

No. 2 OF A NEW SCHOOL STORY PAPER!

# THE SCHOOL FRIEND

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No. 2. Vol. 1.

Three-Halfpence.

Week Ending May 24th, 1919.



A BOOBY-TRAP FOR BESSIE BUNTER!

(An amusing incident from "The Rivals of the Four" complete in this issue.)



Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.



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# The Rivals of the Fourth!

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:: :: introducing Bessie Bunter :: ::

BY

**HILDA RICHARDS.**

## Study Seven Means Business.

**"CHEEK!"** That was Barbara Redfern's opinion.

And Mabel Lynn, for once as emphatic as her chum, said indignantly: "Impudence! Sheer impudence!"

It was a notice pinned on the board that had moyed the wrath and indignation of Babs and Mabs of the Fourth Form at Cliff House.

Several junior girls were gathered round the notice-board, and all their attention was given to the new paper in the somewhat sprawling handwriting of Clara Trevlyn.

They were not interested in the notice concerning school bounds, signed by the Head, or that dealing with the Sixth-Form Debating Society, or that referring to the Shakespeare lecture by Miss Locke.

Shakespeare lectures and debating-society meetings might be very interesting to the seniors, but the juniors passed them over with cheerful indifference.

But the paper in Clara Trevlyn's hand was quite interesting, Clara being a member of that important Form, the Fourth.

The paper ran:

**"TAKE NOTICE!  
A MEETING WILL BE HELD IN  
THE JUNIOR COMMON-ROOM  
TO-MORROW, WEDNESDAY,  
AFTERNOON,  
AT FOUR O'CLOCK PRECISELY,  
TO ELECT THE CAPTAIN OF THE  
FOURTH FORM.**

All Members of the Fourth are requested to be present, and to Vote for Marjorie Hazeldene.

Signed, CLARA TREVLYN, Hon. Sec.  
N.B.—VOTE FOR MARJORIE."

"Hon. sec.!" said Philippa Derwent. "Hon. sec. of what?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Cheek!" repeated Barbara Redfern. "What right has Study No. 7 to call a meeting of the Form?"

"None at all!" said Mabs.

"Study No. 7 is taking too much on itself!" said Babs, with a shake of the head. "If any study has the right to call a meeting, it's Study No. 4."

"Ours!" agreed Mabs.

"I say, you girls!"

Bessie Bunter, the new junior at Cliff

House, pushed her way through the little crowd before the notice-board.

She fixed her eyes upon Babs and Mabs, with an indignant blink through her big spectacles.

"I say, you girls, I've been looking for you!" said Bessie Bunter, in an injured tone.

"Well, you've found us, fatty!" said Babs. "Now run away and play. About this cheeky notice, Mabs—"

"I really wish you'd listen to me for a minute!" said Bessie Bunter peevishly.

"Do you know it's past tea-time?"

"Bother tea-time!"

"That's all very well, but what about tea?" demanded Bessie Bunter. "I'm hungry!"

"You needn't tell us that!" remarked Mabs. "Twas ever thus!"

"And there's nothing for tea!" pursued Bessie Bunter, unheeding. "Now, if I'm going to do the cooking for the study, I must have something to cook. I put it to you."

"Well, go and cook the sosses, and be quiet!" said Babs. "About this cheeky notice, Mabs, I think—"

"What sosses?"

"Oh dear! They're in the study cupboard," said Barbara. "Do give us a rest, fatty!"

"But, I say, you girls," exclaimed Bessie Bunter, as Babs and Mabs turned away, "there ain't any sosses for tea, you know. I had to have a snack while I was waiting for you—"

"Have you devoured our tea, you—you gorgon?" exclaimed Mabs wrathfully.

The new junior blinked at her. "If you're going to be mean about a few sosses, Mabel—" she began.

"Br-r-r-r!" said Mabel.

"But, I say, you girls—"

But Babs and Mabs fairly ran for it, leaving Bessie Bunter to waste her sweetness on the desert air, so to speak.

The chums of the Fourth hurried up the big staircase to the Fourth Form quarters, Bessie Bunter blinking after them in great indignation.

Babs opened the door of Study No. 7 by the simple process of jamming a neat little boot against it, and the two juniors marched in.

There were three girls in the study—Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Dolly Jobling.

Dolly was boiling eggs in a tomato-

can over the study fire, and was very busy.

Marjorie and Clara were at the table, with their heads bent over a sheet of impot paper, and extremely serious expressions on their faces.

Evidently a matter of the greatest importance was occupying their thoughts.

They did not look up as the visitors entered, but Clara waved one hand at the sound of footsteps, as if "shooing" them off.

"Marjorie—" began Babs.

"Run away!" said Clara. "Can't you see we're busy?"

Marjorie looked up, with a smile. "We're really busy, you know!" she remarked.

"Lines?" asked Mabs.

"Oh, no; election address."

"—the honour to appeal to the independent and intelligent electors for their esteemed suffrages—" mumbled Clara, apparently reading over the composition before her. "That sounds all right, Marjorie."

"A bit stilted, don't you think?"

"Well, election addresses are always stilted," said Clara, with an air of wisdom. "You have to lay it on rather thick, too, when you want people's vote. Of course, they're not really intelligent—"

"That's what we've come to speak about!" interjected Babs. "Now, look here, you two—"

"Oh, my goodness!" exclaimed Clara, in a tone of great exasperation. "How is a girl to draw up an election address, with two magpies chattering in the doorway?"

"But I say—"

"Don't say anything, dear! Just run away!" said Clara. "Now, be a good girl, and disappear!"

"Can't be done!" said Barbara. "Now, what's all this about an election of Form captain?"

"My idea!" answered Clara. "Marjorie is leader of the Form—"

"Nonsense!" said Babs decidedly. "Marjorie, being leader of the Form," repeated Clara firmly, "my idea is to have an election, and settle the matter officially, so that girls from other studies—"

"Oh!"

"Study No. 4, for example—"

"Look here—"

"Will know their place, and can be kept in it!" said Clara severely. "When the independent and intelligent electors have given their vote, I hope that all the other girls will leave off being cheeky."

"Well, of all the impudence!" exclaimed Barbara indignantly. "You know jolly well that Study No. 4 is top study—"

"Don't be funny, dear!"

"And if there's a leader of the Form, I'm that leader," went on Babs, with great emphasis. "I appeal to Mabs—"

"Absolutely correct!" agreed Mabs.

"Barbara, you're making a mistake in setting up as a humorist!" remonstrated Clara. "I'll tell you what you can do, though. You can vote for Marjorie."

"I don't think!" said Babs disdainfully.

"Well, as there isn't any other candidate—"

"But there is, my dear! I'm a candidate!"

"You!"

"Yes. Being leader of the Form—"

"Oh, talk sense!" said Clara.

"As leader of the Form, I shall put up for election as captain, and then the matter will be settled," said Barbara, with a chuckle. "And girls from other studies—Study No. 7, for example—"

"Done!" said Dolly Jobling. "Why, you haven't got the table cleared, and the eggs are done!"

"Bother the eggs!" exclaimed Clara.

"I've got to get this election address done before tea, and with constant interruption from silly duffers—"

"My dear kid, that election address won't be wanted," said Babs. "Besides, I'll finish it for you."

And Barbara promptly reached forward and overturned the inkpot upon the election address.

"There was a shriek of wrath from Clara, as she jumped up.

"Hand me that hockey-stick, Dolly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Babs and Mabs fled, and the door slammed after them.

Clara surveyed the unfortunate election address with a face that was a study in itself.

"Well, of all the—"

"Never mind," said Marjorie, laughing. "I know it nearly by heart. Let's have tea."

"I've got the eggs done, and you haven't got the table cleared!" said Dolly Jobling, in a tone of patient reproach.

"Oh, bother!"

But the table was cleared at last, and the chums of Study No. 7 sat down to tea, the election address being postponed for the present.

### A Rival in the Field.

"I SAY, you girls!"

Bessie Bunter was in Study No. 4, when Babs and Mabs came into their quarters.

She turned her big glasses upon Babs and Mabs, with an expression of deep reproach.

"Twenty minutes!" she said.

"Eh?"

"Twenty minutes past tea-time!"

"Well, I'm ready for tea, now I come to think of it," said Mabs. "If Fatima has devoured the sosses, what are we going to do?"

"Oh, really Mabel! I had to have a snack, you know!"

"You had to have a snack big enough for a regiment of infantry!" said Barbara. "If you don't stop this scoffing, Bessie, you will get a study ragging, in the long run."

"If you're going to be mean about

food, I shall have to consider whether I can stay in this study at all," said Bessie Bunter. "If I'm not decently treated, I shall change out."

"Do, my dear!" said Babs. "I'll stand you a hundredweight of sosses if you will."

Bessie Bunter appeared deaf to that remark.

"About tea," she said, unheeding. "I was thinking of standing rashers and new-laid eggs."

"Good girl! Go ahead!"

"Only my remittance hasn't come."

"Oh!"

"Still, I'll stand the spread all the same," said Bessie Bunter. "You lend me some money, and I'll settle up the minute the remittance comes. It can't be delayed much longer."

"I've got a suspicion that it will be delayed a good deal longer," said Mabs, with a sniff.

"Well, what are we going to have for tea?"

"There's a loaf," said Babs, looking into the cupboard. "Half a one, at any rate. And there's butter."

"If you think I can make a meal of bread-and-butter, Babs—"

"I think you've got to, my dear, if you want a meal in this study at all," smiled Babs. "There's coffee, too, and there was some sugar. Where's the sugar?"

"There wasn't much!"

"Much or little, where is it?" demanded Babs.

"If you think I can keep my parrot short of sugar, Barbara Redfern—"

"That parrot will be found slaughtered one of these days," said Babs darkly. "I'm tired of your parrot!"

There was a squawk from the evil-eyed bird in the cage before the window.

"Polly's asking for sugar!" said Bessie Bunter, in an injured tone. "Sweets would do, if you have any."

"Bother Polly, and bother you, too! The next time you eat our tea, Fatima, you will get your hair pulled—hard!"

"Cat!" came from the parrot's cage.

"Mean! Cat!"

Barbara jumped.

"Oh, dear! Is that that ugly bird?"

"That's what Polly thinks of you!" grinned Bessie Bunter. "Polly's awfully intelligent. She knows you."

"What!"

"I—I mean—"

"Cat!" came in another squeak.

"Mean!"

"My word!" said Barbara, with a deep breath. "I believe Bessie teaches that horrid bird to say these things. I've a good mind—"

"Well, if you're not going to have anything decent for tea, I'm going out to tea," said Bessie Bunter. "I'll call in and see Marjorie."

"Do!" said Barbara. "You will probably be turned out of Study No. 7. I'm sure I hope so. Good-bye!"

Sniff, from Bessie Bunter. The fat junior quitted the study, closing the door with unnecessary force.

"Of all the bounders!" said Babs.

"What horrid luck, having her planted on this study! Bread-and-butter, and no sugar in the tea! Never mind, we've got to win that election, Mabs."

"Hear, hear!"

