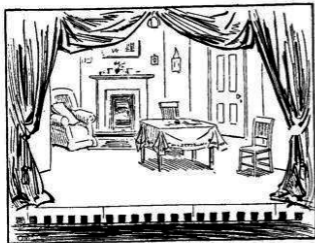


INCOMPREHENSIBLE

A Farcical Playlet in One Act and Two Scenes, introducing the Girls of Cliff House School.

By HILDA RICHARDS



SCENE I.

(The scene shows No. 4 study at Cliff House School. It is a simply-furnished room, the essential furniture being a table—with drawers—an easy chair, and three ordinary Windsor chairs. There is a fireplace at one side, with an electric lamp wrapped in red paper and embedded in coal to represent a fire. If this cannot be arranged, the fire may be assumed to be out of sight of the audience, a suitable curtain being in the way. There must be a door, or a curtain as substitute, used for all entrances and exits.)

Properties required for the first scene are:—A frying-pan containing a yellow cardboard disc to represent a pancake, a fountain-pen, an empty ink bottle, an outline drawing with a black patch of ink in the middle, and the necessary impositions.

For the second scene: A jumper, a cushion, a flatiron, and a large, old book.

When the curtain rises, BARBARA REDFERN and MABEL LYNN are seen seated at the table writing, and BESSIE BUNTER is crouching over the fire with the frying-pan.)

BARBARA: Bessie, are you coming to get on with your lines?

BESSIE (over her shoulder): In a minute, Babs. Plenty of time. I'm just cooking a pancake. A girl must keep up her strength, you know!

MABEL: Gracious! Cooking again! Why, you ate a tremendous tea!

BESSIE (peevishly): I wish you wouldn't keep harping on about that tea. That's half an hour

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

BARBARA REDFERN. Fourth Form girl, with long, wavy hair.

MABEL LYNN. Her chum. Bobbed hair.

BESSIE BUNTER. Fat, with a thick, cable-like plait, and round spectacles. Talks readily and complacently, and proves to be a general "duffer."

(Study-mates in No. 4 Study. Aged about 14 years.)

CONNIE JACKSON. A spiteful mistress, aged 17.

MISS BULLIVANT. A prim, spectacled mistress.

BESSY (Beatrice Barlow).

PIP (Priscilla Pacey).

TEDDY BEAR (Thelma D. Beare), (Three Second Form girls, full of fun and excitement. Aged about 10 years.)

NOTE.—The Second Form girls can be reduced to two, if required, the additional lines being shared equally.

More Fourth Form girls can be introduced by making the Study the Fourth Form common-room, and sharing the parts of Barbara and Mabel amongst the additional players.

ago. How can a girl write a hundred lines for Miss Bullivant when she's got such a dreadful sinking feeling?

(BARBARA throws down her pen and turns round in her chair.)

BARBARA: Now look here, Bessie! You really must come and get on. We three have got special permission to go to a concert with Miss Steel this evening, and you want to come, don't you?

BESSIE (eagerly): Of course I do!

BARBARA: Well, Miss Bullivant won't let you go unless her lines are finished.

BESSIE: They'll be finished. I'll dash them off in no time when I feel fit for it! Besides, she's sure to forget.

BARBARA (a trifle annoyed): It isn't good enough. Really, Bessie, I can't understand why you must start cooking like this. You know you want to go out, and we want you to go with us, and yet you're fooling about in this way. I can't understand it. It's incomprehensible!

BESSIE (startled): Eh?

BARBARA: I said that it was incomprehensible.

BESSIE: You're making that up!

BARBARA: Making what up?

BESSIE: That word. There's no such word as in—incomprehensible.

(BARBARA and MABEL laugh.)

BESSIE (waving frying-pan indignantly): I'm blessed if I can see anything to laugh about. You're trying to show off. I call it jolly bad form to try and show off by using words that you've made up yourself.

MABEL: Don't be silly, Bessie. There is such a word. Everyone uses it at times.

BESSIE: I don't believe it. It isn't a word at all. No one ever says a silly word like that.

BARBARA: They do.

BESSIE (shouting): They don't!

BARBARA: But I can prove to you—

BESSIE: Look here, Babs, I'll take you at your word! Here's an offer for you. You say a lot of people use it. We'll listen all this evening, and if no one says it you'll stand me a good feed. Is that a bargain?

MABEL: But what happens if someone does use it? Will you stand us a feed?

BESSIE (confidently): No one's ever going to use it. Still, I'll tell you what I'd do if they did. I'd go just like this to them!

