

TWO LOVELY COMPLETE STORIES INSIDE!

# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2<sup>d</sup>



## TO TEA WITH THE CAPTAIN!

(A tense moment from this week's  
long, complete tale of *Maroon  
School*.)

*A Gripping School Story Which Will Enthral You.*

# PARTED BY THE CAPTAIN!



By MARJORIE STANTON

The Morocco  
Tweants!  
T-R-R-R-I-N-G,  
ring, ring!  
"Tele-  
phone!"  
"Yes—"  
T-r-r-r-ring, t-r-  
r-ring!

At that impera-  
tive repetition of  
the sharp-toned,  
bell, three girls  
jumped up from  
the breakfast-table  
at Gorselands.

"It's Morocco,  
for a cert," said  
one.

"Doesn't mat-  
ter," smiled another. "Everything was all right  
last night, so there can't be a row on this morn-  
ing!"

Both these girls belonged to Morocco School.  
They were Cora Grandways and Hetty Curzon, of  
the Fourth Form. Not so the third girl, however,  
Joyce Marshall, was the daughter of wealthy  
people owning this fine country house—still of  
school age, but not attending school at present.

"Oh, all right!" cried Joyce, sauntering out to  
the hall where the instrument was installed. "I  
suppose I had better answer it, girls!"

"You have the first turn, anyhow," laughed  
audacious Hetty.

Then the receiver was taken from its hook by  
Joyce, whose very air suggested that she was  
going to be chocky.

"Hello, hello—co! Yes, Gorselands speaking!  
What! Would you kindly speak up!" Joyce  
advised, well aware that it was Morocco's head-  
mistress at the other end of the wire.

Standing behind Joyce, the two Morcovians  
nudged one another, bottling up their laughter.

"That's better!" said Joyce, as if she were  
dealing with a novice. "Pardon? Oh, Miss  
Somerfield, of Morocco! Good-morning! Yes,  
they're here now. Miss Somerfield. Would you  
like to speak to them?"

A pause, Joyce smiling round at Hetty and Cora  
while listening; then:

"Oh, don't mention it.  
Miss Somerfield! It has  
been no trouble! I'm  
only so sorry there was no  
means of getting them  
home last night. Just a  
moment!"

Joyce offered the re-  
ceiver to Hetty.

"You're to  
speak, Hetty. The  
old girl is as sweet  
as a rose. She's  
sending a car to  
fetch you and  
Cora."

"I hope it breaks  
its back, with  
on the way," chuckled  
Cora. "Who  
wants to go back  
to school?"

But now Hetty  
was using the tele-  
phone, speaking  
most demurely.

"This is Hetty  
Curzon, Miss  
Somerfield. Good-  
thank you! It is

kind of you, Miss Somerfield! Cora and I were  
just—"

"Having breakfast," whispered Cora, from  
behind. "Tell her that, Hetty—with my compli-  
ments!"

"Shut up," giggled Hetty. "Er—the instru-  
ment isn't very good, is it, Miss Somerfield? I  
was saying, we were just thinking of walking  
home to Morocco. But it's eight miles, and—  
Thank you—thank you, Miss Somerfield! And we'll  
explain everything when we get to the school!  
Good-bye!"

"And go to Jericho!" Cora sang out, the line  
being safely disconnected.

"The car's on the way," Hetty blandly an-  
nounced. "So it's all right, Cora. We shall only  
miss half morning school—just the first lesson or  
so!"

"Meantime, come round the garden," proposed  
Joyce. "I'll get the head gardener to cut you  
some flowers for your study, and a bunch for the  
Form-mistress, perhaps."

"Hark at Joyce," grinned Cora. "She knows  
how to do it!"

"I was at school—once!" acknowledged Joyce  
lightly. "And all schools are alike."

It was a lovely morning after that spell of  
dronching rain which, starting late the previous  
afternoon, had partly enabled Cora and Hetty to  
enjoy the escapade—a  
pleasant evening at  
Gorselands and a good  
night's rest in one of the  
most luxurious guest-  
chambers!

But there had been an  
additional reason for  
their standing exposed in  
the eyes of Morocco.

*Little by little, with unobtrusive charm, the  
new girl, Hetty Curzon, is winning her way  
into the hearts of girls and mistresses alike.  
Yet at heart she is deceitful and vain, with  
as much cunning as scapegrace Cora Grand-  
ways; but—Hetty is infinitely more clever.*

Their bicycles had been stolen, although not in the circumstances Morocco had been given to understand.

The gardens and ornamental grounds of Gorse-lands were very spacious, and Hetty and Cora had only seen a half of what there was to admire when the Morocco car turned up.

Looking suitably decorous, Hetty and Cora said their hasty good-bye to a very sedate Joyce, and away went the trunks of overnight in the greatest comfort.

"Well, it's been huge fun," exulted Cora, lolling with Hetty on one of the luxurious interior seats.

"What a jolly old time we had last evening!"

"Not to mention that we did get to that circus in the afternoon, after all!" rippled Hetty. "I am so glad we've got to know Joyce Marshall."

"She's the limit!" chuckled Cora.

"Oh, I don't know!" demurred Hetty. "After all, she was not so clever at handling people when she was at school. She couldn't have been, to come a cropper in the end. I am sure she was expelled!"

"Warning to us!" grinned Cora. "Hetty, if you mean to say you really feel as cool as you look? Don't you feel just a bit jumpy—at times?"

"No," the audacious one answered that second question. "Can't say that I do! After all, why should I? Everything is all right, we know."

"Well, then, if you aren't going to feel nervous, I'm not. Although, really," laughed Cora, "I've done some things in my time, as any girl at Morocco would tell you, but for their nerve, you've got me beaten, Hetty."

That girl, new this term to Morocco, sat reflectively for a time.

"I don't get jumpy," she summed up at last, "for the simple reason that I am ever so careful, really. It's getting careless that gets you bowled out in the end."

"I was thinking last night in bed just what you've set out to do, Hetty," remarked Cora. "Have as jolly a time with me as possible, both of us being at school, worse luck, and yet nobody is to suspect. Then you've got to keep in with father, otherwise he'll turn nasty and stop paying for your schooling. And last—"

"But not least!" Hetty caught up her schoolmate. "I have to help you get the Form captaincy!"

"Before this term is out—tall order!" Cora said, with a hard laugh. "Well, you say you'll bring it off, and if you do I shan't forget you, Hetty. Gee, we'll have some fun then. But I'm sure you don't realise what you are up against. Betty Barton has the whole Form solid for her as captain. As for me, I've had a terrible name." She laughed again.

"The reformed scholar makes the best captain," Hetty lightly paraphrased a well-known saying. "If only you will lead them to think that you are reformed. That's up to you, Cora."

"All right. But it's up to you, Hetty," was the grinned retort, "to help me appear reformed." Morocco's new girl nodded.

"I'll do that all right," she said.

