

Read Marjorie Stanton's "MORCOVE'S FIGHT for FAIR PLAY!"—Within

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



**WHAT CAN THE
"REBELS" WANT?**

A tense moment in the exciting long, complete story, featuring the Morcove chums—inside.

Thrills and Excitements in Plenty With Betty and Co. In—

MORCOVE'S FIGHT FOR FAIRPLAY!



By Marjorie Stanton

Four of Grangemoor's rebels still at large, and two of them with a sister at Morcove School! No wonder Betty & Co. feel impelled to aid the boys! For not only are they in hiding on Morcove's shores, but their cause is Morcove's own—fairplay!

It was growing dark out of doors, and already Polly and her chums had switched on every light in the class-room. But although the room was bright and warm, the irksomeness of present conditions were keeping the girls grumbling.

"Can't help it if my prep is full of mistakes this evening," Polly blazed up again. "Ugh! How can I work without all my books!"

Betty Barton glanced up with a smile.

"We were supposed to bring all books away from Study 12!"

"Well, we didn't—at least, I didn't!" said Polly, with a grumpiness that was largely assumed for fun's sake. "Not with all the rest of the Form standing around making fun of us. Ugh!"

"I'm frozen!" shrielled Naomer, casting down her pen. "Queek, let me sit on ze radiator, for a change!"

And she, Morcove's dusky royalty from North Africa, darted away from her desk to perch herself, somehow, on the hot-water pipes.

But she soon hopped down again.

"What ze diggings, burning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Be quiet, Naomer," said Polly crustily. "Remember, I want to work, if you don't!"

It was a remark received with the amused disbelief that it deserved. But the madcap insisted:

"Yes, I will do my prep, after all. Never mind if I have got a brother and three of his best school chums hiding in a cave on the seashore, the last crumb of food eaten, and night at hand—wow! Nothing matters, so long as I get this page finished, in my best copy-book style."

However, she did not at once resume. Instead:

"No, but really, isn't it sickening, girls?"

"Wough luck!"

The Cave Dwellers!

"O H, this is the limit!"

"Terrible!"

"Most twying, weally, yes, wather!"

"I shall strike—even if I have to strike Naomer!"

This last remark, from madcap Polly Linton, of Morcove School, caused a little laugh.

Nine of them there were in all—nine members of the Fourth Form, at prep in the class-room, instead of enjoying all the normal privileges of life upstairs in the studies.

"Yes, bekas, just when we wanted to keep ze boys going with food, every blessed zing goes wrong! What ze diggings, we might have taken them all that fresh lot of rations, by now, if only——"

"If only!" sighed Polly. "If only Miss Somerfield had not pinched the lot—on suspicion, I suppose! If only she hadn't closed Study 12 and all our other studies, and——"

"H'm!" coughed Madge Minden warningly. She was at work rather close to the class-room door.

Instantly nine girls assumed an air of great industry. Every pen was racing as the door opened to let in Miss Everard, the Form's youthful and chummy mistress.

Normally, if any members of the Fourth Form could feel that their mistress bore them the most indulgent goodwill, Betty & Co. could do that. But these were far from being normal times—with Betty & Co., at any rate.

So, now, Miss Everard's geniality was somewhat tempered by the knowledge that here were girls in disfavour with the headmistress.

"Getting on all right?" she inquired.

"Oh, yes!" was the rather sighing chorus.

A few pairs of eyes were raised, to let Miss Everard understand that their owners regarded themselves as martyrs. And she smiled.

"It is no use complaining to me, girls!"

"We are not complaining!" Betty Barton ventured to assert blandly. She had not been one of those to look funeral, even in fun.

"I am sure the headmistress can be trusted to know what she means by it all. But what a pity!" the Form-mistress deplored. "You must keep out of all further mischief, and then you'll soon be allowed back to the studies."

She added, after a pause:

"This all comes of you girls getting involved in that disgraceful business over at Grangemoor School. Naturally, Miss Somerfield could not allow Morcove scholars to help Grangemoor boys in keeping up a revolt against their own headmaster."

"Even though——" Polly began a rejoinder, and then broke off.

She realised, as did her chums, that it was a case of the less said the better. To pursue the subject with Miss Everard might lead that young lady to ask, point blank: Did they know where certain Grangemoor boys were at this moment?