(BESSIE goes through facetious actions—suggest raising her hands to her forehead and then wave her arms three times. Giggles delightedly while she is doing it.)

MABEL: You'd never do that!

BESSIE (indignantly): Of course I would! Just to show anyone what I thought of them for using such a word. Look here, make it a bargain about that feed, you two, and if anyone does use such a silly word I'll either do that or—stand you two a feed instead.

(BARBARA and MABEL exchange looks and nod resignedly.)

BARBARA: All right, Bessie, if it satisfies you. And now, will you leave that pancake alone and come and start writing your lines?

BESSIE: But it's nearly done now. In another minute—

(A voice is heard off stage.)

VOICE: Is Bessie Bunter in there?

BARBARA, MABEL, and BESSIE (together): Miss Bullivant.

(BESSIE whirls round, seeking for somewhere to put the frying-pan. Tries to put it in a table drawer, but is stopped. Endeavours to put it behind a picture but cannot. Goes through various other actions and finally places it in easy chair, with an antimacassar over it. Just drops into a chair as MISS BULLIVANT enters the room.)

MISS BULLIVANT: Have you finished that imposition, Bessie?

BESSIE: N-n-not quite!

MISS BULLIVANT: How much have you done?

BESSIE: Well, the—the fact is I—I didn't think the colour of the ink was n-n-nice enough.

MISS BULLIVANT: You mean that you haven't started?

BESSIE: Only the—the actual writing, Miss Bullivant. I—I've thought it all out—just what

I'm going to write. I—I'll dash them off in no time—that is, I'm going to start now.

(MISS BULLIVANT walks across room, turns, and seats herself in the easy chair. Gasps of horror from the girls. BESSIE looks painfully guilty.)

MISS BULLIVANT: I am very surprised.

BESSIE: I—I didn't mean it. I—I didn't think you'd sit there, Miss Bullivant.

MISS BULLIVANT: Whatever do you mean? I am talking about your slackness.

BESSIE (relieved): Oh, yes. Quite so. It—it's a rather nice chair that, isn't it?

MISS BULLIVANT (sharply): Bessie, at times you seem positively too lazy for words. I cannot make you out at all. You are incomprehensible!

(BESSIE gasps. BARBARA and MABEL nudge each other and chuckle. BESSIE hesitates and looks very uneasy, and finally commences to go through actions.)

MISS BULLIVANT (jumping up): Goodness gracious! Have you lost your reason, girl?

BESSIE: No. Oh, dear, no! I—I—

MISS BULLIVANT: Then, what is the meaning of those absurd antics?

BESSIE (muddled): I—I didn't want to stand them a feed.

MISS BULLIVANT: Goodness gracious! Explain yourself!

BESSIE: I—I mean, it's nothing, Miss Bullivant, really. It's—it's just my high-spirited way—my little p-p-piece of girlish fun.

MISS BULLIVANT: Bessie, those lines are to be written immediately. You are a most foolish and disobedient girl. I sometimes feel that I shall never understand you. At times I feel that you are, as I said before, utterly in—

BESSIE: D-d-don't say it again!

MISS BULLIVANT: Girl!

BESSIE: I—I—I don't like that word. It—it makes me feel dreadful. Really it does, Miss Bullivant. S-s-say anything else you like.

(MISS BULLIVANT stares at the quaking BESSIE BUNTER and moves towards the door.)

MISS BULLIVANT: Those lines are to be written before you go out this evening. If they are not done I shall see that you remain in the school. Understand that! (Exit.)

BARBARA and MABEL: You duffer!

BESSIE: Oh, really! I don't owe you a feed anyway. And I'm not going to count that one—she's always using words that no one else has ever heard of. 'Tisn't fair to count Miss Bullivant. (Goes across to chair and removes antimacassar.) Oh, I say! Look at my pancake! She's spoilt it!

MABEL: Are you going to get on with your lines, Bessie?

(BESSIE lifts the "pancake" from the pan, and examines it critically.)



BESSIE: I can't eat it now. It's absolutely spoilt. If you'd only let me put it in the drawer, as I wanted to—

(BARBARA and MABEL rush forward and replace pancake in frying-pan. Pan is placed in hearth and BESSIE forcibly led back to her seat.)

BARBARA (angrily): Now, Bessie, if you won't get on with writing those lines we'll go out without you. Miss Bullivant's quite right. You are incomprehensible!

BESSIE: That's cheating!

BARBARA: What is?