#### Who Would Blame Them?

NOT until after morning "break" did Hetty and Cora put in an appearance at the Fourth Form classroom.

They walked in just as Miss Everard was starting the reassembled juniors upon a fresh lesson. Hetty held a mammoth bunch of flowers, and the Form accordingly gave a subdued murmur of admiration.

"That will do!" the chummy Form-mistress admonished her charges. "But what lovely flowers, Hetty!"

"For you, please, Miss Everard—from Gorse-lands. Cora and I were asked to hand them to you; they've such beauty."

"Very nice of the Marshalls," commented Miss Everard, in the belief that it was a gift from the family. She little suspected that Mr. and Mrs. Marshall were away in London, and that Joyce Marshall had played hostess to the Moroccan overnight.

"We'll have them on the window-sill, Hetty. You might find a vase for them."

At the midday dismissal, the Form-mistress called Hetty to her. The great class-room emptied, leaving only Miss Everard and the new girl there.

"I just want to say, Hetty Carson, your work appears to be most promising. Already I can see that you are not one to shirk."

"Oh, I don't believe in scamping the work, making it hard for one's mistress," Hetty stated demurely. "I've got to be a credit to Morocco, besides repaying Mr. Grandways for his kindness."

"That's the spirit, Hetty."

"And I'm really awfully sorry about yesterday, Miss Everard—"

"We are not going to hear any more about that, Hetty. Although I will say that if you had not been with Cora, many of us would have been inclined to form suspicions—just, perhaps. Cora really does seem to want to make good this term, and you are a steady influence—all Morocco is aware of that. Run away now, Hetty. And what are you going to do?"

"Oh, games!"—in an innocent "Of course" tone, as if one never, never thought of anything else but work when it was time for work, and games when one was free!

Equally deceived by the new girl's plausible manner were the Form captain and others when Hetty joined them on the games field. She was most keen for a bit of "praeceor," and Cora the same. If more time was spent in talk than practice, Betty & Co. took the blame for that. They wanted a full, true and particular account of yesterday's happenings to Hetty and Cora, and they thought they got it. But they didn't.

"Can you imagine it!" Hetty wound up her and Cora's false version. "The bikes must have been stolen in full view of the windows of that cottage where my mother and sister are living, out Drovers-ton way. When Cora and I came away from the cottage they were gone!"

"What a shame!" sympathized the listeners. "And the worst of it is," sighed Hetty prettily, "as I have explained to Miss Sorenfield, we can't very well complain to the police. I should hate it to be known to mother that the bikes have been lost. She'll grieve about the expense to Mr. Grandways—when he has been so kind already."

"We think of trying to pick up a couple of second-hand ones out of our pocket-money," Cora added. "I'm for not worrying dad this term. Well, what about hockey?"

Girls belonging to the Fourth Form were exchanging glances as the talk ended. Really, there was a change in Cora! As for the new girl, apart from her influence upon Cora, she was an asset to the team.

An hour later Hetty could not have counted on two hands the number of invitations she could have accepted for tea in study that afternoon. "And, of course, you'll come, too, Cora? Judy as well!" they had said.

Judy Grandways, Cora's sister, always would have been a welcome addition to any Morecove tea-party. But it had needed this marvellous change for the good in Cora, and her finding such a charming friend in Hetty, for her to be sought after.

To invite Hetty without the Grandways would be, it was recognised, in the worst possible taste. The invitations were primarily addressed to Hetty, for the simple reason that she was a new girl, entitled to be made to feel at home in the school.

"It's awfully nice of you, and I'd love to come, but I've already accepted Betty's invite, you know," was her answer to all the invitations that overlapped. "May I make it some other time?"

Yes, Betty was having Hetty to tea this afternoon. Only right that the Form captain should have been before any other girl in offering hospitality to a new girl as nice as Hetty. And Study 12 knew that the happy occasion would be

That just had been almost a sneer, but Cora had quickly glossed it over. If she was supposed to be reformed, she must be reformed—outwardly. But at heart she was raging so jealously as ever against Betty and her chums.

It seemed to Cora that she had only been brought to this study to be shown what it meant to be captain!

Would the time ever come when that honour would be hers? Here, to use to personal advantage! Ah, life at Morecove would be a treat then, and no mistake. But was it really to be supposed that one could detract this securely established captain, even with Hetty's artful help?

Cora sat down with those others for whom seats were available, and her secret envy became so great she felt she would choke over the first mouthful.

"And I'm supposed to do as Hetty does," ran



"It's your headmistress, Hetty. She is sending a car to fetch you and Cora!" Cora chuckled. "I hope it jolly well breaks its back axle!" Cora grinned. "Who wants to go back to school, anyway?"

made memorable by the presence of Cora Grandways, until this term the standing enemy of the chums!

It had often been Betty & Co.'s joy to make a new girl welcome at the tea-table. But Cora's sitting down to tea in Study 12—that was going to be something quite unique.

If only space had been as plentiful as were tables! That was Betty & Co.'s difficulty—to find room for all. Hetty herself turned up with the Grandways sisters when the study was looking nicely packed. Eita Margrove, Elsie Ashby, Pat Lawrence—these and one or two more were here. And if they did not have to have their tea standing, others would!

"How nice your table looks!" said Hetty, after being formally welcomed by the captain. "Doesn't it, Cora?"

"The captain's table!" jested Cora. "I mean—er—yes, you have gone to a lot of trouble, Betty."

Cora's secret thoughts. "Well, it'll be a wonder if I do! I wish I hadn't come! I liked it much better, being an open enemy to all these girls, hang 'em!"

#### Cora Can't Stand It!

THERE was great hilarity over the start of tea, and Hetty's silvery laugh rang out as often as anybody's. Outside the circle of seated girls were others who sat perched on elbow-rests of armchairs, or shared the windowledge, or else stood ranged against the walls.

Then there was Nussner, self-appointed waitress—reversing her activities, however, strictly to the tables. She was on the go all the time, working round and round the study, a plate in one hand, the other hand supplying her own merry mouth with its wants.

She came a second time to Hetty's left-hand shoulder, placing a stack of cream buns under Hetty's nose.

"Now, Hetty, how are you getting on? Bekas don't be afraid—all fresh!"

"But," sipped Hetty, "I'm having this delicious fruit salad—"

"Have a cream bun with him, bekas they go together, I know."

And Naomer dexterously shook the popular pastry on to Hetty's plate, then passed on.

"What about eat, Cora!"

Cora glared.

"Bekas, just to show there is no ill-feeling!" Naomer pressed.

That, of course, was only one of those current phrases which the dusky imp had managed to seize upon. But even she realized that at this moment it was the wrong thing to say to Cora. She artlessly attempted hasty amends.

"All right, don't get on so hind leg, Cora. He was only my joke."

"You should keep your jokes to yourself," Cora said, with a touch of the old snappishness.

"What so diggings! Kef that is the way you —"

"Naomer darling," interposed Betty, "would you mind passing this cup to Madge over there!"