"You see, I am really leader of the Form—"

"Passed unanimously. Pass the butter, too!"

"Study No. 7 is really nowhere, in comparison with this study."

"Yes; but—"

"If anybody is going to be Form captain, I'm the man—the girl, anyway!"

"Yes; but—"

"Don't you think so?" demanded Babs warmly.

"Yes; but—"

"But what, then?"

"Pass the butter!"

"Oh, bother the butter! What a duffer you are, Mabs!" Barbara passed the butter. "The question is, how many votes shall I get? It depends on that."

"An election generally does!" agreed Mabs.

"If I get more votes than Marjorie, I shall be official Form captain!"

"Did you work that out in your head?"

"Look here, Mabs, don't be funny—it doesn't suit you. Now, how many girls are there in the Fourth Form?" said Babs thoughtfully, wrinkling her brows in calculation.

"Eighteen."

"Nineteen, now Fatima's come. Out of nineteen votes, we must get at least ten," said Barbara. "The question is, can we get ten? You'll vote for me, of course, Mabs."

"Unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you vote for me?" suggested Mabs blandly.

Barbara gazed at her chum speechlessly for some moments. Mabs went on sedately eating bread-and-butter.

"Well!" ejaculated Babs, at last.

"Well! What a girl you are, Mabs! When it's a question of keeping up our end, and keeping Study No. 7 in its place, you begin to make difficulties like that! I'm really surprised at you, Mabs. What an idea!"

Mabs chuckled.

"I was only joking, dear!" she answered. "I'm going to vote for you, of course. Don't lose your patience!"

Barbara's brow cleared.

"Well, I knew I could depend on you to do the right thing, Mabs. That's one. I'll make a list." A pencil was produced, and a fly-leaf from a grammar. "Now, here's my list of followers. Mabel Lynn—"

"Not a very long list, so far."

"Fatima will vote for me, as she's in my study. I won't give her any more choos if she doesn't."

"That's bribery and corruption."

"Oh, nonsense! Bessie Bunter—that makes two! I think I can depend on Katie Smith. She likes me to do her hair, you know."

"What a reason for voting for you!"

"If you're going to make difficulties again, Mabs—"

"Not at all. Go ahead!"

"Lucy Morgan ought to vote for me. She came home with me last vac."

Mabs wrinkled her brow over her list. "Look here, Mabs, we'd better make a round of the Form, and get down voters' names. If the election is coming off to-morrow, we haven't any time to lose. The sooner we get the names down on our side the better. Those girls in Study No. 7 would think nothing of going round and getting the girls to promise to vote for them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing about?"

"Nothing. We'll go round the studies as soon as we've finished tea."

"I've finished!"

"I haven't!"

"If you're going to risk losing the election, Mabs, for the sake of sitting here and eating bread-and-butter—"

Mabel rose, with a sigh.

"Oh, all right. Lead on, Macduff!"

"Strike the iron while it's hot, you know!" said Barbara, as they left the study. "We may get a dozen girls to put their names down before those slackers in Study No. 7 get to work at all. Get a move on!"

And the canvassing commenced.

**Impartial!**

**"NOW, Philippa—"**  
**"Now, Phyllis—"**  
 The voices were Marjorie's and Clara's, and they were speaking simultaneously in Study No. 5 as Babs and Mabs stopped at the door of that apartment.

Babs gave her chum an eloquent glance.

The idea of striking the iron while it was hot had evidently occurred to Study No. 7 as well as to Study No. 4.

Marjorie and Clara were already on the war-path.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Babs. "Fancy cutting in before us like this, before we've had a chance to speak, you know!"

"And we only wanted to cut in before them—before they had a chance to speak!" murmured Mabs.

"Look here, Mabs, this isn't a joking matter."

"Not at all," agreed Mabs. "We'd

"They haven't any!" suggested Philippa.

"Lots!" exclaimed Clara. "F'rinstance, Marjorie is jolly smart at games—hockey and tennis—"

"Babs is smarter!" remarked Mabs.

"Well, she might be at hockey. The way she plays hockey—"

"Look here—"

"Marjorie's head of the Amateur Dramatic Society," went on Clara. "Doesn't she get up all the plays and things—with my help? Barbara can't act for toffee."

"Oh, can't she?" said Babs indignantly. "Nobody can touch me when it comes to acting. Why—"

"Blessed if she isn't blowing her own trumpet!" remarked Clara sarcastically.

"Besides, Marjorie's got lots of qualifications. She's head girl of the Form—"

"Because she swots!" said Mabs.

me—Ow! Ah! Oh! What are you pushing me for, Clara, you silly idiot?"

Clara did not explain what she was pushing for. She put all her energy into the push, and Bessie Bunter disappeared into the passage.

There was a sound of a heavy bump as Clara closed the door.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A fat and wrathful voice came through the keyhole:

"Yah! Cat!"

Then the heavy footsteps of Bessie Bunter receded, probably in search of a study where the inmates had not yet had tea.

"I know I shall scalp that fat duffer some day!" said Clara, with a deep breath. "Now, did you say I was to put your names down on my list, you two?"

"No!" chuckled Phyllis.

"Say it now, then."



"That election address won't be wanted," said Barbara Redfern. "Besides, I'll finish it for you!" And Babs promptly reached forward and overturned the inkpot on the election address.

better chip in, before they've talked Phyllis and Flap over."

"What ho!"

The door was ajar, and Babs pushed it wider open.

Marjorie and Clara were there, standing, and addressing Phyllis Howell and Philippa Derwent, who were reclining gracefully in two rocking-chairs.

Philippa and Phyllis appeared to be rather amused. Philippa was holding up a finger.

"Don't both speak at once," she urged.

"Which is the candidate?"

"Marjorie."

"It's practically settled in advance, you know," explained Marjorie. "The election is really only a matter of form, to confirm what is really the case already."

"Nonsense!" said a voice at the door.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Marjorie and Clara turned wrathfully upon the intruders.

Clara pointed to the passage.

"You run away!" she said. "We're canvassing for votes."

"So are we."

"First come, first served," said Clara.

"You run off!"

"Hold on!" said Phyllis. "Let's hear both sides. What are the qualifications of the candidates?"

"I don't swot!" exclaimed Marjorie indignantly.

"No swotting in our study!" said Clara warmly.

"Well, no swotting at spelling, I admit, to judge by the notice on the board."

"What's the matter with the notice on the board?"

"My dear girl, the question is, what isn't the matter with it? Now if a Form captain was going to be elected for original orthography—"

"I knew there were two s's in 'precisely,'" exclaimed Clara hurriedly. "It was Marjorie made me put in the c!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what's the chuckle about?"

"I say, you girls!" A fat face and a pair of big glasses looked in, before Babs could reply. "I say, I've been looking for you, Marjorie! I was coming to tea in your study, and you were gone."

"What luck for us!"

"Oh, really, Clara—"

"We've had tea, Fatima. Run away!"

"I say, it's too late for tea in Hall!" said Bessie Bunter dismally. "And my remittance won't come now before the shop closes. I've got a proposition to make, Marjorie. Suppose you lend

"It now then?" said Phyllis humorously.

"Eh! What?"

"That was what you asked me to say, wasn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Babs and Mabs.

"Splendid joke! Ha, ha!"

"Well, if that's a joke, I hope I shall never grow humorous!" said Clara, with a sniff. "Of all the duffers—"

"I'm to put your name down, Phyllis?" asked Mabs, with a business-like air.

Another chuckle from Phyllis.

"No fear!"

"Not after she laughed at your splendid joke?" asked Clara sarcastically.

Babs and Mabs became grave again at once.

"Now, look here, Phyllis—"

"Look here, Philippa—"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Phyllis. "We can't really choose between two such ripping candidates. We'll split the difference, and give you a vote each."

"First-rate idea!" exclaimed Philippa Derwent heartily. "One vote for each party—that's fair play. Who's your candidate, Phyllis?"

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"I'll vote for Marjorie, if you'll vote for Babs."

"Good!"

"Put me down, Clara."

"Put me down, Mabs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two candidates blinked at the independent and intelligent electors, who chuckled.

"Well, of all the duffers——" began Clara.

"Would you rather we both voted for Babs?"

"Nunno!"

"Then let it go at that," said Phyllis. "And now run away, the lot of you! We've got some sewing to do."

And the candidates and their lieutenants left Study No. 5.

In the passage they exchanged looks of mutual defiance and separated, seeking different studies to pursue their canvassing.

Both of them appeared to reap some success, to judge by the growing satisfaction of their looks, as they proceeded.

Some of the studies followed the example of No. 5, and promised a vote to each candidate, feeling that that was very impartial and fair.

But Gwendolen Cook, who had Study No. 6 to herself, gave the support of the whole study to Babs, which was very satisfactory to Babs and Mabs.

"That balances Dolly Jobling's vote for Marjorie, anyway," said Mabs. "We shall get half at least, I think."

"We want one over half."

"Oh, we'll get it, don't you worry!" said Mabs cheerily.

"I say, you girls——"

"Oh, be quiet, Fatima!"

"What about prep?"

"Bless prep!"

And the canvassing went on, in reckless disregard of prep.

### Feeding Bessie Bunter.

"NINE!" said Clara Trevlyn. Marjorie & Co. had returned to Study No. 7, and were conning over the list of promised votes.

"Nine!" repeated Marjorie. "That's just half the Form! That looks as if it will be a tie."

Clara shook her head darkly.

"There's nineteen now, since Fatima came!" she said.

"Oh!" exclaimed Marjorie. "I'd forgotten Bessie Bunter! I—I say, that looks as if Babs will win the election!"

Clara wrinkled her brows.

"We've got to get the other vote somehow!" she said resolutely. "We've got nine, if you vote for yourself, Marjorie!"

"Is that allowed?" asked Marjorie doubtfully.

Clara nodded emphatically.

"Of course! Babs is sure to vote for herself, and we can't afford to give away our majority, can we?"

"No, but——"

"It would look better for a candidate not to vote for herself," admitted Clara. "But we can't give away a point. Still, you might agree with Babs for both candidates to keep off voting, and it would come to the same thing."

"I'll speak to her."

"But it's all the same—that leaves us with eight—and Babs with eight—and Bessie Bunter's in her study, and she's very likely to vote for Babs, for that reason!" said Clara ruefully.

"We might have had her in this study," remarked Dolly Jobling.

"I wouldn't have her in this study to be captain of the school, let alone captain of the Fourth!"

"Better not tell her so, if you want her vote!" grinned Dolly.

"Ahem! No! Perhaps we'd better be

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a bit tactful with Bessie," said Clara very thoughtfully. "The question is, has she promised her vote to Babs yet? I wonder. I believe she's prowling round looking for food now."

Marjorie glanced over the list again.

Study No. 7 had counted on the election as quite a certainty, but it was looking far from certain now.

The belief in strict impartiality which prevailed in most of the Fourth-Form studies was rather disconcerting to a candidate.

"Nancy Bell, Annabel Hichens, Bridget O'Toole, Cissy Clare, Phyllis Howell, Clara Trevlyn, Dolly Jobling, Meg Lennox!" read out Marjorie. "Eight—or nine with myself."