BESSIE: Saying that word! But I sha'n't do it to you, so there! I don't believe it's a real word now.

MABEL: But your impot—that's what we're worrying about! You haven't even started, and you know what the Bull said.

BESSIE: I'll do it now—I will, really! (The door opens silently, and CONNIE JACKSON appears, but is not seen by the three girls. She stands still, listening.) I say, jolly lucky I bluffed the Bull like I did, wasn't it! You know, I've always got a way of getting over things. It isn't every girl who could carry it off, when she'd promised to wave her arms about whenever anyone said a stupid word like incom—incomprehensible, is it?

BARBARA: You were very lucky, dear. But do get on with your work now.

(CONNIE JACKSON smiles to herself, and disappears again without having been observed.)

BESSIE: Rather! I'm going to! Now you'll see how I write lines. (Picks up fountain pen.) Oh, bother! There's no ink in this thing.

BARBARA AND MABEL (anxiously): Let me fill it.

BESSIE: Pooh! Think I can't fill a fountain pen, now? Just you watch! You take this little thing, and you just give it a push like this, and then—oh!

(BARBARA and MABEL shriek, Mabel picks up the paper on which she had been drawing with a huge splotch of ink in the middle of it.)

BESSIE: Bessie, just look what you've done!

MABEL: It—it went off wrong. The ink squirted out.

MABEL: Yes; and now you've ruined my drawing. How can I show this to Miss Primrose?

BESSIE: Well, it was an accident. I'm sorry.

I can't say more than that. And I really think you needn't make such a fuss when the stupid pen—

(Enter CONNIE JACKSON.)

CONNIE (harshly): What is the meaning of all the noise in this study?

BARBARA (blandly): It's quite all right, Connie. It's all over now.

CONNIE (aside): Is it, though? I always suspect cheek in this study. I think this is my chance now to teach them something else. (To others): What are you doing with that pen, Bessie? What is the meaning of all this ink about the table? Have you done it?

BESSIE: Quite an accident, Connie.

CONNIE: Accident, indeed! Bessie, you are a preposterous girl.

(With emphasis.) I consider that you are quite incomprehensible.

(BESSIE looks dismayed. BARBARA and MABEL exchange glances.)

BARBARA (aside): She'll never be so silly!

CONNIE: I said, Bessie, that you are utterly incomprehensible!

BESSIE (in a nervous aside): I've got to stand them a feed if I don't!

(BESSIE commences to go through her "actions" in a very half-hearted manner.)

CONNIE: Girl, how dare you! What are you doing? What is the meaning of this impertinence? Are you attempting to defy me?

BESSIE: I—I—I—

CONNIE: How dare you! Barbara! Mabel! Have you been urging this girl to do this sort of thing to a monitress?

BARBARA: It's only a joke, Connie.

CONNIE: Joke, indeed? Then I will teach you a better one. Bessie, you will write one hundred lines immediately! Do you understand? You will write them at once!



BESSIE (anxiously): But I'm going to a concert with Miss Steel.

CONNIE: Not until you've finished those lines for me.

BARBARA (holly): Connie, you can't do it! It's not fair! We won't stand it!

CONNIE (retreating to the door): That remains to be seen. Those lines are to be written at once.

There is plenty of time before any girls have permission to leave the school. I shall watch and see that you do not go out until they are finished. (Exit.)

BESSIE (fearfully): Another hundred lines! Two hundred to be written before I go out!

BARBARA (angrily): She must have known! It's Connie's spitefulness! I'm sure she knew all the time, and she's just made it an excuse to have her revenge on us!

MABEL: All our fault for ever letting Bessie be so silly!

BESSIE: Oh, really! I jolly well defied her, anyway!

BARBARA: But how can you possibly do two hundred lines now?

BESSIE: I'll try! I won't be beaten! I've got a spiffing idea! Just you listen! When you see it, you'll say that it's—it's—incomprehensible!

(CURTAIN.)

TABLEAU. Curtain raised to show BESSIE seated at table, with BARBARA and MABEL bending over watching her. BESSIE has four pens tied together, and is endeavouring to write with them all at once.

The attempt fails, and she flings them to the ground in disgust.

(CURTAIN.)

SCENE 2.

(Scene) same as Scene 1. Time, half an hour later. BESSIE BUNTER is alone in study, writing her hardest, and pausing constantly to hold her wrist, as though cramped. Great noise made by pen, which may, in reality, be scraping upon a piece of sandpaper.)