"I will!" offered Hetty, jumping up. "Naomer's hands are full."

But there was a heavy pause, although Betty had nipped trouble in the bud. All present had seen a flash of Cora's old animosity just then. On an awkward silence came Hetty's gay remark, after she had delivered the cup of tea to Madge at the window and taken a glance out.

"Glorious weather again! Perhaps last night's rain is all we shall have for weeks now. It was heavy enough."

She worked her way back to her seat.

"One thing, the games field seems to dry out very quickly," she commented. "We'll be able to play on Saturday!"

"Oh, rather!" she was answered by several, and the talk turned upon games—fixtures for the season. Hetty was full of enthusiasm, her school-mates were sure, and Cora made one or two remarks implying keeness.

"As for the weather, of course, we must expect anything just now," Betty carried on the talk.

"Anyhow, we're all right for other interests, even if we do get a few wet weeks."

"Do you ever," asked Hetty presently, "get up concerts and things?"

"What! Oh, don't we just!"

"Yes, wather, bal Jove!"

"Bekas—sure she is!" shrieked Naomer, pointing at Polly with a hand that held a plate of cut cake. "Zo one who writes our plays!"

"Shoo!" glared the Form's playwright, but Hetty smiled brilliantly.

"Plays? How awfully jolly! Oh, do remember me, girls, if you think of—"

"You like that sort of thing?" smiled several together.

"Like acting! I adore it!"

"We shall have a part for you, of course, Hetty, if we get up a play—as I expect we shall," said Betty. "Naturally we wouldn't dream of leaving you out."

"I know you wouldn't," said Hetty prettily.

"I was only joking. Seriously, I feel—I feel —"

"Bother the girl, with her cool impudence!" raged Cora inwardly. "If she felt as I feel—ugh! Now they're going to talk about all the wonderful plays they've done!"

"Somebody hold Polly tight whilst I tell

Hetty. We've a really wonderful playwright in Polly," said the captain. "And then we are lucky to have Tess Trolawney, our scene painter."

Hetty turned to smile at Tess, whilst Cora swallowed the last of her tea.

"And Madge!" cried the other. "Our musical director, Hetty."

"This is thrilling!" declared the new girl. "You girls are wonderful!"

"That's what they are telling you," muttered Cora.

Another pause.

"How are you getting on, Cora?" inquired the captain.

"Oh, as well as can be expected."

Some of them tried to laugh, willing to treat that remark as a joke. But if it was not the old Cora popping out again—well!

"Cora," said Hetty, in a pained tone, "you needn't talk like that, dear. The captain and her friends have been awfully kind to have us. Don't spoil it, and don't spoil yourself, dear."

"Sorry!" Cora laughed bitterly. "I—I was forgetting you're a new girl. You haven't heard it all before."

"Cora, what do you mean?" protested Hetty sadly.

Then Cora jerked back her chair and rose.

"I mean that anyone who has been at Mercere as long as I have must be sick and tired of hearing Study 12 sing its own praises! I can't stick it any longer!"

Only Hetty answered the vicious outburst. The others, convinced that Cora had reacted entirely to her old nature, were tactfully keeping quiet.

"Cora," said the new girl softly, "you are rude—very rude!"

"Don't care if I am! Mistake for me to have come! Wonderful this, and wonderful that! I know it all by heart! I know the Form would be nothing without Study 12. I know we've got the most wonderful captain in the world!"

More notice was being taken of Hetty, whilst this was being said, than of Cora. Hetty looked very upset. Even Judy Grandways did not look paler than the new girl.

The girls had risen.

"Yes, well," said Pam, with her usual serenity, "it'll be light for a little while yet. Supposing we go down—"

"For a game?" exclaimed Hetty eagerly.

"Yes, let's! I should love it, wouldn't you, Cora?"

"No, I wouldn't! You can go—to see how wonderfully they play hockey or lacrosse, or whatever it is! As, of course, they do—with Betty for a captain!"

"That will do," frowned Hetty. "Now, come away, Cora."

"Yes, Cora," pleaded Judith, "it's too bad of you to start being—"

"I do think, Cora," broke out Betty, with cold sternness, "even if you feel the same against us, after all, at heart, you might consider the feelings of your own friend."

"Hear, hear!" cried Polly warmly. "If this is what you call playing the game this term—"

"She—she doesn't mean it," Hetty broke in, with what seemed to be a desperate loyalty towards Cora.

"No, bekas, perhaps it is so indigestion," Naomer made her well-meant suggestion.

"Bekas, I know what eat is, eef you— But you needn't push me, even if you have got so indigestion!" she shrieked at Cora, who had thrust her aside.

"Naomer!" called out Betty, and the dusky one subsided. "Well, Cora, after this I suppose you had better go."

"Oh, I am going!"

"Quiet!" implored Betty, passing to the door with Cora and Judith. "Why will you, Cora?"

"Then why can't they talk about something or somebody else but themselves?"

"You're unjust!" Hetty admonished Cora in front of them all. "They were only explaining to me, as a new girl—"

"Well, I don't want to hear it!"

And with that last cry Cora marched out of the study.

#### Behind the Mask!

HETTY followed Cora into the passage, as did Judith, but in a moment the new girl was back in the study.

"Girls—Betty," she exclaimed distressfully, "I am awfully sorry about this—"

"And I am awfully sorry on your account," Betty said. "I shall never forgive her for what she's done now—never! It's no use; she's as hopeless as ever."

"Oh, don't say that, Betty!"

"It's awfully decent of you to plead," the captain spoke on with unusual heat, "but we girls have had too much of it. We are told that she has come back reformed. It's all humbug! We saw the fine friend she has in you, Hetty, and still she's the same as ever. I'm through with her. She's not going to spoil it all for everybody this term!"

Hetty looked too distressed for words. For a few moments she stood mute and still, noticing the looks of approbation which Betty's outburst had excited in the other girls. Then she drew off to the door again.

"I'll come and see you later, Betty. Meantime, thanks ever so for your kindness, all of you!"

In the Grandways' study were the sisters. When Hetty rejoined them there she found Cora wearing a crafty smile, whilst Judith looked full of despair.

"Judith, I want a talk with your sister, if you don't mind."

Promptly the younger sister went from the study, closing the door behind her. She had implicit faith in Hetty.

"Rather funny!" Cora chuckled, now that she and Hetty were alone together. "So much for being reformed, Hetty! So much for my becoming popular and making a shot for the captain!"

"You were an idiot!"

"Here, don't you start that sort of talk to me!" flared out Cora. "Just remember, you are only at Morocco on father's charity. Oh, hang! I'm fed up again!"

She took a turn about the room, then laughed recklessly.



"You just don't know how I hate Betty Barton!" Cora said violently. "That's only because she's captain and you're nothing," was Hetty's calm retort. "I can make you captain if you'll only listen to me."

"You must go on—" began Hetty.

"Oh! Who says so?"