"You won't make them more by counting them, Marjorie. The question is, where are we going to bag the other vote," said Clara. "Only Fatima is doubtful—the rest have promised Babs. I took their names down when they told me—here they are."

Clara read out a list of Barbara's supporters.

"Lucy Morgan, Katie Smith, Freda Foote, Marcia Loftus, Mabel Lynn, Philippa Derwent, Gwendolen Cook, Vivienne Leigh—that's eight, or nine counting Babs in. No good asking them to go back on their candidate—they wouldn't. I haven't seen Bessie Bunter——"

"I don't really like asking Fatima for her vote," said Marjorie thoughtfully.

"Why not?"

"Well, I—I don't like her much, you know."

Clara Trevlyn gave her chum a pitying look.

"I must say you're a duffer, Marjorie."

"Oh, Clara!"

"What does it matter whether a candidate likes her supporters or not? What a candidate has to do is to get votes."

"Oh!"

"You rely on me," said Clara patronisingly. "I'll see you through. We've got to see the Bunter girl. Of course, if she's actually promised Babs——"

Clara paused.

"We couldn't ask her, then," said Marjorie.

"Well, a voter has a right to change her mind, on reflection," said Clara firmly. "Britons never shall be slaves, you know; it's the greatest right of a free Briton to vote for anybody she likes. We're entitled to point out to Fatima that our candidate is the proper one, and leave it to her sense of—of patriotism!"

"Oh!"

"Of course, I admit, in private, that she is a horrid little fat—oh!—ah!—ahem!"

Clara broke off abruptly as a fat face looked in at the door.

"I say, you girls——"

"Run away!" said Dolly Jobling, from force of habit, as it were.

Clara gave her a warning look.

"Come in, Fatima—I mean Bessie!" she said, with a sudden and startling cordiality. "Just the girl I wanted to see!"

"Oh!" gasped Marjorie.

"Just speaking about you, and wondering whether you'd give us a look-in for supper!" pursued Clara.

Bessie Bunter's fat face brightened up. "Clara, you're a brick!" she said.

"The fact is, I was thinking about supper——"

"Seen Babs lately?" asked Clara carelessly.

"No; I've been downstairs," said Bessie Bunter. "I say, you girls, the cook here is a cat! She threatened to report me to Miss Primrose for going down to the kitchen!"

"Horrid!" said Clara sympathetically.

"I suppose there's no harm in a girl looking into the larder—what?"

"Not a bit!"

"As for the tarts, what's the good of making a fuss about a few tarts? I told her I was hungry, too!"

"Good; you're just in time for supper, Fat—I mean Bessie. Would you care for the rocking-chair?"

"As a matter of fact, I would."

"Turn out of that chair, Marjorie, you slacker! Aren't you going to help me with supper?" asked Clara severely.

Marjorie laughed, and turned out of the rocker, and Bessie Bunter promptly disposed her fat person in it.

She rested her feet on another chair, with a view of a somewhat startling pattern in stockings.

"I say, there isn't much for supper, you know," remarked Dolly Jobling. "Only bread and cheese, you know."

Bessie Bunter's cheerful expression faded.

"That's all right—Auntie Jones isn't shut up yet, and I'll pop down to the shop," replied Clara.

The cheerful expression returned.

Clara hurried from the study, putting her head back for a moment to tell Marjorie to look after Bessie while she was gone.

Then she vanished.

Marjorie regarded Bessie Bunter rather helplessly.

She did not quite know how to look after her; and, indeed, Fatima seemed to have a remarkable gift for looking after herself.

Bessie Bunter blinked at her.

"Got a cushion?" she asked.

"Certainly!"

"A soft one?"

"Oh, yes."

"You might put it behind my head, then."

"Oh! Ah, yes! Certainly!"

Marjorie disposed a cushion behind Fatima's head.

The fat junior rested very comfortably there, blinking at Marjorie and Dolly.

As a matter of fact, Bessie Bunter was surprised by the unusual cordiality displayed in Study No. 7.

She did not know the reason for it, but she was prepared to take full advantage of it, on the principle of making hay while the sun shone.

"Is that toffee on the shelf?" she asked suddenly.

"Yes."

"You might offer a girl some."

"Won't it spoil your supper?"

"Certainly not."

Marjorie handed over the toffee.

Bessie Bunter had just finished it by the time Clara Trevlyn returned with a little bag, packed full.

The fat girl's eyes were fixed on that bag as it was opened.

They grew round and wide behind her glasses, as a little bundle of ham was turned out, and then a cake, and then a packet of jam-tarts.

There was beaming satisfaction in the fat face now.

"Will you come to the table, dear, or shall we wait on you there?" asked Clara, with astonishing solicitude.

Bessie Bunter blinked at her suspiciously; but Clara was evidently quite serious.

Bessie Bunter began to swell a little with importance.

For whatever reason these unusual attentions were bestowed upon her, there could be no doubt that, for the present, she was an important personage in Study No. 7.

"You can wait on me!" she said calmly.

"With pleasure."

"Oh, my word!" murmured Dolly Jobling, almost overcome.

"Make the cocoa, Dolly. Bessie likes cocoa for supper, don't you, Bessie?"

"Yes; thick, and plenty of sugar, please," said Bessie.

"You hear that, Dolly?"

"I—I hear!" stammered Dolly.

"Well, buck up, then."

Dolly Jobling, with an expressive silence made the cocoa.

Marjorie and Clara waited on Bessie Bunter most assiduously.

They did not have much chance with the supper themselves, but that was a secondary consideration.

Canvassing for votes was the business in hand, and that was what they were attending to.

It was absurd, no doubt, that the vote of such a person as Bessie Bunter should be of so much account.

But with an equal number of voters promised for both sides, the fat junior of Cliff House had the casting vote, and, absurd as it was, the result of the Form election depended on Bessie Bunter.

Evidently, in these circumstances, Bessie Bunter was a person to be cultivated, and treated with distinction.

It was worth a supper, with some politeness thrown in, to save the election.

The ham disappeared, and several rounds of buttered toast accompanied it.

Then Bessie Bunter tried her strength on the cake.

It was a large cake. But Bessie was more than equal to it.

Dolly Jobling was looking rather alarmed by this time.

Where Bessie Bunter was putting it all was a mystery, and Dolly feared that if it went on much longer, the guest would have to be taken away in an ambulance.

But the new girl never turned a hair; she began on the jam-tarts with cheerful energy.

"These are jolly good tarts!" said Bessie, at last.

"So glad you like them, dear!" murmured Clara.

"Aren't you girls going to have any?" inquired Bessie, when the last one was in her podgy fingers.

"Oh, no! Never mind us!"

The last tart disappeared rather slowly.

There was an expression of beatific satisfaction on Bessie's face by this time.

"I call that a decent supper!" she said.

"So glad!"

"I'll come in to supper with you again."

"Do! Oh, do!"

"Very different from the way I'm treated in my study," said Bessie Bunter, with a shake of the head.

"Babs and Mabs are mean. They kicked up a fuss only to-day about a few paltry sausages."

"D-d-did they?"

"They did! I told them I was shocked at them. I never could stand greediness."

"Oh!"

"It's the thing I despise most in anybody," said Bessie Bunter. "Fair play all round—that's my motto. Did you say there was another cake?"

"Oh, my word! I—I mean, nunno."

"Well, I'll be going along, then," said Bessie Bunter, getting out of the rocking-chair with some difficulty.

"Thanks very much for the supper. I'll stand you a better one when my remittance comes."

"Oh, by the way, Bessie!" remarked Clara, in a casual tone, "you've heard about the Form election, I suppose?"

"Eh? Yes, I believe I heard somebody talking about it," said Bessie. "I didn't pay much attention. I hadn't had my supper."

"You'll have a vote, you know, as a member of the Fourth."

"Shall I?" said Bessie Bunter indifferently. "I don't suppose I shall take the trouble to vote."

"Ahem! I think you really ought to vote, you know—patriotic duty, and all that!" urged Clara.

"Well, I dare say I shall turn up. Good-night!"

"Just a minute, dear. We're making up lists of voters," explained Clara sweetly. "I suppose I can put you down to vote for Marjorie?"

Bessie Bunter gave the determined canvasser a quick, sharp blink through her big glasses.

The fat girl might be obtuse on some points, but she was very sharp on others.

That suspicious blink showed that Fatima had "tumbled" as to the cause of that excellent and unexpected supper in Study No. 7.

"Oh!" she said.

"You'll vote for Marjorie, of course?"

"I'll think about it," said Bessie Bunter calmly.

Clara breathed hard.

"Better make up your mind at once," she urged. "You see, the election's held

## OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY!



No. 2.

MABEL LYNN.

"Mabs."

to-morrow afternoon. What do you say?"

"I say I'll think over it."

Dolly Jobling giggled slightly.

Marjorie smiled.

Clara Trevlyn looked at the fat junior as if she could eat her.

"Now, look here, Bessie——"

"Good-night!"

Clara, losing patience, caught hold of Bessie Bunter's plait, as the fat junior was rolling out.

Bessie spun round with a yell.

"Yooop! Leggo!"

"Now, Bessie——"

"Leggo! Yah! Leggo!"

"Ahem! Now, dear, hadn't you better make up your mind to vote for Marjorie?" asked Clara, in her sweetest and most persuasive tones.

Bessie Bunter jerked her plait away.

She held up a forefinger—a very fat one—and shook it at Study No. 7, in an admonitory way.

"I'm shocked at you!" she said.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Asking a girl to supper, to get her vote!" said Bessie Bunter indignantly.

"I call it sly!"

"What!"

"I'm shocked at you! I may say I despise you!" said Bessie Bunter loftily. "Of course, I don't expect you girls to have the same high ideas that I have—I know I'm a bit out of the common in the matter of a sense of honour. But really—really, you know—I'm shocked, and I must say so plainly!"

"You greedy little duffer!" shrieked Clara, exasperated out of all patience by this unexpected rebuff. "I—I—I'll pull your hair!"

Bessie Bunter skipped out of the study just in time to save her plait.

"Clara——"

"I—I—I'll——"

"No, you won't, dear!" said Marjorie, laughing, catching her chum by the arm and pulling her back into the study. "I could have told you it was no use, you know. Never mind her——"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Clara crossly.

"That nice cake wasted!" sighed Dolly Jobling. "And all those beautiful tarts! You are a duffer, Clara!"

Clara allowed that aspersion to pass unanswered.

She had to admit that her secret diplomacy with regard to Bessie Bunter had not been a striking success.

But Clara was a determined girl, and she did not give up hope yet by any means

### A Slight Misunderstanding.

"COME in, my dear!"

"Where have you been all this time?"

Bessie Bunter blinked as that affectionate greeting met her in Study No. 4.

Polished manners and sugary sweetness were apparently running riot in the Fourth Form at Cliff House that evening.

"Eh?" ejaculated Bessie.

"We've got some nice toasted cheese for supper," said Babs. "We wouldn't begin till you came."

