put in the butter, but not let it all melt at first—I mean—"

"Bessie, how dare you talk about frying-pans and melted butter!" thundered Miss Steel, whilst the class tittered.

"I—I—I—" said Bessie Bunter.

"You were not attending again!"

"Oh, I was!" said Bessie anxiously.

"Every w-w-word, Miss Steel!"

"Then why didn't you hear my question?"

"I—I was suddenly dud-dud-deaf—just for about half a mum-mum-minute. I—I missed every word you said. But if—you care to tell me the question again—"

"Bessie, you will write fifty lines!" said Miss Steel crossly.

"Apparently you are thinking about making sweets. I consider you a very greedy girl! Have you written those lines I gave you last night?"

"Nun-no, Miss Steel."

"What!"

"The—the fact is, I—I had to do some c-cooking—"

"Cooking?"

"Not exactly cooking. Bib-bib-boiling and bib-bib-baking, you know—"

"Bessie, I sometimes think you are utterly incorrigible!" said Miss Steel indignantly. "I warn you now that if you go on in this manner you will find yourself in very hot water!"

"Oh dear!"

That, and the tone in which it was uttered, was nearly enough to keep Bessie's attention a little nearer to the lesson than before.

A few gentle prods from the Clara Trevlyn's large and pointed slipper helped even more to keep Bessie from the realms of fancy.

But there was an exceedingly absent expression on her face when she rose at interval-time and went out with the others into the quadrangle.

"Bessie, you've got to pull yourself together!" said Babs firmly. "Your resolution's all very well, but it can't be allowed to upset things in class. We're going to look after you if you don't understand that."

"It's only because that Miss Steel's so horridly suspicious!" said Bessie indignantly. "If she ate more sweets herself she wouldn't be like it. It's easy enough for a girl to make a little slip, especially over that stupid geometry!"

"H'm!" said Babs. "It sounds all right, Bessie, but you mustn't go too hard at this cookery, and forget everything else, for all that."

"I had a jolly good idea this morning, anyway," said Bessie cheerfully. "I nearly told Miss Steel all about it, too. I'm glad she wouldn't listen now. Think I could go up and have a shot now?"

"Wha-a-a!" gasped Babs.

"Cook during an interval that lasts ten minutes?" said Babs.

"Well, I don't see why I shouldn't. Oh! Oooh! Look!"

Bessie Bunter gave those three startling cries, and seemed to forget about everything else.

She raised a rigid arm, and pointed across in the direction of the gates. Her fat face was very pale.

"Bessie, what ever's the matter with you?" cried Babs.

"Don't you see?" said Bessie throatily.

"There's only an old man sweeping the road."

"Don't you know him?"

"Know him?" repeated Babs. "How—what—"

"It—it's pip-pip-poor old Mr. Gillis!" chattered Bessie. "L-l-look, Babs! He must be working for the council, sweeping the roads!"

"Gillis!"

"Good gracious, Bessie's right!" muttered Babs. "It is he, Babs!"

Bessie Bunter made a queer noise in her throat.

"He must have lost all his mum-mum-mum-mum, after all, and—and it's my fault!"

"Oh, Bessie! Don't start reproaching yourself again!" cried Babs. "It wasn't your fault, and—"

"It looks as though some of the girls are going out to see the old chap," put in Mabs quietly.

"So they are?" Babs nodded. "But Marcia, and Nancy are there. We don't want to meet them. Hallo! Some of them are coming back again now."

Headed by Freda Foote and Gwen Cook, half a dozen Fourth-Formers came hurrying across the quadrangle.

"See who it is, Babs."

"It's old Gillis," said Freda Foote. "We've just been talking to him. He says he's really ruined, and he's had to get rid of his barrow and everything. Even this job may be only temporary. Isn't it an awful shame!"

Freda's expression showed how sincerely she pitied the old man in his unhappy plight.

"I think it's a shame that such a thing has happened," said Gwen Cook, ignoring the pitifully uneasy Bessie. "The farmers ought to have compensated him. Or, if not—"

"Bessie Bunter ought to," said Nancy Bell, as she strolled up after the others. "That's what you mean—eh, Gwen? Considering that Bessie's the cause of it all."

"It wasn't Bessie's fault!" cried Babs. "You know that."

"I don't know anything of the sort!" said Nancy impudently.

"Yes, you do! You dared Bessie to scorch on her bike, and because the old man acted absent-mindedly when she was passing him, this happened. It's really your fault; you caused it all!"

"You say that on Bessie's word," sneered Nancy Bell. "Do you think anyone else believes the fat fibber?"

"Oh, I say!" gasped Bessie.

"I think we ought to know the rights and wrongs of the case, anyway," put in Gwendoline Cook. "There's that poor old chap out there, over seventy, and with his bit of capital and his old age pension he was managing to make ends meet. Now he's got to turn out and work for his living like this. It makes me mad to think about it!"

"Do you think you're the only one who feels like that?" asked Babs heatedly.

"Well, I don't know—"

"You're not, anyway! But it wasn't Bessie's fault, and you know it," Babs said. "The whole thing was an accident. Bessie's would do as much as anyone for the old chap, if she only could."

"Fat imbeciles, who scorch down hills on bikes they can't control, ought to be kept in a special school somewhere," said Nancy Bell.

Nancy still had every reason for throwing as much suspicion and doubt as possible on to anyone but herself.

"You deserve to be bumped for saying a thing like that!" said Clara.

"It's the truth!"

"It isn't!"

Bessie Bunter, having licked her lips several times, as though getting ready to make herself audible, at last spoke.

"I—I'm g-going to m-make it up to old Mr. Gig-Gillis, anyway!"

"How?" sneered Nancy.

"Why, I'll win that cookery k-k-competition," said Bessie. "T-twenty-five pounds is the first prize, you know. I'll be able to pay him fifteen pounds—"

"You! You pay anyone fifteen pence when you had the money in your hand! You know you stand no chance

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of winning the prize, and that's why you say that!"

"How can you say that when Bessie was experimenting all last evening?" cried Babs.

Nancy Bell grinned.

"I don't suppose she did it without testing everything, and having a jolly good tuck-in! Bessie's idea of experimenting, of course! That's how much in earnest I believe she is—just enough to get all she can for herself out of the idea!"

"Nancy, you horrid girl!" cried Babs.

"I always am, according to you!" sneered Nancy, as she turned away.

"You want me to believe that Bessie's really trying to invent something new. Why, I tell you that I'll get nearer to winning that prize than she does!"

"If you don't go to sleep!" said Clara

but of cookery. A strange click, that startled mademoiselle once or twice, was, in reality, the click of Bessie's tongue.

Bessie was mentally devising a new sweetmeat.

The smile on her face grew steadily. When French lesson ended things seemed to be reaching a climax. Bessie looked as though she could really taste whatever it was that had come into her mind. She started to jot words down on a scrap of paper.

And then Miss Bullivant came in.

It should have been the signal for Bessie to start attending, but it wasn't. Bessie always did that sort of thing.

The Bull talked, and Bessie Bunter scribbled.

Bessie also grinned, and licked her lips. She concluded it all by giving a click of triumph with her tongue.

Click!

"Bless my soul!" gasped Miss Bullivant. "Did you make that strange noise, Bessie Bunter? Good gracious! You do not seem to have been attending at all! Bring me that paper instantly!"

"Wh-wh-which paper?" said Bessie, making frantic attempts to hide it.

"This!" said Miss Bullivant, and she pounced forward and helped herself.

"Bless my soul! What an extraordinary occupation, Bessie Bunter! Put in some butter, as big as two fingers, one handful brown sugar—"

"I sus-sus-say, it's—it's secret, Miss Bullivant!" stammered Bessie.

"Secret?" gasped the mistress. "What ever do you mean by that?"

"It's a—a recipe!" Bessie explained guardedly. "I've just been thinking it out, and— Oh, I say, don't tear it up, Miss Bullivant! It's worth twenty-five pounds! I—I—I— Oh dear! Now you've done it! Now you've torn up a twenty-five pound recipe!"

"You will be in detention if I find you writing about butter and sugar in my lesson again!" said the Bull grimly.

"Just pay attention now! I shall keep my eye on you, Bessie!"

Bessie tried to attend, but it was difficult. She was known for her ability to combine flavours together in a pleasing manner. In her mind's eye she could see some entirely new possibilities that had never come even to her before. Those ideas she had been committing to paper when interrupted.

She would have jotted down her thoughts again, but Miss Bullivant was suspicious enough to watch her. Bessie had to give up the attempt, and pretend to take some interest in the lesson.

But she really couldn't take much interest! Bessie was thinking of her cookery, and the events of that morning had made it, more than ever, the most necessary subject of all!



COOKERY HINTS!

By DOLLY JOBLING.

How to Make Chocolate Fancies.

Bessie Bunter actually studied during the last vacation.

Needless to say, it was not Latin or French verbs, but something much more to her liking engaged her time.

She spent many hours in the kitchen of Holly Hall worrying the cook, with the result that she started to compile a cookery book! Bessie brought the first four pages of the book back to school with her, and sandwiched in between the many blots and smudges were some really good recipes. These might have been published before had not Bessie had the misfortune to mislay them.

However, here is one of them:

Required.—1oz. of chocolate, 4oz. of granulated sugar, half a gill of milk, half a teaspoonful of vanilla flavouring, and ½oz. of butter.

Grate the chocolate finely, and put it into an enamel-lined saucepan with the sugar, butter, and milk.

Stand the saucepan over a moderate heat, and stir slowly and carefully until the mixture begins to thicken.

Remove the saucepan from the fire, allow the mixture to cool slightly, stir in the flavouring, and continue to stir until the mixture begins to set.

Turn the cooked sweets into a slightly-greased tin, mark with the back of a knife into square or diamond shapes, and decorate each shape with a shelled walnut, almond, or small, coloured sweet.

When quite cold, separate the shapes.

caustically; but the bell for resume lessons went at that moment.

A very dejected Bessie it was who returned to her place. The interval had not done Bessie any sort of good. The sight of old Gillis had brought back all those memories that had started to slip away from her brain. Nancy Bell's cruel chipping had made her feel very gloomy.

French lesson, fortunately, came next that morning. Mademoiselle Lupin was an easy-going young lady, who had already discovered that her idea, and Bessie's idea, of how to pronounce French were entirely different matters, never likely to agree.

Seeing Bessie take up a very reposeful attitude, mademoiselle was rather pleased than otherwise, and certainly did not prove as officious as Miss Steel would have done.

Bessie Bunter did quite a lot of thinking during French lesson—not of French,

Non-Stop Cookery!

THERE was quite a lot of talk in the Form that evening about ruined Mr. Gillis, of Friardale, and the part that Bessie Bunter had played in his bad luck.

There were some who said that, even supposing Nancy had dared the fat girl, she should have had sufficient sense to ride more cautiously. To such people it seemed rather useless to point out that Bessie Bunter would always be Bessie, and no one else, no matter how wise anyone might care to be after the event. It seemed equally futile to point out that Bessie was not quite like other girls, and certainly was easily flustered, and little allowances should be made for her.

But Babs and Mabs were pointing out all those things.

They stayed in the Common-room to argue, whilst Bessie Bunter made herself supremely and completely happy in Study No. 4 cooking.

While Babs and Mabs were telling critical Fourth-Formers their own opinion of what had happened, Bessie attacked her task with a light heart and a frying-pan, quite determined to "pull off" something to-night.

What anyone might be thinking about her at that moment certainly did not worry Bessie just then. That huge prize, offered just when she had real need of a large amount of money, had certainly captured Bessie Bunter's imagination.

"Just a little bit more—a little finger!" Bessie muttered, and popped some more butter in the pan.

Sizzle-sizzle! was the cheerful sound that answered.

Polly, the parrot, shifted along his perch, looked carefully at Bessie Bunter, and said:

"Shriek!"

"You're happy to be here, after all—eh, Polly?" beamed Bessie Bunter. "You like to hear the frying-pan, too, I know. I expect it reminds you of the jungle, and all those nasty insects buzzing about. Um! Begins to smell all right now!"

"Shriek!" said Polly again. Polly was not conversational to-night. He had his moods.

Fizzle, sizzle! came from the pan, and Bessie Bunter stooped to tend it, and smiled and sniffed more pleasurably than ever.

Babs and Mabs were still in the Common-room, talking to those who had made Bessie's position an unpleasant one.

"It isn't her fault, Gwen, and she's jolly well cut-up about it, too!" said Babs. "You might at least give her fair play. If she wins that twenty-five pounds' apologise for that!"

"If!" put in the scornful voice of Nancy Bell.

"Oh, are you ever going to be quiet?" cried Babs angrily. "Always putting your spoke in! We all guess why now, Nancy! It's because you dared Bessie yesterday, and now you're frightened to admit it!"

"It isn't!" blustered Nancy, but she looked quite taken aback by Babs' sudden bluntness. "I was thinking about Bessie winning the twenty-five pounds' prize. She'll never do it, so it's stupid to talk about it."

"Why is it stupid, please?" asked Babs.

"Because she'll eat everything she makes, of course!" said Nancy. "Why, I believe I've got a better chance of winning it myself!"

