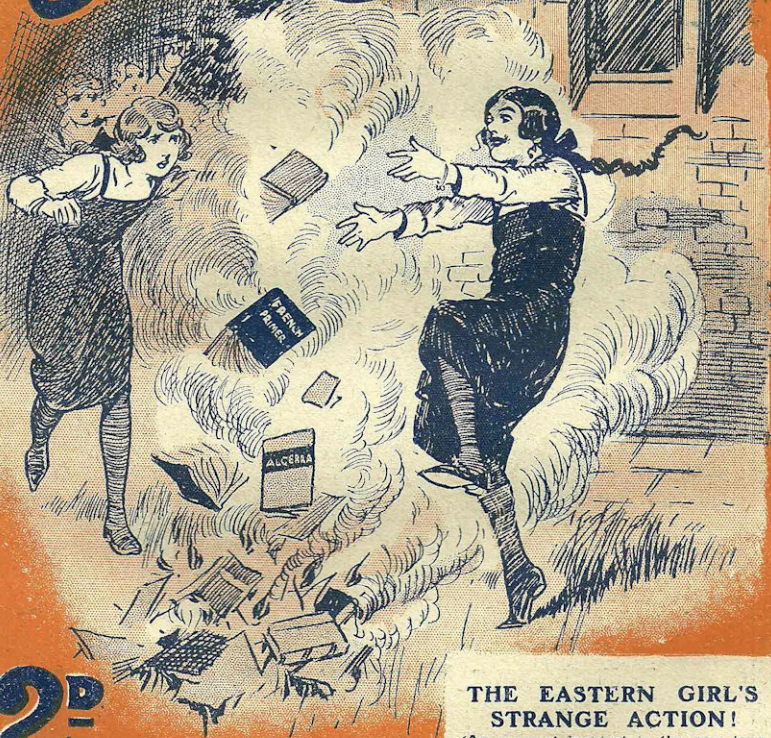


In this issue:

“The Fourth Form Runaway!” A splendid story of the girls of Morcove School.

The Schoolgirls' Own



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THE EASTERN GIRL'S STRANGE ACTION!

(An unusual incident in the new long
complete story of Morcove School con-
tained in this issue.)

The fame of Morcove School is world-wide. Here is a splendid "Morcove" yarn.



FOURTH FORM RUNAWAY!

A magnificent new long complete story of the girls of Morcove School relating how Naomer, the girl from Morocco, kicked over the traces.

By MARJORIE STANTON.

Talk and Teasing.

POLLY LINTON stood at the top of the table in Study 12 at Morcove School, rattling teaspoons into one cup and saucer after another. She was not the only girl in that particular study who was busy with preparations for a high tea.

Betty Barton, the form captain, was cutting bread-and-butter. Madge Minden was dispensing the prettiest paper serviettes. Tess Trelawney and Trixie Hope were fagging in borrowed chairs from adjacent studies. Dolly Delane was off to see after the boiling water.

The only idler, in fact, was Paula Creel.

That aristocratic young lady was reclining in an easy chair, looking the very picture of elegant languor.

"Now!" said Polly, having rattled down the last teaspoon, "let's see how we stand!"

"To see where we are going to sit would be more to the point," laughed Betty, standing back to survey the table. "I think I ought to have Jess Lingard on my right, girls, as she is the guest of the day—"

"Yes, wather!"

"And Naomer on my left," proposed Betty.

"No, not Naomer. I was forgetting! She is still so unused to British ways, I can hardly put her to the trouble of passing the cups when I've filled them. Madge, you had better come to the rescue!"

"Right-ho, Betty!"

"So Naomer shall sit next to Paula Creel."

Polly Linton proposed mischievously, causing the girl in the easy chair to gape with sudden dismay "Oh, gwacious!"

"You always say you are so fond of darling Naomer!" cried Polly.

"Pwecisely, gvals! I have the gwreatest wegard for our little dusky fwend fwom Awfca. Howevah, I twust there will be no pwanks!"

"Franks?" grinned Polly, as if she had never heard of such things.

"Pwanks. Yes, wather! There was a time, Polly, deah," drawled Paula, shaking up a cushion, "when I only had one twial to put up with. That was you, deah! Then, howevah, Naomer Nakara awvived from Awfca, and—wweal, wwealy, she is wather another madcap, don't you know!"

"You dare say a word against Naomer!" Polly

cried, with mock indignation, going across to the girl in the easy chair. "Naomer is the nicest, sauciest little imp—"

"Yes, wather!"

"As for you—," Polly added, and suddenly sat down on Paula's lap, as a sort of mere beginning to a bout of teasing. "You are just a lazy lie-about—"

"Polly!" squealed Paula. "Get off me, pway! My fwock—you are cwumpung my fwock tewwibly!"

"I don't jolly well care if I am!" And if you struggle—ha, ha, ha!—you'll only get more rumpled than ever! Ha, ha, ha!"

Paula yelled dismally: "Healp, healp! Geals—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You dweadful tease!" howled the aristocrat, as Polly pulled this stray lock of hair and then that other. "Stop it, Polly, deah! Pway wealise, I shall not have time to put myself to wights!"

"That you won't," chuckled Betty, glancing at her wrist-watch. "We said four-thirty sharp for all our guests, and it is four-thirty now!"

"Bai Jove! Then I must fly!" Paula groaned, heaving up from the chair.

"But mind the hot water, please!" warned Dolly Delane, as she came skirmishing through the doorway.

Paula side-stepped just in time to avoid a collision, then made a little run for it out of the study—only to charge full tilt into Tess and Trixie, with four more chairs!

"Hello, look where you are going, Paula—"

"Yes, wather! Howevah—Healp! Gwreat goodness—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" went up the peals of laughter, as Paula was seen to be struggling like a human fly in a web of chair-legs. "Oh, duffer! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get down and crawl! That's the way out," advised mirthful Polly. "Crawl!"

And that, in the end, was what Paula had to do!

Tess and Trixie, being in teasing mood, they gave the long-suffering aristocrat such a doing with the chair-legs that to get out of the awful maze she was in she had to go down on hands and knees, and extricate herself by that method.

Whilst the laughter was still going up, Tess and Trixie came into the study with the four more

borrowed chairs, and dumped them down—thump!

"Now, I think we've enough!" Tess said, breathlessly.

"Just," agreed Betty. "I look forward to the day, though, when they'll have to lay seats for exactly the number of girls in the form!"

"Hear, hear!" cried Polly, heartily. "We would get them in, somehow! But I am afraid that day is a long way off, Betty. Can you ever see Audrey Blain, for example, accepting an invite, even if we gave her one?"