"Couldn't begin without you, Bessie!" said Mabs solemnly.

Bessie Bunter blinked harder than ever.

She had learned the cause of the amazing courtesy in Study No. 7, but this was more astonishing still.

She was not yet aware that Babs was the rival candidate in the election.

Bessie Bunter had been too busy prowling for supper hitherto to pay any attention to the talk among the junior girls.

"What's the game?" she asked suspiciously.

"Eh? Game?" said Babs vaguely.

"Yes, you're joking, I suppose?"

"As if we would!" said Mabs, looking surprised at the idea. "Oh, Bessie!"

"You were grumbling at me about a few paltry sosses when I saw you last!"

grunted Bessie.

"Oh, that—that was only—only——"

stammered Babs. "I—I mean, let bygones be bygones, Bessie!"

"Girls in the same study ought to be friendly, and stand by one another!"

remarked Mabs.

"Do you like toasted cheese, Bessie?"

"It's rather nice, you know."

"Oh, all right!" said Bessie Bunter.

"I've had some supper with some friends of mine, but I can do with a snack. Yes, it looks all right."

Babs passed up the plate of toasted cheese that was keeping warm in the funder.

Bessie sat down before it.

"I'll have a fork," she said.

Mabs handed her a fork.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 2.

Bessie Bunter started on the plate.

There were two other plates on the table, but the fat girl did not seem to notice them.

"Jolly decent of you to get this for my supper!" said Bessie Bunter, with her mouth full. "I must say it's not like your usual behaviour."

"Oh!" gasped Babs.

Supper for three was on the plate, but evidently Bessie Bunter regarded it as supper for one.

"Aren't you girls having any supper?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, I dare say your appetite's not so good as mine. You're not so healthy," remarked Bessie Bunter. "Now, I'm healthy—fit all through. I've got plenty of flesh on my bones."

"You have!" agreed Mabs, with conviction. "Lots!"

"If you mean I'm fat, Mabel Lynn

N-n-not at all! Plump!" said Mabs.

"Not skinny, at any rate, like some girls!" said Bessie Bunter, with a disdainful blink at the slim and graceful figures of Babs and Mabs. "It's horrid to be skinny, in my opinion!"

"Dreadful!" said Babs.

"You should eat more," said Bessie Bunter encouragingly. "Don't take such a jolly lot of exercise, and eat more, then you might get a figure like mine."

"Oh, my word!" gasped Mabs. "Might we? I—I mean, that—that would be ripping, wouldn't it?"

"Topping!" said Barbara. "We'll remember that, Bessie. It—it's jolly good of you to give us the tip."

"Well, I'm a good-natured girl," said Bessie Bunter. "So long as I'm treated decently, and people aren't mean about food, they'll find me all right. You should really have had some of this. It's tip-top!" And she finished the final morsel with that remark. "I say, you girls, have you heard that there's an election on?"

Babs and Mabs exchanged a glance.

This was the subject they wanted to get to.

Bessie Bunter was not yet aware of it, but the toasted cheese was the consequence of a discovery made in the study—the same discovery that had been made in Study No. 7—that, without counting Bessie Bunter, the lists of voters in the Fourth exactly tied.

Hence the smiling friendliness that reigned in Study No. 4.

Mabs had remarked to Babs that Fatima was not really such a bad sort, and Babs agreed that she wasn't.

Mabs suggested that it would be only decent to be rather civil to a new girl, and Babs agreed that it would.

And the toasted cheese and the sweet smiles were the outcome.

"Election, eh?" repeated Barbara.

"Yes; some sort of a Form election," said Bessie Bunter. "I remember my brother Billy telling me about a Form election in the Remove at Greyfriars. Billy ought really to have got in as captain, but the election was worked, he told me, and a fellow named Wharton was elected."

"Oh!"

"That silly duffer Marjorie is putting up as captain of the Fourth here!" giggled Bessie Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Babs and Mabs.

"Ridiculous, I call it!" said Bessie Bunter.

"Absurd!"

"Funny, in fact!"

"Well, I'm glad you agree with me. They actually stood me a supper for my

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 2.

vote, you know," said Bessie. "I told them I thought it sly."

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"I mentioned that I despised them!"

"Oh!"

"Um!"

"Clara is a cat!" continued Bessie Bunter cheerfully. "Don't you think so?"

"H'm!"

"And Marjorie is a duffer—an awful duffer!"

"Ahem!"

"Dolly Jobling is a greedy little minx!" pursued Bessie Bunter. "I believe she had some more toffee, only she kept it dark."

"Of course, you wouldn't vote for that study!" remarked Mabs casually.

"Well, would you?" said Bessie, with a sniff.

"No."

"I sha'n't, either."

"Good!" Babs really began to think she could perceive some good qualities in Bessie Bunter at last. There was no denying that she possessed a certain amount of judgment, at any rate. "That's right, Bessie. Stick to that."

"I mean to."

"The fact is," murmured Barbara, "a candidate from this study would be a very much better idea."

"That's a jolly sensible suggestion!" said Bessie Bunter, cordially.

"This is really top study, you know."

"Yes, rather!"

"And we ought to stand together and win the election," said Mabs eagerly.

"Certainly!"

Babs and Mabs exchanged glances of great satisfaction.

The casting vote was Barbara Redfern's apparently.

Babs beamed sweetly on Bessie Bunter.

"I never expected you to make such a sensible suggestion as that, Barbara," remarked Bessie Bunter. "It's very bright—for you. You are rather dense as a rule, if you don't mind my mentioning it."

"N-n-not at all!"

"Let's stick together, and beat that study," said Bessie Bunter. "I dare say we can work it. Go round to the voters and make them promises, you know, like Parliamentary candidates. No need to remember the promises afterwards."

"Ahem!"

"Anyway, this study means two votes, doesn't it?" said Bessie.

"That's right."

"Two votes is something to start with." Bessie Bunter looked very thoughtful. "Now, you know the girls here better than I do, as I'm new. Who else do you think would vote for me?"

Babs and Mabs gave a simultaneous jump.

"For—for—for whom?" stammered Babs.

"Me!"

"You!"

Bessie blinked at them over her glasses.

"Yes, of course. That's what you were suggesting, wasn't it?" she asked, in surprise.

"Good gracious!" gasped Mabs.

"You! Well—"

Words failed Mabel.

"What do you mean, Mabel Lynn? You said plainly that there should be a candidate from this study!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter warmly.

"Me!" shrieked Babs.

"If that's a joke—"

"It's not a joke, you silly girl! I'm the candidate!" exclaimed Barbara indignantly.

Sniff!

"You the candidate!" ejaculated

Bessie Bunter derisively. "Why, you're not a bit better than Marjorie!"

"Look here, Bessie—"

"So that's why you had supper ready—same as Study No. 7!" exclaimed Bessie, with another sniff. "I see it all now. I call that sly."

"Bessie—"

"I couldn't vote for a sly girl!"

Barbara fixed a look of concentrated wrath on the new junior.

"You duffer!" she said sulphurously.

"If you call me sly I'll shake you!"

"I don't expect you to look at things as I do, Barbara!" said Bessie Bunter loftily. "Some people have a very high sense of honour, and some haven't. Vote for you, indeed! Catch me voting for a girl who's mean over a few sosses!"

"If you vote for me, I'll box your ears!" exclaimed Barbara, in concentrated wrath.

"Babs!" murmured Mabel.

This was really not very good electioneering, but Babs was too angry to think of that.

"I mean it!" exclaimed Babs. "Let her vote for me, and I'll shake her—hard! Little fat thing!"

"That's jealousy!" said Bessie Bunter calmly. "I've noticed that skinny girls are always jealous of a girl with a figure!"

That remark, somehow, had the effect of dissipating Barbara's wrath. She burst into a laugh.

"I don't suppose you weigh eight stone," continued Bessie Bunter, surveying Barbara's graceful figure scornfully. "Now, I tip the scale at eleven!"

"Dear me! I should have guessed fifteen or sixteen!" said Barbara sweetly.

"Hallo, Gwen! What is it?"

"Bed-time!" said Gwendolen Cook, looking in.

"Right-ho!"

"Hold on a minute!" said Bessie Bunter. "To talk sense—for a change in this study—what about voting for me in the election? I'm prepared to put up as a candidate, if you promise your support to—"

"I'd rather vote for Mademoiselle Lupin's lap-dog!" answered Babs cheerily. "You're awfully like it, only the lap-dog is nicer."

And Babs and Mabs followed Gwen, and a snort of disdainful wrath from Bessie Bunter followed them.

### Trouble in the Class-Room.

THERE was some excitement in the Fourth Form at Cliff House on the following morning.

The Form Election occupied most thoughts.

The Fifth and Sixth—tall girls who regarded the Fourth with very lofty eyes—took no interest at all in such a matter.

If they knew that there was an election on at all, it simply caused tolerant smiles in the Fifth and Sixth.

But to the Fourth it was a matter of all-absorbing interest.

Marjorie Hazeldene had always been looked on as leader of the juniors, but since Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn had come to Cliff House, that proud position had not been held without dispute.

Hence the election which was to settle the matter beyond the shadow of a doubt—an idea propounded in Study No. 7 by Clara, and approved of by Marjorie and Dolly.

Study No. 7 had taken it for granted that the election would confirm Marjorie's leadership.

Rather late in the day, as it were, they woke up to the fact that they had taken too much for granted.

It was going to be a tussle, after all—and the result was very much in doubt.



Eight girls were pledged to Marjorie, and eight to her rival, and though, of course, the honourable electors were entitled to second thoughts on the subject, it was not likely that they would change their minds.

It really looked as if the whole affair hinged upon the vote given by Bessie Bunter—which gave Bessie an importance which was certainly far beyond her merits.

Persuasion had been tried by both parties, and in vain, so far.

Indeed, the rivals had made matters rather worse instead of better.

Babs had threatened to box the ears of that valuable voter—on the other hand, she had narrowly escaped having her plait pulled in Marjorie's study!

To make matters still more doubtful, the cheerful Fatima had also fallen a victim of vaulting ambition, and was quite seriously thinking of standing for election herself!

If she carried out that intention, she would require her vote on her own account—and certainly it was the only one she was likely to get.

But Bessie Bunter was by no means despondent as to her chances.

She explained to Phyllis Howell, after breakfast, that she depended on the common-sense of the Form.

When they had a chance of getting a really good candidate, why should they vote for Marjorie and Barbara?

That was how Bessie Bunter looked at it.

And she could not understand in the least why Phyllis was seized with a fit of merriment during her remarks.

In the short interval before morning lessons, Bessie Bunter did some canvassing for votes on her own account.

She added thereby considerably to the gaiety of the Fourth Form that morning.

When Miss Bellew came in to take the Fourth, she found her Form rather more restive than usual.

The junior girls were giving more thought to the coming election than to Miss Bellew's valued instructions.

Miss Bellew had not happened to hear of the important affair that was exciting the Fourth, and she was puzzled.

When she found Mabs whispering excitedly to Bridget O'Toole, instead of paying attention to English history, she was cross.