"I say so! For one thing, if you try being an open trouble-maker in the Form, like you used to be, you'll be sent packing!"

"Oh, Eddie! How many times have they been going to expel me?"

"It's different this term. Betty is through with putting up with any more nonsense. I could see that in her eyes just now."

"She's nobody!"

"She's the captain. If she chooses to do what she has never yet done, and make a serious report to the headmistress about you, that'll be the end of you at Morocco."

"Let her! Who cares! Then I shall be done with school, that's all—hooray! Look at that Marshall girl, at Gorsclands! She's knocking about at home, simply because she got hooped out of her school, and see what a fine time she has!"

"There is another thing," Hetty pursued steadily. "I have to remember what your father said to me—that he'd like to see you made captain of the Form. I can't afford to disappoint your father, even if you can. He's not a nice loser."

"Neither am I. I warn you! So I had better give up the idea of aiming at the captaincy, in case I do lose!"

"You wouldn't lose, if only you would trust to me, Cora. I—"

"Oh, be quiet! Anyhow, I'm like that; I just can't do the double-faced stunt!" Cora said fiercely. "I have to be what I am, and that's

the worst girl at Mercere! It's not a bit of use. I shall only break out."

She suddenly strode close to Hetty. "You don't understand me, Hetty, even yet. Betty Barton makes me see red. I can't breathe when I'm in the same room with her!"

"That's only because she is captain and you are nothing," was the calm retort. "Which shows how much you want to be captain. Yet you won't try—"

"I have tried. It doesn't answer." "It can be done," insisted Hetty, "in spite of what has happened this afternoon. After all, you yourself warned the girls that you might slip back into the old ways now and then, and need to be forgiven."

Cora began to grin at the recollection. "So now, if you go in for being sorry, Cora, it will go down with the Form. People like to forgive. If the girls can see you making a struggle against your old bad nature—"

"You mean, of course, pretending to make a struggle."

Hetty nodded, and smiled back at grinning Cora. "Yes, that's what I mean, Cora. Just a sec."

The new girl slipped to the door and was gone from the study for a moment. She was smiling artfully on her return. "They've gone down to work off the upset by getting a game in before dark," she remarked. "Now, look here, Cora! You must be thoroughly heartbroken about what you've done to offend them all again! You must start crying—"

"I look like crying!" laughed Cora. "Stick your fingers in your eyes to make them red, then," said Hetty impatiently, "while I go down and tell the girls. If only they could see you—crying your eyes out—"

"Oh, yes, and what good will that do!" snapped Cora. "You have just said—Betty is through with forgiving me."

"I really think she is," nodded Hetty. "But is everybody else? And isn't that just your chance, Cora? Only get the idea started that Betty is being hard-hearted—considering you have cried your eyes out, and all that—and then you may do some good!"

Cora saw the idea clearly. "Something like this?" she whispered, and set down to set a tearful part.

Burying her face in her hands, she began a sobbing outburst that sounded perfectly genuine.

"I know it was unfair and hateful of me, Hetty. I'm a wretch! My own sister will hate me in the end. As for Betty and the rest, I—I— Oh, go away—leave me! Let everybody have nothing to do with me!"

"Splendid!" Hetty applauded softly. "I deserve to be shunned! When I promised my people and promised Betty—I would make good this term!"

The door flashed open and there was Judith. Her eyes softened at the sight of her sister huddled down in a chair, hands in front of the drooping face.

"Cora!" "Oh!" interposed Hetty, instantly assuming a distressed air. "Don't speak, Judy. You should not have come back."

"Judy, go away!" implored Cora, looking up for a moment to show red-rimmed eyes. "Both of you—leave me, leave me!"

"This will do her good, Judy," whispered Hetty, drawing that girl back to the doorway. "It's—the end of all the trouble with her."

"I have never seen her like this before!" "No, that's why I say—it is just as well it has happened. Come away."

They withdrew into the lobby, Hetty closing the door. Even as she and Judith walked away together, the one looking as emotional as the other, they heard heart-rending sobs from the study.

"Where's Betty—downstairs? I must find her," Hetty said gravely.

Followed by Judith, the new girl walked straight into the midst of the players, calling: "Hetty, I must speak to you!"

The practice game of hockey broke off abruptly. Betty had most of the other players looking around as she gave Hetty a good-tempered:

"Well!" "About Cora—she's crying now—"

"Then let her cry!" "But, Hetty—"

"Betty, it's no use coming to me about Cora," the captain said, with a renewal of that unusual sternness. "I know her better than you do. Crying, is she? And as soon as we've forgiven her—"

"I don't think so," dissented Hetty gravely. "Judy here, she has never seen her sister like it. We came away; Cora begged to be left alone. It has upset me to hear her."

"She is always upsetting everybody," Betty frowned, and murmurs to the same effect came from Polly and others. "She spoils it for us all. For her to behave as she did at our tea-table was— Well, I won't say it in front of Judy. Let's get on with the game!"

"Oh, but do wait a moment!" implored Hetty. "Won't you give Cora one more chance, Betty? Won't you?"

"No, I will not! I have to think of the rest of the Form!"

"Really, Hetty, there has been enough to make Betty talk like this," spoke out Polly.

The new girl nodded.

"I am sure you have all been most patient and forgiving. And, of course, it was shocking of Cora to behave as she did. I wouldn't be putting in a word for her now—much as I owe it to Mr. and Mrs. Grandways to stand by their daughter—only to hear her crying like that—"

"Go back to her, and you'll probably find her laughing," exclaimed Betty, walking away.

"Come on, girls, before it gets too dark. You don't feel like joining in at present, Hetty!"

"I'd love to, but—"

"Here"—and one of the players offered her hockey-stick—"perhaps I'll go up to—to see how Cora is now."

It was Etta, Hargrove speaking. She was one of the captain's most loyal supporters usually, and she certainly never had had any opinion of Cora. But that talk about Cora being in tears had moved Etta as it had failed to move the captain.

"I'm going to see how Cora looks when she's sorry!" Etta said, as she ran off. But the half-flippant remark had a tinge of seriousness in it. Betty caught her chums' looks as she turned back to the field.

"She doesn't believe in Cora's reformation," Polly muttered. "She's gone to see if she's shamming."

But Betty could not feel it was that entirely. There was something in Etta's tone that had suggested she had been half-impressed by Hetty's report that Cora was in tears of repentance for

her outbreak. Etta was one of the fairest-minded girls in the Form, and the fact that she was uncertain about Cora's shamming vaguely disturbed Betty.

Was she herself in the wrong in disbelieving Cora's sudden desire to do better? Etta knew Cora just as well as she—Betty—did. If she, then, was willing to believe that Cora might have made a genuine attempt to be a nice girl, was she being unkindly harsh in doubting her?

It worried Betty as she resumed the game. Time and again she tried to convince herself that Cora's sudden change of attitude might, after all, be genuine, but something inside her said "No." She knew Cora too well. Too often she had had trouble through the "bad girl" of the Form: she, perhaps, had had occasion to know Cora more deeply than any other of the girls.