Betty & Co. did know, quite well! But they had no intention of saying. For very vital reasons, the chums wanted those particular boys to hold out still—last survivors, as they were, of all who had rebelled.

"When you have finished your prep," said Miss Everard, turning back to the door, "you have the music-room, you know. Nice and warm there—and the library. Oh, yours isn't a very hard case, I'm sure!"

"Isn't it!" Polly gloomed aloud, after the Form-mistress had effaced herself. "She doesn't realise! It's upset the whole caboodle!"

"And we shall soon be starving, too," complained Naomer. "No corner cupboard to go to—ah, bah! I am disgusted! Soon I shall be as thin as Paula!"

"You have been most heroic, to-day," declared Polly. "The way you went without tea, Naomer, so that the bread and butter might be saved in case we can get it to the boys—most self-sacrificing! But we can't have you fading away!"

So saying, the madcap suddenly whisked a small

paper package from the ledge under her desk. She unwrapped the contents and invited Naomer to help herself.

"No, zank you," declined the ever-hungry one. "Bekas, eet is only bread and butter. My idea of a snack is——"

"All right," said Polly, changing to bleak contempt. "Others will be glad to have that bread and butter! You wait until you are an outcast, like my brother Jack, with a price upon your head! Ugh, dash!" she raged, and stamped clear of her desk to pace about the class-room. "I could—— Look here, girls, what are we to do about it?"

"Wait," counselled Judy Cardew soothingly. "What's the use of waiting?" protested headstrong Polly. "Tisn't as if we'd be all right in the morning for getting in touch with them! We're gated!"

"All the same, Polly," said Betty softly, "Judy is right. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if we do manage, in spite of all, to——"

"Sh!" warned Madge Minden, for the second time.

Polly, as she returned to her desk, was glaring towards the closed door.

Again the class-room door opened, just wide enough to admit the pretty head of a certain girl all the chums liked. This was Etta Hargrove, at present taking Betty's place in the Form as captain. Part of the penalty paid by Betty Barton for being involved in the Grangemoor business had to be deprived of the captaincy for a fortnight.

"Polly—and you, Judy; you were supposed to report to me at six," Etta remarked with a smile.

"And again at seven, yes," said Polly sweetly. "It's now seven, so we'll report twice over, to catch up."

She rose in her desk.

"Here I am, Etta"—she offered herself for inspection. "Judy, stand up and be seen! Both here. Not gone breaking bounds again."

Etta laughed.

"Hard at work, in fact?"

"Very! And we would get on so much better," Polly said as sweetly as before, "if we were left in peace."

"Yes, bekas——"

"I leave you to it!" Etta said, with a nod and a smile; and then she was gone.

"Nice girl, Etta!" exclaimed Betty. "I think she ought to keep the captaincy. Not that I ever expect to have it offered back to me! The way things are going——"

"Etta's all right," broke in Helen Craig; "but she doesn't inspire quite the same respect as you, Betty. Everyone likes her; but she can't govern, really."

There was to be something bearing out the truth of that ere another minute had sped. No sooner had the nine victims of Miss Somerfield's displeasure resumed work, than a skittish mob of girls turned up at the clas-room door, to poke fun at Betty & Co.

It was all good-natured teasing; but that made it none the less exasperating to the chums! The most annoying thing was that these teasers, like the rest of the Form, knew nothing of circumstances which had excused any breaches of discipline.

"Boo, bad girls!" they were addressed. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you like working down here?"

"And where are you going to sleep to-night?" was another inquiry. "In the coal cellars?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Laugh at them! Betty, feeling better for your rest cure?"

More shrieks of laughter.

"Hope you all had a good tea?" came the next pitying remark. "Poor things!"

Then Etta Hargrove appeared, and was quite powerless to disperse the ribald crew. It was asked: Why must they all go away? Were Betty & Co. dangerous? What had they done?

"Never you mind, girls——"

"But, Etta——"

"Shut that door!" shouted Polly from her desk.

"Ooo, listen to Polly!" cried the teasers, falling back as if in alarm. "She's got it badly!"

"Some of you will get it—in the neck," the madcap threatened, handling a book menacingly. "If you've done your work, we haven't!"

"It must be difficult," someone shouted sympathetically, "not to have any study now to work in. And look at Naomer, poor soul! Growing quite thin!"