Mabs, with reckless disregard for the reign of Henry the Eighth—and the number of his wives, was trying to persuade Bridget that she really ought to act on second thoughts—the second thoughts being in favour of Barbara Redfern.

"Mabel!" rapped out Miss Bellew.

"You see, our study is it, you know!" Mabs whispered into Bridget's ear.

"Mabel!"

Mabs jumped.

"Oh! Yes, Miss Bellew?"

"You were talking to Bridget!" exclaimed Miss Bellew severely.

"W-w-w-was I?" stammered Mabs.

"Were you not, Mabel?"

"Ahem! Yes, please, Miss Bellew!"

"Have I, or have I not, told you that you must not chatter in class, Mabel?"

"Ye-e-es, please, Miss Bellew!"

"I was about to ask you, Mabel," said Miss Bellew, with crushing dignity, "the number of wives of King Henry the Eighth!"

"Eight!" answered Mabel, without stopping to think.

She was really thinking of the eight votes for Marjorie, and the eight for Barbara, but Miss Bellew was not aware of that.

"What?"

"I—I mean nine!" Mabs stammered helplessly. "That is to say, eighteen! Oh, dear—"

"Eighteen!" shrieked Miss Bellew, horrified.

"Mabel! Answer me at once! You—"

"Nine!" gasped Mabel, hardly aware of what she was saying in her confusion.

"I—I mean nine including Bessie Bunter!"

"What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a shriek from the whole Form.

Miss Bellew blinked at Mabs like one in a dream.

"Nun-nun-nine, including Bessie B-B-Bunter!" she stammered.

"Are you out of your senses, Mabel?"

"Yes—I—I mean, no!" stammered the hapless Mabel. "I—I mean—"

"You were thinking of some other matter, and not of the question I asked you at all, Mabel!" exclaimed Miss Bellew wrathfully.

"I—I—I—"

"I shall detain you this afternoon, Mabel!" said Miss Bellew sternly.

"Oh!" gasped Mabel, in utter dismay.

the mistress of the Fourth, with a slight smile. "But if you have something very particular arranged for this afternoon, I will not detain you."

"Oh, thank you!" gasped Mabel, in great relief. "We—we've got an election, Miss Bellew."

"A what?"

"We—we're electing a Form captain."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Bellew.

"In that case, Mabel, I must certainly not allow the proceedings to be interfered with."

There was possibly a slight inflection of sarcasm in Miss Bellew's tone.

"At what hour does this important function take place?" inquired Miss Bellew.

"Fuf-fuf-four o'clock, please."

"Then you will be detained until half-past three," said Miss Bellew.

"And now, Mabel, you will pay attention to your lessons, or I shall be sorry that I have been so lenient."



"I'll pull her hair!" exclaimed Bessie Bunter, rushing at Freda Foote. "I'll—yaroooh! Leggo my plait, Barbara, or I'll—!" "Order!" said Babs. "This isn't a boys' school, Bessie, and it isn't a bear garden! Quiet!"

Miss Bellew was astonished by the result of that announcement upon her class.

Mabs looked dismayed; but Babs looked more dismayed than Mabs—in fact, her expression was one of utter consternation.

And seven other girls looked thunder-struck.

On the other hand, Clara smiled—and seven other girls smiled.

They were sorry for Mabel's detention, of course.

But one voter away from the election meant a win instead of a tie.

"Oh!" gasped Barbara, echoing Mabs' dismayed gasp. "Oh!"

Miss Bellew's severe expression softened, though she did not understand.

Girls had been detained on half-holidays before, without causing this consternation!

"Oh, Miss Bellew," stammered Mabel.

"w-w-would you mind caning me instead, please?"

"I shall not cane you, Mabel," said

"Yes, Miss Bellew," said Mabel meekly.

There was no danger of attention wandering in the Fourth Form again that morning.

Every girl there was anxious not to catch Miss Bellew's eye.

And for the remainder of morning lessons the Fourth Form of Cliff House were as good as gold, if not a little better.

### A Minority of One!

"I SAY, you girls!" There was a shower after morning lessons, and most of the junior girls had gathered in the Common-room.

There was a great deal of discussion going on, and nobody heeded the fat voice of Bessie Bunter.

Bessie had mounted upon a chair, apparently to deliver an address.

She seemed surprised that no head was turned towards her.

"I say, you girls!" she shouted.

Babs held up a hand.

"Be quiet, Fatima."

"Oh, really, Barbara! Look here, you take a back seat for a bit. I'm going to address the meeting," exclaimed Bessie Bunter indignantly. "I say, you girls, just listen to me."

"Sure it's always talking you are," remonstrated Bridget O'Toole. "Give us a rest, Fatima darling!"

"I say, you girls—"

"There she goes again!"

"Wound up!" said Philippa Derwent resignedly. "Better let her run down, and get it over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut it short, fatty!"

"If that's what you call being well-bred, Phyllis Howell—"

"Get on or get out!" interjected Clara. "Life's short, you know—too short for unlimited gas."

"I've got some notes here. Hold on a minute!" Bessie Bunter blinked round wrathfully. "Who's taken my notes?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This belong to you?" asked Freda Foote blandly, holding up a crumpled and somewhat soiled sheet of notepaper.

"That's it! Hand it up to me."

Freda handed up the paper, which was scribbled on in Bessie's somewhat mysterious-looking handwriting.

There were plenty of corrections in the pencilled lines, and Freda, who was a little bit of a humorist, had added some more, which Bessie was not yet aware of.

"Now, I've made some notes for an address," announced Bessie Bunter, blinking at the scribbled paper. "Lend me your ears, as Tennyson says."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean Wordsworth," said Bessie hastily.

"Not Shakespeare?" chuckled Babs.

"Certainly not, Barbara. You don't know anything about the poets. Now, lend me your ears. On this suspicious occasion—"

"What!"

"It's smudged. I mean this auspicious occasion—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bessie Bunter had the attention of the roomful now. Her election address looked like being interesting.

"On this sus-suspicious occasion, I have the honour of proposing myself as a candidate for Bedlam—"

There was a shriek of merriment.

"Hear, hear!"

"I second that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's not it!" shrieked Bessie Bunter. "It's got altered somehow."

"Of proposing myself as a candidate for the captaincy of the Form," was what I meant to say."

"That's not so good."

"I beg to appeal to the Fourth Form girls for their valued pocket-money—"

"What?"

"Their valued votes, I mean," yelled Bessie Bunter. "Somebody has been altering my notes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I desire to point out that I am the very girl for the job. What is required in a Form captain is podginess— No, that's wrong—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is required in a Form captain is— is— Somebody has scribbled over this! Freda, you cat—"

"Oh, dear!"

"What is required is gumption, and I leave it to the Form whether I haven't plenty of fat. Oh!"

"Lots!" shrieked Babs.

"Tons!"

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 2.

"Ha, ha!"

"I can't make out these notes, now they've been scribbled over," shrieked Bessie Bunter. "You're a cat, Freda Foote! You're making me read out a lot of nonsense. I mean plenty of gumption, not plenty of fat."

"Well, the fat's more in evidence than the gumption," remarked Philippa.

"Plenty of that! If I am elected captain of the Fourth Form, I undertake to eat all the food—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's not it. Freda wrote that in. I mean, I undertake—lemme see, what is it I undertake? I can't make it out now, Freda, I'll pull your hair!"

Bessie Bunter jumped off the chair and charged at Freda, who fled round the big table in alarm.

"Order!" shrieked Babs.

"Hold on!"

"Bessie!" exclaimed Marjorie, wiping away her tears. "Bessie—"

"I'll pull her hair—I'll— Yaroooh! Leggo my plait, Barbara, or I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" gasped Babs. "This isn't a boys' school, Bessie, and it isn't a bear-garden. Quiet!"

"She's spoiled my election address—"

"Never mind!"

"I'm going to pull her hair!"

"You're not, you duffer!" gasped Marjorie. "Hold her other arm, Clara! Oh, dear!"

"Tie her pigtail to the table-leg!" suggested Freda Foote.

"Ha, ha!"

"Now, will you keep the peace, Bessie?"

"No; I'll—"

"Here's a string."

"Hand over her topknot."

"Oh, you cats!" shrieked Bessie Bunter, as her plait was tied to the leg of the big table.

She sat on the floor and gasped, a helpless prisoner.

"Now, keep order!" said Babs, wagging a warning finger at her.

"Oh, dear! I'll—I'll—"

"There goes the bell! Dinner!" exclaimed Freda Foote. "Now you'll be late for dinner, Bessie."

There was a dismal howl from Bessie Bunter.

"Lemme loose! I—I say, you girls, I was only joking, you know. If I'm late I mayn't get a second helping! Oh, dear! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Freda, dear—dear old Freda—"

"How long have I been dear old Freda?"

"I—I say, you know, I'm awfully fond of you, Freda! I shall be late for dinner. You're a good sort, Freda. I sha'n't get a second helping! I—I wasn't going to touch you, old girl! I—I was only going to kiss you! That's what I really meant to say!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Freda dear, lemme loose! Marjorie, you cat—I—I mean, you dear—come and untie me—"

Marjorie, weeping with merriment, bent and untied the string.

Bessie Bunter scrambled to her feet.

"There you are!" gasped Marjorie.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"

A fat hand caught at Marjorie's soft brown hair, and gave it a tug.

Then Bessie Bunter bolted.

That, apparently, was the Bunter method of expressing thanks.

"Oh!" stuttered Marjorie, rubbing her head. "Oh! The horrid—horrid—"

Crash! Bump!

"Oh, my word!" shrieked Clara. "A collision on the line!"

The girls rushed to the door.

Bessie Bunter, bolting from the Com-

mon-room, had met Miss Bullivant in the passage—in full career.

Both were sitting down now, and the expression on Miss Bullivant's face was extraordinary.

"What—what—what—" spluttered Miss Bullivant.

"Yooooop!"

"Bessie, you utterly stupid girl, how dare you—"

"Yow-ow-ow! I'm hurt!"

The girls ran to help Miss Bullivant up.

Bessie Bunter sat and roared. She certainly was not concerned for the "Bull."

"Yaroooh! I'm hurt! Ow, ow!"

"Bessie—"

"Yooop! Whooop!"

"Where are you hurt?" panted Miss Bullivant, forgetting her wrath in her alarm.

"Yow-ow! My back's broken—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, my neck—"

"You stupid girl!" shrieked Miss Bullivant. "Get up immediately! Take a hundred lines! Take two hundred lines—"

Babs helped Bessie up, and dragged her away before Miss Bullivant could make it three hundred.

### A Really Good Idea!

**B**ESSIE BUNTER wore an expression of subdued but righteous wrath and indignation during dinner.

The rest of the Fourth wore subdued but irresistible smiles.

Even Bessie Bunter's self-satisfaction was not proof against the reception given to her candidature in the Common-room.

Even to her far from brilliant intellect it was clear that there was no chance for her.

A proposer and a seconder were required, and even if the fat junior proposed and seconded herself it was pretty clear that she could not give more than one vote for herself—which really was not sufficient to give her a chance.