In the beginning, she had been ready to believe that the influence of Hetty Curson was changing Cora for the better, but that outbreak just now had been so much the genuine old Cora whom she knew so well. No, she could not believe it, and there was an end to it.

As the game was resumed, Etta went with swift steps across to the schoolhouse and up the stairs to the Grandways' study. Sure enough, as she approached it, she could plainly hear someone crying very bitterly inside.

A sudden feeling of awkwardness made her tap softly on the door before she opened it and peeped round. Cora was alone in the room, sitting huddled in the armchair, and the face that she lifted as Etta entered was one that made Etta cross to a standstill. It was reddened and streaked with tears which were even now trickling down her cheeks, and her eyes were brimming over.

"Oh, Cora—" Etta began awkwardly. "I—I'm sorry, but Hetty told me—"

"Go away—go away!" Cora wailed. "Oh, it was kind of you, Etta, to come, but—I feel I can't bear you near me! I—I'm so ashamed of myself! I—I'm not fit to be in a decent school with girls like you! I'm a disgrace to you all!"

And her head went down again upon her arms and the shoulders shook with sobs.

Moved even out of her awkwardness, Etta stepped forward and laid a hand upon the heaving shoulder.

"Don't—don't be so upset, Cora," she said

softly. "I—we understand. It—it can't be easy for you, but don't get downhearted. Don't get like this about it."

But Cora, more clever than Hetty had given her credit for, only sobbed, and would not lift her face again, so that at last Etta withdrew, feeling deeply compassionate and entirely convinced of the genuineness of her remorse.

A little after this there came a tap at the door of Study 12. Betty and her three co-tenants of the study, on the point of starting prep., rested their pens.

"Come in!" sang out Betty.

Etta Hargrove was the caller.

"E—Betty, I've only just come away from the Grandways' study. Cora really has been—crying her eyes out."

"Has she stopped now?"

"Yes, I couldn't hear her when I passed the door just now to come along to you."

"Good! Then perhaps she'll get on with prep. Anyway, I want to get on with mine, Etta!"

"Oh, don't be hard, Betty! If you had seen how Cora was crying—"

"If I had seen her I might have been taken in by her. That's why I wouldn't go," explained Betty, and she dipped her pen.

Etta stood a moment or two longer in the doorway, wanting to say more, but feeling discouraged. She did not get a word from Polly, Paula or Naomee, only glances that said: "Leave it at that, Etta!"

So, drawing back, she closed

the door and went away. It had not been her place to take the captain to task. But she felt that her own loyalty to Betty was being taxed. Betty was being a bit hard—for once.

And what Etta was thinking, just then, was to be said by several other girls before long.

#### Hetty Makes Headway I

**N**OW, Cora, do remember! Whenever you meet Betty to-day, don't ignore her. Leave it to her to do that!"

"I like the way you lecture me, Hetty! But I suppose I must put up with that. Your advice did the trick yesterday, I will admit."

Cora Grandways followed the half-sulky remark with a grin. She and Hetty were alone together in their study, just before morning school.

"Plenty of girls seem all right with you to-day, don't they, Cora?"



"Can you come to tea in my study?" asked Etta Hargrove. "I'd love it!" answered the new girl sweetly. "I suppose I can bring Cora?"



"Oh, yes!"

"Well, then, if you ask me," said Hetty, "the rest should be plain sailing. A single complaint against the captain, and you know how it is with anybody in an important position. Things soon mount up."

"If ever I'm captain," grinned Cora, "there'll be enough complaints against me."

"No, there won't. I shall look after that." /

"You're very kind," Cora sneered. "You are not looking after yourself all the time, are you? Not thinking how it will please my father if you do manage to get me the captaincy—oh, no!"

Hetty laughed. Then she took from her pocket a letter that had come by this morning's post, and she gave a frowning glance.

"Bother! My sister writing to me, Cora, and the way she writes! Looks as if I shall have to handle her pretty carefully. Never mind, there's the bell for classes."

"Oh, hang!"

Books in hand, both girls went from the study together, and in the main corridor they came upon a good many Form-mates. Some were already dawdling towards the stairs, others still stood about in talk. Hetty and Cora, passing two or three batches, came in for civil glances, at least. A few girls there were who even had an almost sorrowful glance for Cora, as if hers was complex nature that really must be allowed for. Everybody was nice to Hetty.

Then, at the top end of the corridor, the couple found Betty in talk with Pat Lawrence and some others. Betty met Hetty's eyes and nodded pleasantly—very pleasantly—but ignored Cora.

And Cora—she was artful enough to set upon her ally's advice of a minute ago, after all. She did not bounce past the captain. Instead, she preserved quite a humble air.

"You did that very well," whispered Hetty, when they were round the corner. "Keep to that, Cora, and—"

"Hetty Curzon!" a friendly voice suddenly called after her, and so she stopped, whilst Cora went on downstairs.

Round from the corridor came Etta Hargrove, her face lighting up as she found the new girl waiting for her.

"I thought I'd ask you in good time, Hetty. What about this afternoon? Can you come to tea in my study to-day? I know you are overwhelmed with inv—"

"I shall love it, Etta! Thanks so much! By the way, though, I suppose I may bring Cora?"

"Er—yes, why not? I don't suppose you would care to come without her, anyhow?"

"To tell you the truth," said the girl who was all duplicity, "I would not. Cora's a trying girl, but I can't believe she is as hopeless as some people seem to think."

Etta was in the mood to nod complete agreement. She guessed that she would like to go in talk with the new girl downstairs, and they descended together.

"Perhaps you were meaning the captain, Hetty!"

"Oh, but I think all the world of Betty Barton. Don't imagine—"

"No, Hetty, I quite understand. I hope I'm one of the last to go against the captain at any time, but I can't forget Cora's tears. I saw her; Betty didn't."

"Well, let's say no more," Hetty artfully suggested. "Come, I know, is—resigned."

Nor did Etta Hargrove observe anything in

Cora's behaviour during the day that was inconsistent with what the new girl had said—so sweetly!

It was remarked by many juniors how submissive Cora was to the captain's unrelenting attitude, and that submissiveness couldn't possibly be a pose, oh, no! Betty, for once, was greatly mistaken if she thought it was a pose!

Study 12, later in the day, heard that Hetty and the Grandways sisters had been to tea with Etta Hargrove. And everything had passed off so nicely! Not a fault to be found with Cora! What had most impressed the tea-table was Cora's complete silence about Study 12.

It became, however, a rather disturbing thing for Betty, not to say anything, when Saturday morning found quite a number of girls wanting to drop out of the team for the afternoon's fixture.

As early as before breakfast requests to be excused were made in such a number Betty had to say that she would have to see what she could do. As she pointed out, they were all some of the best players who were wanting to be let off, and to find efficient substitutes was not going to be easy.