BESSIE (pausing in her work): Ninety-five. Oh, dear, and I've got two hundred to do. Ninety-five from two hundred leaves a hundred and fifteen. It can't be done!

(Starts work again, laboriously counting the lines aloud. Has just finished the hundredth, when the door opens. Enter BUNNY, PIP, and TEDDY BEAR looking ready for any mischief.)

BUNNY: Hallo, Bessie. Busy?

BESSIE (despairingly): Yes, I'm writing lines for horrid old Connie Jackson, and the Bull as well.

PIP (winking): Writing lines, eh? I'll tell you a better way to do them, Bessie.

BESSIE (eagerly): What is it?

PIP: Why, do them with a ruler! (BUNNY, PIP, and TEDDY BEAR shake with mirth.)

BESSIE (indignantly): I'm blessed if I can see anything to laugh at in that. That's the worst of you Second Form kids. You're so ignorant. You don't understand how serious it is to be in the Fourth Form. (PIP creeps behind BESSIE, and commences to tickle her.) Oooh! Ow! He, he, he! Leave me alone! He, he, he! Oh, stoppit! He, he, he!

(BESSIE jumps up from chair and faces youngsters.)

TEDDY BEAR: We wondered if you'd like to play Red Indians with us this evening, Bessie.

BESSIE: I can't, Teddy Bear. I want to go to the concert. Besides, it's no good playing Indians with you—you always want to jolly well scalp me!

BUNNY: But you've got such a lovely plait!

BESSIE: Of course I have. But if you'd had your way you'd have jolly well chopped it off before now for a scalp. I say, do go away. I want to be busy. I've got a lot of lines to write.

PIP: Nonsense!

BESSIE (severely): You ought to know that it's very bad manners to talk like that to me. I don't know what they teach you kids in the Second Form. Really, I don't know what things are coming to at all. It's—it's—incomprehensible!"

THE THREE: Oooh!

What ever's that?

BESSIE (triumphantly): There you are! That shows how jolly ignorant you are! You don't know the meaning of a simple little word—that everyone jolly well uses.

THE THREE: They don't!

BESSIE: Everyone I've met uses it.

BUNNY: What does it mean?

TEDDY BEAR: Spell it!

BESSIE: I-n-k-e-r-m-m— No, I'm bothered if I will!

THE THREE: You can't!

BESSIE (indignantly): Who can't? Why, I knew how to spell that word when I was only half your age!

BUNNY: I don't believe it!

BESSIE: Why not?

BUNNY: It's incomprehensible!

BESSIE: I'll put you out of the study now!

(Tussle follows in which BESSIE gets considerably the worst. Door opens abruptly. Enter CONNIE JACKSON, smiling triumphantly.)

CONNIE: What is the meaning of this? Bessie! Answer me instantly! Have you



written that imposition? Why are you playing about and bullying these youngsters?

BUNNY: She's not bullying us!

CONNIE: Silence! Where are those lines, Bessie? I want them at once!

(BESSIE makes a clumsy attempt to hide the imposition she has been writing.)

BESSIE: I haven't d-d-done them yet.

CONNIE: What is that under your hand?

BESSIE: Th-th-that's n-n-nothing. Just a f-f-few—

CONNIE: It is an imposition!

BESSIE: Oh, dear! It's for Miss Bullivant, Connie. She—she won't let me go to the concert unless I give it to her first.

CONNIE: I have come for my own imposition.

(BESSIE looks very uneasy, then opens one of the drawers and produces fresh papers which she hands to CONNIE.)

CONNIE: You did not write these!

BESSIE: I've borrowed them. I—I mean I write better at some times than others—just like Babs, in fact.

CONNIE: These lines, written by some other girl will not do. (Starts to tear them across.)

BESSIE (clutching her arm): Stop! Don't tear them, Connie! Oh, don't do it! They're not m-m-mine at all. They're Babs' lines for Miss Steel.

(CONNIE deliberately tears up the papers and strews them on the table.)

CONNIE: You should have explained that before and not given me another girl's imposition. (Laughs.) You're so clever at explaining things that you'll be able to make it all right with your friend. Hallo, what is this? Why, you've written a hundred lines here!

BESSIE (desperately): They're for Miss Bullivant.

CONNIE: I shall take them.

BESSIE: But I can't go to the concert if you do. I was going to dodge you and do yours to-morrow—I mean, do them next!

(CONNIE laughs again and crosses to the door.)

CONNIE: You'd better hurry up and do your lines for Miss Bullivant. You'll have to be quick. The concert party's nearly ready to start. (Exit, laughing afresh.)