"Hey, Naomer, would you like a cream-bun?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, bekas——"

"Just as well," the dusky one's spirited retort was cut short. "'Bekas,' they're all gone, anyway. We ate all ours at tea—in study."

"Boo! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Girls, do leave them alone," entreated Etta. "Come away——"

"Before the police come, yes!" the chums heard a girl sing out, and they knew it was Cora Grandways, about whose twittings there was little likely to be any good-nature. "The police are after Polly's brother, you know—and Judy's!"

"That's a wicked untruth!" cried Polly, jumping up to rush across to the thronged doorway. "Cora Grandways——"

"I know what I'm talking about!" asserted that spiteful girl, pushing through the crowd to stand in front of Polly. "And I don't see why the whole school shouldn't know, either!"

She turned to the others, who were suddenly standing astounded.

"It's as I say! The rebellion broke down at Grangemoor last evening. But four boys are still at large. They ran away rather than give themselves up; and before they made off they robbed Dr. Trouncer's study."

"They didn't!" stamped Polly. "Oh——"

"They did!" cried Cora, with a malicious grin. "To obtain money to keep themselves going, and so——"

"Cora, that will do," interposed Etta. "Please——"

"No use saying 'Please!' to her—the wretch!" panted Polly. "She's a—she's— Get out of my sight, Cora, or I shall——"

"Will you?" jeered Cora, confident that she was able to skip back in time. "Boo! Who stole Dr. Trouncer's petty cash? Jack Linton! Jack and——"

The rest was never said. Polly, in spite of a deterring cry from the ineffective captain, flew at Cora, got her by the shoulders and sent her spinning.

Which done, roused Polly drew back into the class-room and closed the door with a violent bang!

Not To Be Beaten!

AFTER her violent slamming of the class-room door, Polly turned round, intending to speak across to her chums. But surprise checked her.

She saw Betty making the most frantic signs

imply caution. The others were still in their desks; but Betty was over by a window, beyond which there was the outer darkness of night-time.

Something that Polly read in the gestured warning made her thrust a foot against the closed door, to keep it fast against anybody who might try to come in.

Now Betty came flying across from the window to whisper the madcap:

"Polly, your brother——"

"What about him?"

"There!" And Betty, speaking under her breath, pointed back to the window, on the other side of the great room. It's Jack—outside——"

"Jack!"

"Yes!"

Betty followed up this answer with another excitable warning, addressed to the other girls. They were all on their feet, wanting to swarm across to the window indicated.

"Sh! No—no!" breathed Betty. "Some of you come over to this door, in case! Leave the rest to Polly—and Judy, too, in case her brother is there as well."

Every movement in the next few moments was made in silence. All Betty's chums, with the exception of Polly Linton and Judy Cardew, tipped across to the closed door, to help guard it. Meantime, Polly and Judy had silently nipped to the window which Betty had indicated.

It was closed top and bottom, and the two girls inferred that Betty must have seen a face at the window—Jack's face, as he ventured a peep into the lit-up class-room. He would never have been so rash as to proclaim his presence by calling out.

Judy was every bit as excited as Polly now. As Betty had hinted, a moment since, it was quite likely that Dave—Judy's brother—was here with Polly's brother Jack.

And so it proved.

Even as the pair of girls reached the window, two faces were brought close to the outer side of the pane. There was the face of Dave Cardew, serious and unexcited; and there was the face of Jack Linton, wearing its usual lively smile, whilst the eyes sparkled merrily.

"Gee!" said Polly. "Heave, Judy—quick! It's a chance—a chance!"

Easily and silently they raised the lower half of the sash-window, for it worked with the smoothness of constant use.

Then they looked behind them, across to the door. The girls there made reassuring signs, and so Polly and Judy knew that it was safe to speak.

"Jack! Dave! Oh——"

"You didn't get down to us, any of you," came Jack's explanatory whisper. "What does it mean, girls? You working in this class-room, instead of——"

"Never mind about that," his sister cut in. She and Judy did not wish the boys to know what calamities had befallen in the school! "Wait, whilst I get——"

"But, Polly——"

"Sh! Quiet, you goop!"