"And whilst Audrey Blain is a law unto herself," added Madge, rather sadly, "I'm afraid Stella Munro, for another, will never be very friendly!"

The talk had only just taken this grave turn, when a medley of voices in the corridor warned Betty and Co. that there were the other girls turning up prompt to time. And then they came in, all looking very jolly—quite a host of Fourth Form scholars, amongst them Jess Lingard, the day girl.

This was Jess Lingard's first day back at Morcove, after an enforced absence due to a sprained ankle. That it was perfectly recovered now, stands to reason, when we remark that Jess had to cycle to and from school every day.

"You are to sit here, at the captain's right hand, Jess," Polly informed her, gaily. "Place of honour, you know, because it is to celebrate your return that we are having the little feed!"

"Oh!" was all Jess could say to that, whilst she flushed with pleasure. "And I am not sure that I know how to behave!"

It was said with such a touch of pretty shyness, several of the girls gave her quite a loving look.

She was so sweet, so unassuming, this girl who had won her way to Morcove by means of a scholarship, more and more her schoolfellows admired her, as they got to know her better. Jess, from the little shop in one of the by-streets—the little shop kept by her widowed mother, and behind whose counter the girl served many a customer out of school hours.

Only a day-girl, with a little bedroom to go to every night under the leaky tiles, instead of a place in the Fourth Form's airy dormitory; nor had she a share in any of the Fourth Form studies.

Only a day-girl! And as such Jess had wondered whether, when she first came to the school, she would ever be allowed to feel that she really belonged to it. But how nice most of the girls had been to her! What could have been nicer than this special invitation to Study 12 for tea, this afternoon, in celebration of her return to the school?

"We are now ready, except for Paula and Naomer," Betty announced, happily. "Paula, of course, is putting her hair to rights! But Naomer—where is she?"

"Doing lines, of course!" hazarded Polly, with a laugh. "Poor Naomer! She has been getting the wrong side of the mistresses more and more just lately! How ever many lots of lines has she to knock off?"

"It is a fact," said Madge. "The last I saw of Naomer, she was staying behind in the class-room to write out, 'I must obey my mistress,' fifty times. But that was quite half an hour ago, and so—"

There was a sudden excited cry from a girl who was over by the window.

"Oh, look—look! There's Naomer! But whatever is she doing?"

Close to the study window surged the rest of the girls; and, as they looked out and down to where Naomer Nakara was to be seen, loud cries of blank amazement arose in a chorus.

Naomer Has Done It Now.

"GOOD gracious!"

"Well, I never!"

"But whatever—!"

"Yes, whatever is she up to?"

Well might Betty and Co. voice these and similar cries of bewilderment.

Gazing from the study window, they saw Naomer, all alone in the centre of a grassy plot, setting a match to a sort of bonfire.

"Here, I say, those are her books she is setting light to!" Polly suddenly exclaimed, "Great goodness!"

"The little monkey!"

"She is going to burn her school books!"

A general "Oh!" of amazement rounded off this fresh outcry.

Hardly able to believe their eyes, the chums stared fixedly, whilst a little whiff of smoke suddenly arose from the big pile of primers, exercise-books, and text-books that the dusky maiden had heaped upon the grass.

Then, as a puff of wind took the kindled bonfire, the flames rose up.

Readily the loose papers in the pile took fire, making a right royal blaze.

"Of all the daring things!" exclaimed Madge.

"Oh, won't she just catch it hot from—"

"Look at her now—look at her!"

Thus Polly, as she saw with great amusement how Naomer was starting to dance round the blaze.

Round and round the bonfire skipped Morcove's quaint little scholar from a certain desert kingdom in North Africa; and whilst she danced, she began to sing gleefully to herself.

Not a word could any of her listeners understand, for Naomer Nakara had lapsed into her own native language. All the same, Betty and Co. knew perfectly well what the drift of the song was.

Now that all her tiresome school-books were going up in flames, Naomer was singing, as she was dancing, for sheer glee!

"Oh, I say, come on!" Polly suddenly urged her companions, and next instant she was out of the study and whirling down through the house.

Betty and the rest chased after her, for they, too, were eager to put a check upon Naomer's latest assertion of her untamed nature. The headmistress and her colleagues had put up with a good deal, but this—oh, terrible!

"Naomer! Stop—stop, you naughty girl!" a dozen of them were shouting at her a few seconds later, as they dashed towards the dancing girl and her blazing bonfire. "How could you dare to do such a thing!"

"Ohé, ohé!" chanted Naomer, keeping up her jubilant dance, whilst the flames leapt higher and higher. "Keep a smile, yes, wather! No more feefy line for me, hooray!"

"Naomer!"

"Ohé, ohé, keep a smile! See how nice they burn! All ze horrid English grammar, ze French,

"Whatever shall we do about it?" Betty asked

her breathless chums, in comical dismay. "The books are done for now! Oh, Naomer—"

"Yes, Naomer, stop!" Polly fairly shrieked, trying to restrain the little wild thing. But Naomer shook herself free of the deterring hand, and danced on again. Round and round the bonfire, clapping her hands, and laughing and singing:

"Ohé, keep a smile! No more feefy line, hurrah! I not want to learn ze lesson! In my country I do just as I please! So I shall do just as I please at Morcove!"

By now the chums were caught in a sort of spell. They simply stood around, gaping helplessly at Naomer as she still danced, and sang, and clapped her hands. Other girls came pouring out of the schoolhouse doorway, to see the fun; and as fast as they got to the spot they also stood spellbound.

There must have been fifty girls looking on at the strange scene, when all at once an impressive figure joined the throng.

Miss Somerfield!

That good lady, the headmistress of the school, came hurrying up in a scandalous manner. As she stepped to the front of the crowd around the bonfire, and saw the familiar school books all ablaze, with Naomer dancing around them, she gave a sort of scream.

"Na-oh-mer!"

"'Ello, present!" cried that little minx, ceasing her antics for an instant.

"Naomer, how—oh, how dared you do a thing like this! You—your beautiful new school books!"

"Ohé, yes, see how nice they burn!" Naomer chuckled, starting to dance round the fire again. "No more feefy line for me! No more lesson! In my country I do as I like—"

"At Morcove School, Naomer, you will do as you are told!" Miss Somerfield cried at her. Not often had Betty and Co. seen their headmistress in such a state of anger.

"You naughty girl—worse than naughty!" Miss Somerfield went on, without any effect upon the object of her wrath. For Naomer still danced and sang.

"This is the end of all indulgent treatment, Naomer! Do you hear me? Naomer, stop—stop, I say! Attend to me, this instant!"

"No! Because you say 'take feefy line'!"