(BESSIE sinks into a chair and starts to weep. The Three Second Form girls gather round her.)

BUNNY: Bessie, I say, I am sorry!

PIP and TEDDY BEAR: So am I, honestly. We're both sorry.

BESSIE (dismally): I shan't be able to go to the concert now.

BUNNY (dramatically): It's all Connie's fault. We didn't understand that Bessie was in such a hurry. But if we hadn't fooled about Bessie might have got the lines done. Come on, we'll go and see Connie!

PIP: Oh, rather! We'll give her such a time of it!

TEDDY BEAR: We'll go up and tell her what we think of her!

BUNNY: Cheer up, Bessie. We're awfully sorry it's happened, and we'll make old Connie sorry for being so horrid! (Exeunt Three.)

(BESSIE rises and examines the pancake critically, as though wondering if it is still possible to eat it. Returns it to the frying-pan in disgust. Enter BARBARA and MABEL, in hats and coats.)

BARBARA (cheerily): Buck up, Bessie, it's all right after all. We've seen Stella Stone and she says Connie has no right to insist on her lines before you go out. So if you've done Miss Bullivant's hundred we can get off at once!

BESSIE (dejectedly): Connie's got them already.

BARBARA (horrified): Never!

(MABEL steps to table and looks at scattered papers.)

MABEL: Good gracious! What's all this litter?

BARBARA: My lines I wrote for Miss Steel!

(BESSIE looks very nervous and worried.)

BESSIE: Connie did that, Babs. I—I was just going to borrow them, you know. She—guessed that I hadn't written them, and jolly well tore them up.

BARBARA: Bessie!

BESSIE: I—I'm awfully sorry, Babs. I—I'll write you some more—better writing than yours, too. I—I'll do them in red ink as well.

BARBARA: I wasn't thinking of that. Connie's got your lines and you've nothing to show to Miss Bullivant. She won't let you go out now. I say, I am sorry!

BESSIE (hopefully): I say, suppose I defy the Bull?

MABEL: Don't be silly!

BESSIE: Oh, really! I could, easily. You know the way I can look at people when I'm angry. (Strikes attitude.) I'd say something



like this to her: "Madam, I have stood all I kee-an! You have dee-riven me to desperation. I have not done your lines, and for you to expect that I should is—is—incom-om-prendible!

BARBARA (*sighing*): It's no good. Connie's been too quick for us. She must have known that we had spoken to Stella, and she came down first.

(*Bang at the door. Enter BUNNY, PIP, and TEDDY BEAR excitedly.*)

THE THREE (*shrieking*): We've got your lines back.

(*BUNNY waves bundle of very crumpled papers.*)

BESSIE: My lines.

PIP: Yes, we followed old Connie upstairs. She didn't tear them at all. She simply screwed them up and threw them in the paper basket. Here they are!

(*BUNNY hands BESSIE the crumpled papers.*)

BARBARA (*doubtfully*): You can't give them to Miss Bullivant like that!

BESSIE (*excitedly*): I don't care. I've got an idea. I'll make them all right again. I'll iron them!

BARBARA and MABEL: You'll what?

(*BESSIE darts to fireplace and gives a shriek.*)

BESSIE: The iron's hot! It jolly well burnt me! (*Grabs at jumper lying on chair.*) This will do it. (*Picks up iron.*)

MABEL: My jumper! Bessie, you silly noodle—

BESSIE: I say, don't be quarrelsome, Mabs. This is jolly important, you know. I'll iron these lines out in no time. (*Dabs flat-iron on papers on table.*)

BARBARA: You duffer! They're scorching! Take it off!

BESSIE (*removing iron*): Oh, dear! I—I think it must have been too hot. That top page looks rather brown, doesn't it. I—I'll have to put that one underneath. (*Returns iron to fender and exhibits paper previously scorched with hot iron.*)

BARBARA: It's impossible to do anything now!

BESSIE: Not at all. I'll get them smoothed out some way. The Bull never looks at lines, you know. I know what I'll do. I'll press them in this book!

(*Puts papers into book and starts to squeeze it very hard and with a great amount of deep breathing.*)

BUNNY, PIP, and TEDDY BEAR rush to help, and generally get in the way.)



BESSIE: Can't you leave a girl alone? You'll jolly well tear the book if you're not careful! A lot of consideration you've got for poor old Babs' atlas, I must say. I know what I'll do! I'll jump on it!