"Except that you never do anything at all unless you're driven!" said Mabel Lynn. "Also, you can't cook for candy! You're a likely one even to talk about going in for the competition!"

"I'd do as well as your fat friend, even at her favourite cookery!" blazed Nancy Bell, realising that it was an unreasonable thing to say, even as she said it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nancy Bell wheeled on the girls who laughed at her statement.

"I've tried some experiments already, and I'm going in for the competition!" she cried. "I got quite a nice thing last night, although I don't boast about everything I do—like some people!"

"Was it a new kind of glue?" inquired Clara Trevlyn, with sarcasm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, it wasn't. It was a sweet!"

"Well, I don't believe anything you could make would be nice!" said Clara bluntly. "It ought to be horrid—like you! Fancy thinking that you can ever stand in the same street as Bessie when

it comes to cookery! She'd beat you at it the same as she would at anything, except telling fibs, and getting up to horrid tricks to throw blame on other girls!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Well done, Clara!" cried two or three.

Nancy Bell flushed.

"So you think I couldn't cook if I wanted to?" she cried.

"Not even cold water!" nodded Clara, and there were grins.

"Oh, all right! You wait and see!" said Nancy vindictively. "You may be surprised even yet. You may have to apologise for that!"

And with that Nancy Bell swung out of the Common-room, and went to her study, but with curiously mixed feelings. She knew that she only fallen into that sudden boastful, or argumentative, or defiant mood because of many causes.

seriously worried about Nancy. They stopped to talk for some minutes with the sceptical Gwen, and got her to promise to let Bessie, at least, carry on her experiments in peace. Then they went out into the corridor.

Dolly Jobling had been back in Study No. 7 for some time, and Clara and Marjorie seemed to be there as well—shrieking!

And it didn't seem at all to surprise Babs and Mabs when the door of Study No. 7 burst open, and a sooty-lobking Dolly appeared, and went whizzing along the passage with a frying-pan that blazed like a beacon in front of her!

"Another little error of judgment on Dolly's part!" chuckled Babs. "Surprising how quickly she can get a pan on fire now, isn't it? She's quite proficient! I don't think there's any girl in the Form who can beat her at it!"

Mabs laughed.



IF I WERE HEADMISTRESS!

PHYLLIS HOWELL is responsible for securing the following.

BARBARA REDFERN.—What a question to ask, Phyllis! Anyway, I must admit I would have the school run pretty much as it is at present. We could hardly have a more successful headmistress than Miss Primrose, could we?

MABEL LYNN.—Try to increase the zest for acting among my pupils, of course!

BESSIE BUNTER.—What would I do if I were headmistress? The question is—what wouldn't I do? I've always said that there ought to be more tuckshops here, and I'd remedy that. I'd see that food was more plentiful, too. I'd encourage eating between meals, for this is good for the digestion. It's bad for the digestion, Phyllis? Anyway, it serves some purpose, I know, and I'd see that it was part of the routine!

MARJORIE HAZELDENE.—My opinion is the same as Barbara Redfern's.

CLARA TREVLIN.—Expel all girls who didn't mend their stockings regularly!

DOLLY JOBLING.—I'd give cookery a chance, and probably run a series of jumper competitions!

VIVIENNE LEIGH.—Resign my post as soon as I found myself with it, I think!

FREDA FOOTE.—Brighten things up a bit generally. I'd bring a few puns into my speeches, for one thing. Summon a grand muster in hail the first of every April, and call them all fools for turning up! Ha, ha, ha! It wouldn't be a bad idea to play occasional little jokes on the mistresses—change the history books for joke books, replace Miss Bullivant's hat with Miss Bland's, put an alarm clock in Miss Steel's desk etc., etc.

MARCIA LOFTUS.—Girls like Barbara Redfern would get it hot from me, I can tell you!

MYSELF.—Give sport just a little more prominence!

PHILIPPA DERWENT.—See if there couldn't be just a few Australian girls under my charge!

GWENDOLINE COOK.—Encourage a serious study of the supernatural. Have special lessons devoted to the subject.

PEGGY PRESTON.—Do my best to have more scholarships open, so that deserving girls in poor circumstances might have the chance I've had myself.

ANNABEL HICHENS.—Alter fashions first, and make girls' dress as in the old days. Alter manners next, and make the girls behave in the approved old style!

NANCY BELL.—Take jolly good care that I didn't exert myself!

One of them was that her efforts to clear herself too entirely of the bicycle incident were winning Bessie far more support than there had been at first.

Yes, they were beginning to think that Nancy really was at the bottom of it all.

"If only I could do something to make them look small!" Nancy muttered. "I can't stop them thinking what they like. But they don't believe I can do anything." Her eyes gleamed. "Supposing I really could pull off that twenty-five pounds' prize! What money it would be for me! And how mad it would make some of them to think that they'd said that I was jealous of that fat booby in Study No. 4, and that she's brainier than—I am!"

But the eager light quickly faded from her eyes again. A good many girls wished to do something like that, and most of them had more energy than lazy Nancy Bell. It wasn't Nancy's plan, as a rule, to accomplish anything by work if there was any other means.

Babs and Mabs had watched her leave the Common-room, but they were not

"I wonder what it was?" she said. "Poor old Dolly! I really think she'll have to give up cookery and go in for making fireworks! She'd be far more successful, I'm sure!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bridget O'Toole and Lucy Morgan were at the door of their study having a hot argument on something that certainly seemed to be connected with confectionery. When she was called upon to settle the dispute, Babs found that that was indeed the subject.

Bridget and Lucy were going in for the competition. With great difficulty Babs found out their real difference. Bridget had made an "ould fat porker" out of green marzipan, and Lucy Morgan had called it a carrot with legs.

"As though it could possibly be a carrot when it was grane!" said Bridget indignantly. "Who iver heard av a grane carrot?"

"Well, I've never heard of a green pig, either," said Babs.

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COMPLIMENTS FROM POLLY! "Hallo, Miss Bullivant!" came from the parrot. "You are looking charming this evening—younger than ever!" The mistress was astounded!

"There you are, look you!" yelled Lucy triumphantly.

"Have ye niver heard of the grane of Ould Ireland—the shamrock and the emerald?" demanded Bridget.

"Oh, yes!" said Babs. "Symbolical, eh? Green bacon, I suppose?"

"No, it wasn't grane bacon!" said Bridget. "It was a shamrock porker!"

"Been eating shamrock?"

"No," said Bridget. "I made it grane to show them that it was Irish!"

"I don't think," said Babs, "that it ought to be necessary to make it any special colour to show that it was Irish; not if it had the same ideas in its head that you have when you want to explain anything! Still, why not turn it into a sprig of shamrock leaves and have no further bother?"

And that suggestion at last pleased Bridget, and she went back to her study and her rich brogue no longer awoke echoes in the passage.

But there were still others engaged in minor works of cookery this evening, as Babs and Mabs could see. Flap Derwent and Phyllis Howell were stirring up a mixture that was either going to make a very nice caramel or a very nice mess on the floor if Flap's skirt caught the frying-pan handle again.

Peggy Preston was working from a Lancashire recipe for Turkish delight, and Vivienne Leigh was on something different. But nothing that Babs and Mabs saw anywhere came up to the scene that awaited them in Study No. 4.

Bessie Bunter had made herself "at home!"

There were sweets on the hearth and on the table and in Polly's cage and in Bessie's mouth. No. 4 was like a sweet-shop.

"Invented anything special, Bessie?" asked Babs.

"No—no' yet!" answered the fat girl with some difficulty.

"Well, you'll have to pack up and start prep now, dear!" said Babs.

"There'll be a row if you're caught

doing all this cookery when you ought to be working. Come on!"

Bessie Bunter crunched.

"Have one of those pink toffees, Babs!" she invited. "They're a bit different, but they're not what I wanted. I'm going to make something special."

"All right, but you can't do it to-night, Bessie," said Babs. "Don't start anything else now, or I'm certain there will be trouble!"

Babs and Mabs cleared the table and made the place look something like a study. But Bessie went on cooking, in spite of more advice to the contrary.

For a quarter of an hour.

During that time Bessie had plenty of chances of finishing her work and getting on with prep. She let all those chances pass. And then the door opened suddenly and dramatically to reveal Miss Bullivant!

"Bless my soul!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bessie, and nearly dropped the frying-pan.

"Bessie! Goodness gracious!" cried the mistress. "You are cooking now—with all those things around you, when you should be working? Stand up, girl—stand up at once, and don't look at me from that absurd position! What is the meaning of this?"

"I—I—I'm making expip-pip-periments, Miss Bullivant," said Bessie anxiously.

"Experiments in what, pray?"

"Making sweets that are going to be worth t-twenty-five p-pounds!"

"Good gracious! You were talking that nonsense this morning!" cried the mistress. "I won't allow this sort of thing to go on! Do you understand? This morning you were most inattentive in lessons. I shall make an example of you now."

"But—"

"No argument at all, please!" cried the Bull. "I have stood quite enough of this sort of laziness! You will have cause to remember to do your preparation in future."

Bessie Bunter glanced round the study with desperate eyes.

A gruff and uncanny voice came to her rescue with startling suddenness.

"Hallo, Miss Bullivant!" said Polly. Babs and Mabs started.

So did Miss Bullivant—and looked dangerously at the parrot.

"You are looking charming this evening, Miss Bullivant!" said the parrot.

"Younger than ever!"

"Eh?" gasped the mistress. "Goodness gracious! The—the stupid bird—"

"Younger and more beautiful!" said the parrot.

"Oh!"

Such flattery from the evil-eyed bird astounded Miss Bullivant. She was not used to flattery from Polly. Bessie Bunter's pet, on the contrary, was famed for his blunt remarks and tactless way of uttering them. He had told Miss Bullivant, on more than one occasion, that she was an old cat—which was certainly not the correct conversation between a parrot and a mistress.

To speak in these terms was entirely new.

"Bessie! Stop that stupid bird, please!" gasped the mistress, going pink. "You really must not teach your pet to speak like that! Ahem! You will write fifty lines for not being at preparation, Bessie, and I hope it will not occur again!"

Click! came the closing of the door.

"And she's gone!" breathed Babs.

"My word, Bessie, your luck's in to-night, and no mistake! You were in for a couple of hundred lines before Polly spoke up like that. And you'd have got four hundred if he'd called her an old cat to-night!"

"I didn't know Polly had such intelligence!" said Mabs, gazing at the bird with a fresh respect.

"That wasn't Polly!"

"Eh?"

"What?" said Babs.

"It wasn't Polly—it was me!" said Bessie, with a fat smirk.

"Polly isn't in a talkative mood to-night, so I did a little ventriloquism. Jolly good, don't you think so?"

"You—you said all that?" gasped Babs.

"And took the Bull in?" added Mabs.

"Oh, rather!" said Bessie. "There isn't much that stops me when I'm determined to do something like inventing a new recipe, you know! Fifty lines—nothing at all! I'd have kept it up a bit longer, but I wanted to get on with this!"

And with that Bessie Bunter knelt calmly in front of the fire and went on with her experimenting.

Fizzle, fizzle!

Babs and Mabs exchanged a glance, but they said nothing—absolutely nothing. They really couldn't! They thought that they were used to Bessie Bunter, but once more she had taken their breath away!

Raising the Wind!

THE cupboard in Study No. 4, on the following evening, resembled the celebrated cupboard that once belonged to Mrs. Hubbard.

It was bare!

Babs and Mabs had not emptied it. They had been only able to guess the going of many things. They had abandoned all thoughts of going in for the competition.

Bessie Bunter was the one who had cheerfully emptied the cupboard and converted all its contents into sweetmeats.

She was quite emphatic about paying back just as soon as she got the prize-money. But so far, as it happened, Bessie had not even invented the sweet that was to win the prize for her.

She was now on the war-path, looking for fresh cupboards that might be emptied in the good cause. The lines had piled up about Bessie in a distinctly disconcerting manner since Wednesday, but she was cheerfully ignoring them. Only a very few had been written to placate Miss Steel, and it was likely that they would not placate her for much longer.

"I wonder if she really is going to do anything?" speculated Nancy Bell to Marcia Loftus, after they had sent Bessie from Study No. 1 with a very blunt and curt refusal.

Marcia grinned at the sticky little mess that adorned a plate on the table.

"In view of your own efforts—" she began.

"Oh, bother my efforts!" cried Nancy. "I haven't finished yet. I've thought of something else besides toffee!"

"It's just as well," said Marcia, and grinned at the plate again.

Nancy drummed her fingers on the table.

"I don't want to see her win anything—not a great fat duffer like her!" she said. "If she did, I wonder whether she'd really turn over fifteen pounds to that old fellow in the village? Do you think she would?"

"She might," said Marcia. "Especially as you've told everyone that it was Bessie's fault."

"Well, it wasn't, really," muttered Nancy. "I only said that for a joke. Fancy giving that silly old man fifteen pounds for his carelessness!"

Marcia stared at her in surprise. "The fifteen pounds isn't yours," she said.

"I wish it was!" answered Nancy.

She went out of the study and looked into Study No. 4. Babs and Mabs were both out, as well as Bessie Bunter. Nancy went in.