"I am not going to give you a mere fifty lines for this, Naomer," Miss Somerfield announced gravely. "I and my colleagues have been very patient with you; but apparently you require firm treatment. There must be a change, or else—"

"You send me back to my country, I not care!" Naomer struck in, with such a saucy look that Miss Somerfield's anger almost passed.

After all, how could one be wroth with this untamed girl, when she was so artless, so pretty and lovable!

It is almost certain that such thoughts as that passed through Miss Somerfield's mind. Nevertheless, she had other thoughts that could not be ignored.

Naomer was here in England, at Morcove School, for the express purpose of being trained up like other girls. And trained she must be, or what would her doting grandfather, the Sultan of Nakara, say?

"If your grandfather knew how you were behaving, Naomer, he would tell me to be firmer. This would grieve him as much as it grieves me. I am sad—"

"I am not sad; I am glad to see my books burn!"

"You will have others to-morrow, Naomer; that is all it means. And as a punishment for the naughty thing you have done, you must now go to the detention-room!"

At this instant Naomer, recognising certain friends of hers in the crowd, suddenly remembered that she had an invitation to tea. So she said, with a shake of the head:

"No, I not go to detention! I go to tea in Study 12! 'Ello, Betty! 'Ello, present!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Polly and a few others could not help laughing.

"Betty," said Miss Somerfield, in a pained tone, "I am very sorry, but this girl cannot come to tea with you and your friends. She must be made to



PAULA IN DIFFICULTIES!

Paula rushed out of the room straight into the arms of Trixie and Tess who were laden with chairs for the study tea. The next instant the aristocrat was hopelessly mixed up with the furniture.

understand the enormity of the thing she has done!"

Betty could only say "yes" to that. Like the rest of the scholars, she realised that this business of the bonfire was just about the limit!

"This way, Naomer," Miss Somerfield said, trying not to melt, as she found Naomer's pretty eyes regarding her, now, with a very rueful expression. "The rest of you girls had better disperse, leaving the fire to burn itself out. Come on, Naomer!"

"You not love me?" she almost whimpered; as her arm was taken by the headmistress.

"I do love you, Naomer; and because I want you to grow up a pleasure and a credit to those who love you, I am going to take you in hand!"

"I think you very cruel!"

"I know I am not, Naomer; only being kind to you in the long run," was the quiet response.

And, much as it was going against Miss Somerfield's inclination to do so, she led the little rebel to the detention room, and left her there, with orders not to stir out until seven o'clock!

Naomer was looking the picture of injured innocence now. She had nothing to say when Miss Somerfield, resisting the inclination to forgive her with a kiss, said coaxingly:

"Try, dear—try to be a better girl! Just think it over, dear!"

A pettish shrug was the only response to that gentle entreaty, nor had the girl got over her sulks by the time a maid brought in tea for her.

The comely servant could not help grinning, knowing just why the seldom-used detention room had this occupant at present. But Naomer did not grin back. On the contrary, she glared resentfully at the maid, as if to say:

"How dare you laugh at me—me, Naomer Nakara, the daughter of a royal house!"

And then, when the unrepentant rebel was left to herself, she sat frowning at the wall.

Now and then she looked at the window, with its cross-bars of iron, and then she sighed like a martyr who was doomed to the most unjust imprisonment.

It was obvious that she was making a terrible grievance of what was really the lightest kind of punishment. She did not touch the tempting cup of tea and ample bread-and-butter and jam. Nor did she deem her banishment to this room any the less humiliating, because she was not locked in, but only placed there on her honour, as it were, not to slip away.

There she sat, and anybody seeing her could have guessed that she was working herself up into a fine state of revolt, like the passionate little soul that she was. But nobody did see her.

Nobody saw all her heavy frowning give place at last to a sudden smile of daring decision. Nobody saw her as she jumped up from the bench, and, after neglecting the food for so long, hastily swallowed down the tea and ate up every scrap of bread-and-butter!

Nor did a single pair of eyes observe her as she then tiptoed to the unlocked door, opened it, and crept out.

Like a little brown mouse Naomer made her furtive runs from point to point, until she had reached a certain study upstairs. It was the one she shared with Paula Creel, and at present Paula was with a whole host of other girls in Study 12.

With lightning speed she made herself up a little parcel of food, stuffing it into the pocket of an outdoor coat that was hanging upon a hook.

That garment she took down and folded into as small a compass as possible, and then, hugging the tiny parcel under one arm, she whisked off again.

And again no one saw her!

Down through the house she flitted, out by a side door that gave on to a shrubby path, and then off as hard as she could go for the boundary hedge.

Not until an hour later was she missed from the detention room; and not until half an hour after that—when all Morcov School had been searched through and through for the little rascal—was the alarming news going like wildfire amongst the girls.

Naomer had run away!

Where is Naomer?

JUST before call-over that night, Audrey Blain came into the study that she shared with Stella Munro.

Stella was there, reading a book. She closed it smartly as her friend entered, and had a look of welcome for that girl.

"Well, they have not found Naomer!" Audrey announced, with a chuckle. "I do think it rich, the way that little monkey has capped everything by making off like this!"

"Then she is like us," Stella rejoined, softly.

Audrey leaned back, with hands clasped behind her head and one leg crossed over the other.

"Just like us, Stella, darling!" she assented, swinging one elegant foot up and down. "Only, there is one law for Naomer and another law for us. Now if we had run away!"

She gave a little laugh.

"Even if we had been found out, over that day's absence that we worked so neatly, Stella, there would have been no forgiveness for us. Expulsion, you bet!"

"You laugh now," Stella ventured to say, gently, "but I am sure, Audrey, you were lying awake just as miserably as I was; that night, wondering if Miss Somerfield would ever find out that we spent the day at the Callowbys' after all, and—"

"And had to walk home to the school after bedtime, with our motor-cycle and side-car left behind at the Callowbys' garage, ha, ha, ha!" Audrey laughed again. "Oh, I admit it; I was scared that night, Stella. But the luck we had, next day, in getting the bike home without being found out, just shows how silly it is to get jumpy, even when things are looking-ther blackest! The next time, Stella, darling—"

"Oh, Audrey, there had better not be a next time, had there?"

"Hadh't there!" was the answer.

Audrey got up, stretching her arms as she yawned.

"This is not fatigue, Stella; this is the old, old ennui, if you know what that means. Fed-uppishness, call it. And the Callowby girls are still at that pretty country house which their people are renting for the summer!"

"Oh, Audrey!" Stella exclaimed again. "I'm sorry. I—I'm sorry you begin to feel inclined to—"

"Little fraud!" her reckless friend said, bestowing a playful slap of the hand, "that's your slogan—I'm sorry! At heart, you know you are yearning for another bit of a spree. And you shall have one—to-morrow!"