Wherefore the wrathful cloud that darkened her plump brow.

After dinner Clara Trevlyn approached the fat junior as the girls left the dining-room, and Bessie elevated her fat little nose and walked away.

Clara joined her again, and Bessie, elevating her nose still higher, walked off once more.

She knew why Clara was seeking her society, and that knowledge gave her the upper hand.

Clara restrained the desire to take Bessie Bunter by her shoulders and shake her.

"Bessie dear," she said in honeyed tones.

"Don't speak to me!" said Bessie Bunter loftily.

"I was only going to—to say—"

"You needn't!"

"That perhaps you'd like to step into Auntie Jones' shop with me," murmured Clara. "She has such nice toffee—"

The lofty expression on Bessie's fat face thawed at once.

"Well, I don't mind!" she said. "Mind, I'm not going to vote for Marjorie!"

"Ahem! This way!"

Bessie Bunter ambled into the school-shop willingly enough.

It was never difficult to guide her footsteps in that direction.

Auntie Jones' toffee proved quite nice, in proof of which fact the fat junior called for a second and a third packet.

"Shall we go for a walk till the election?" asked Clara sweetly.

"I don't care to, thanks!" Bessie

Bunter's loftiness returned now that the toffee was disposed of.

"Come and look at the tennis-courts."  
"Bother the tennis-courts!"  
"H'm! I—I suppose you're really going to vote for Marjorie, Bessie dear?" murmured Clara, coming out into the open at last, as it were.

Bessie grinned.  
"I'm going to think about it," she answered. "I shall turn up for the election. I decline to stand as a candidate myself. I couldn't be bothered with it. No time, you know!"

"Ex—exactly!"  
"Ta-ta!" said Bessie Bunter coolly. And she rolled out of the tuckshop, leaving Clara to settle for the toffee in a rather dubious mood.

In the quadrangle the fat junior was pounced upon at once by Babs and Mabs. They had been looking for her.

"People who don't like my parrot having enough sugar can't expect—"

"We'll buy no end of sugar for Polly."  
"How much?" asked Bessie, with a businesslike snap which was really the last word in efficiency.

"A pound!"  
"Oh, all right! I'll remember that! I often wish I could spare some sugar myself for Polly!" said Bessie Bunter. "I can't, and it's rather hard. I'm so fond of Polly, you know!"

"Oh! And you're going to vote—"  
"Yes, I'm going to vote."  
"For whom?"

"I haven't made up my mind yet."  
And Bessie Bunter ambled away, leaving Babs and Mabs exchanging glances of intense exasperation.

"I—I—I never felt so much inclined to shake anybody in my life!" murmured

tions and titled relations—and nobly suppressed their yawns.

But their manful endurance in the good cause was unrewarded, for when Lucy Morgan ventured to inquire how Bessie was going to vote, the fat junior replied calmly:

"I'm going to think that out!"  
"Vote for Barbara!" urged Marcia.  
"No fear!"  
"Look here, if you're going to vote for Marjorie Hazeldene—"

"I may, or I may not! I was telling you about my uncle. He keeps three cars—Rolls-Royce, you know! I say, you girls, where are you going?"

Marcia and Lucy walked away without replying.

If it was not to result in a vote for their candidate, they had had enough of Bessie Bunter's rich relations and their motor-cars.



"Where are you hurt?" exclaimed Miss Bullivant. "Yow-ow!" shrieked Bessie Bunter. "My back's broken—I-I mean my neck—." "You stupid girl!" said Miss Bullivant. "Get up immediately! Take a hundred lines—take two hundred lines!"

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Babs, slipping her arm through Bessie's.

"Leggo!"  
"My dear—"  
"Stop it!"  
"Oh! But—"  
"I'm going to turn up at the election," announced Bessie Bunter. "I'm not at all certain how I shall vote."

"You're going to vote, then?" exclaimed Mabs eagerly.

"Certainly!"  
"You're bound to vote for your own study, you know!" urged Mabs. "Noblesse oblige, you know—esprit de corps, and all that!"

"Nonsense!"  
"Now, look here, Bessie—"  
"It depends on the way my study treats me," said Bessie Bunter, blinking at them. "People who make a fuss over a few paltry sosses can't expect to be voted for."

"We—we'll have sosses for tea after the election."

Barbara. "I shall break out presently, and shake her hard—I know I shall!"

"Not till after the election," said Mabs. "Mind that! Hallo! There's Miss Bellew calling me! I've got to go in now!"

And the hapless Mabs went in to her detention.

Bessie Bunter, ambling away cheerily, was cornered by Lucy Morgan and Marcia Loftus, two of Barbara's supporters.

They smiled sweetly, and talked in honeyed tones; and Bessie Bunter grinned.

She proceeded to talk quite amiably, and the two Barbarians—as Bab's supporters were termed by Study No. 7—listened to her with great politeness and attention.

They heard her expatiate upon her prowess at hockey, at tennis, at several other things, and they gained a great deal of information about her wealthy connec-

"Cats!" murmured Bessie.

The fat girl sniffed, and went into the School House, and up to Study No. 4. She was not long left alone there—as she guessed would be the case.

Babs, after a word of condolence to her chum at the door of the Form-room, came up to the study.

She found the fat junior holding a conversation with her parrot.

"Pretty Poll!" said Babs diplomatically.

"Ugly girl!" came from the parrot's cage. "What a freak! Squawk! What a face! Yah!"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Barbara. "That—that is a very clever bird, Bessie."

"Knows you—what?" grinned Bessie.

"Ahem! I didn't mean that, I—"

"What a face! Oh, my!" came from the parrot.  
Barbara coloured.

"I say, Bessie—" she began.

Bessie blinched at her.

"You're still putting up for the election at four?" she asked.

"Of course!"

"I could give you some advice if you'd like it. I've got sense, you know."

"I'd really be very much obliged," said Barbara sweetly.

"Well, my opinion is, that the best thing you can do is to stand a spread to your supporters."

"Oh!"

"A really ripping spread," continued Bessie Bunter—"something quite out of the common. Invite the whole Form, and girls who come will feel bound to vote for you, if it's really topping. I should."

"Oh, you would!" ejaculated Barbara.

"Yes, if I enjoyed your hospitality!" said Bessie loftily. "I should feel bound to. Of course, I mean a real spread."

"But it's too early for tea."

"What nonsense! Fix it for half-past three. I know I shall be hungry before then. I'll tell you what," said Bessie, her eyes gleaming behind her spectacles, "give me carte blanche, and I'll arrange the whole thing for you. I'll do the cooking, and the shopping, too, if you like. I dare say it could be done on a pound."

"A—a—a pound!"

"Well, you could make it thirty shillings if you liked."

"I—I mean I haven't—"

"I'd lend you the money, with pleasure."

"Would you really?"

"Only my remittance hasn't come yet. But I dare say you could raise a sovereign. If you could, I'd undertake to provide a feed that would rally all the Form round you," said Bessie eagerly.

Barbara smiled.

She had great doubts about rallying the enemy's voters by means of a study spread, but there was little doubt that she could rally Bessie Bunter by that method.

And that, after all, was what was wanted. One more vote would turn the scale.

"Do you agree, Barbara?"

"Yes, rather!" said Babs, at once.

"Good! I'll manage it for you," said Bessie, with glistening eyes. "You can get nearly all the Form in this study, with a bit of packing. Of course, some won't come—Marjorie and Clara, and Dolly, and some others. In fact, we don't want 'em all—only a majority. No need to waste food, is there?"

"Nanno!"

"I'll make a record spread of it," said Bessie enthusiastically. "This is the sort of thing that I really can do, you know."

"I've no doubt of that," assented Barbara cordially.

"You may get thirteen or fourteen votes, and settle the thing beyond the shadow of a doubt, you know. A bumping majority," said Bessie. "Leave it to me. I'll make some tarts—I can make splendid tarts. And poached eggs and toast, and apple-rings, and lots of things, you know. Get me the stuff, and rely on me."

Barbara suppressed a chuckle.

Bessie Bunter was enthusiastic now—bubbling with enthusiasm.

If that mood could be kept up till four o'clock, the election was safe.

It was evidently judicious to give Bessie her head, so to speak.

Bessie blinked rather dubiously at the study grate.

"Not much accommodation here for really good cooking," she remarked. "I suppose the cook would make a fuss if I asked to use the kitchen."

"The passage fire!" suggested Barbara. "We've often—"

"Just the thing! You run off and get the shopping done, and I'll make up a good fire in the passage. I'll give you a list of things to get."

Bessie Bunter scribbled a list—rather an extensive one.

Barbara hurried from the study.

It was necessary to borrow up and down the passage to raise the required funds.

But there was hearty support forthcoming among Babs' supporters, especially as they were all to be included in the feast.

In fact, Babs found that all her supporters were cordially in favour of Bessie Bunter's scheme—it met with general approval.

With twenty-two shillings and sixpence in her purse, Barbara hurried away with Bessie's list, to interview Auntie Jones.

And among the "Barbarians," there was rejoicing and satisfaction—partly because the election now seemed a sure thing, and partly, perhaps, because of the record study spread that was in prospect.

### Clara is Equal to the Occasion.

BESSIE BUNTER was losing no time.

At the end of the Fourth-Form passage there was a big grate.

Near by was a deep window recess.

That comfortable little quarter was called the "Cosy Corner" in the Fourth Form, and the girls often met there for chats just before bed-time.

The fire being a good deal larger than a study fire, it was frequently used for cooking on the occasion of a study spread.

Bessie Bunter raked the bars, and piled on nice little knobs of coal, and had a really splendid fire ready by the time Babs returned with a large basket full to the brim.

Bessie's fat face glowed in the fire-light, and she gave Barbara quite a friendly smile.

She quite loved Barbara, when her eyes fell on the basket.

Her vote was evidently secure.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "Now, I shall want a frying-pan, and a saucepan, and some dishes and plates, and—"

Bessie ran on with a list. "Hurry up, old girl!"

"Right you are!"

Bessie's wants were supplied, from the various studies.

Barbara ran to and fro at her bidding.

"Can I help you?" she asked, when the fat junior set to work at last.

Bessie shook her head.

"No. You'd only bother me. You can go and get the chairs and things in the study ready. Tell the girls it's for half-past three. I'll have the whole thing ready by then—not before."

"Then I can go for a stroll?" suggested Barbara.

"You can go anywhere you like, my dear," answered Bessie Bunter politely.

"You'll only worry me if you hang about here."

Barbara laughed and ran off.

Half-past three was decidedly early for tea, and Barbara & Co. considered it judicious to work up an appetite in the keen sea air, ready for the great occasion.

Bessie Bunter's appetite was vigorous enough without that.

And Bessie's scheme was turning out more successful than Babs had expected.

She had supposed it would catch Bessie's own vote; but that stunning spread had its own attraction, and Bridget O'Toole had accepted the invitation to share it.

Bridget was backing Marjorie in the election, but she was entitled to second thoughts.

And it was understood that that royal spread was for Barbara's supporters.

Bessie Bunter proceeded with her congenial task in great spirits.