With quick, cunning eyes she glanced around her. What was Bessie doing? How was she doing it? Nancy suddenly wanted to know.

She had boasted to Clara that she might prove a rival to Bessie, and since then she had thought the matter over, and wished that she really could be one. Twenty-five pounds! Nancy was never well supplied with money. Supposing she could win a sum like that somehow? What a "score" it would be for her over the others!

She tasted some of the confections that Bessie had made, and her heart sank. They were certainly made in a gifted manner. Bessie always seemed to know just how much to put of everything. She thought of that sticky plateful in Study No. 1, and groaned.

Nancy Bell was still peering round trying to read some of Bessie's jotted-down recipes, when she heard steps approaching, and fled. She was only just in time to escape before Babs and Mabs entered the study.

But there were thoughts already in Nancy Bell's mind, thoughts that had grown out of that first bitterness that she had exhibited towards Bessie Bunter so groundlessly. That is always the way with bitter thoughts.

She wanted to push Bessie a little lower than she had done. She wanted to score off her more completely. And—and she wanted that twenty-five pounds prize

more than she had ever wanted anything before.

There was all the temptation in Nancy's mind now.

Ignorant that anyone was harbouring such thoughts, Bessie Bunter was rolling round the school, intent on borrowing fresh supplies.

She went to the Fifth-Formers, and was politely but firmly repulsed; she went to the Upper Third Common-room, and was more or less ejected; she went to the Third, and a moment later was all of a heap in the passage.

It was all through a misunderstanding, of course. Bessie Bunter delivered a very emphatic and disappointed opinion of the unjustified suspicion shown by the members of the Third.

"I wasn't going to borrow sugar at all!" she shouted through the closed door. "I'm trying to give a poor old man fifteen pounds' worth of eggs. Now you sha'n't jolly well help me!"

To prove that, Bessie rattled the knob of the door.

The door was locked. Unable to get back into the room, even "accidentally," Bessie Bunter went to see the Second-Formers. She found them very cordial and nice after the members of the Third, but not really helpful. They regarded Bessie more or less as a walking joke in the Second. They asked her to describe what it felt like to sit in a lot of eggs, and all that sort of thing. When it came to lending supplies it was quite a different matter.

Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear had to confess that they were "broke."

"But won't you stop and tell us all about sitting in those eggs again?" said Bunny. "It must have been awfully funny!"

Bessie, having never seen anything at all funny in her luckless adventure, made her way back to Study No. 4.

"No one seems to have anything!" she announced gloomily. "I didn't think they were all so jolly mean as they are. I'll never invent anything now!"

"Have a rest just for to-night, Bessie," urged Babs. "You'll get some more ideas then. If you don't tackle all those

lines of yours you'll be getting into an awful scrape soon."

"I want to invent something," said Bessie Bunter dismally.

It seemed useless to argue against that. Babs and Mabs got their chum to write a few lines, but they were very few. After that Bessie Bunter sat for a long while with a deep and gloomy frown on her forehead.

"I've got it!" she yelled suddenly, and leapt to her feet.

"A recipe?" said Babs. "No; but I know how to get some more things," said Bessie darkly. "My word! I wonder I didn't jolly well think of it before!"

"How—"

"What—"

Babs and Mabs watched their fat chum gather up a heap of her exercise-books and sail away from Study No. 4. Bessie had told them nothing; she did not seem to wish to do so. That in itself was mysterious. But there seemed something strange about everything that Bessie did these days.

"What's her idea?" said Mabs.

"Goodness only knows!" said Babs, locking rather worried. "I've never known Bessie to be so strange before. She's taken it to heart terribly, and all those horrid, spiteful things that Nancy Bell has said have only made things worse."

"She really believes that that accident was all her fault," nodded Mabs. "It wasn't of course. The old chap was really in the wrong, and Bessie was only a bit thoughtless. I never knew she was so good-hearted as to want to repay so much damage. Did you?"

"Never!" said Babs. "Bessie's turned out a jolly sight better girl than I ever thought she would, and—Hallo! What ever's that?"

"That" was a peal of laughter that seemed to come from the direction of the Fourth Form Common-room.

"Must be Bessie," said Mabs glumly. "She usually does something funny wherever she goes."

"Better go and see," said Babs. So they went along the corridor and looked into the Common-room.



WITHOUT WORK! "It's the poor old man whose bib-bib-barrow I upset!" gasped Bessie Bunter, and two fat tears rose to her eyes.



BESSIE BUNTER'S GREAT LAPE!

By PANSY CARTER (Third Form.)



"I SAY, girls—he, he—I say!"

Bessie Bunter entered the Third Form Common-room.

We looked up as she held aloft a sheet of foolscap, painted yellow. Scrawled across it was something that was obviously her writing.

"What's that?" asked Madge Stevens, rather surprised at this commencement. "I suppose you don't recognise ancient parchment when you see it—what?" explained Bessie mysteriously.

"My hat!" said Madge.

Bessie Bunter wanted us to believe that that sheet of foolscap, washed with yellow paint, was ancient parchment! It was only with the greatest difficulty that we kept from laughing.

"I suppose you won't believe me when I say that I found this in a secret hiding-place in the vaults?" went on Bessie mysteriously, tactfully avoiding direct misstatements.

"Quite so; we won't!" returned Madge agreeably.

"Oh, really!" blinked Bessie. "I'm letting you kids into something great—but of sheer good nature, you know! Ahem! Tee-hee! Just you read that!"

Madge took the yellow-painted sheet, and we clustered round her, and looked curiously over her shoulders. This, in Bessie Bunter's handwriting, and Bessie Bunter's spelling, is what we read:

"Oyes! Oyez! Oyez! I, John Oggilvy, have berried another Clif Howse treasure besides the wun you fownde some time ago. I have berried this wun near Piper's lodge, at a spot marked with three large stonoes. Yours truly, sined, in the year twelve hundred and thirty too,—Jhon Oggilvy."

How ever we managed to keep from bursting into roars of laughter I simply cannot say! This was Bessie Bunter's great lape! She had painted one side of a sheet of foolscap a brilliant yellow, under the impression that this would make it look like ancient parchment, and had written on it directions for unearthing a buried treasure that wasn't there!

"Hurrah, girls!" cried Madge Stevens, with a great show of enthusiasm. "With this we'll be able to dig up a second treasure of old John Oggilvy's! Hurrah!" Bessie beamed.

"See what you've got to thank me for?" she chuckled. "And look here, don't you youngsters run away with the idea that I'm japing you!"

"Oh, you couldn't, Bessie!" came a shocked chorus.

"Oh, couldn't? He, he, he! I jolly well have done just now—I mean, you can see that that parchment's genuine, can't you?" said Bessie hastily. "It's dated twelve hundred and thirty-two, you know. That's centuries ago!"

"Of course it's genuine!" said Doris Redfern seriously. "The reference to Piper's lodge proves that!"

"That's it!" said Bessie, with satisfaction. "I worded it jolly cleverly—that is to say, I discovered it jolly cleverly! When are you kids going to begin the digging?" Madge glanced thoughtfully at the ceiling.

"To-morrow afternoon's a halfer. That's the time," she said.

"Good!" chirped Bessie, rubbing her fat hands. "He, he, he!"

Then she nodded mysteriously at our serious faces, and rolled out of the Common-room.

And then, putting our heads together, we thought out a plan:

The next morning, very early, a small party of us might have been seen near Piper's lodge, digging! We might also have been seen burying something, after which we filled up the hole, replaced a certain three large stones, and returned indoors. That was the fruits of our thinking the previous night!

And then came the afternoon of the great treasure hunt. Armed with spades, and with the exuberant Bessie Bunter as "supervisor," we moved in a small body to the porter's lodge, and found the spot where the "three large stonoes" had been placed by "Jhon Oggilvy," alias Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter.

And then Madge and Doris commenced to dig. Bessie beamed and grinned, and, as the hole deepened, kept having to smother spasmodic chuckles.

"Keep it up, Pansy and Iris!" urged Bessie, for we two had taken a turn with the spade now. "Don't give up hope, you know! He, he, he! Keep on digging! Italo!"

Bessie almost leapt into the air, and stared at the hole disbelievingly. My spade had just struck something with a metallic chink—or, to be more exact and less romantic, a tinny clatter.

"The Clif House Treasure!" shouted Madge Stevens, with a grand show of enthusiasm. "John Oggilvy's treasure!"

"My tut-tut-treasure!" stuttered Bessie Bunter, jolting forward.

"Run away, Booby! It's ours!" exclaimed Doris Redfern greedily.

As she spoke she dragged out of the ground a deep square box. The "treasure" was most certainly ours. We had buried it only that morning! It was a biscuit tin, corded, and on the outside was painted, in large black letters: "Ye Cliffe Howse Treasure,—Yours truly, John Oggilvy."

"My treasure!" hooted Bessie, her eyes glimmering behind her glasses. "Gimme it! It's mine! I tut-tut-told you where to dig!"

She snatched the biscuit tin from Doris, and sprinted off like an unusually fat cinderpath champion. She did not stop until she reached the lofty solitude of the elms. And there she plumped down the tin, whilst we watched from a respectable distance.

Bessie dragged off the lid, and then fell back, blinking quite dazedly.

"Cue-cue-coal!" she stuttered feebly.

The tin was full of coal! An irrepressible peal of laughter from our humble selves drew her attention to us. And then the truth dawned on her.

"Cats!" she yelled. "Little cats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat girl rolled towards us at amazing speed, and, knowing we were too convulsed with laughter to struggle with her, we scudded away. And that was the fitting end of Bessie Bunter's great lape!

It was Bessie. And Bessie was evidently the object of considerable mirth. She was standing on the table, and by her side were all those books that she had taken from Study No. 4. She gave Babs and Mabs a rather apprehensive blink, but did not turn from her purpose.

"Lot No. 2, girls!" Bessie cried, banging together a Latin grammar and a First Book of Euclid. "Latin and Geom. Very little used!"

"We can believe it!" chortled Freda Foote.

"These two fine books for sale!" Bessie called persuasively. "Who'll offer me five shillings for these two? Where is the girl?"

"They took her to the asylum several months ago" said Clara Trevlyn gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really! There's no joke in that, said Bessie peevishly. "Four-and-six, and dirt cheap at the price! Any advance on four-and-six? I mean, will anyone offer it? I sha'n't give you the chance in a minute!"

Babs and Mabs exchanged a look.

"Is this an auction, Bessie?" exclaimed Babs.

"Of—of a sort," said Bessie guardedly. "Still, don't interrupt me now, Babs. You see—"

"I wonder what sort of pickle you think you'll be in in class to-morrow if you've sold all your books!" said Babs bluntly.

"I'm going to buy them all back again as soon as I've won that twenty-five pounds!" said Bessie confidently. "Miss Steel will understand, and think it jolly self-sacrificing of me to sell such a lot of lovely books. But I'll buy them all back at double the price when I get that prize!"

Mabs smiled slightly.

"Let her get on with it, Babs," she whispered. "None of the girls will buy anything. May just as well disappoint her here and get it over. If we don't she'll probably go down to the Third and sell the whole lot for about sixpence!"

Babs saw the sense of that, and nodded.

"Four-and-six!" cried Bessie Bunter persuasively.

"Yes, that's what they cost new," nodded Clara Trevlyn. "We know they're bargains, because you're giving us some nice thumb-print patterns and quite two-pennyworth of blots with each of them!"

"Four shillings!"

"Four rats!" said Clara.

"Three-and-six!"

But that did not draw anyone. Bessie went on down the scale, and finally got to pence. But there were no buyers for Latin and geometry. Unless Bessie was prepared to make a gift of them, she had evidently got to keep them. She did so.

"Here's my scrap-book, anyway! You'll all rush for that!" Bessie Bunter cried, holding up a fresh volume. "All the best verses I've written, and I've put some jolly good paintings in as well. Look at that one!"

"Attack by high explosive shells?" asked Clara Trevlyn.

"Shells!" gasped Bessie. "Oh, really! It's a bunch of daffodils! You must have known that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's another one, girls—the Ruined Castle!"

"It looks it!" said Freda Foote. "But haven't you got it upside down? Surely that's the sky at the bottom!"

"That isn't! It's water!"

"The castle's floating, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie Bunter turned over the picture

of the castle and showed what was, according to a legend underneath, a "Frogg."

The delighted audience at the auction immediately hailed it as quite a masterly presentation of an elephant with a short trunk and long legs.

Bessie Bunter gave it up, and withdrew the scrap-book from the sale.

"Two books on maths, girls!" she exclaimed. "This one's got all the answers in the margin. Here we are: 'Height of the mountain, 144 inches; boy eats 240 cakes; and so on.' There you are—that shows you how useful it is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ten shillings, girls?"

"Tenpence!" came a bid.

"Oh, really! That's trying to beg things!" said Bessie indignantly. "Still, I'll be generous, as I must have the money. Who's going to pay tenpence?"

No one spoke. The bidder was not coming forward. Evidently the tenpence bid, though it had scandalised Bessie, was only a joke.

"Where is she?" said Bessie.