"What! To-morrow?" Stella echoed incredulously. But her handsome face lit up with eager excitement, proving that if the thing could be done, she would throw all scruples to the winds once again.

Audrey was going to speak on in a lowered tone, when voices suddenly sounded in the corridor. Several girls were out there, halting close to Stella and Audrey's door, to exchange some breathless gossip.

"It really is a lick where the silly girl has vanished to!" Polly was saying. "We—"

"So did we! Scoured the seashore and the caves—"

"Did you? We took our cycles, and went along the Barncombe road—"

"Some of us scouted around over the moor—"

"We've all drawn blank, anyhow!" That was Polly's voice which Audrey and Stella heard

again, as they listened to the talk in the passage. "Pity we had to come in!"

"Oh, well," said Betty. "We couldn't expect to be allowed to keep up the search after dusk had set in. But I can tell you this—if Naomer isn't found and brought back during the night, we shall all be let off school to-morrow, to hunt for her!"

"Oh!" was the excited comment on this bit of news. And of the two girls who were listening on the inner side of the study door, one looked as if she wanted to exclaim: "Oh, how splendid!"

It was Audrey. She clapped her hands together noiselessly.

"You hear, Stella?" she whispered, gleefully. "Just what I was counting upon happening! To-morrow—no school—search parties! Lovely!"

The talkers in the corridor now drifted on, and as the medley of voices died away, Audrey gave full play to her jubilation.

She swung on to the edge of the table, and then waved a dainty hand above her head.

"Spiffing! We shall not even have to ask for permission to join in the search! The whole school will go off, helter skelter, and we, Stella—we shall simply trot along to the Callowbys' place, and get another topping day with Van and Murie!"

"But Betty knows that we—" began Stella.

"What Betty knows doesn't trouble me in the least!" was the scornful answer. "She won't blab! If ever she does—oh, won't I make her pay for it! Think I am going to be kept on a string by that girl? Not likely!"

At bedtime, in the Fourth Form dormitory, Stella was again reminded of her own "I will, I won't" nature.

Naomer was still missing, and all the talk was of that girl, and of the eager search that would be resumed in the morning.

So, during the girls' undressing for bed, the chums of the form were heard by Stella Munro to be debating to-morrow's search as a very serious bit of business. With them, it was by no means to be an excuse for kicking over the traces. And Stella Munro could not help feeling ashamed of the advantage which she and Audrey were going to make out of this disturbing affair.

Up here in the dormitory, as it were, Audrey was such a being apart from all others. Haughtily aloof from her schoolfellows, she minced about the room, with all the old air of being above what she called the petty hum-drum of school life. Stella held her breath in a sort of awed way, as she let her gaze dwell upon the girl.

"Oh, it was no use! There was a lot in Betty and Co. that one had to admire; but so long as Audrey was in the school, Audrey must take first place in one's affections!"

Audrey, the one girl here who could minister to the craving that Stella was conscious of in her own heart—the craving for excitement, variety, pleasures that other girls didn't seem to hanker after, but she hankered after them. She couldn't help it!

It meant nothing to her to play in a tennis tournament, and have tea afterwards with a host of keen girls. It meant such a lot to play a game of tennis with the Callowby girls, in their garden. They were like Audrey.

They were her sort!

"By Order!"

NO news of the runaway next morning! Almost before first bell had ceased ringing, word was flying around to the effect that the police had 'phoned a report on their night's

inquiries and searching to Miss Somerfield. Still missing, and not a clue, so far!

"Greatest goodness, then wheeah is the wascal?" Paula wanted to know, as she hurried through her dressing.

"Just fancy her staying away all night!" Polly exclaimed. "She is a little monkey!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Now, Paula," remonstrated Polly. "You know very well you simply adored her royal highness!"

"Yes, wather!" And Paula suddenly looked like weeping. Bai Jove, she was a little wipper, and if anything has happened to her, I shall cwy my eyes out. I hate cwyng; it makes one's eyes so wed. But when I think of the pwetty cweature —"

"Pwetty cweature!" Betty echoed, with a laugh to cheer up Paula. "Polly has described her better. Naomer is just a little monkey, to lead us this dance!"

Breakfast that morning was a bit of a scramble, with the scholars of Morcove all aware that a field day was before them.

Far from having to ask permission to be allowed to search the district round about for the absentee, the girls were even ordered to make up search parties.

On the notice-board there was a brief announcement in the headmistress's own hand, bearing that day's date. It had been there when the girls first came down, and it was so thrilling that many of them went to have another look at it after brekker.

SPECIAL ORDER FOR THE DAY!

was the boldly-written heading; and underneath:

The Headmistress regrets to announce that Naomer Nakara, IV. Form, has not been heard of since she went away from the school early yesterday evening.

It is hoped that the girl's action is nothing more than a reckless escapade, prompted by her peculiar temperament.

At the same time, it is most important that every effort be made to find the girl before she comes to harm.

The School will, therefore, devote itself to a careful search, each Form to be under its own captain.

No girl is to separate from the search party to which she belongs, and any girl flouting this important rule is to be reported by her captain.

By Order,

ESTHER SOMERFIELD,
Headmistress.

"Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest!" Polly exclaimed to several girls standing around, as she turned away from the board.

Audrey was there.

She passed on, smiling a secret smile!

Out on the Moor.

"COO-EE. Coo-ee, Na-omer!"
No response.

The Fourth Form search party had been out for an hour now, scouting over the area that had been allotted to them, and for the twentieth time they had sent up that appealing call.

It seemed advisable to call out now and then, the missing girl being the bundle of vagaries that she was.

After staying away from the school all throughout the summer night, and thereby keeping everybody in a terrible state of anxiety, it was just as likely



NAOMER THE UNTAMABLE!

Naomer, standing stiffly erect, her head thrown back and arms folded, glared resentfully at the smiling maid. In effect, she said: "How dare you laugh at me, Naomer Nakara, the daughter of a royal house!"

as not that a chance *halloo!* being heard by her, would suddenly draw a merry:

"Ello, present!"

But no such welcome end to the anxious hunt was to be expected for the present, apparently. Twenty girls lifting up their voices together in a prolonged, cheery "Coo-ee!" can be heard for a good distance over moorland country. And yet there was no answer.

"She may have heard, and may be stubbornly lying low," Betty pondered aloud. "But somehow I prefer to believe that, as soon as she did hear us, she would feel like giving-in!"

"Yes, wather! And, bai Jove, what a relief it would be, geals, if she did suddenly cwoop up under our noses, don't you know! We could then take a west!" said Paula, fanning herself with a handkerchief.