BARBARA (*feebly*): But my atlas—
(*BESSIE places heavy book on floor and commences to jump excitedly on it.*)

BESSIE: This'll make 'em flat in no time!
(*Door opens quietly. Enter MISS BULLIVANT. All girls see her with the exception of BESSIE, whose back is towards the door.*)

BESSIE (*excitedly*): Jolly fine idea, this! It'll take her in completely. She'll never guess anything now. My word, I would give her a look, too, if she asked any questions.

(*Girls try frantically to warn BESSIE of Miss BULLIVANT'S presence.*)

BESSIE: I think it's mean of you to pull faces like that just because it happens to be your atlas, Babs! Anyway, I'm not the sort of girl to be afraid of a mistress, just because she happens to be jolly suspicious. I shall simply smile at her and say—

MISS BULLIVANT: Bessie Bunter!
(*BESSIE gives a cry of alarm and jumps off the atlas. She stands quaking.*)

MISS BULLIVANT: I have come for that imposition, Bessie. Where is it? The other girls are ready to start. Have you finished it? What is the meaning of these extraordinary antics?

BESSIE: I—I—I—
MISS BULLIVANT: Have you written it?

BESSIE: Oh, rather. I—I've done it beautifully.

MISS BULLIVANT: Then please give it to me at once.

BESSIE: Oh, dear! I—I—I say! Look at that picture over there, Miss Bullivant.

(*Mistress does so. BESSIE snatches at the atlas, just as mistress turns again. BESSIE jumps to her feet and tries to look very unconcerned.*)

MISS BULLIVANT (*angrily*): What is the matter with you, you stupid girl? Where is that imposition?

BESSIE: I—I can't get it for the m-m-moment. I say, Miss Bullivant, if you—you'd j-j-j-just mind going out into the passage for a minute I'll tell you when you can come in again—

MISS BULLIVANT (*breaking in*): I have stood as much of this nonsense as I can! Where are



those lines? Give them to me immediately. Are they in that atlas?

(*BESSIE looks thunderstruck.*)

BESSIE: Oh, dear! They—they might be in it. I—I can't understand how you guessed it. I—I'll just look and see if they are.

(*Examines atlas, and gives a very forced exclamation of surprise as she produces lines.*)

MISS BULLIVANT: These are very crumpled and soiled, Bessie!

BESSIE: They shouldn't be! I jumped hard enough.

MISS BULLIVANT: What?

BESSIE: I—I mean, it's the cheap paper. It's fearfully cheap paper. It—it gets a bit crumpled when you're writing quickly.

MISS BULLIVANT: And this bottom sheet—it looks as though it had been scorched.

BESSIE (*guiltily*): Oh, dear! So it does. I—I say, Miss Bullivant, that's funny, isn't it? He, he, he!

MISS BULLIVANT: I see nothing to laugh at!

BESSIE: Oh, no! Quite so. Barbara, what are you laughing about? I'm surprised at you! Miss Bullivant doesn't like you to laugh!

MISS BULLIVANT: You have not yet explained why these papers were in that atlas, Bessie!

BESSIE: H-h-haven't I? I—I put them in there to—keep them clean, Miss Bullivant. That's—that's me all over. I—I didn't want them to lie on the table and get all dusty—

MISS BULLIVANT: Bessie, I cannot believe such a preposterous tale. You have been smoothing these papers out to deceive me.

BARBARA: It's true that they've been crumpled, Miss Bullivant, but it isn't Bessie's fault. She wrote them for you this evening.

MABEL: And someone took them away from here for spite.

BUNNY, PIP, and TEDDY BEAR: That's quite right, Miss Bullivant. We got them back.

MISS BULLIVANT: Goodness gracious! I am not deaf!

THE THREE: But it isn't Bessie's fault. We got the papers back for her, Miss Bullivant, and she did write them for you!

MISS BULLIVANT: Will you—

THE THREE: And we hope you'll let her go to—

MISS BULLIVANT (*shrieking*): Please be silent! You will deafen me. Bessie, I am very dissatisfied with the whole business, but I am willing to accept this explanation that you have not tried to deceive me intentionally. I will accept these lines, and you may get ready immediately. (*BESSIE beams.*) But I still cannot understand how you have written an imposition so quickly. Knowing your laziness so well, it really seems to me—well, quite—

BESSIE (*triumphantly*): Incomprehensible!

(CURTAIN).

First Curtain-call: BESSIE, in hat and coat, arm-in-arm with her two chums, waving concert tickets triumphantly.

Second Curtain-call: Full company.

(FINAL CURTAIN).