She was busily engaged when Marjorie and Clara strolled along the passage, intending to sit down in the Cosy Corner and discuss the pros and cons of the election.

But they found the Cosy Corner, window-seat and all, occupied by Bessie Bunter's dishes and plates, and a gigantic tray.

"My word!" exclaimed Clara, opening her eyes. "What's this game?"

Bessie waved a fat hand at her.

"Don't bother!"

"Are you getting ready for a siege?"

"Run away!"

"But what does it mean?" exclaimed Marjorie. "We came here to sit by the fire, Bessie!"

"Well, you can't! I'm getting the election feast ready," grinned Bessie Bunter. "Study No. 4 at half-past three. You can come if you vote for Barbara."

"Oh!" exclaimed Marjorie.

Clara's face was a study.

She realised that this was an astute move on the part of her rival, and she saw defeat looming ahead.

"So—so—so you're voting for Babs after all?" she exclaimed.

"Everybody at the feed will vote for the founder of the feast, of course," said Bessie Bunter. "I know I shall."

"Oh, dear!"

"It's my idea, you know," said Bessie Bunter. "Entirely mine."

"You—you—"

Words failed Clara.

"Better look after your voters!"

chuckled the amateur cook.

"Our voters are safe enough!" said Marjorie loftily. "They won't change their minds for a few tarts!"

"Won't they? I know one's coming anyway!" chuckled Bessie. "I won't tell you which—but one is—and perhaps more. And everybody who comes is bound to vote for Barbara—that's understood. You're done!"

"I don't believe—"

"You'll see! He, ho, he!"

"Oh, come away!" said Clara crossly.

"He, he, he! Half-past three in Study No. 4!" called out Bessie Bunter. "You can come if you vote for Barbara! He, he, he!"

Clara turned round quickly.

"You're taking all that food to Study No. 4?" she asked.

"Yes, of course!"

"At half-past three?"

"Before then. You see, all the girls in the Fourth are coming in at three thirty. I'm going to have it all ready. That's what I've got this tray for. I say, you girls, isn't it a splendid idea?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"If you'd treated me more decently I'd have used my gumption on your side!" said Bessie Bunter loftily. "You haven't got any gumption, you know! Barbara hasn't, either! Now, I've lots!"

"Oh, nonsense!"

Marjorie and Clara beat a retreat.

They were greatly inclined to charge the happy cook, and mix her up with her pots and pans and dishes and plates and jam and flour and butter.

But they felt that that step would be a little too drastic.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Dolly Jobling, as they came back into Study No. 7.

"We're done!" said Marjorie dimly.

Clara explained, and Dolly gave an expressive whistle.

"Oh! That accounts!" she exclaimed.

"Accounts for what?"

"I heard Bridget O'Toole saying to Cissy Clare that she'd go, and Cissy said

she thought she would, too. They must have been speaking about the spread!"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Clara. "That's two of our voters gone! They can't vote against Barbara after that!"

"Then we're jolly well beaten!" said Dolly Jobling. "Barbara will get in as captain of the Fourth, and this study will be nowhere. I call it bribery and corruption, you know!"

"All through that greedy little duffer, Bunter!" exclaimed Clara wrathfully. "Nobody else would have thought of such a dodge! Of—of course, Barbara is entitled to entertain her supporters if she likes!"

"We sha'n't get more than five or six votes, at this rate!" said Marjorie dimly. "Suppose we did the same? We could stand a feast to our supporters! There isn't much time now, but—"

Clara shook her head.

"Money's scarce! We spent the last pound feeding Bessie Bunter last night—with this result! Little minx! Besides, it's no good making out that we could get up a spread like Bessie Bunter—we couldn't! But there's more than one way of killing a cat!"

Clara's eyes gleamed with the light of battle.

"We're not beaten yet, Marjorie—don't you worry! I've got an idea!"

Marjorie did not look very hopeful.

"It was your idea to have the election, in the first place!" she remarked, in a casual sort of way.

"And a jolly good idea, too!" answered Clara warmly. "Never mind that now! I tell you I've got a wheeze! That feed isn't coming off!"

"But—"

"Mabs is detained in the Form-room till three-thirty—and Babs has gone out," resumed Clara. "They're off the scene. They're all coming in together at half-past three."

"Well?"

"Before that, Bessie's taking the food into Study No. 4. She's got that terrific tray—she told us—"

"I don't see—"

"You never do, dear!" said Clara. "Follow your leader, and you'll see what you will see. It's turned three now, and it's time we got to work!"

Clara led the way down the passage, followed by her mystified friends.

The shower was long over, and nearly all the juniors were out of doors.

Nobody was visible in the Fourth-Form passage save Bessie Bunter, who was busy cooking in the Cosy Corner.

Clara made her chums a sign to tread softly, and they tiptoed along to Study No. 4, and entered that famous apartment.

As they expected, it was empty—but an unusual number of chairs showed that some preparations had been made for the royal spread.

"And now—" said Marjorie, in wonder.

Clara was looking round the study.

She picked up a huge cushion from the rocking-chair, and then placed the study door about six or seven inches open.

Standing on a chair, she arranged the big cushion on top of the door, resting it against the wall over the doorway.

"Oh!" ejaculated Marjorie, understanding at last.

Dolly laughed.

"I see—a booby-trap! Ha, ha!"

"Shush!"

Clara stepped down, and pulled the chair away.

There was a smile of serene satisfaction on her face.

"All's fair in love and war!" she remarked. "Barbara's started out to beat us with this study spread—well, when Bessie Bunter walks into that booby-trap with the tray full—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rather think the result will be to beat Barbara!" chuckled Clara. "Get behind this screen, and wait and see!"

And with a subdued chuckle, the three girls squeezed behind the screen in the corner—and waited!

### A Close Finish!

"GORGEOUS!"

Bessie Bunter, as she surveyed her handiwork, felt that "gorgeous" was really the

word.

It was gorgeous!

The fat junior surveyed the good things through her big glasses, with great satisfaction.

Although she had taken many a snack during the process of cooking—and some of the snacks were large ones—Bessie Bunter was quite prepared to do full justice to the election feast.

In fact, she was getting quite sharp set.

And there was no doubt that the cook

by the array of crockeries and comestibles Bessie Bunter had stacked on it.

She stood for a moment, contemplating the treasures under her fat little nose in ecstasy.

Then, holding the laden tray very carefully, she progressed along the passage to Study No. 4.

There was no sound from the study—Marjorie & Co. keeping still and silent as they heard the heavy footsteps approaching.

Bessie Bunter reached the door.

It was open several inches, and through the opening came a ruddy gleam from the fire within the study.

She placed the edge of the tray against the door, to push it wide open before her, and walked in.

The door flew open.

Bessie Bunter made one step after that. She had only time for one.

What happened next was volcanic.

Crash!

Smash!

Splash!

Scrunch!



Bessie Bunter held up a forefinger—a very fat one—and shook it at the occupants of Study No. 7. "I'm shocked at you!" she said. "Asking a girl to supper, to get her vote! I call it sly!"

would take the lion's share in the cookery when the feed came off—or, rather, if it came off!

But on that point Bessie Bunter had no doubts, not knowing of the thoughtful preparations made in Study No. 4.

With a careful, almost loving, hand, she stacked the tray.

It was some little distance down the passage from the Cosy Corner to Study No. 4. Bessie blinked along the passage to see whether the door was open, and caught a gleam of firelight from within the study, falling into the dusky corridor.

Then she picked up the tray.

It was a large tray—a very large tray, borrowed from the regions below stairs by Barbara.

But, large as it was, it was well-covered

"Yarooooooh!"

Something that swooped from above smote Bessie Bunter, and smote the huge tray, and smote the enticing array upon it.

With a yell that rang the length of the Fourth-Form passage, Bessie Bunter sat down in the doorway.

The tray flew, and the plates flew, and the dishes flew, and the jam-tarts, and the apple-rings, and the rest of the goodly array.

It rained good things for some moments.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Three bright faces were peering round the screen.

There was a shout of laughter in answer

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 2.

to the fiendish yell that rang out in the doorway.

"Yaroooh! Help! Yooop! Yawp! Oh! Ah! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What ever's the matter?" exclaimed Gwendolen Cook, dashing out of her study. "What—what— Oh, dear!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gwendolen ran up.

Three convulsed faces disappeared behind the screen at once.

Marjorie & Co., understudying Brer Fox, lay low.

"How did you do that?" shrieked Gwendolen.

"Yooop!"

"Are you hurt?"

"Yarooop!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Gwen. "You clumsy girl! Ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow! They did it on purpose!" shrieked Bessie Bunter. "That cushion fell on me! Yooop! I'm smothered with jam. Yow-ow! I've got hot coffee down the back of my neck—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a laughing matter! Yah! Cat! Ow, ow, ow!"

Bessie Bunter scrambled up at last, scrunching among crocks and tarts and other things.

She set her spectacles straight on her fat little nose, and glared round the study.

The trio behind the screen made no sound.

If they had shown themselves at that moment, it was evident that for whomsoever Bessie Bunter's vote was cast, it would not be cast for Marjorie Hazeldene!

"Yow-ow-ow! Look at me!" gasped Bessie Bunter. "Smothered! Yooop! It's a booby-trap! Ow! Pulling my leg, you know! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cat!" shrieked Bessie Bunter, enraged by Gwen's helpless merriment.

"Oh dear!"

Gwendolen fled.

"Cats! Yow-ow! Smothered! Oh, dear! Yarooooh!"

There was a faint gurgle behind the screen; but, fortunately, the fat junior was making too much noise herself to hear it.

She tramped out into the passage at last, shedding fragments of jammy tarts from her attire as she went.

What Bessie Bunter needed most at that moment was a wash, and to change her frock.

Jam and coffee and cream and other things were mixed over them most liberally.

She rolled away down the passage towards the dormitory stairs, still ejaculating, and the last word that floated back to Marjorie & Co. was:

"Cats!"

"Oh, my word!" gurgled Clara. "I think I should have died in another minute. Ha, ha, ha!"

"She—she thinks it was Babs laid that trap for her!" gasped Marjorie.

"Let her!" chortled Dolly Jobling.

"But, I say—"

"The feed won't come off now!" trilled Clara.

"Ha, ha! It doesn't look like it. But

"Come on! We've got to prove a strong alibi after this!" gasped Clara.

"If we're spotted here, it's good-bye to Fatima's vote!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three girls picked their way through the wreck of the feast, and peeped cautiously out of the door.

Bessie Bunter was at a distance towards the stairs, her back towards them.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 2.

Marjorie & Co. scuttled out of the study, in the opposite direction, and took cover in the Cesy Corner.

From the other end of the passage a buzz of voices came to their ears as they sat tight in the window recess.

Barbara & Co. had come in; it was close on half-past!

They met Bessie Bunter as they came up into the passage, and there was a general shriek at the sight of her.

Mabs, just released from detention, was with Babs, and eight or nine other junior girls.

And at the sight of the jammy, sticky, and infuriated new girl, a shriek burst from every member of the party.

"Bessie!"