"Hullo, so you want to throw up the hunt, do you?" teased Polly.

"On the contwawy," protested Paula, "I will dwag aound until I dwop, wather than dwop out! I merely remarked that when we do find the twying miswceant—"

"When!" Audrey Blain struck in, half-sneeringly. "How can you ever expect to find Naomer, when we are all keeping together in a bunch like this? Calling out 'Cooe' over and over again, like a lot of ninnies!"

"What's the grievance, Audrey?" Betty asked quietly. "You don't like it, because you can't go off on your own, making the search for Naomer an excuse for—"

"None of your impudence!" flared out Audrey,

drawing herself up. "Just be careful what sort of insinuations you are making, Betty Barton!"

"The cap fits, I think," Betty remarked, as calmly as ever. "Or we would not see such a colouring up."

"I am not colouring up!" Audrey asserted, fiercely.

"No. But somebody else is," Betty said, with a direct glance at Stella.

Then the form captain swung about, loath as ever to be drawn into a battle of words with Audrey.

"Polly, dear! Any of you who want to," the form captain broke out a minute later, "you can scatter, if you want to, of course!"

Audrey pounced on this.

"Oh; and I thought the headmistress said that we were all to keep together, like a lot of sheep! With our worthy captain as shepherdess!"

With most of her chums scampering off in varying directions, Betty turned again upon her inveterate enemy.

"Audrey, you know perfectly well what Miss Somerfield's order meant. It was not meant to debar the girls from spreading themselves over as much country as possible. We are merely to be sure of keeping in touch with one another."

"Oh, I see!" Audrey said, with false sweetness. "So if Stella and I go, say, as far as that holly tree over there, you won't report us?"

The holly tree was only about fifty yards away, and Betty refused to answer such a goading question.

"If Stella and I should even be out of sight for, say, two whole minutes, you still won't report us?" twitted Audrey.

"Polly and Paula, and lots of them, are already out of sight," Betty answered, keeping her temper. "Do you think I am going to report them? But if you and Stella—"

"Quite so!" Audrey took her up triumphantly. "If Stella and I take any liberties—oh, you will report us fast enough!"

"I always do, don't I?" was the withering retort that Betty got in, giving Audrey a steady look. "How ungenerous you are, Audrey! But perhaps Stella has not forgotten, even if you have, that I might have reported you for a certain escapade the other day, and didn't."

Then she walked on a few steps, and, glimpsing Polly and a few others as they scampered ahead through the heather, broke into a run to catch up with them.

Audrey was still standing very still, glaring after the form captain with bitter animosity in her handsome eyes, when Stella spoke.

"Oh, Audrey, I'm sorry! I'm sorry that you gave Betty the chance to give us that rebuke!"

"Bother Betty!" was Audrey's sudden fierce comment. "What do I care for her rebukes—or her authority, either! Stella, come on. Now is our chance!"

"But—"

"Are you coming, or must I go alone?"

Stella gestured hesitatingly. Her eyes looked away from the friend who was always daring her on, to the other girls who were dispersed over the moor. Then she looked back at Audrey, to find that girl already walking away.

"Audrey! Yes, all right!" Stella blurted out, starting after her. "I'll come!"

From where the wayward couple had detached themselves from the search party was but a couple of miles, as the crow flies, to the Callowbys' country house.

Its red roof, indeed, was clearly visible to the girls at this moment, and Audrey pointed to it.

"You know what awaits us there, Stella! A hearty welcome, a nice lunch, an afternoon's laziness in the hammocks. Better than wearing oneself out hunting for horrid little nigger girls!"

And with her harsh, shallow laugh, she hastened on, always the picture of grace, even at a time like this.

Stella might look nervous, guilty, floundering on between the clumps of gorse; but Audrey swung along with resolute daring, and there was good cause for the remark with which Muriel Callowby greeted the schoolgirl visitors, when at last they stood before her, in the beautiful garden.

"Well, if you aren't as cool as a cucumber!" Muriel laughed at Audrey. "Come along in, the pair of you! My sister is about the place somewhere, and will be just as glad as I am over this—ahem, hem—quite unauthorised visit! Ha, ha, ha!"

And taking Audrey about the waist, she ran her up the gravel path to the house, calling back to Stella:

"Come along, Stella darling! You must be dying for a lemonade after your hot walk!"

From the porch Muriel tornadoes into the hall of the house, to cry the news to her sister.

"Nan, darling!" Such a spree! Here are Stella and Audrey, come to lunch with us!"

"Oh!" Vanessa Callowby slammed a bedroom door behind her, and came speeding down the stairs. She made a rush at Audrey, then at Stella, with the usual effusive welcome.

"How jolly of you!" she applauded their scapegrace action. "Muriel and I were rather at a loose end to-day. Dad and the mater are out with the motor, and there was no room in the car for us, because we have friends. So you two girls have just come in time to cheer us up!"

"And do let's hope that your prim Miss Somerfield won't come buzzing in, like she did that other time, to spoil everything," Muriel laughed, leading the way into the cool dining-room.

She minced to the sideboard, took out tumblers and some bottles of lemonade, and began to open one of the latter. She did this by the simple process of pressing a thumb upon the glass ball.

"Now, do be careful!" Vanessa admonished her playfully. "You squirted half a bottle over an Old Master yesterday, Murie, so—"

Shee-ist!

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Murie, as her thumb went into the mouth of the bottle. "Look out!"

"Murie, Murie!" Vanessa shrieked back, as the fountain of foam squirted as high as the ceiling. "Shocking!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I felt like letting off a bottle at Miss Somerfield, that evening she was here!" chuckled Muriel, pouring out lemonade. "There you are, you two. Van, darling?"

"Please—and a cigarette," Vanessa said, stepping across to get a silver box that stood upon the sideboard. "I shall not offer you girls any. You are only schoolgirls!"

Then Audrey saucily got up from her chair and helped herself at the box. With a low laugh, Stella followed this bad example.

"And what, really, are you two supposed to be doing, instead of being here?" smiled Vanessa, seating herself with more froe and easiness than elegance.

"We are supposed to be taking orders from our worthy captain," said Audrey.

"Oh, dear!" laughed the Callowby girls. And the flippant talk flowed on.

The Missing Girl's Message.

IT had gone one o'clock, and by now they were a hungry pack of girls still scouring the moor in quest of the runaway from Morcove!

"Didn't we all pack a snack?" hinted Polly, giving a jerk to a certain bulging satchel, so that it came round into a handier position for being opened.

"We did!" said Betty, patting her equally bulky satchel. "And if the rest of you are as peckish as I am, then I vote we fall to!"