"But I'll do my best, of course," she promised. "Let you know later."

"Thanks, Betty," said Etta, for she was one of those who wanted to be absent from the field this afternoon. "It's only that I and the others rather wanted to do a good walk with Hetty and the Grandways sisters. Hetty has been nowhere yet."

"She went home to her mother's last halfer," Betty amiably reminded the petitioners for leave. "And Cora was let off games as well to go with her."

"Oh, surely, Betty," broke out Ella Elgood, "you are not going to suggest that Hetty Curzon is a slacker at games?"

"Now that the evenings are fairly short," put in Pat Lawrence, "half-holidays are the only times for going anywhere. Hetty hasn't seen Barncombe, and she can't be in two places at once."

"I haven't a word to say against Hetty," declared the captain. "But look at the number of you who don't want to play this afternoon. I must take some sort of a leap on to the field to-day, when it's a match against the Fifth."

"Only an inter-Form match," commented Eva Merrick. "Let the Fifth win for once!"

"No!" dissenting Betty, and Etta and two or three more were with the captain there.

When they had gone, Betty stood looking at the list she had made of their names. Polly came into the study to find the captain glumly regarding the list.

"Say, Polly, what sort of team can I scrape together, leaving out Etta Hargrove, Pat Lawrence, Eva Merrick, Hetty Curzon, Cora Grandways—"

"And Ella Elgood?" cried Polly, catching sight of the last name on the list. "Phew! What's the counter-attraction, then?"

Betty threw down the slip, smiling.

"I'm told that they'd like to go out with Hetty. But I expect it really means more of this business that ought to put me to shame, but it doesn't!"

"You mean 'Be kind to Cora'?"

"Yes."

"They are making a big mistake, Betty," frowned Polly. "Don't you give in! I call it—"

A pasture from Betty silenced the madcap. Someone was coming to the open doorway. It proved to be Hetty Curzon.

"Get a moment, Betty!" she inquired silkily. "About this afternoon. If it's going to put you out at all—Cora and I have both been saying to the others—we must be reasonable."

"It's very nice of you to put it like that, Hetty," responded the captain. "It is rather a large order, but I am going to do my best."

"Awfully good of you. This suggestion came up in a friendly way when Cora and I were at tea yesterday—"

"I know," Betty nodded her understanding. "And don't imagine that I take it personally." "Oh, as if it could be!" laughed Hetty, turning away. "Hallo, Diana!"

Diana Forbes had now turned up for a word with the captain. She exchanged a word with Hetty, who then stammered away.

"Betty, about this afternoon. You won't want me to play!"

"You're in the team, Diana."

"Yes, I know, but you can find a substitute—"

"I say—I say!" Betty protested good-humouredly. "How many more! Are you another who wants to 'see Barcombe first'?"

"Anyone would think the circus had arrived," chuckled Polly. "But that's not until next week, Di."

"Can I miss the match, anyhow?" Diana asked the captain impatiently.

"I must see, Di. I'll let you know."

"But—"

"I'll let you know, Diana."

"What's the idea?" was Diana's curt retort to that. "Getting rather unreasonable, aren't you?"

It was Polly who bit a lip then. Betty appeared to take the remark unmoved, but after Diana had gone away she—the captain—closed the door, then sat down, a little dejectedly.

"I suppose, Polly, they think I can make bricks without straw! Well, let me see what can be done."

She tugged open a table drawer and brought out a nominal roll of the Form.

"No," she said at last, putting the list away, "it can't be done. I'm sorry, but I'll have to ask them to arrange it amongst themselves—four, at least, to remain in the team."

And at "break" she informed those concerned that that was what they would have to do.

They might, she thought to herself, have received her regrettable decision with better grace. "They would let her know at dinner-time," she was informed.

After the midday dinner Cora came up to her study ready to find only Hetty there.

"This is great, Betty! The other girls are for making a bid of a stand against the cap."

"Then they must!"

"What! Isn't that the very thing we want them to—"

"Not yet. It's too early, and their case is too weak," Hetty shrewdly ruled. "Hain't the captain the right to order them to play? Too many girls have asked to be excused. The team has crumbled right away—"

"Who cares!" laughed Cora. "The sooner the Form starts to do badly on the field, the sooner there'll be more fault-finding against the cap."

"And you have been at Morocco all this time!" was Hetty's scornful rejoinder to that.

"Oh, I don't wonder you have never done any good for yourself! Come on—come with me and

find these others. The way to do a bit of good for yourself now, Cora, is to—"

"Do as you advise."

"Certainly!" And Hetty gave her a brilliant smile.

Result: the captain was presently informed that they were all willing to play. Hetty and Cora had insisted that the outing must be left to another time. Great credit was given to both those girls for wanting to avoid feeling!

Cora in particular was praised. That she had not said a single nasty word against the captain was pretty wonderful. Betty's warm thanks to all of them for doing so much for the sake of the Form met with silence.

It was a strong team that she took on to the hockey field. The Fourth Form fought for victory and achieved it. But was there not, now and then, a strained politeness towards Betty that was hurtful, coming as it did from girls whom she counted amongst her chums?

She seemed to sense something of the sort on the part of Etta and others, and when the match was over she was left with thoughts that took her for a lonely roaming round the grounds.

In her frame of mind, what wonder if Betty felt a little annoyed when she was crossed out of a dreaming state down at the gateway by being chimed out of the way by a lot of cyclic bells, the riders, all those girls who had been wanting to be left out of the match!

Betty was only human, and here were Etta and the rest, gaily setting off now that the match was over, and treating her to rather provoking smiles as they rode by.

The new girl—it was only to be expected that they should be greatly taken with her. Hetty really was a charming girl. But how about Cora? Were they only putting up with Cora's society for the sake of enjoying Hetty's? Or were they still of the opinion that Cora this term was honestly wanting to make good?

Thinking it over, Betty went further and farther from the school gates, drifting off the road across the moorland that lay all around the school, quite unconscious of everything but her own vaguely troubled thoughts.

Queer that such a situation should have come about through such a nice girl as Hetty! And Hetty would be the last girl to wish to cause any trouble for anyone. Yet it was neither her fault nor anyone else's. She couldn't help being a girl whom other girls liked, and the other girls could not be blamed for liking her.

So Betty told herself, as her slow steps took her over the tussocky grass and heather. But making allowances for the Form could not banish the hurt feeling that she had been rather deserted by Etta and the rest, for the sake of a girl who had hardly been in the school five minutes. After all, they knew the hockey match had to be played, and that it was up to her, as captain, to put a team into the field. Yet they had all wanted to be exempt from playing, because there was the rival attraction of an outing with Hetty.

Betty had an uncomfortable thought that, if this was how the new term had started, with Hetty at Morocco, there might be worse yet to come. And then suddenly she was startled out of her pondering as a massive shape heaved itself up from the ground almost under her feet.

It was a young bull which had been lying in a hollow, half-hidden by bushes. Betty, absorbed in her thoughts, had all but fallen over it.