"Gone with the other one to the asylum!" said Clara.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie Bunter scrambled off the table and gathered up her books furiously.

"You're mean, and you're cunning, and you don't jolly well intend buying!" she exclaimed. "I can see your idea. You want me to jolly well give my books away! I ain't going to do that for anyone!"

Bessie Bunter made her way back to Study No. 4 and slammed inside. And the rest of that evening she spent debating the problem of how to cook—with nothing! It was a problem to worry even Bessie!

Success!

ON the Monday evening Barbara Rodfern, Mabel Lynn, and Bessie Bunter were shopping in Friar-dale as dusk was just beginning to descend.

As far as Bessie Bunter was concerned, things were getting really desperate. She had two or three recipes that she could send, but none of them were strikingly new. Bessie wanted to be able to send a sweetmeat of quite original flavour and manufacture. How was she to do it when this was Monday, and the entries must be posted on the following day?

That was why Babs and Mabs had brought her shopping, so that Bessie would have no cause for complaint that she had not had support in her own study. They had bought practically everything that Bessie had suggested, and bought in quite generous quantities, too.

"I'll do something this evening," Bessie remarked, her fat face considerably brighter than it had been. "I've got all sorts of new ideas that I haven't tried before, and I'm sure one of them will be all right. I say, Babs! It's going to be ripping when I win that prize!"

Babs smiled.

"I—I know it's cost you and Mabs rather a lot," said Bessie suddenly. "You—you must make out a bill for what you have spent, you know. I don't want you to be out of pocket—especially when I'll have twenty-five pounds to spend!"

"You set to and win the prize, Bessie!" smiled Babs. "That's the best thing for you to think of at present, eh, Mabs?"

"Rather!" said Mabs.

They walked on along the street, ready at last to return to the school.

A little way ahead of them there was an archway that ran between two of the old-fashioned shops. The girls knew it, and knew the little yard that it led to—the yard used to store the barrows and things belonging to the district council. It was a place to pass with care when it was being used by muddy and careless roadmen.

"Shall we cross over, Mabs?" asked Babs. "It's the old spot—you know what happened to your best dress here once, and you said you'd never pass it again!"

work. You must look elsewhere. You shouldn't be wanting work at your time of life! There's your money, and you can come again when there's more rain—not before!"

A muttering voice seemed to be answering.

"Oh, Mabs, I don't like hearing that sort of thing, do you?" said Babs impulsively. "Some unfortunate fellow who can only do unskilled work—and he's got to wait until it rains again! I do think— Oh!"

CLIFF HOUSE PANTOMIMES!

The Pantomime season is nearing its end—at Cliff House and elsewhere. Roll up and see the following before your last chance goes!

CINDERELLA!

Bessie Bunter as Cinderella!

Owing to the slipshod methods of one of the maids, Bessie Bunter re-lays and re-lights the fire in Study No. 4 every day! Come and see her among the cinders! Cinders in her shoes, cinders in her hair, cinders down her neck! Hear the sound she makes when she kneels on a cinder! Hear the sound she makes when she stands up with a cinder in her shoe! "Cinderella" will finish when the warm weather comes! Don't delay! See this grand pantomime to-day!

ALADDIN!

The Tale of the Wonderful Lamp! Enormous Attraction!

Annabel Hichens as Principal Boy!

Annabel, in order to be right out of fashion, has bought an oil lamp for Study No. 1, in preference to the electric light. Marcia and Nancy—and we don't blame them!—prefer the electric light. Result: Something goes wrong with Annabel's lamp every evening! Sometimes it won't light at all! This scrumptious pantomime can't last for ever! Don't miss it! Aladdin and her wonderful lamp! Every evening at six—or thereabouts! Remember the study—No. 1!

RED RIDING HOOD!

Frances Barrett as Red Riding Hood!

Piper is painting part of the bike-shed red. Twice hath Frances, wheeling out her bike, bumped into the ladder and brought the red paint down upon herself! Twice hath she stepped into the can of paint—first with the left foot, then with the right! Even more times has Red Riding Hood brushed against the wet, painted part of the shed! Come and see this great pantomime! Frances doesn't promise to keep it up! It's now or never! Don't miss your chance!

PUSS IN BOOTS!

The Kitchen Cat as Puss!

This is the Second-Formers' own pantomime. Bunny, Pip, and Teddy Bear call it a "great jape" on the kitchen cat. They catch Puss each evening—if they can!—and fasten four dolls' shoes on his paws—also if they can! And the pantomime consists of "Puss in Boots" clumping resentfully about the Common-room! For goodness' sake DON'T MISS "Puss in Boots"!

P.S.—"Puss in Boots" has just come to an end—sharp and sudden. Puss presented Pip with a playful scratch on the arm. A terrific shriek from Pip brought Miss Scott to the scene, and thus ended the delightful pantomime of "Puss in Boots"!

MOTHER GOOSE!

Angelica Jelly as Mother Goose!

Goose as she was last term, Angelica is even more of a goose this! Come and see Mother Goose at her goosest! Come and see the stupid things Mother Goose does! Come and roar over her laughter-provoking hobbies! All day and every day—the non-stop pantomime of "Mother Goose"! No need to worry about being too late to see this! Mother Goose is always with us!

ALICE IN WONDERLAND!

Minnie Jerome as Alice!

Who built the Third Form Common-room? Why is it called "common"? Who built the Third Form class-room? Why is it called "class"? Who paved the quadrangle? Who planted the seeds that have grown into the elms? Who built the tuck-shop? Why doesn't Piper like work? Why does ivy grow on the school walls? Was it planted by the man who planted the elms? Why should we have ivy and elms? These are only one millionth of the things Alice wonders! Don't miss this grand pantomime! Lasting until further notice!

"And Connie Jackson's saying the same thing!" laughed Mabs. "Only last night a man ran into her with a muddy broom. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, I think we may as well—"

And there Babs stopped.

A loud and commanding voice came suddenly to their ears from the direction of the archway.

It was something rather bullying and peremptory in the voice that caught all three of them and made them involuntary listeners.

"No, you won't be wanted to-morrow, and it's no good telling a pitiful tale!" the man was saying. "I can't make

She broke off, and her jaw dropped with blank dismay.

Mabs and Bessie seemed as surprised and horrified.

An old man with a long beard, and strained, white face had come with stumbling steps through the archway. He tottered past them, but did not seem to see anything. They could hear him shuffling along the pavement behind them. It was the discharged man.

"Old Gillis!" muttered Babs, and gulped.

Two fat tears rose to Bessie Bunter's eyes.

"It's the poor old man whose bib-bib-barrow I upset!" she gasped. "I say, Babs! He's been sacked, even from road-sweeping. He—he hasn't got anything to do now! Oh dear!"

The three of them exchanged horrified looks.

"If—if I hadn't done it!" wailed Bessie. "I—I sus-sus-say! Supposing we run back and give him all these parcels—"

"That wouldn't be any good!" muttered Babs.

"Oh, really—"

"Packets of sugar and things like that wouldn't be any use; besides, he's been paid his money, and that will be enough for to-night, at any rate. But we can't forget this, can we, Mabs?"

"We can't!" said Mabs, shaking her head. "It isn't your fault, Bessie, and you're not to blub any more! But no one seems to be thinking anything of the poor old chap except us; if no one will help him, we'll have to try and think out some way of doing so. That's all I can see for it, Babs!"

Bessie Bunter sniffed loudly.

"I'm going to invent my sweet to-night!" she said.

"You are?" said Babs.

Bessie Bunter drew herself up in what was really a rather comic attitude of determination.

"Nothing's going to stop me now!" she said. "I—I'm that sort of girl, you know—when I'm really roused. I shall say 'blow prep!' and keep on until I've got something really good. Then I can give that poor old chap the fifteen pounds he lost over the eggs! Oh dear!" (Sniff!)

"It's a very fine resolve on your part, Bessie," said Babs. "If only you can do it!"

After that they fell very silent as they made their way back to the school. They did not tell anyone what they had seen or heard. But as soon as they reached Study No. 4 Bessie Bunter made a start.

And it was a great start!

On all the other evenings on which Bessie Bunter had cooked it seemed, by comparison, that she had only been playing!

Within two minutes there was the steady bubble-bubble from near the fire, and Bessie was on her knees, and around her were packets and packets. The abstracted gleam in the fat girl's eye told that she was doing it very thoroughly and conscientiously.

Whi-i-isk! sounded the last rites of an egg.

Thump, thump, thump! went Bessie's wooden spoon.

Dolly Jobling looked into the study.

"Thought someone was juggling with basins, from the noise," she said. "Has Bessie got another idea?"

"I think so," said Babs, nodding.

"Well, she'll have to try hard to beat Jobling toffee!"

"Bit hard to eat Jobling toffee, did you say?" asked Mabs innocently.

Bessie Bunter did not permit herself to indulge in any little pleasantries at all. She was very much in earnest.

Even Clara, who called a little later, could not "draw her." Bessie pounded steadily away at her basins, and made notes, and sniffed, and tasted, and considered. The way that Bessie cooked was really worth seeing—in spite of the fact that it was a way that always worked!

"Better have a rest now and do prep, Bessie!" said Babs, at length.

"Prep!" said the fat girl scornfully.

"Yes. You'll have time afterwards, dear," said Babs persuasively. "You know you still owe the Steely lady—"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 146.

hundreds of lines, and she's threatened to double them!"

"I don't care!"

"But you will if she catches you!"

Thump, thump, thump!

Whi-i-i-iz!

Bessie Bunter was "off again," and going faster than ever. She already looked red and hot. But cooking, once she got properly started, was not work to the fat girl.

Babs and Mabs, knowing that they had more or less called the tune themselves by allowing Bessie to start, gazed at her in some trepidation.

And they could hardly think of work themselves as they looked at the fat girl's face.

Was she merely growing desperately anxious to do something, or was she really on the track of something at last?

Neither Babs nor Mabs had ever seen such an excited gleam in Bessie's eyes before! Nor had they seen her move



THE ESSENTIALS OF A GOOD STORY!

Gathered by FRED A. FOOTE.

BARBARA REDFERN.—Keep control over your pen all the time you are writing.

MABEL LYNN.—See that the characters act their parts properly.

MARJORIE HAZELDENE.—All the incidents should be well-knitted together. That is the chief need for a good yarn.

CLARA TREVLYN.—Vigorous writing essential. Plenty of action should be in the story.

DOLLY JOBLING.—Cook down your matter to its smallest compass. See that the atmosphere is good (What about that of No. 7?—Ed.), and that the yarn pans out all right.

VIVIENNE LEIGH.—Do your best. Never be afraid to re-form your plot.

NANCY BELL.—There is a trick in the art of story-writing, but good plotting is the chief thing.

PHYLLIS HOWELL.—See that the story runs well.

PHILIPPA DERWENT.—Make it of galloping interest.

PEGGY PRESTON.—See that the tone is good. That is the key to good story-writing.

ANNABEL HICHENS.—Consider the dressing of the story—the old, old style, preferably.

MEG LENNOX.—Fashion your characters well!

about so quickly. Her cheeks were colouring, too, with quite a flush. Had she over-excited herself?

Something pink went into a little pan to stand on the trivet. Bessie mounted guard over it. She kept on stirring it, and turning it, and watching it with almost grotesque care.

Its place was taken by something white that was treated almost with greater care.

They were both cooked at last, and cooled off in water. Bessie put the two circles of stuff together and pressed them. Then she cut a finger out and tasted it—and shrieked!

"Aaaaaaaaay!"

"My hat!" gasped Mabs.

"Burnt yourself?" ejaculated Babs, leaping to her feet.

"Burnt?" gasped Bessie. "My g-g-goodness, no! Ooooh! Just you taste it! Ooooh! Look at it—smell it! Here you are, Babs—here's a piece! Here's a piece for you, Mabs! You taste it—just you taste it! Aaaaaaaaay!"

And Bessie Bunter shrieked again.

Babs tasted the little pink-and-white slice of confectionery.

She blinked her eyes, and licked her lips, and looked at Bessie.

"Taste it!" shrieked Bessie Bunter.

Mabel Lynn was looking as astonished as her chum.

"What do you think of it, Babs? How do you like it?" yelled Bessie, capering about the floor. "Ever tasted anything like that before? Aaaaaaaaay!"

Babs ate the last piece. It certainly was unique. It was soft and smooth, with a creaminess she had never believed possible in a sweet. There was a faint flavour deliciously reminiscent of almonds—and something else. And it seemed simply to melt in her mouth.

"It—it's wonderful, Bessie!" breathed Babs, in quite an awed voice.

"The finest stuff I've ever tasted!" declared Mabel Lynn.

"Hurraaaaaay!" yelled Bessie, yet again.

And then the door opened.

"Elizabeth Bunter!" exclaimed Miss Steel's frigid voice. "Have you gone completely out of your senses?"

Bessie Bunter gasped.

"This shouting and yelling—and not a sign of preparation in the study!" thundered Miss Steel. "I have spoken about slackness before! Now I come up and find this! It is insufferable—absolutely insufferable! I will not tolerate it for another minute!"

"I—I've got my invention, Miss Steel!" put in Bessie breathlessly.