"Bai Jove, it would be a most agreeable sensation!" drawled Paula. "Say the word, and I will pwo long the search until I drop; but I do feel that a slight wepast would be wewfeshing!"

"Callous creature!" teased Polly. She pointed a mock scornful finger at the amiable aristocrat. "This—is this the girl who pretends to be anxious about Naomer!"

"There is no pwetence!" protested Paula. "Pway wealise, howehav, that the stwain has pwoved wather twywig! Wheeh are you going to sit, Polly, deah?"

"Here," was the madcap's answer, as she flopped to the grass close to Betty.

"Then—then I will sit just here," Paula announced, choosing a spot at a safe distance from the teaser. "I do not wish my wepast to be intewwupted by any fwivolous behav—yow!"

One of the old peals of laughter floated forth, as the girls saw poor Paula jump up with far more celerity than she had sat down with.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



FOUND! There she was, the little dusky runaway from Morcove School, lying fast asleep on a mound of hay. "Bai Jove!" beamed Paula. "A pwetty dance she has led us, and we find her weposing in peace!"

"I don't know how it is, geals," sighed the aristocrat, "but if there is anything pwicky to sit upon, I always pvoe the victim!"

She chose another spot with greater care, whilst Madge, as the girls in general began to dive into opened satchels for sandwiches and cake, now came out with one of her sober remarks.

"I should think Naomer herself must be getting hungry by this time!"

"Bai Jove, yes, wather!" exclaimed Paula, beaming again, now that she was comfortably seated. "It is twue that the poor geal took some food from the study larder. But it was weally only enough to feed a spawwow!"

Dolly Delane, with a monster sandwich on the way to her mouth, suddenly gazed round on the assembled company.

"Hullo! Where are Stella and Audrey?" she exclaimed, in great surprise. "They are not here!"

"Only just found that out?" grinned Polly, trying to distract attention from Betty's worried looks. "Personally, I am not breaking my heart because Audrey and Stella are having lunch all by themselves."

"Wather a welief, bai Jove!" said Paula, daintily nibbling a sandwich. "Good widdance, what? I say, geals—"

Paula broke off with a sort of gasp. She held the sandwich away from her mouth, eyeing it with sudden horror.

"Bai Jove!"

Next instant she yelled: "Wasps! Gweat goodness! Healp—wasps!" and scrambled up, overturning all her lunch on to the grass.

"Geals!"

"Oh, help! How many more of them?" chuckled Polly, as the warm mid-day air suddenly filled with buzzings. "Geraway! Shoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm off!" Polly announced, bounding to her feet. "Just look at them—hi, hi! They are going to scoff the lot!"

Polly must have meant by this that the wasps were going to make themselves at home upon the sandwiches and cake.

How many nests happened to be round about there was no telling, but the girls did know that there were hundreds of wasps!

In wild disorder the luncheon-party broke up, fleeing with shielded faces through what seemed to be a thick cloud of insects, whilst already slabs of cake and scattered sandwiches were simply smothered with the uninvited guests.

"Bothah it!" palpitated Paula, heading the hasty evacuation. "Geals, healp! I've got them cawling down by back, bai Jove!"

She stood still for a second, to give a most uncomfortable wriggle, then dashed on again, with the other girls adding their shrill cries to hers, more or less seriously.

And then, suddenly, when the scholars had scattered just about far enough to feel safe from the wasps, there was a different sort of cry altogether from one girl.

It was Madge who suddenly sang out excitedly: "Oh, quick—quick! Come and look, all!"

Breathlessly her companions came rushing at her from all points, to find her standing at a spot they had none of them chanced upon during the search.

For, in a sort of warm nest formed by a surround of brambly bushes, there was the impress left by a human figure that had been coiled there in sleep.

The bracken was flattened down, and a snug

couch had been made by someone out of gathered grass.

Nor were the startled girls left in doubt for a moment as to who had been resting here, in this snug retreat.

For, right before their eyes, there was a sheet of paper, impaled upon a thorny branch, so that it could catch the eye of anybody who passed.

The sheet of paper was adorned with a very crude, comical drawing of a girl dancing with delight. And underneath this extraordinary caricature were the words:

KEEP A SMILE!

On the Track.

"NAOMER!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove!"

"Naomer did that, of course!" burst out Betty, as they all gazed at the amazing sketch. "That is her way of saying 'Keep smiling!'"

"Bai Jove, haow wick! Haow extwemely gwatifying, too!" Paula cried. "She is still all wight—must be!"

"But still leading us a dance!" Betty rejoined, with a rueful smile. "This is a start at last, however! Did she curl up here to sleep last night, I wonder? If so—"

"Aha, there may be a chance for some tracking now!" broke in Polly, jubilantly. "Yes, look! She had to tread down fronds of this young bracken at every step she took."

"Hooray!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Steady, though," Betty cautioned, for she saw some of them making too big a rush to follow up the trail.

Naomer certainly had left a faint track behind her when she quitted her resting-place; but in the last hour or so the searchers had also trampled this way and that through the bracken, and Betty saw a skifful task in front of them. The task of following up the vital trail when it was criss-crossed with others.

"Now, look," the form captain exclaimed, after they had all come to a standstill where the bracken ended. Open grassland confronted them, and all save Betty looked baffled.

"I may be wrong," Betty said, bending low to look along the sunlit grass, "but my theory is that Naomer, in the middle of the night, found her little nest a bit too chilly for her after all."

"Bai Jove—"

"She got up to seek a warmer resting-place," Betty reasoned; "and that took her across the dew-laden grass!"

Polly shouted an "Ah!" of sudden understanding.

"So there is a trail, even here—yes!" she cried out, joyfully. "If you bend down and look along the grass, you can see where it was trodden upon, whilst heavy with dew. Betty, you are a marvel!"

"A wegular Wedskin at twacking!" agreed Paula, beaming. "Now, bai Jove—"

"Yes, now—oh, come along, all!" Polly entreated, going on at a run in a most peculiar attitude. She was stooping as she ran, so as to be able to survey the grass at the needed angle in the sunlight.

Watched in this fashion, the turf showed the track of footsteps made in the night quite clearly, and for quite as long as the girls found necessary.

For, all at once, Madge came out with a shrewd guess.

"You say Naomer left her hiding-place to find a

warmer one? Then doesn't that suggest that she made for some proper shelter?"

"And there is shelter!" Polly exclaimed, pointing towards a red-roofed house not half a mile distant. "I say!"

"Bai Jove, geals—"

"She is there, for a cert!" several of the excited girls chorused, and next moment slow tracking gave place to a race straight across open country to the lone house.

As the girls drew nearer they realised that they were approaching it from the back.