"It's all right!" Jack declared stoutly. "Bob Halliday and Charlie Calligan are keeping a lookout for us. We've been round under your study-window, but that was all in darkness. Fairly flummoxed we've been feeling, and then suddenly we heard your voices——"

"Listen!" Polly again cut her brother short. "Can't explain now, but we've got some food for you, anyhow."

"Yes, bekas—"

"Hallo, kid!" Jack grinned, now that Naomer had rushed across to the window. "Well, where's the grubbins— We chaps have scoffed what little we had. Can't live on air!"

"No, bekas—"

Naomer was the one to be cut short this time, by Polly, who seized the dusky one and dragged her away. This left Judy alone at the window, with the heads and shoulders of Jack and Dave on the other side of the sill.

"How wonderful that you've turned up like this!" was Judy's fervent exclamation. "We've been at our wit's ends about you. Couldn't get down to the shore; and the food we bought—it—you won't be able to have it. Only some food that we saved from tea."

Dave looked very grave, whilst Jack muttered: "What! Been going without, for us? But that won't do, girls. Gosh—"

"Here you are, catch!" was Polly's interrupting whisper, as she now rushed back with several packages. "That's not the lot, but—"

"No, bekas, queek, queek!" panted Naomer, now that she also had dashed back with packages of food to pass out to the boys. "Zere you are, and best of luck, and as for old Shudders at Grangemoor—boo!"

An urgent "Sh!" came from Betty over by the door.

"Hurry up!"

Polly glanced behind, then turned again to the boys.

"It's a sickener," she fumed. "Everything against us. But we don't mean to fail you. Look here, in case we can't get out to-morrow; we shall be here at this time, in the evening."

"But why, won't you be able to get out, Polly? Not gated, are you, all of you?"

They were; but it was the very thing they didn't want the boys to know!

"I said in case, Jack," his sister evaded the question. "Only in case! And look here—"

"Hurry up, there!"

"Oh!" Polly raged softly. Then suddenly her usually bonny face assumed a still more frantic expression. She stared past Jack and Dave into the darkness behind those two boys.

"Oh, goodness!" she breathed. "Who's that—"

"What! Where?" gasped Jack, turning round in alarm. Then he chuckled.

"It's only Calligan," he remarked. "Though what he wants to come butting in for, I don't know. Hey, you gooch!"—as a figure, singularly tall and lanky for its age, loomed up in the darkness. "Beat it!"

But the figure came on to the window, and the exceedingly learned-looking face of Charles Calligan, popularly known as "Comrade Calligan," came into the light flowing from the classroom.

Polly and Judy, in spite of

the excitement of the moment, spluttered with laughter.

It had been one of the ironies of Fate that Jack and Dave, when forced to withdraw from Grangemoor School, rather than give themselves up, should be joined by the Honourable Bob Halliday and Comrade Calligan. There could have been no greater contrast between two boys, but the pair were splendid pals, which, as Betty & Co. had been saying, "was the funny part about it!"

"What'd you want, Calli?" demanded Jack, in stage whisper.

"Is Paula Creel there?" inquired the Comrade.

"Yes, why?" asked Polly.

"Oh, I only wondered!"

"You want to speak to her? Here, Paula—wanted!" the madcap voiced across the class-room. "And look sharp!"

"Howwows!" murmured Paula. Being of a languid, timid nature, she was easily agitated. All the same, she did not forget to give tidying touches to her hair as she came across.

The lanky, learned face of Comrade Calligan peered in over the window-sill as elegant Paula came up.

"Bai Jove!" said Paula. "It's—er—that youth again; the wemawable one!"

Judy managed not to laugh; but Polly had to conceal her smiles.

"Look here, Calli," chuckled Jack; "Paula's one of the idle rich. You can't have anything in common with Paula!"

"I only wanted to say," he said huskily to Paula, "that book I advised you to read. It wasn't Froust's 'Chaos'; that was my mistake. It was Humpnickel's 'Elements of Reconstruction.'"



No sooner had the chums resumed work than a laughing mob of girls collected at the class-room door. "Boo, bad girls!" they teased. "How do you like your rest cure, away from Study 12?"

"Bai Jove!"

"So now you know," said Polly.

"Er—yes, wather!" gasped Paula. But it was like her to be polite. "I will wead it, certainly—"

"Do," said the Comrade, bowing. "You'll then be able to understand me, when we get a talk. I would like to get a talk with you about things. The world-to-day—"

"Yes, but this isn't the time, old son," interposed Jack. "So switch it to earth. The chap's positively batty!" he grinned, to the girls. "Fancy having to live in a cave with a chap like that!"