"Invention? Goodness gracious, you have the impudence—"

"But it's ripping—it simply is!"

"Bessie has made something wonderful, Miss Steel!" put in Babs.

"Absolutely!"—chimed in Mabs excitedly.

Miss Steel surveyed them frigidly.

"Perhaps you have all taken leave of your senses!" she exclaimed.

"No, it's my lovely sweet!" said Bessie proudly. "It is jolly fine, really; better than doing silly old prep, you know!"

"Bessie!"

"I—I mean, it's going to win the prize! You try a piece, Miss Steel! You have this piece! You'll think it lovely, the same as we do!"

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Miss Steel.

She jumped as Bessie Bunter, in an utterly reckless mood, steered across to her with a piece of her new sweet. And then—well, Miss Steel hardly knew what happened. She felt, and intended to be, really cross. No other girl would have dared to offer her a sweet, let alone press it on her. But Bessie did! And Miss Steel found herself eating it!

"There! What do you think of that, Miss Steel?"

Miss Steel stared at the fat girl in great perplexity.

"You—you surely do not tell me that this is something entirely new that you have given me, Bessie?" she said.

"Rather! I've only just made it!" said Bessie triumphantly.

"We saw her!" put in Babs.

Miss Steel blinked.

"This is really most extraordinary!" she said. "By right I should take you to the headmistress. But this is certainly a remarkable thing that you have done, and I am inclined to overlook your thoughtlessness, Bessie. I—I must congratulate you on accomplishing something quite clever. And now, my girl, you are to clear up the study and get on with your work!"

With that Miss Steel turned, and closed the door as she went.

Bessie Bunter was quivering like a fat jelly.

"I've done it. Even Miss Steel had to

admit how nice it is!" she cried. "I say, I'll win the prize now, won't I?"

"You—ought to stand a jolly good chance!" Babs admitted.

"She will!" said Mabel enthusiastically.

The door opened to admit a good many curious girls attracted by Bessie Bunter's yelling.

"I've got it! I've got my new sweet!" she cried to them all in turn.

Babs grabbed her arm.

"Come here!" she laughed. "Here's a pen! Write down the recipe quickly while you remember it!"

Bessie was cautious at last.

"But it's a secret!"

"All right, I sha'n't try and steal it!" chuckled Babs. "You write it down, and I'll look the other way. You put dozens of things in, and I'm sure I don't know what any of them were!"

Bessie scribbled the recipe down and blotted it. Clara Trevlyn, feeling frivolous, was standing at the salute and facing the new invention. Dolly Jobling was pretending to wring her hands with dismay at being outdone. Flap Derwent and Phyllis Howell were each eating imaginary lumps of such size that they had to hold their faces with their hands.

"I'll give you each a little bit to try," said Bessie; and she did.

They tried it, and suddenly all of them lost their jocularly. They stared at each other, and they stared at Babs and Mabs, and they stared at Bessie.

"It's great! Gorgeous!" said Clara Trevlyn, in quite an awed voice.

"I daren't send Jobling toffee in after this!" said Dolly, with comical dismay. "Anyway, I wasn't quite satisfied with it. It was just a little bit burnt, I know."

"Wonderful stuff!" said Marjorie Hazeldene.

Bessie Bunter capered about in Study No. 4 excitedly.

"Hurrah! I'll win the prize now!" she cried. "Twenty-five pounds, and I can pay old Gillis, after all!"

And after that there was no holding Bessie at all. She mounted guard over her new sweet, and over the recipe. She had to taste it again herself, and she had to give others tastes. But a big piece was being kept for sending to Flavour & Favour's on the morrow.

It was the night of Bessie's triumph, and a full triumph, too! Never before had her greatness been recognised as it was being recognised to-night!

While Bessie Slept!

SNO-O-O-ORE!
Nancy Bell knew the sound well enough as she sat up in her bed that night.

It was past midnight, but she had not slept a wink yet. She did not think that she would be able to sleep at all with such thoughts in her brain.

She was thinking of Bessie's new sweet.

No other subject had been spoken about in the Form that evening. Like everyone else, Nancy had-ried to get a sample, but Bessie had drawn the lime at all those who were not her "special chums." Nancy certainly didn't qualify.

But how she would have liked to have a piece! Was it really as wonderful as they all said? Was it something that was bound to take the judge's eye, and the judge's taste, and sweep the board? If only she had a piece!

Sitting up in bed, Nancy listened again. All seemed to be still and restful. She sat a little higher, then drew one leg from the bed. A minute later she found that she was right out and pulling

on her dressing-gown without having consciously taken any resolve to leave the dormitory.

But there was no alarm still, and courage came to her.

If she could just taste a piece! That was all Nancy told herself that she wanted. Curiosity, perhaps. And she was interested in that sweet, too. Her rather reckless "chipping" had driven Bessie on to her final efforts. Yes, she ought to have been allowed to try it!

Spurred on by the thoughts which even now Nancy would not honestly face, she went downstairs, moving with greater stealth than ever. She came to Study No. 4, and lit herself inside by a candle she had brought with her.

Would she find this wonderful thing now?

It proved a long search. Bessie had hidden her invention, and thought that she had hidden it well. But Nancy was a good searcher, and a resolute one. She came on it suddenly at the top of the

money. Besides, there's no proof that this is going to win!"

She rose to her feet, with a shaky laugh.

"No proof at all!" she said. "I dare say that something that has been sent in already has won the prize. Bessie won't win anything. But it—it would serve her right if it just disappeared from the study!"

Nancy Bell ate another piece of the sweet.

It was the most fascinating thing she had ever tried. Would it please the judges as much as it seemed to have pleased all the girls? Her eyes looked uneasily away. Such a great temptation. And now, in this quiet study, it was in her power to do anything!

"It's really Clara's fault," Nancy muttered suddenly. "She's accused me of being against Bessie. If I have the name for it, why shouldn't I live up to it, and spite them?"

That was one argument, and another soon came to her greedy, unscrupulous mind.

"There's no money belonging to anyone yet," she muttered. "And it's a prize, too—a competition; and all competitions are luck. My own effort might be considered as good as this, only I haven't swanked to all the Form. Anyway—anyway, I'd love to send in something like this, just to spite them all!"

She sat for another quarter of an hour, biting her lower lip, drumming with her fingers on the table. She tried the sweet again. And then, with a sudden flood of guilty colour, Nancy Bell came to her resolution.

"I'll do it!"

That was all. But now she moved from Study No. 4 with all the terrified haste of a guilty girl. Straight to Study No. 1 she went with the sweetmeat and the recipe. She found a little box, and some brown paper, and a printed visiting-card that bore her name. With trembling fingers she began to pack the sweetmeat, and on top of it went the card that bore her name—not the name of the fat girl who had invented it!

Flustered and flushed, Nancy finished at length. She was breathing quickly and heavily. But the deed was done now—the little parcel was addressed to Flavour & Favour's Works.

Would it win?

Nancy Bell would not even ask herself that question now. She was scared at what she had done, yet still unrepentant. Where was the risk, after all? Why should they even guess? No one was likely to have seen her leave the dormitory. No one could ever say that she had had it!

She crept back up the stairs, and into the darkened dormitory. No voice hailed her. She slipped out of her dressing-gown, and got back into bed. And there, almost trembling with a peculiar fear, she lay and realised what she had done, and what, perhaps, it might lead to!

Nowhere to be Found!

I SHOULD send it off soon, Bessie!"

"I'll send it off as soon as breakfast is over!" vowed Bessie Bunter. "Now that it's had all night to get properly hard it ought to be better than ever. Nice and hard, you know! Won't they be delighted when they taste it?"

There had been no containing Bessie as she dressed that morning.

Few remembered her jumping out of her bed so quickly and readily as she had done that day. Few remembered

Look Out for this Cover Next Week!

"Nancy Bell's Secret!"



Order your copy in advance.

cupboard. Beside it there even reposed the recipe!

She lifted the pink-and-white sweet down and ate a piece. She gasped. They hadn't exaggerated at all! It really was wonderful!

Then she sat back in a chair, and knew at last why she had really come down here—why she hadn't been able to sleep!

She was thinking of the twenty-five pound prize. She knew what it meant, and how she herself could spend it. She didn't want to see Bessie win anything, and was utterly careless of her motives. She had boasted that she might do something herself. What a score it would have been if she had invented something like this!

Nancy Bell gritted her teeth.

The thought was in her mind again. What did it matter who had invented it?

"Bessie's only going to fritter the money away—give it to an old man who'll put it into eggs and get them all under a cart or something!" Nancy muttered to herself. "And she's too fat and silly to be allowed to have so much

ner having such a generous and conscientious wash. Bessie evidently felt that she could afford to do things well. And there was a little touch of dignity about Bessie, too, as befitted a girl who was soon to receive a twenty-five pounds cheque!

"Don't laud too much upon it, Bessie," said Babs warningly, as they went down to breakfast.

"How do you mean?" said the fat girl, in surprise.

"Well, you're not the only entrant, you know," said Babs. "I think you stand a good chance of winning. But it's a competition, you know. Someone else might make something that would take their fancy more, or perhaps be cheaper to manufacture."

But Bessie shook her head very confidently at that.

"I'll win all right, Babs!" she said. "They won't touch me at cookery, you know!"

Bessie was distinctly seen to refuse a third helping when she was offered it that morning. Freda Foote made fainting signs at the sight, but Bessie was definite. She was in a hurry to get to the study!

And she did hurry as soon as the meal was over, little guessing what awaited her there. Babs and Mabs went upstairs in a more leisurely manner. They hardly understood the first breathless cry that came to their ears.

"I can't find it!"

Then there was a second shout, and they went at a run for Study No. 4. They found Bessie on a chair by the cupboard, and beside the cupboard were pitched all the things that were usually to be found on the top. Bessie's face was red, and she was snatching and fishing, and peering everywhere. Babs could see her fat arms trembling.

"Bessie, what ever's the matter?"

Babs and Mabs felt a chill of dismay as they saw the look on the fat girl's face as she turned to them.

"It's gig-gig-gone!"

"Gone!" said Babs blankly.

"Y-y-yes."

"Oh, you can't have looked!" said Mabs disbelievingly.

"I—I have!" chattered Bessie. "Oh dear! I—I put it here, just at this side. And—and now—"

"You must have put it somewhere else!" ejaculated Babs.

"I didn't!"

And then Babs was on a chair and at Bessie's side, while Mabs was jumping on to the table, and looking from that coign of vantage. They looked at the empty cupboard top and stared. It certainly wasn't there.

"Has it slipped behind?" gasped Babs.

Bessie Bunter was trembling so violently that she could not reply.

"Let's see!" suggested Mabs.

They both jumped down, and tugged so frantically at the cupboard that the things inside seemed to be spilling. Mabs peeped behind, and nearly jammed her head against the wall. But there was nothing to be seen, no sweetmeat!

Bessie Bunter dissolved into tears.

"It's gig-gig-gone! Someone's eaten it!" she wept. "Have—have you t-t-taken it, Babs?"

"I?" said Babs, horrified.

"Y-y-yes. You—you know you were warning me n-n-not to make up mummum-my heart too m-m-much!"

"Good gracious! Why, I haven't had it, Bessie! I wouldn't do such a thing!" said Babs. "I say, you must have made a mistake—put it somewhere else. Do think!"

Marjorie Hazeldene and the chums of Study No. 7 came in just then.

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They were told what had happened, and they were horrified.

"I expect it's in the cupboard!" said Clara. "We'll soon find it!"

Clara Trevlyn was a thorough and energetic searcher.

Dolly Jobling was a trifle clumsy, but just as keen. They upset a few things, but they looked everywhere. Marjorie helped. In five minutes they knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that that luscious stuff was not in Study No. 4.

"Perhaps it's just a horrid jape on someone's part!" said Babs, glancing at the tearful Bessie. "We'll ask all round the Form at once, to make sure!"

She started and encountered Nancy Bell almost at once. But Nancy was looking very cool and confident now.

"Bessie's lost her wonderful invention?" Nancy exclaimed. "Well, it isn't to be wondered at, really! I suppose she got up in the night and ate it. It's just the sort of thing she would do!"

"G-g-got up in the night?" chattered Bessie. "Oh, you fibber!"

"Of course Bessie didn't do that!" said Babs indignantly. "Are you sure you haven't seen it, Nancy?"

"Oh, positive!" yawned Nancy easily.

"Well, we must believe that, I suppose," said Babs. "Sorry, Nancy, but we've got to ask everyone. Come on, Mabs!"

They asked all round. The girls were genuinely concerned over the fat girl's loss, but no one seemed to know anything. Every girl was questioned. The thing became a bigger mystery than ever.

"There's only one thing, Bessie!" said Babs blankly. "You'll have to make some more. You'd better get a start made just as soon as possible, so that you can catch the tea-time post."

"I—I kik-kik-can't!" groaned the fat girl.

"Can't?"

"Nunno! I—I haven't got the recipe. That's gone as well!" said Bessie.

"You—you've lost that?" said Babs, in horror. "Oh, surely you can remember how you made it? Didn't you keep a copy?"

Bessie Bunter sniffed tearfully.