It stood in very spacious grounds, and apparently its front paths led down to a narrow lane, which, in turn, led in one direction out on the Barncombe road.

"Wait a bit," panted Betty, slowing up, and her companions knew that it was worth while hearing what she had to say. They slowed up accordingly.

"Naomer cannot have been found by the people at the house, or her discovery would have been reported. She may be still hiding in some out-building, then, unbeknown to the tenants of the house!"

"And, if we are not careful, she will yet give us the slip!" rejoined Madge, soberly. "Is it your idea, Betty, that some of us had better stay around outside?"

Betty nodded, and then, the girls thoroughly approving this precaution, they had to decide quickly who was to remain on watch.

Madge instantly volunteered to forego her share in the excitement of visiting the house, and others were just as willing to hang back, merely on watch. In the end, Betty was persuaded that she was the right one to go forward to the house, taking Polly, Paula, and Tess with her.

So, in another minute, those four girls were passing in at the back entrance to the grounds. Betty would have gone straight on to the house, but Polly suddenly swerved towards the coach-house and stable.

Its doors were wide open, but neither horse nor carriage was there. What if the place were quite disused by the present tenants, and Naomer had found shelter there in the night-time?

"We may as well look!" Polly muttered. "Sh!—softly!"

And on tip-toe they stepped across to the coach-house, all four of them emitting gasps of joyful amazement as they lined up in the sunlit doorway. Naomer!

There she was—the little dusky runaway from Morcove School—lying fast asleep on a mound of hay in a corner of the building.

Curled up like a dormouse in that cosy corner, and smiling in her sleep!

"Bai Jove!" beamed Paula. "A pwetty dance she has led us, and we find her weposing in peace!"

"The darling," said Polly. "Oh, doesn't she look sweet!"

"Naomer!" Betty called to her softly. "Naomer, dear!"

Then Naomer the naughty opened her pretty eyes, sat up, with a start of surprise, and answered with a sudden merry laugh:

"Ello, present!"

"If You Refuse—"

"YOU beauty!" said Polly. "Oh, you little sauce-box!"

"Yes, wather!"

And Naomer only laughed again.

"I am very happy like this," she informed the girls. "I not happy at the school! I am teached too much; I am given too much feety line! I shall always live by myself now, and believe I am in the desert!"

"Will you?" Polly said, with a grim laugh. "We may have something to say about that!"

"Yes, wather! Naomer, darling, pway wealise that this is a civilised countwy! People who sleep out are called twamps," said Paula; "and twamps are vewy disagweeable cweatures!"

"I not go back to school!" insisted Naomer, obstinately. "It was cold in the night, until I come here. Then it is warm, and I sleep, oh, so nice. And I dream I am back in Nakara!"

"Dreams, my deah Naomer, have a distwessing way of not coming twue," Paula drawled philosophically. "You do not wealise, perhaps, that we had a nightmare on your account? You do not gwasp the disagweeable fact that we have been wendered pwostwate with anxiety!"

"All over a little imp like you!" grinned Tess. "Don't laugh, Naomer! Think of Miss Somerfield—how she loves you—"

"Do she love me?" Naomer asked, with sudden pretty wistfulness.

"Naomer, you know we all love you—"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! And if you come quietly, Naomer, deah, we'll make it all wight for you—won't we, Betty, deah?"

Betty did not answer. All at once she seemed to be forgetting Naomer's very existence. She was in a sudden, tense, listening attitude, with her gaze turned in the direction of the house.

Surely, the form captain was thinking excitedly, those were familiar voices she had heard a moment since, although her chums had not noticed them. The little burst of flippant laughter, too—how it resembled Audrey's!

The awful truth burst upon Betty then.

This was the house where certain friends of Audrey's lived, whom she was not allowed to visit.

It was common knowledge in the form that Miss Somerfield had refused Audrey and Stella both permission to spend a day with certain girl friends who were staying in the neighbourhood. But Audrey and Stella had snatched the visit, none the less. And they were here again to-day!

Betty's mind was working swiftly, whilst she very quietly walked away from Naomer and the others. All the comedy of little Naomer's escapade had changed to sudden drama. Audrey and Stella—here!

To Betty the whole thing stood revealed as a strange turn of fate.

She had been terribly worried lately, knowing the lengths to which Audrey and Stella had been going in their quest of pleasure. She had made up her mind that, for the good of the school, the couple must be pulled up somehow. But how—how?

It was a question that had kept Betty awake for many an hour at night time. But that question was answered at last!

Still hastening along on tip-toe, she gained another path—one that ran in front of the big verandah. A burst of ribald laughter came again from some open French windows. She was sorry to have to do it, but it was a thing that must be done. She ran up the verandah steps, and boldly showed herself at the wide-flung windows.

Then she stopped dead, staring with undisguised disgust at two of the occupants of the room.

She had been right in her suspicion. Audrey and Stella were here.

Betty was aware of the presence of two other girls, belonging to the house, and of their wild amazement at seeing her. But it was upon Audrey and Stella that she kept her eyes fixed.

Audrey and Stella, loling in easy chairs, smoking an after-lunch cigarette!

For a long moment there was dead silence in the room. All five figures made a tableau. Then Stella gave way to her usual panic. She floundered up with a sort of moaning gasp of dismay.

"Stella, don't be silly!" Audrey sought to brace up her fellow miscreant by crying sharply, "This is only Betty!"

"Only me—yes," said that girl, very quietly, "but you will find I am somebody to reckon with now!"

Vanessa and Muriel rose from their lounge chairs, still retaining their cigarettes, although the schoolgirls had put out theirs.

"This impudent person—" Vanessa began, icily, looking Betty up and down. "Is this—?"

"The form captain, yes! Busybody Betty!" Audrey said, with a sneering laugh. "You must excuse her rudeness in butting in. She was brought up in a Lancashire slum, you know!"

"Will you please go away, and if you wish to account for your visit, kindly go round to the door like a decent person," Vanessa ordered Betty, haughtily.

But the form captain stood to her ground.

"No, I am not going to put myself to that trouble," she said calmly. "You know very well why I entered like this. Because I saw these two girls in here, behaving like that."

"And you meant to catch them in the act!"

"I meant to catch them in the act," Betty echoed serenely, "and so make it the last time there is anything of this sort!"

Audrey gave a stamp of one foot, as she came a stride nearer the captain.

"You—you meddler!" she said furiously. "Who are you, to come butting in like this, thinking to humiliate me—me, Audrey Blain—before my friends! You are not a precious mistress!"

"I am your form captain, Audrey. I don't often exert my authority, but I am going to now!"

"You are not!"

"I am. There is going to be an end to all this, do you understand?" Betty went on, with such stern composure that all four listeners quailed visibly.