"What—"

"How—"

"Good gracious—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cat!" yelled Bessie Bunter, shaking a fat and jammy fist under Barbara Redfern's astonished nose. "Yah! Cat!"

"Why—what—"

"Cat!"

And, with that, Bessie Bunter rushed up the dormitory stairs, and vanished.

"What—what—what's happened?" stammered Mabs.

Write to  
Your Editor and  
tell him what you  
think of

THE : :  
SCHOOL FRIEND.

He will send you  
a prompt reply  
by post.

They discovered what had happened when they came along to the study.

It was strewn with the wreck of that terrific feed that was to win the Form election.

It was evident that it would never win the election now.

All that feed would ever do was to keep Babs and Mabs busy for a considerable time cleaning up their study.

"Well!" ejaculated Barbara. "The clumsy little duffer!"

"Oh, what a smash!"

"And look! My beautiful cushion mixed up in it!" exclaimed Barbara breathlessly.

"The state the study's in—"

"I'll shake her!" shrieked Barbara.

"Election or no election, I'll shake her!"

The cushion was rescued.

It was not so easy to rescue the carpet. As for the crocks, they were past rescue.

The casualty list in crockeryware was simply terrific.

Babs and Mabs were still busy—and wrathful—when Clara's charming face looked into the study.

"Forgotten the election?" inquired Clara sweetly

Sniff!

"Bother the election!"

"Four sharp, you know!"

"Bother!"

"Door locked at four, and anybody outside the Common-room then won't be admitted!"

And Clara dashed off.

Babs and Mabs exchanged a glance.

"Let's go!" said Mabs. "We may have a chance. It's not lost till it's won! That fat little duffer ought to vote for us after smashing up our crocks!"

"Come on!"

The two girls raced away.

They were the last in the Common-room—with one exception!

All the Fourth were there with the exception of Bessie Bunter.

But a minute later the fat junior rolled in—still jammy.

There was a vengeful expression upon Bessie Bunter's face, and she glared at Babs and Mabs with a glare that bade fair to crack her spectacles.

"Bessie—" began Babs and Mabs together.

"Yah! Cats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order for the voting!" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn. "Now, then! Grace Woodfield of the Fifth is counting the votes. Leave Bessie alone, you two!"

Clara was anxious.

All depended on Bessie Bunter's vote, and Bessie's vote depended upon whether or no she discovered the real authors of the booby-trap in Study No. 4.

"Go ahead, Grace!" she exclaimed. "You keep by me, Bessie. Marjorie, have you those chocs for dear Bessie?"

"No bribing the voters allowed!" exclaimed Babs warmly. "Bessie, my dear

"Cat!"

"What are you calling me names for?" demanded Barbara, repressing her strong desire to shake the fat junior. "After smashing all the crocks—"

"Order!" exclaimed Clara breathlessly.

"Do get on with the election! We haven't come here to waste time. Take Bessie's arm, Marjorie—"

"I'm going to vote for Marjorie," said Bessie Bunter truculently. "I'm not going to vote for girls who set booby traps for their friends!"

"Silence! Order!" exclaimed Clara in despair. "Grace Woodfield, we're waiting for you! I propose Marjorie Hazeldene—"

"Who laid booby-traps?" shrieked Barbara, comprehending at last. "Bessie, you fat little—I—I mean, you dear little goose—it wasn't us! Did you think we'd spoil our own feed—"

"Vote!" exclaimed Clara. "Vote! Vote!"

"Order!"

"Hands up for Marjorie Hazeldene!"

"Hold on! I'm proposing Barbara Redfern!"

"I second that!"

"One at a time, please!" drawled Grace Woodfield of the Fifth. "Quiet, children! Now then—"

"Bessie! Let go Bessie's arm, Clara!"

"You let go her arm, Barbara!"

"I say, Bessie, it wasn't us, you know! It was somebody from along the passage. Study No. 7, I should think!"

"Silence!" shrieked Clara. "Hands up for—"

"Let go, Bessie, at once!"

"Put up your hand for Marjorie, Bessie! Dear old Bess!"

Bessie Bunter comprehended at last. She jerked her fat arm away from the dismayed Clara, and pointed a podgy forefinger at her, as if in denunciation. "You!" she exclaimed.

"Dear Bessie—"  
 "Cat!"  
 "Look here, my—my darling—"  
 "I'm going to vote for Barbara!"  
 "Oh, you horrid, horrid fat duffer!"  
 gasped Clara.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Order!" said Grace of the Fifth.  
 "Now then, Marjorie Hazeldene's supporters will hold up their hands!"  
 The Fifth-Former proceeded to count. Clara fixed an imploring look on Bessie Bunter's fat face.  
 Bessie gave her a ferocious blink in return. The die was cast!  
 "Eight!" announced Grace Woodfield.  
 "Oh dear!" groaned Clara. "Horrid little—"  
 "Hands up for Barbara Redfern!"  
 Up went eight hands—and a podgy paw followed them.

Bessie Bunter grinned at Clara's wrathful face.  
 Marjorie laughed.  
 The loyal support of her chum had had the effect of losing her the election, but she would not have told Clara so for worlds.  
 Clara had done her best.  
 "Nine!" was the announcement.  
 "Barbara Redfern is duly elected captain of the Fourth Form!"  
 "Hurrah!"  
 "Bravo!"  
 "Hip-hip-hurrah!"  
 Amid the cheering of the "Barbarians" there came a loud squeak of anguish. Clara was shaking Bessie Bunter. She really could not deny herself that consolation.  
 "Hurrah!"  
 Shake, shake!

"Yarook!"  
 The great election was over, and Babs was captain of the Fourth.  
 And later on, in Study No. 4, there was a feast of celebration which quite consoled Bessie Bunter for the incident of the booby-trap.  
 And the Barbarians, amid shouts of laughter, passed a vote of thanks to Clara Trevlyn for winning them the election!

THE END.

(Another long, complete story of the Girls of Cliff House, entitled "Bessie Bunter's Busy Day!" in No. 3 of "The School Friend," on Sale Thursday next. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)



## Your Editor's Corner.



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

My Dear Readers,—It has often been remarked that the second number of a paper is always better than the first. Many people have scoffed at the idea, whilst others have readily agreed with it. Personally, I believe this to be the case.

The first act of a theatre play is rarely as interesting as the second, and the same may be said of a cinema film. The reason for this is, in my opinion, not hard to find. In the case of the first issue of a new paper, and the first act of a play or cinema-film, there is a great deal of introductory ground to be covered. The characters have to be staged, and do things before you can decide whether you like them.

### BETTER THAN NUMBER ONE.

This argument, I am sure, can be applied to THE SCHOOL FRIEND. For excellent as was our first number, there is no doubt in my mind you will all agree that this week's issue is even better.

Last week the girls of Cliff House were staged before you, so to speak. Possibly many of you doubted whether the characters would appeal to you, but after you had read all about Bessie Bunter's arrival, I am confident that Babs and Mabs, and Marjorie, Clara, and Dolly, had endeared themselves to the hearts of all of you.

And Bessie Bunter, in spite of her obtuse manner, and her peculiar ways, must have amused you, and made you long to read more about her adventures at Cliff House.

One cannot help laughing at Bessie Bunter's ways, and if you have not enjoyed reading of the part she played in connection with the Fourth Form election, I shall be very disappointed. You must have come to the conclusion by this time that Bessie Bunter possesses a most abnormal appetite, and in next Thursday's magnificent long, complete story of the Girls of Cliff House, which is

### "BESSIE BUNTER'S BUSY DAY."

By Hilda Richards.

You will secure more evidence of this fact. Marjorie & Co. invite Stella Stone of the Sixth to tea in Study No. 7. It is really a great honour for a member of the Sixth Form to have tea in a junior's

study, and, of course, Marjorie Hazeldene and her friends feel highly honoured. They decide to prepare a splendid tea, and to give Stella Stone a grand reception.

But Marjorie & Co.'s plans are completely upset by none other than Bessie Bunter. Bessie helps herself to the good things on the table of Study No. 7, and when Stella Stone arrives, there is nothing left for tea except a little bread and margarine, and a few stale sardines. The feelings of Marjorie & Co. are too deep for words, and can better be imagined than described. Needless to say, Stella Stone takes her departure from Study No. 7 in a very disgruntled mood.

Bessie Bunter receives a very severe shaking for her pains, but the next day proves to be a busy one for her. I do not mean to suggest that she works hard; work, as you may have guessed, does not appeal to Bessie Bunter. But Bessie is kept busy in endeavouring to obtain as much food as possible. During cookery lesson, Bessie helps herself to the jam, as you will see by glancing at next Thursday's cover, which appears on page two of this week's issue. She also helps herself to a number of tarts, and when you read of the punishment she receives, you are bound to agree that it is well deserved.

But the punishment does not act as a warning to Bessie Bunter. She never lets a chance slip by of securing food that does not belong to her. Nevertheless, she helps herself once too often, as you will learn when you read this splendid story. She has a glorious feed, and when she is discovered she tries to blame the cat and the dog, and—well, I will not tell you anything more about this grand tale. I have told you sufficient to prove to you that it will be an excellent yarn, a worthy successor to numbers one and two, and when you have read it, I am confident you will agree with me that it does not contain a dull line.

Next Thursday's issue of THE SCHOOL FRIEND will, of course, contain another magnificent long instalment of our grand adventure serial,

### "THE GIRL CRUSOES!"

By Julia Storm.

In this instalment the girls have some very exciting adventures on Diamond Island. They also make some very surprising discoveries.

The desert island is, as you will see, a wonderful place. The girls receive surprise upon surprise, and as you follow the adventures of Hilda, Pat, and Joe, you are sure to long to be with them on Diamond Island, and to share their experiences.

Now I wish to repeat the request I made in last week's issue. I want you all to write and let me know what you think of THE SCHOOL FRIEND. I want to know whether you like the girls of Cliff House, whether Babs and Mabs, of Marjorie, Clara, and Dolly, are girls whom you would like to number amongst your own friends, and whether Bessie Bunter's peculiar ways send you into roars of laughter? I also want you to let me know your opinions of "The Girl Crusoes," and whether you like Hilda, Pat, and Joe.

### WRITE TO ME.

I shall, of course, send a prompt reply to every reader who writes to me, and if any of you wish to know anything about our stories, or the characters which appear in them, don't hesitate to write and ask me. And if you are in any need of information or advice, let me know, and I will do all in my power to assist you.

In conclusion, I would urge upon all of you the necessity of ordering your copies of THE SCHOOL FRIEND, in advance. As this paper is of an entirely new type, the demand for it is bound to be large, and I should not like a single one of you to go to your newsagent's, and to be met with the words: "Sold out!"

Tell all your chums about THE SCHOOL FRIEND, and if any of them do not read the paper, show them the cover of next Thursday's issue, which appears on page two, and tell them that if they do not secure a copy of No. 3 they will be missing a splendid treat. By so doing, you will greatly oblige,

Your sincere friend,  
 YOUR EDITOR.  
 THE SCHOOL FRIEND.—No. 2.