She hadn't kept a copy, she said, and she couldn't remember. It had just been a fortunate experiment, coming after many luckless ones, and they were all confused in her mind. She couldn't remember the quantities at all, and it all depended on the quantities. She had got them just right.

Babs and Mabs didn't know what to do then. They went on questioning and searching until school-time. It was only when they were waiting for first lesson to commence that they found that Bessie Bunter was missing, and no one seemed to know where she was.

Bessie came into lessons a quarter of an hour late, and such a dejected and dusty-looking figure that Miss Steel hardly seemed to think at first that it was Bessie!

All down the front of her she was dust and cobwebs, and her face was grimy as well. She explained that she had been searching in all the likely places that she could think of.

Miss Steel was very sharp, but not as sharp as she might have been. She sent Bessie to wash, and then kept a stern eye on her. But Bessie was quite incapable of attending to any lessons that morning.

Babs and Mabs did their best to console Bessie after dinner.

"You must try to make it again, Bessie!" said Babs. "Look here! You've got time. There's a good fire. Mabs and I—or any girls in the Form, for that

matter—will get you the stuff. Now do try!"

So Bessie tried, but in not a very optimistic manner.

She tried first this, and then that, but the inspiration seemed to have gone. Nothing came right. The samples that Babs and Mabs were allowed to try were nothing like the sample they had tried the previous night. The mysterious "quality" of Bessie's sweet had vanished. She could not get it again.

"No luck?" Clara whispered, when Babs and Mabs were following Bessie down to afternoon lessons.

"None at all," said Babs heavily. "If it's some jape I think it's horrid, and the japer might have owned up by now. The stuff must go off by the tea-time post."

"Well, I give it up!" said Clara Trevlyn, with a perplexed shake of the head. "Poor old Bessie!"

Bessie Bunter herself was despairing now. She sat through afternoon lessons like a girl in a dream, every now and then giving a pronounced sniff. Threats of punishment were entirely wasted on her, and in the end all the mistresses left her alone.

The last chance came when lessons were over. Bessie Bunter went and waited in Study No. 4, hoping that there was still some "japer" to come forward and return the sweet and recipe. Babs and Mabs toured the school, making an appeal for fair play in every Common-room. But no one seemed to know anything.

They went back to Study No. 4 at last, to find Bessie Bunter in the rocking-chair, dissolved in tears. She was weeping copiously.

"Oh, poor kid!" muttered Babs, and choked back a lump in her throat. "It is a shame! Some horrid girl, I'm sure—"

"I—I won't be in time now, will I, Babs?" quavered Bessie, raising a fat, tear-stained face.

Babs could hardly reply to that. But she slowly shook her head.

"And—and I won't win the pip-pip-prize after all!" Bessie went on to sob. "I—I really meant to help that poor old man. Now—now perhaps I'll never be able to do it. Oh, Babs, I have tut-tut-ried, haven't I?"

Babs and Mabs both assured her that she had, and did everything they could to console their unhappy fat chum. But Bessie was almost inconsolable. Triumph had been turned into disaster, and it was a disaster that could not have hit the fat girl in a more cruel manner.

And Bessie, in her own fat and blundering way, really had meant well; she had tried to do a very fine and generous thing. This was the result. It was, perhaps, the biggest disaster that Bessie Bunter had ever known!

The Girl Who Won!

THE news came to Cliff House at last. It came as a shock to everyone, and a still greater shock because no one was expecting it.

Practically the whole Form was gathered in the Common Room when Boker, the page, came in.

"A telegram for Miss Bell," he said.

No one noticed the guilty colour that dawned suddenly in Nancy Bell's checks.

"For—for me?" she muttered.

"Yes, miss," said Boker.

There was a momentary lull, in case it might be bad news. Except for that, no one was very interested in Nancy or Nancy's telegrams.

Nancy Bell tore open the envelope and stood looking at the written slip inside.

She blinked her eyes and seemed to have difficulty in believing what she read.

"Not bad news, is it, Nancy?" asked Babs quietly.

Nancy Bell gave a shriek.

"Hurrah! I've won!"

The colour was flooding her cheeks, and every eye was on her. But that did not matter now. And, after all, they had to know sooner or later.

"I've won! I've won the prize!"

"For laziness?" asked Clara Trevlyn, with sarcasm.

Nancy Bell waved the slip in the air and danced. She knew all the shame of being under false colours, an impostor, and she was having to hide that. But there was a genuine triumph in her heart as well when she thought of what this meant, in honour and in money!

"The prize for cooking!" Nancy shouted. "Ha, ha, ha! You wouldn't believe that I was any good! You told me that I couldn't do anything! And now I've won the prize—I've beaten Bessie Bunter!"

There was amazement in the Common-room at that.

"She's spoofing!"

"Let's see the telegram, Nancy!"

Nancy Bell extended it to the nearest one.

"Certainly! You read it, and then you'll see!" she cried. "You'll see that it's the truth, and I've surprised you all this time! Hurrah! Twenty-five pounds!"

They took the wire and peered eagerly at it.

This is the startling message they saw:

"Miss Nancy Bell, Cliff House School, Kent. Heartiest congratulations on wonderful sweetmeat which wins first prize in our competition.—Flavour & Flavour, Ltd., Smalltown."

"It's—it's really true!" muttered Babs.

Nancy Bell took the telegram back and sniggered.

"You don't come rushing round to congratulate me; but perhaps I can hardly expect that!" she exclaimed. "I'm not popular enough, of course! Still, I've won—I've won! You can't deny that!"

"Congrats, Nancy!" said Marcia Loftus softly.

But the others could only stare—first at Nancy, and then at Bessie Bunter.

Bessie Bunter was sitting, her mouth agape, fresh tears in her eyes. And they knew, as soon as they looked at her, the feelings that must be in her heart. The prize had come to Cliff House—to that very Form. But it had not come to Bessie, who needed it!

"Poor kid!" muttered Babs, and her first action was to go to Bessie's side. "It's an awful disappointment for you. And if your effort had gone in, you might have been the winner now!"

"She would have been!" cried Clara. "Goodness knows what you sent in, Nancy—you've done precious little, and had a giddy lot of luck, I should say! But Bessie's sweet would have beaten yours easily. I suppose you deserve to

be congratulated, but it isn't nice of you to stand there, grinning like that about it!"

"And why didn't Bessie's sweet go in?" cried Katie Smith's voice. "Was it kept out of the way purposely?"

Nancy Bell smiled her triumphant smile again.

"Thank you, Katie, for that!" she said, with mock politeness. "I can expect something like that, of course! You'll apologise for saying that when you think things over. And even if you don't, I don't care. Twenty-five pounds! My word! I can have a time with a prize like that!"

She flounced eagerly and excitedly towards the door, still watched by all eyes. But no one seemed to guess—not one girl seemed to have an idea of the truth. They did not know for what sweet that prize had been awarded.

Yes, Nancy Bell had won at the expense of unfortunate Bessie Bunter. And it looked as though she was going to enjoy her false triumph quite unchallenged!

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

(Next Thursday's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND will contain "Nancy Bell's Secret!"—a magnificent new, long complete story of the girls of Cliff House, by Hilda Richards—a splendid instalment of "Joan Haveland's Silence!" and numerous extracts from the "Cliff House Weekly." Order your copy at once!



OURSELVES!

A Description of the Staff of "The Cliff House Weekly!"

EDITRESS (Barbara Redfern).—First in command. Has the power of commanding anyone to write an article for the "Weekly," but not the power of making them do it. Always "editing," which means that she is able to excuse herself from writing very much for the "Weekly," except Editorials (which the rest of the staff will tell you that no one reads!) Has to bear the brunt of all interviews with indignant would-be contributors, and is now an expert at repulsing Frances Barrett, and can get the proverbial word in (edgewise) when Angelica Jelly is talking. Usually has the honour of falling into a booby-trap when something in the "Weekly" has offended any Form. The contributors are praised for the best articles in the "Weekly," and the Editress is blamed for the worst ones. A nice, quiet, dignified job—as you will have observed already. All the sub-editresses have been offered the Editorship at various times, and have refused—perhaps because they are so self-sacrificing!

ASSISTANT EDITRESS (Mabel Lynn).—Helps the Editress, and is usually at her side when a booby-trap descends and smothered them with damp sawdust or anything like that. Saves the Editress a few shocks by reading some of the articles first, and has become an expert at knowing what to do when told: "Mabs, it's press day, and we must have another column to fill the issue! Do write something interesting!" Like the Editress, the efforts of the Assistant are consistently ignored when things are going well; but she provides an excellent substitute when Babs is missing, and some indignant contributor comes for an "explanation." Her position is fully recognised at such times. Fills the position of Secretary to the Debating Society, which sometimes helps her to fill a column after an interesting debate. The lot of the Assistant is much the same as that of the Editress, except that she never gets praised!

VERSE SUB-EDITRESS (Clara Trevlyn).—Is responsible for the quality and matter of all verses contributed by outside people, but

is held to be quite irresponsible when writing verses herself. Being a sort of Poet Laureate, she is expected to burst forth into song at all sorts of happenings. When the Second-Formers have executed what they, in their juvenile innocence, consider to be a great jape on the Third, they look eagerly for something as inspiring as "The Charge of the Light Brigade" commemorating their feat in the "Weekly," and frequently attempt to jape Clara for slighting their dignity. Has a promising pupil in Katie Smith, and, when too lazy to write verses herself, frequently calls upon her for assistance.

NEEDLEWORK SUB-EDITRESS (Marjorie Hazeldene).—A very steady and conscientious contributor to the "Weekly," who never incurs the anger of anyone. As Clara says: "If you don't want to waste time with a giddy needle and cotton, you needn't read Marjorie's page, and that's all about it!" Walks round with an abstracted gleam in her eye when a fresh article is required from her pen, pounces suddenly on someone, and says: "That's a jolly good idea, and very pretty! Can I describe it for the 'Weekly,' please?" Of course, no one can say "No," when Marjorie asks so nicely.

SPORTS SUB-EDITRESS (Phyllis Howell).—Another one who comes in for more knocks than bouquets. The "Weekly" being a Fourth Form paper, sports are described by Phyllis from the Fourth Form point of view, and this always differs from the view taken by any other Form. Recently Study No. 5 was visited by a deputation of Third-Formers, who came with hockey-sticks to demonstrate exactly what happened over a certain incident that (they said) Phyllis had wrongly described. The deputation was not received warmly. Further, the deputation itself became the prey to internal differences, half of the Third-Formers being divided against the other half. Exactly what happened in the end is not exactly clear, but it resulted in the Third Form deputation being banded into the passage, leaving one broken picture in Study No. 5. These who have any

grievance whatever over sporting matters seek out Phyllis Howell to have the matter debated in the columns of the "Weekly"—always provided that they cannot first find the Editress! The hockey-stick kept by the Sports Sub-Editress in Study No. 5 is not there purely as an ornament!

COOKERY SUB-EDITRESS (Dolly Jolliffe).—An heroic young lady who spends many hours of her life experimenting for her own benefit, and for the benefit of the readers of the "Weekly." Commits many excellent recipes to paper, and commits many more "unsuccessful cooks" to the dustbin, or other suitable receptacle. Is invited to Third Form banquets "to see how it is done," but, being in the habit of burning things herself, she knows already! Blunders cheerfully along through life and usually contrives to see a joke when it is against herself (as it usually is!) Although not always able to practise what she preaches, has a reputation for absolute reliability concerning cookery matters—when writing about them! Has to serve as a standing joke for—

JOKE SUB-EDITRESS (Freda Foote).—Freda is sometimes described as the life of the Form, and at other times they say that one day she will be the death of the Form! Makes a lot of jokes every day, but in extenuation it must be pleaded that all of them are not really her own, and she is, therefore, not too deeply to blame. Has the knack of being able to take a seemingly impossible title like: "Chiefly Concerning Cats," and write an article which does not tell you very much, but is quite interesting to read—especially when you have nothing else. Has a particularly nimble mind, and usually sees the funny side of everything, and is thus able to undertake her editorial duties as faithfully as anyone. Can usually make a suggestion when a "guaranteed contributor" comes along to her at the last moment for an idea.

Although one might gather at times that she was the "Weekly" itself, BESSIE BUNTER is not even on the staff. At Editorial Conferences her position is usually on the coal-scuttle, from which position of honour she makes numerous suggestions that are never of any use whatever. Has abandoned the position of "Honorary Returner of Rejected Contributions" (which entitled her to put the letters "H.R.R.C." after her name) since taking one back to Frances Barrett and tactlessly making a few suggestions of her own! Now calls herself the Office Mascot—whatever the others may call her!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 146.

The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New School Serial!



JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!

By JOY PHILLIPS

(Author of "The Girl Who Chose Riches!")



THE LEADING CHARACTERS.

JOAN HAVILAND, a poor scholarship girl, who formerly lived in Brick Row, in a London suburb.

RUBY HAVILAND, her sister, whose sudden accession to riches completely spoiled her.

ELSIE DANTON, the friend of Joan.

HILDA HEATHCOTE, an excellent girl, and captain of the Fifth Form at Greyhurst School.