She fetched a deep breath.

"It would be bad enough," she went on steadily, "to know that you have defied the order for the day by separating from the search party and going off on your own. It is a shocking thing to have found you spending your time like this. But what makes it a hundred times worse is that these are the very girls, Audrey, whom Miss Somerfield does not wish you to be friendly with!"

"Insolent!" stormed Audrey, helpless to say anything else.

"It is the truth," persisted the captain. "They are the girls, too, with whom you and Stella spent another stolen day, when you were supposed to be visiting Jess Lingard. Can you deny it, Audrey—Stella?"

"I—I'm sorry," Stella began to gulp, but Audrey silenced her with a gesture.

"Don't say anything to her, Stella. Take no notice of the interfering busybody!"

"That is the best thing, I really think," Vanessa

said, flicking the ash off her cigarette. "You must go, Betty Barton. But before you go—"

"Let me tell you what I, for one, think of you," flared out Muriel. "I have been at a boarding-school; and I know what we girls thought of anyone who quizzed about like this! We thought her a sneak, a spoil-sport, a—"

"You are at liberty to call me all the names you please," Betty broke in calmly. "That won't turn me aside. My mind is made up. I don't go away from here until I have made sure that it can't happen again. Audrey, I will give you a chance—"

"Thank you; I don't know that I want to accept a chance at your hands," flashed Audrey. "I'd rather be expelled!"

But Stella whispered:

"Oh, Audrey—don't! If—if Betty will let us off this time—"

"I will do that," Betty broke in quietly, "on condition that Audrey gives me a written undertaking that there will be no more of this sort of thing. Nothing, during the rest of the term, that can be a disgrace to Morcover School and the form."

"I shall not write at your dictation—"

"You will, Audrey; or you will certainly compel me to report everything!" came the form captain's quiet word.

Like every person with authority who is not fond of displaying it, Betty was all the more impressive now that, for once, she was making full use of the power with which she was invested.

"There is a desk over there," she pointed. "Go to it—"

"I won't!"

"Very well, then—"

"After all, you have no witnesses," Audrey panted fiercely. "It is only your word against mine and Stella's!"

"I have witnesses," was the announcement with which Betty staggered her listeners. "I have only to give a call, and Polly Linton, Paula Creel, and Tess Trelawney will be here in a second! I left them round at the coach-house—"

"Well!" burst out Vanessa, indignantly. "The liberties some people take!"

"Perhaps Audrey and Stella told you that a certain girl foolishly ran away from school yesterday evening," Betty said. "We have tracked her to the coach-house, where she was fast asleep in the hay. We had only just found her, when I heard laughter and talk, and that made me feel sure Audrey and Stella were—"

Betty broke off abruptly, to give heed to a medley of voices. Her chums, with Naomer, were going by on the verandah path, evidently to work round to the front door.

Not only did Audrey and Stella hear the girls; they even glimpsed them through the French window, and both culprits covered a little.

"You see," Betty resumed, in that deathly calm tone: "Do you still refuse to take the chance I offer you then?"

Audrey breathed fiercely through her clenched teeth. At that moment, her jealous hatred of the form captain showed in its most malignant form.

"What do you want me to write?" she panted at last, huskily.

"Sit down over at the desk, and I will tell you," was the answer.

Another pause.

Then, with a furious shrug, Audrey turned about and went to the desk, and Betty came and stood over her.

For the Good of the School.

"WRITE this," Betty Barton began in a moment. "Give it to-day's date, and then say—"

The calm voice went on, a few words at a time, with frequent pauses, during which nothing was to be heard in the room except the ill-tempered scratching of Audrey's pen.

How that girl's hand was shaking with mad resentment; how viciously she dabbed the pen every now and then into the inkpot! But Betty had said she must write, if she and Stella wished to be given a chance, and write she did.

"Finished?" Betty asked at last. "Then let me read, will you?"

Audrey flung down the pen and got up from her seat, walking away with her back to Betty. Such rudeness did not in the least trouble the captain, however. Ignoring it, she picked up the written sheet and scanned it carefully.

"We, Audrey Blain and Stella Munro, hereby own to having committed grave breaches of

"Thanks," Betty said. "Now you, Audrey!"

Again that look of vehement fury in Audrey's eyes. It was as if she wanted to take up a dagger instead of the pen.

She hesitated, still inclined to show defiance; but now there came a tap at the door, and the maid entered.

"Some schoolgirls, miss——"

"Oh!" burst out Vanessa, impatiently. "I don't know! Tell them——"

"Tell them to wait, will you, please?" interposed Betty. "And please don't mention that these schoolfellows of mine are here, and have been here to lunch. One moment!"

She stepped up to the maid, slipping a half-crown into her hand.

"You understand?" Betty whispered, beseechingly. "These girls would get into a big row if it were known!"

"Very good, miss!" And the maid withdrew, looking pleasantly surprised at having come upon a different sample of Morcovian scholar than the sort she had had to do with so far.



"YOU MEDDLER!" Glaring furiously at Betty Barton, Audrey Blain continued: "Who are you to come butting in like this, thinking to humiliate me, before my friends!" "Your captain!" replied Betty calmly.

school discipline, by visiting for a second time girl friends of whom our headmistress disapproves, and whilst there indulging in behaviour discreditable to ourselves, and the school.

"In consideration of our captain, Betty Barton, granting us a chance to do better in the future, we hereby promise not to commit any further breaches of discipline during the current term.

"We admit that Betty Barton has the right to report us, and that if we do commit any fresh offence it will be her duty to place this paper in the hands of the headmistress."

That was the perfectly honourable little document which Betty's shrewdness had prompted her to dictate. She now laid it down upon the desk again.

"Stella, you will sign?"

That girl left off biting a finger-nail, and was at the desk in a moment, although she was so nervous that she dropped blots, and inked her fingers, and took quite a time altogether to form her signature.

"Now, Audrey! You must either sign, or the girls must come in, and they and the rest of the search party—the whole school in the end—must know!"

"Bother you—there you are!" Audrey said, passionately, dashing her signature on to the paper.

She backed away, white as marble with anger. With a sign to Stella to follow, she quitted the room, the two girls going out by a door that would let them escape to a part of the house where they would still remain undetected by the waiting visitors.

As for Betty, left alone with Vanessa and Muriel, she took up the written sheet, and folded it.

"I shall keep this by me," she informed the Calloway girls, coldly. "If you two have anything more to do with Stella and Audrey, during term time, I shall not hesitate to take the document to the headmistress!"

"You are a clever person, you are!" sneered Muriel.

"I have to be as clever as I can—sometimes!" was the bland reply. "Now, if you will take me