As startled as she, the bull reacted differently to the shock. While Betty, suddenly paling, recoiled a step, the bull lashed its tail and tossed its head, snorting loudly through its distended nostrils.

Betty hesitated uncertainly. It was an unusual thing to meet cattle hereabouts. They were often to be seen, grazing across the moors, but usually the approach of a human being would send them shambling away to a distance. This bull, however, gave no indication of following the usual rule. On the contrary, he seemed strongly inclined to contest Betty's right to be here.

She backed, intending to get out of his way and then make all haste back to school, but it alarmed her to find that, as she backed, the bull advanced. Unnerved, as any girl might well be, Betty turned, to retreat more swiftly. And then the bull appeared to make up his mind.

There was a thud of hoofs on the short turf as he made a rapid run forward, head down, and Betty gasped in dismay as she, too, broke into a run. Her heart thudded. The bull was going to be nasty. There was nothing for it but flight, but how could she hope to outrun him, with the open moor all around and no chance of a place of refuge?

Fanfully, Betty dashed over the ground as fast as her legs would carry her. She felt she had never run so fast in her life before. But still the thud of hoofs sounded terrifyingly close behind. And then her foot struck against one of the grassy tussocks, and with a sickening sensation of dismay she felt herself falling.

But even before she found herself all sprawl upon the grass she caught the sound of shouting—loud cries in a girlish voice and the furious ringing of a cycle bell. Some of her chums, riding after her from school. Oh, thank goodness!

The thudding of hoofs ceased. Betty, almost as soon as she touched the ground, raised her head to see what was happening.

"Lie still—lie still!" shouted the voice again, and it was not a voice that was familiar to her. Then, as she instinctively obeyed, followed more shouting, and the bull rang more shrilly.

She could just see, through the grass, a girl riding up on a bicycle, jolting and bumping over the turf, wobbling perilously as she held the handles with one hand, while she furiously waved a small branch of a tree with the other. And she was riding straight for the bull.

Betty scrambled up.

"No, no!" she called. "Go back! The bull, he's dangerous!"

But the girl, though she must have heard, rode on grimly, still keeping up the shouting and the tinkling, and waving the branch with her free hand.

The bull appeared puzzled. He could not understand this new apparition that demanded his attention. For a moment or so he stood still, watching its approach. Then, deciding that, after all it might be better not to encounter it at too close range, he turned and lumbered heavily away.

Betty dashed towards the girl, who had now dismounted from the bicycle and was in the act of throwing away the tree branch. She was a girl Betty had never seen before, a girl of school age, and rather pale now, after her experience.

"It was wonderful of you to do that," Betty gasped, grasping her hands tightly between both

her own. "You risked danger yourself to save me."

"I—I— Nothing of the sort!" the girl stammered, colouring now with confusion. "I—I was just riding along when I saw what was happening, and it was easy enough to scare the bull off. He—he wasn't really very fierce."

"It was a jolly plucky thing!" Betty insisted. "And you must tell me who you are so that I can thank you properly. I'm very, very grateful to you. Won't you come along to the school with me and meet my chums and have a talk?"

"Morocco School?" the stranger said shyly. "You come from there? Then perhaps you can tell me, please, would I be allowed to see my sister?"

"Your sister? Why, were you going there to see her?" Betty asked excitedly. "Whose sister are you, then?"

"I'm Molly Curzon, and Hetty—"

"Oh, the new girl! And you, then, are the sister she has mentioned."

Betty liked this shy, serious-looking girl, even apart from what she had done for her; felt as much drawn towards her as she had been drawn towards Hetty—and that was saying a good deal.

"Pleased to meet you, Molly Curzon! You are coming to Morocco as well some day, I understand! At least, I hope you will; and don't forget when you do, you can always rely on me for a friend."

The girl started a smile that became very wistful as they turned and began to walk towards the school.

"I hope so," she said softly. "It depends, though. It all depends upon how—how my sister goes on. So Mr. Grandways said."

Betty laughed. She was not to know that words had been voiced just then which were to take terrible effect upon her own life, denying her all freedom of action, tying her hands, and that, too, at a time when she would be hard put to it to fight for herself—and the Form!

#### The Captain's Quandary.

"If your sister does well! No fear about that," said Betty warmly. "Hetty is a girl in a thousand, just as you must be."

There came from Molly Curzon no quick nod of agreement.

"You think so, of course, Molly!"

"Er—it wouldn't do for me to say what I think of my sister, Hetty," the girl answered, forcing a smile. "She takes my breath away sometimes—so clever—"

"Oh, you're only thinking about her school work," Betty laughed again. "But is it so that unless Hetty goes on well, Mr. Grandways won't pay for your schooling?"

"Yet," nodded Molly Curzon. "You can't wonder, either. Morocco is an expensive school, and Mr. Grandways is entirely supporting mother out of pure generosity. So unless Hetty does well—"

"There's not the least need to fear. At the end of term, Mr. Grandways will be saying you must enter Morocco in the New Year, and do just as well as Hetty—as I'm sure you will when the time comes!"

Perhaps there was something in this too flattering for Molly's shy nature. She looked uncomfortable, and in a moment she turned the talk.

"Mother said I might take the old bike and

come over to the school this afternoon to look up Hetty. I wrote to her, but she hasn't answered. I suppose there hasn't been time."

"Well, I'm very sorry, Molly, but your sister has gone into town with some chums. Still, you must come along into the school to see my chums—have a cup of tea, anyhow, even if you can't wait."

"Oh, I had better not, thanks all the same," declined Molly. "I'd rather go home to mother. If you would tell Hetty, please, that mother sent her love, and hopes Hetty will be over to see us both at the cottage, first opportunity. Hetty hasn't seen our little home in the country yet."

"She hasn't?" cried Betty, remembering Hetty and Cora's last half-holiday.

"No," said Molly simply. "Hetty, you see, stayed with the Grandways for a few weeks before term began, then came to Morrove direct with Cora Grandways."

"I know. But there was a halfer last Wednesday! You didn't see anything of your sister then?"

"Not at home—no," faltered Molly, and her eyes, that had met Betty's so cordially, suddenly wavered.

"If you'll give my sister that message, then, when you see her?"

"Right—ho! But, I say! Are you sure you can't stay for tea? Oh, you must—"

"Oh, no thanks!"

And away went the lonesome-looking girl, along the road that had brought her to Morrove. Betty watched her until she was out of sight, then turned back into the school grounds, but not to go indoors. As likely as not, tea was on the table in Study 12, and Polly and the rest were wondering what she meant by depriving them of her company.

No matter, there was a lot to think about now. Oh, it was just awful what she had begun to think—about Hetty!

Betty was thinking of Molly Curzon as much as she was considering Hetty's duplicity. Molly, at any rate, was a splendid girl. No trickery about her! She reminded one of Judith Grandways, and very likely she had suffered as much as Judy because of her sister. She should not suffer disappointment about coming to Morrove if Betty could help it!