SYBIL SARDONE, **CLARICE CHOANE**, **OLIVE COURTNEY**, and **PHYLLIS FRANKLIN**, four "cronies," who formed a "set" at Greyhurst, and were bitterly opposed to Hilda Heathcote and her friends.

Joan and Ruby Haviland arrived at Greyhurst School separately—Joan with Elsie Danton, Ruby with Sybil Sardone. Elsie had previously pressed Joan to keep silent as to their relationship.

From the first Sybil Sardone & Co. were down on Joan, though Hilda Heathcote and her chums befriended the scholarship girl. It was on account of this that Hilda became accused by her enemies of favouritism, and lost many of her friends.

Founders' Day, famed for the visits of the girls' parents, arrived. Ruby, learning that her mother intended to visit the school, shammed illness, and stayed in the dormitory. However, Joan and Mrs. Haviland found their way there, and Ruby's manner showed that she was really deeply fond of them both. Outside in the grounds again, Joan and her mother were met by Clarice Choane, dressed as a charwoman, who, amidst the spiteful laughter of Sybil and the others, commenced to taunt the widow. Hilda Heathcote arrived, and quickly put a stop to the proceedings, making all four apologise to Mrs. Haviland.

(Now read on.)

Who Will Lead Them Now?

GREYHURST'S great and happy day was drawing to an end at last.

With the down-going sun now flaming upon the old grey walls of the school, some of the last good-byes were being said at the big porch.

All the traditional events associated with Founders' Day had been enjoyed by the scores of parents and guardians who had visited the school to-day.

There had been speech-making and a great junketing, and an impressive service in the school chapel, together with much fun and merriment.

But now it was the time for loving farewells, even for those grown-ups who were most reluctant of all to tear themselves away.

One after another private cars and hired motors were speeding down the long avenue, whilst back yonder, near the school porch, this girl and that stood

waving—waving until her own particular "people" were at last lost to sight.

Across the emerald grass, on which the shadows of the great old elms were lengthening fast, Joan Haviland came sauntering alone.

Her loving good-bye to the one visitor she had had this memorable Founder's Day had been said hours ago.

Mother had had to leave shortly after two o'clock, returning on foot to her humble lodgings down in the village, there to resume the ill-paid work by which she won her daily bread.

Somehow, Joan was feeling glad to be alone just at present. Detached like this from all the bustle and excitement still in force over by the School House, she felt there was a soothing influence in the quietude of the field at this hour of sunset, such as she stood in need of.

It had been a very trying day, a sheer ordeal from the very moment when her mother first set foot inside the school, until the last good-bye kiss had been exchanged at the lodge gateway.

And it was a shame, Joan was thinking sadly, that the day had been so spoilt, a day that had seen so many other girls full of joy after the happy reunion with their loving parents.

If only she had never been under that painful, cruel obligation to keep silent about Ruby's relationship to her and mother!

There was the trouble that had marred the day's reunion, spoiled everything.

Ah, well! It was no use repining. Things being as they were, it seemed to Joan that she must try to be glad that the secret had been kept. Not glad because it gave Ruby another lease of the selfish life she had been leading up to now, but glad for a reason which was the only one Joan could have any regard for now.

As she had said to Ruby tragically, for their relationship to be revealed at this stage would be for her—Ruby—to come in for a terrible time in the school.

Every scholar in the place would draw her own correct conclusion as to why Ruby Haviland had pretended she was no relation to "the scholarship kid." And terrible would be the opprobrium suffered by Ruby, for having let cheap, false pride induce her to disown her own mother and sister!

But how was it all going to end?

Poor Joan! Heavy indeed was her heart at this moment.

She knew how well what love and devotion mother deserved. She had, too, a love for Ruby that only made her feel

that sister's shortcomings all the more keenly. Yes, the whole situation was a deplorable one, grieving her night and day, and always there was this despairing thought—how would it end?

In her aimless sauntering, Joan was drawing close to the beautiful avenue, down which cars were speeding every other minute. She would have turned to retrace her steps across the almost deserted field, still preferring solitude. But all in a moment something happened to make her forget every personal anxiety.

To her sudden horror, she saw a horse that was harnessed to a tradesman's delivery van, come bolting up the drive, with hoofs pounding madly on the gravel.

The horse and van had been left unattended for the time being on the grass beside the avenue. But a car going by with its misfiring engines, had frightened the beast, and now it was off up the drive, tearing madly towards the throng of people and the host of cars still gathered just outside the school.

But the runaway would pass close to Joan in the next moment or so, and in a flash the plucky girl was rising to the grave emergency.

Out into the roadway she darted, gathering breath and energy for a desperate attempt to hold up the horse.

His head flung high, and his hoofs thundering over the ground, straight at the intrepid schoolgirl he came, whilst shouts and screams arose from the beholders of this appalling scene.

Then, with a fearless spring, Joan made her snatch at the runaway's bit.

Missed!

Yes, her hand had just missed the portion of harness that she had meant to seize, and now—now she would have gone down, all mixed up in the trailing reins, and fated to be dragged along the ground. Only she just managed to hang on to a shaft of the vehicle.

It was a moment for the shouts and screams of alarm to change into groans of despair.

The unchecked horse was dashing madly on, with that poor girl only just managing to hang on to the shaft.

At any instant she might lose her hold, or be shaken off by the sheer violence of the stampeding beast, and then it meant certain death for Joan Haviland!

Entangled in the reins, she could never fall clear of horse and cart.

But now, who was this second girl who, undaunted by seeing the tragic penalty which Joan Haviland was likely

to pay for her bravery, was ready to challenge the runaway in his mad career? Hilda Heathcote!

There, in a flash, as if she had got to the spot by sheer magic, was the captain of the Fifth Form.

Just in time she made her dash at the horse's head, and got a firm hold somehow.

He plunged and reared furiously, flinging the girl this way and that as she still hung on. But there she was, holding him, and he might do his very worst, she would not let go.

Just a few yards short of the scattering crowd and the deserted motors, Hilda pulled up the runaway.

He came to a sudden, trembling stop, the wind piping in his throat, and then a shout of relief went up as all saw Joan Haviland disentangle herself from the trailing reins, and spring clear, quite unharmed.

That shout of relief, however, alarmed instantly to another outburst of alarm and pity.

Hilda Heathcote let go her hold of the stilled horse, only to fall limp and lifeless upon the ground.

Then the crowd surged around.

Strong hands took the horse under control, leading him away, whilst those who were already kneeling about that mute, limp form were beset with anxious whispers from the rest of the throng.

"What is the matter? Is it serious? Oh, poor girl, don't tell us she is badly hurt!"

There was a doctor in the crowd—a famous West End doctor, whose daughter was a Greyhurst scholar. In an instant he had the case in charge, and, under his care, the still senseless girl was borne away to the school sanatorium.

Calm words from the doctor dispelled the worst fears that had assailed all who stood around. Nothing very serious—no, the girl was not injured for life; not a single bone had been broken. But the effort it had cost her to hang on to the horse, whilst the crazy beast was dashing her about so madly—that effort had left her terribly bruised and shaken.

It was all bad enough, despite the reassuring verdict. In the same way that gloom seemed to settle with startling suddenness upon all the age-old walls of Greyhurst school, now that the sun had set, so a tragic gloom was settling upon the dispersing crowd.

In a hushed way were all the last good-byes said between scholars and departing parents. Quietly and slowly cars hummed away down the avenue, and so out on to the main road.

Dusk deepened into night, with all the girls of Greyhurst now assembled within doors; and what a hush was upon the usually boisterous School House now!

No one was allowed to go to the brave, stricken girl who lay in a silent ward of the sanatorium.

Tearfully had Joan, Elsie, Joyce, and many others begged to be allowed to creep in to the bedside; the entreaty was refused.

It was "Hush—hush!" everywhere. So the anxious evening wore itself out, and bed-time came at last, with scores of girls going softly up to their dormitories, faced with an almost sleepless night.

Again there had been word of a reassuring nature from those who had the case in hand. Poor Hilda had rallied for a few moments. Her physique—thanks to the healthy recreations of which she had been so fond—was a splendid one. She ought to go on quite all right.

But who was it had put a damper on this cheering news, by starting talk about possible complications, relapses, and such dread contingencies?

No one seemed to know; but somehow the whisper had got started, filling a hundred anxious minds with nightmare thoughts of Hilda lying helpless upon her bed of pain for weeks and weeks; of her being over there, in the sanatorium, for the rest of the term, too ill to be removed to her home.

And, oh, how awful it was to think of her never making a complete recovery—Hilda, of all girls who loved the active life, the very keenest!

No light-hearted chatter in the dormitories, to-night, whilst the girls were preparing for bed.

Once only was a ribald laugh heard in the silence that filled the whole School House, and that laugh did not come from one of the dormitories proper.

It came from the little annexe to the Fifth Form quarters—that overflow room in which Sybil Sardone had her bed, along with the members of her "set." But even Sybil at length became quiet.

Lights out! And after that, the deep darkness of a moonless night, with anxious minds still as wakeful as ever, let the chimes ding-dong the passing hours, one after another.

Brave, splendid Hilda Heathcote, their captain, the best the Form had ever had; they hoped fervently that all might go well with her!

How was she now, they wondered? What would the news be, when morning came again at last?

And—at first only a very vague, half-considered question, but slowly becoming more definite and insistent in the minds of all who had the welfare of the Form at heart—there was this problem to be solved:

"Who will lead us now?"

The Ways of Destiny!

MORNING at last! Wan-faced, weary girls had been up an hour or more, talking in subdued tones whilst they made their listless toilettes. Now, mustered in the great hall, as usual before classes commenced, they were giving prompt obedience to the cry:

"Silence, please! Silence for the headmistress!"

In a moment she appeared before all the rows of scholars, stepping from a side doorway to the centre of the dais.

Usually a lady whose capable manner was toned down by a certain degree of charming geniality, this morning Miss Chessingham seemed to be in a terser mood.

"I have only to say a few words," she began briskly. "The bulletin on the notice-board will have informed you how the position is as regards the girl who is in all our thoughts to-day. Hilda Heathcote—"

A sudden murmur interrupted the quiet speaker; a murmur that swelled gradually into a definite, ringing cheer.

The headmistress waited, entirely pleased by the seemly interruption.

"That is nice of you," she commented, still as brisk as ever. "I only hope that our brave Hilda has heard your cheering! I think she must have heard it, for, as the bulletin tells you, she has had a good night, and is much better this morning!"

"Hurrah! Bravo! Bravo, Hilda Heathcote!"

"It will be up to us," went on the headmistress, "as soon as Hilda Heathcote is sufficiently recovered—and may that day be soon!—to show what we think of yesterday's heroic deed. Meantime—"

The slight pause left every girl hanging upon the next utterance. What would it be—some message for the whole school, or for her own Form, at least, from Hilda herself, perhaps?

"Meantime," resumed the headmistress, amidst tense silence, "the Fifth Form is left without a captain. You all know the rule in these matters, girls. The election of captain is, traditionally, a matter purely for the Form in question to settle for itself."

Miss Chessingham was sending her keen glance along the line of Fifth Form girls now.

"I presume you will have your meeting for the selection of candidates at noon, and I do trust that the subsequent voting will decide things happily. I mention no names; I wish to influence nobody's vote! But, girls of the Fifth Form, I trust and believe that you will



Whilst Joan Haviland clung desperately on to the shafts, Hilda Heathcote, with a great spring, seized the reins. What would be the result of their gallant efforts?

week a worthy successor to one who was so able a leader—Hilda Heathcote, of whom the whole school is prouder than ever to-day!"

It was not meant to be in any sense a rousing speech—merely a simple appeal to the girls to keep steady heads at such a critical time for the Form. But Hilda's name had been voiced again, and that in itself was enough to evoke a fresh outburst of cheers!

The assembled girls took the dismissal, and even the Sixth Form seniors could be heard discussing the pending election as they drifted away; discussing it keenly, just as if it were a matter affecting the entire school.

And, after all, was not the Fifth Form's ultimate choice of a leader bound to have its indirect influence upon the school as a whole?

The girl who would take Hilda Heathcote's place must do one of two things—either have the whole school's own good name always in mind, as Hilda herself had done or else lead the Form with utter disregard for all that was Greyhurst's boast.

At noon the Fifth Form girls remained in their desks in the class-room.

She, the versatile leader of the Debating and Dramatic Society, was quite unembarrassed.

"I have said nothing about it up to now," she continued, "but you all saw a note brought into me during class, and I want to tell you what was in it."

How they listened for what was to come next!

"The note was from Hilda Hea—"

"Hurrah! Bravo, Hilda!" instantly cheered Evelyn Gray, Elsie Dainton, Joan Haviland, and half a dozen others.

"Only a few words," Joyce went on. "The question of who shall be captain now is troubling Hilda, you might be sure of that. In that note to me she begs me to propose her own choice, and I do so with pleasure. I beg to propose Joan Haviland—"

"Wh-a-a-at!" came in a startled cry from Sybil and her "set."

Nor were some of Hilda Heathcote's most loyal friends able to conceal their amazement.

"Joan Haviland! That girl!"

"A new kid! Besides, she— Oh, impossible!"

Joan stood up in her desk, scarlet-cheeked and breathless.

"I second it!" said Evelyn Gray.

Elsie had wanted to jump up and do the seconding, but Joan was simply hanging on to her, imploring her to "Stop! Sit still!"

"Now, may I speak, please!" panted Joan, springing up again. "I—I—I don't know what to say—"

"Then sit down!" sneered Sybil.

"Order, order! Give her a chance!" "But," Joan floundered on breathlessly, "of course, I shall not dream of standing as a candidate!"

"Loud cheers! Hooray! Pip-pip!" cried the swell set derisively.

"Only, I feel I must say one thing before you all," Joan continued, trembling visibly. "I think it is just like Hilda Heathcote to be so—so—"

"Hear, hear!" cried Elsie, Evelyn, and a few others.

"Just like Hilda Heathcote to want to put a scholarship kid over the lot of us!" remarked Sybil. "Oh, sit down!"

"I—I—"

"Sit down!"

"No, no!" Order!"

But Joan sat down. She could have said no more, in any case. The thought of Hilda's loving regard for her had caused a wave of emotion to rush over her, and she was almost in tears.

"Joan, then, absolutely declines to stand for election," Joyce said, keeping her own emotions well in hand. "Who else, then?"

"I am only a new girl myself," said Elsie; "but if anybody who has perhaps a better right to do so will propose Joyce Carroll, I'll second it!"

"Bravo! I propose Joyce Carroll!" cried at least half a dozen girls. "Joyce Carroll—yes!"

"No," said the bobbed-hair girl just as calmly as ever—"oh dear, no! I'm much too much this-and-that in the Form already! As for being captain—why, I'd never get a single moment at my violin then! Somebody else, please!"

"Elsie Dainton!" said Evelyn Gray.

"I second Elsie Dainton—yes!" said Joyce promptly. "And I may tell you that she will have Hilda's vote!"

Sybil & Co. cried again:

"Wh-a-a-at!"

Elsie was on her feet already.

"It is very kind of you; but—"

"Oh, you know you have been fishing for it!" sneered Sybil.

"Order, order!"

"Really, Sybil Sardone," protested Joyce Carroll, "we know you can't help a lot of your bad manners! But do try to be at least a little decent for once—just try!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" the meeting laughed, enjoying Sybil's discomfiture.

"I was going to say," resumed Elsie, when the merriment had subsided, "it is surely very undesirable that a new girl should be Form captain, unless—as in Joan Haviland's case—she has done something which the Form desires to reward her for. So I will just thank those who have proposed and seconded me, and then sit down."

Which she did, creating such a favourable impression by her modest conduct that half the room suddenly felt: Why, she was just the girl!

"I seem to be always speaking—sorry, and all that!" said Joyce Carroll. "But I must say this. Hilda Heathcote's disappointment over the non-election of Joan will be a great deal softened, if Elsie Dainton can be persuaded to stand!"

"Hear, hear!" from all parts of the room. They were not forgetting Hilda's feelings in the matter.

"And why shouldn't Elsie Dainton stand?" Evelyn Gray jumped up to argue. "True, she is a new girl; but she was at a big public school before she



"All right, then! Now I will say a word!" said Clarice Choane, rising to her feet. "I beg to propose Sybil Sardone as captain of the Fifth Form."

Miss Trotter, the Form-mistress, stayed to see someone properly elected to the chair; but she tactfully withdrew as soon as Joyce Carroll, amidst the cheering of a good majority, had been persuaded to keep the meeting in order—if she could!

"Well, then," Joyce, of the bobbed hair, began, standing up in her formal place at the Form-mistress' desk directly Miss Trotter had gone, "let's to business, girls! You know the one thing on our agenda—To select candidates for the election of Form captain."

She added, smiling:

"So now, all you girls who are thirsting for the job, you can propose yourselves, you know. But don't all speak at once!"

There was some laughter, and then a very heavy pause. Everybody was waiting for everybody else to speak.

"Perhaps I may open the ball myself with just one remark," Joyce went on.

"It is all right. Don't worry yourselves! I wouldn't dream—" she began, but was tugged back to her seat by Elsie, who saw Joyce gesturing for a hearing.

"Before Joan or anybody says anything more," said Joyce, quite serenely, "I had better explain. Hilda's chief reason for wanting the Form to elect Joan is that Joan had her shot, you know, at trying to stop the runaway horse. She—"

"That doesn't matter! All rubbish!" sang out Sybil and her cronies impatiently. "Wouldn't any girl have tried to stop the runaway if she had been there?"

"You can't be altogether certain," Joyce said sweetly, and a few girls laughed.

They were girls who felt quite certain that Sybil Sardone for one would never have attempted to stop the runaway.

"I object, anyhow!" cried Sybil violently. "I have been objecting all along to scholarship kids being at the school at all. And now you are going to propose that one of them becomes Form captain."

"Yes, I am proposing that, exactly that!" said Joyce sweetly.

ANSWERS
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came here. And she isn't so new that we have not had time to get to know her!"

"Hear, hear!"
"Your name must go to the meeting—it really must, Elsie!" insisted Joyce. "Proposed by Evelyn Gray, and seconded by Joyce Carroll, that Elsie Dainton be asked to stand as a candidate, she being assured of support at the poll. Hands up all those who— Thank you!"

Elsie could not help seeing the number of hands that shot up. Well, she thought, giving a shrug, no harm in being made a mere candidate!

Girls who wanted to see the Hilda Heathcote regime continued would surely be getting at least one other candidate to stand. That candidate, of course, being a better-known scholar, would top the poll. And quite right, too!

As if to confirm these expectations of Elsie's, one of Hilda Heathcote's loyal supporters now jumped up to ask:

"Can we propose another candidate to make sure of getting at least one good girl or another? I have nothing whatever to say against Elsie Dainton. But do let's be sure!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured several girls, nodding their full understanding.

"Evelyn Gray—Evelyn Gray!" half a dozen voices began to clamour.

"Very kind of you, I'm sure!" Evelyn said, beaming round upon the girls. She was standing up in a front desk. "But just remember this. It will be a fatal thing if you split the vote!"

"I was thinking of that," Joyce Carroll said. "I know I am in the chair; but that can't stop me from wanting to see a fitting successor to Hilda Heathcote win this evening's election! I am heart and soul for what you may call the Hilda Heathcote party!"

"Hear, hear! Hear, hear!"
"And down with all outsiders!"
"Outsiders!" sneered Sybil Sardone, springing up.

Her lovely face was white with passion.
"You are showing your true colours now, some of you!" she cried.

"We are hoisting them—yes! Nailing them to the mast," said Evelyn Gray. "The flag that Hilda Heathcote always kept flying!"

"You talk about outsiders!" cried Sybil. "I put it to the whole meeting who is the greater outsider—am I, who have been several terms at the school, or the girls who have been flattering to-day? That scholarship kid—and her cousin, Elsie Dainton—"

"Order, order!"
"It is no use, Sybil Sardone," Joyce Carroll said, with sudden sternness. "You have always been the declared enemy of Hilda Heathcote! And we, who want a girl like Hilda for captain, must regard you as our enemy, too!"

"Hear, hear!"
"All right, then! Now I will say a word!" cried Clarice Choane, rising gracefully and calmly to her feet. "I beg to propose Sybil Sardone as captain of the Fifth Form!"

"Oh, oh!"
"Hear, hear!" applauded Olive Courtney, Phyllis Franklin, and a few others.

Joyce gestured for silence, and then asked formally:
"Does any girl second that?"

"Yes, I second it," a voice answered—a voice so faint and tense, it would not have been heard but for the sudden hush that had fallen upon the room.

All looked at the girl who had stood up to answer.
Ruby Haviland!

"Seconded by Ruby Haviland!" Joyce announced dispassionately. "Any further nominations?"

There were no further names proposed. Thus it was to be a straight fight between Elsie Dainton and Sybil Sardone. Some hard breathing was audible from the girls who were heart and soul for a Hilda Heathcote type of captain. What a good thing, they were thinking, that they had been warned not to split the vote!

With Elsie and another girl standing as friendly rivals for the Hilda Heathcote party, how easily might Sybil Sardone have slipped to the top of the poll when the time came!

Even now she had eight girls willing to support her. And what if there were a few waverers whose vote could yet be enlisted in her interests by a bit of canvassing?

Joyce Carroll was as keenly alive as any of them to the critical situation.

"Anybody got anything else to say?" she asked sharply.

Nor did she wait long for an answer.
"Very well, then! That ends the present business!" she declared. "The ballot will be taken in the usual way this evening!"

A stir went through the room.
The meeting was over—and Elsie Dainton and Sybil Sardone were rivals for the captaincy!

"Vote For Her—If You Dare!"

IN the studies, when classes for the day had ended, all the talk was of this thrilling contest which was to be settled in a few hours' time.

Already the school's ancient ballot-box had been set out in the entrance-hall downstairs, with this inscription suspended above it on a sheet of cardboard:

"FIFTH FORM CAPTAINCY.

"This ballot-box is for the reception of votes, and it will be cleared at 9 p.m., when the result will be announced."

Already, too, some more or less desperate canvassing had begun.

Joyce Carroll was having she knew not how many cups of tea this afternoon, tea-time finding her going from study to study in support of Elsie Dainton.

Nor was her self-appointed task one that she found uncalled for.

Girls there were who were going to vote for Elsie Dainton right enough when the time came. These were girls who greeted Joyce with high-spirited cheers and made her sit down and "have another cup" whilst she was there. But there were others—just a few—who were not such certainties!

Why?
In some cases a shrug of the shoulders was the only answer to that question. Never mind why, these girls seemed to say; they had their reason, and that was enough.

But from others Joyce found out what the reason was for shakiness over the coming vote.

It was not that they resented Elsie Dainton as a new girl standing as the party candidate.

The waverers would have felt just as hesitant, they frankly owned, even if Joyce herself, or Evelyn Gray, or any other leading light of the Fifth, had been up for election.

The real reason was that these were girls who had been wavering just a little bit lately in their loyalty to Hilda Heathcote—or, rather, in their loyalty to the ideals for which Hilda Heathcote stood.

They were, confessed one or two, just a trifle weary of being kept up to the mark. And if Elsie Dainton was elected, she was going to be a second Hilda Heathcote, wasn't she?

"I hope so," said Joyce frankly. "I am pretty sure of it."

"Well, then—"
And talk followed which showed that these girls really did not want to see a second Hilda Heathcote holding the captaincy.

Were they thinking of voting for Sybil Sardone then? That girl! Oh, no! At least, they might feel like giving Sybil "a trial." There was nothing like giving the other side a trial, just for once, was there?

It was vague, shifty talk that Joyce longed to demolish by some of her best debating and dramatic eloquence. But she was shrewd; she knew that earnest argument might easily be mistaken for bullying.

The waverers were girls who were just the sort to get their backs up unless handled very tactfully.

She left them to "think it over," whilst her heart sank for the safety of that cause for which she was fighting.

A terrible element of uncertainty had suddenly shown itself as to which way the voting would go.

"Well? Shall we pull through?" the just-as-anxious Evelyn questioned, when Joyce returned to the study which the pair of them shared these days.

"Oh, don't ask me. I'm fed up!" Joyce exclaimed, sinking into a low chair. "Give me my fiddle, Evelyn dear, will you? I mustn't let Elsie and Joan drop in and find me such a cross-patch."

"How would another cup of tea help?" suggested Evelyn.

(Continued on the next page.)

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JOAN HAVILAND'S SILENCE!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Tea! I've been having tea every where," said Joyce, tuning up. "Evelyn says it is very sad, but all girls are not what they pretend to be."

"You mean— Oh, Joyce! Are some of them really going over to Sybil Sardone's side?"

Joyce did not answer. She was holding the fiddle under her chin, and now, as her right hand drew the bow softly across the strings, she closed her eyes.

The study door opened softly. Joan Haviland looked into the room, whispering:

"Well? Is it all right still? We are going to win, aren't we?"

Evelyn made a gesture, which said:

"Wait, Joan! Joyce will tell you!"

Then for a full minute the soft music flowed on, with no other sound to mar its glorious harmony.

"Win? Yes, we shall win, Joanie!" Joyce said, suddenly opening her eyes and smiling, whilst she still played on. "My fiddle tells me so!"

"She's mad—quite mad at times," smiled Evelyn.

"No," said Joan quietly. "I think I understand!"

(Who will win in the fight for the captaincy—Elsie Dainton or Sybil Sardone? There will be another fascinating, long instalment of this grand new school serial in next week's SCHOOL FRIEND. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)

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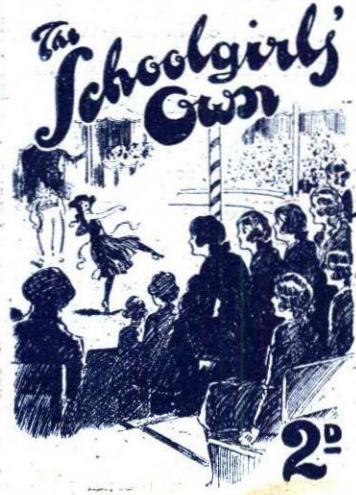
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