It all seemed proved against the new girl, yet Betty, before she slept, had made up her troubled mind to do one thing, so as to leave no room for doubt. She must make a private inquiry into Hetty and Cora's activities last Wednesday afternoon.

The following day furnished her with more than sufficient reasons for carrying out this resolve. Hetty Curzon, impetuous that she was, with Cora in tow, went on making great headway, taking in more and more of the best girls in the Form.

Sunday also furnished Betty

with an opportunity to pursue her private inquiry. Girls were free after dinner, having been to service in the morning. She gave her chums the slip and cycled away to Goselands—that country house where Hetty and Cora had passed Wednesday night.

It was close upon tea-time when Betty got back to Morrove. Girls, as the custom was, would be having tea at the school tables this Sunday afternoon. Running up to Study 12, Betty found only Polly there, just gunning up a long letter for home.

"You're a nice one!" the madcap reproached the captain playfully. "Going off on your own! Naomee's done with you, she says. Meantime, she's lugged Paula downstairs to go in early doors, as it were, for tea."

"I could do with a cup," smiled Betty. "But first of all—"

She closed the door, then turned again to Polly, this time with such a serious look that the madcap started up.

"Polly, you won't lose faith in me, will you, even if others do? I mean, as the captain, doing what seems best—"

"Betty, you know!" exclaimed the madcap, with all the earnestness that was hers at times. "But why?"

"I look like having to do something that may be misjudged by the Form, Polly. Something about Cora and Hetty. What does Miss Brevard do in class when two girls have got together to be a nuisance?"

"Parts them!"



"I simply must have some sort of a team against the Fifth!" Betty said wearily. "Oh, let the Fifth win for once!" said Eva Merrick carelessly.

"Just so," nodded Betty. "Well, for reasons that I can't go into now—if I ever am able to go into them, even with you, Polly dear—I am going to part Hetty and Cora."

A silence fell. Polly stood struck back a step by the shock of the words.

"Well, Betty, you know your own business best as captain," she said at last. "But I should have thought—Hetty being the only girl who has ever been able to do any good with Cora, and then the fact that Hetty came to school with Cora, at Mr. Grandways' expense—"

"It seems strange for me to be going to do this thing," returned Betty steadily. "Still, I've got to do it. I am going to have a word with Miss Everard about it. I shall supply Miss Everard with a good enough reason why those two had better not be in the same study."

"Oh, Betty, but why—why?"

"Best for all concerned. I can't say more than that, dear."

"Then I'm sure I don't understand, Betty. But it's you—*you*," added Polly, her face bright with the old admiring look for the captain, "and that is good enough for me?"

#### Storm in the Studies.

**B**UT it was not to prove good enough for others in the Form.

Monday midday found a storm raging in the schoolhouse, and Study 12 the centre of that storm. And very much the captain was Betty then.

"Hark! All that angry talk that's started!" Polly exclaimed. "And your name, Betty! Listen!"

"It's all right," said the captain, sitting calmly at the table. "I know what it means."

"What so dignified, though?"

"Yes, really!" palpitated Paula, sitting up in the easy-chair in quite an electrified manner. "I don't like to hear that wow, goals! One wather gathers that—"

Several girls burst inside the study, then they stopped, bunched together, glaring at Betty.

"Betty, what's this about Hetty and Cora not being allowed to go on in the same study?"

The captain rose, facing the angry batch of girls.

"I've nothing to say—"

"Then we have!" cried one of them indignantly. It was Eliza, too—Eliza Hargrove. But they were all girls who had followed the captain up to now. "It's a shame!"

"You may think so—"

"We do think so!" they all dimmed. "A shame! Unfair—spiteful!"

"Hitting at Cora through Hetty!"

"A helpful friend for Cora at last, and you go and part them! It's your doing, Betty!" flamed on Eliza. "Too bad of you!"

"No!" burst out Polly. "Look here, I know no more than any of you why it is, but—"

"Then there's nothing you can say!" she was silenced. "Nothing that will alter our opinion! It's most unfair, and both Hetty and Cora deserve all credit for taking it so quietly!"

Betty stood firm as a rock, except that she threw out one arm to gesture to the angry girls to go away.

"So long as I am captain—"

"All right! It won't be for much longer, perhaps!" cried one of the disgusted girls. "Sooner we have a change, the better!"

At the doorway there was commotion for a few moments more. The angry girls were only reluctantly passing away, whilst Madge, Pam, and other members of the chummers were now having quite a struggle to come in.

"Betty! What's the row?"

"You might close that door, one of you. Thanks. They don't like it," Betty said calmly, "because I have just told Hetty and Cora that they'll have to be in different studies."

"So we gathered," Madge said shortly. "But, Betty, isn't there something in what they say? Depriving Cora of a helpful friend! Granted that Cora isn't genuinely reformed, will she be any better without Hetty as a study-mate?"

"If Cora is no better for that, I know someone else who will be," was Betty's cryptic answer.

"Meaning, Hetty herself?"

But Betty was not meaning that at all. She was thinking of Molly Curzon, who would never enter Morocco School as a scholar unless—unless her sister did well this term! It was the great quandary again—impossible to expose Hetty, for if she did her sister's chances would be done for already.

Besides, Molly Curzon had been the means of saving Betty from what might have been a decidedly nasty situation; she had proved herself entirely different from her sister. And was it likely that Betty could forget a thing like that? No. She had a debt to pay to Molly Curzon, and she would pay it—to the full.

A pause in Study 12 was filled in by angry murmurings from the passage.

"I should have thought," said Pam gently, "Betty could be trusted to lead and not be led, being the stronger character. But you are the captain, Betty, and we stand by you."

Polly brightened at that loyal remark.

"Right or wrong, is that it, girls?" She took the cue from Pam. "Betty hasn't done this thing for fun, we can be sure of that. Nor yet to spite Cora. We don't know all, perhaps—"

"You do not, girls," spoke Betty, with slow impressiveness. "Even Miss Everard doesn't know all. I have worked it as well as I could—as kindly as possible. Some day I'll be able to tell you, let's hope. Meanwhile—"

"Oh, listen!" jerked out Polly, throwing up a finger. "Listen!"

A number of girls in the passage repeated a cry which had turned Betty's cheeks pale.

*Down with the captain!*

"They cannot mean it," whispered Madge.

But the cry came yet a third time:

*Down with the captain! Fair play in the Form! Bos for Betty Barton—bos!*

Betty, signaling to her chums not to go out and remonstrate, resumed her seat at the table.

"Keep calm, Polly dear—all of you. Things have got to get worse than this before they alter. And," she said, her eyes suddenly flashing with that spirit which so distinguished her, "I stand or fall by what I've done!"

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

What is this that Betty has done for herself? It looks as if things cannot be much more serious for the captain—when her Form has lost faith in her. Don't on any account miss next week's gripping story to read what will happen now. Order your SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN immediately!