"Quick, before you go," Polly said, getting over her amusement. "How are you boys going to manage for the night?"

"We'll be all right," Jack remarked. "There is the inner cave, you know; nice and dry, and safe as houses. At this time of year, not a soul is likely to— Gosh, though, now who's this?" he broke off, knowing full well that it was the Honourable Bob.

Polly giggled.

"This is a scream, girls!"

"What do you want, Bob?" demanded Jack.

"Jest to say heh-do, don't you know. Is Paula there?"

"You want to speak to her?"

"Quiet so!"

"Gwacious!" Paula palpitated. "Weally, this is most embawwassing, yes, wather! It will result, I'm afraid, in a dweadful catastwophic. You boys— Pawdon?"

There were now some six or seven voices all going at once.

"Come away, boys—"

"But wait ze bit, bekas—more food, here you are, and jolly good luck!"

"Bai Jove—"

"The chapter on the 'Duty of the State to—'"

"Old Shudders—"

"Quiet so! Your people, Paula, must be the same Creelis who, don't you know, have often visited—"

"That inner cave, I tell you, Polly, is as snug as toast! Gee, though, we must be going—"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Bye, Dave, and take care of yourself!"

"Bye, Judy. We shan't repeat this; too risky. But—"

"Boys—listen a moment!" This was Polly, in an eager whisper. "All food and messages to—where, shall we say? I know. Where that big holly grows in the school's boundary-hedge!"

"Good wheeze, Polly!"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Quiet so, Paula. My people knew them well. Didn't they have a place in Scotland?"

At this point Betty ran up on tiptoe to protest, in a mirthful whisper:

"Are you boys going to hang about all night? We can hear you, over there at the door!"

"Fall in, boys," said "General" Jack Linton to the remnant of his rebel army. "Calli, you can tell Paula all about that another time. And you, Bob! Come on, Dave—"

"Night, all!" said quiet Dave.

A chorus of good-nights came over the sill from all four boys, and so at last they moved off in the darkness, Jack pretending great anger against the Honourable Bob and the Comrade.

"You didn't stick to the arrangement, you chaps!" he condemned them, softly. "Talk about Froust's 'Chaos.' Our world is in a state of flux, Calli boy, and all you can do is to—"

"Sh!" warned Dave, and the others, checking as he did so, shot him questioning stares.

"Where?"

He pointed.

Then, to their amazement and alarm, his chums beheld a girlish figure flitting by in the darkness, perhaps fifty yards away.

It was much too dark for them to be able to tell for certain, but it seemed to all four boys that there was a guilty stealthiness about the furtive movements of this shadowy figure.

They kept as still as statues, and remained unseen, some shrubs serving to screen them. The furtive figure flitted on as if to make for another side of the great schoolhouse, and then the boys could steal away.

They did so in Indian file, keeping to cover as much as possible. Their pockets crammed with the packages of food which the girls had saved for them, they reached the boundary hedge. Jack, in front, was going to be the first to scramble through, when he stood arrested by an exciting thought.

"Boys! Do you know," he whispered, "that person we saw just then—it wasn't anyone belonging to Morcove, after all! Boys, I'll tell you who it was—that Jackson girl!"

Jack's three chums considered this in silence.

"You know who I mean?" he pursued, in a whisper, and they all three nodded. "She's the girl who is connected in some mysterious way with Old Shudders at Grangemoor. Polly and the others say it's a big mystery, and they hope to solve it. They feel that it may mean the bowling out of Old Shudders."

"But anyhow, what is that girl doing, hanging around Morcove School after dark?" asked Dave under his breath.

Jack shook his head.

"That's got me beat. We know that Elsie Jackson has made herself friendly with Cora Grandways—and Cora is no friend of Polly and the rest. I say, chaps, how about leaving a message where Polly said, telling her and her chums that we saw Elsie Jackson just now? I think we should, don't you?"

They agreed, and so the next thing was to prowl along to where the big holly grew in the boundary hedge. Having found that appointed spot, one of them provided a stumpy pencil; a sheet was torn from a notebook, and Jack himself wrote the message.

It was no easy thing to do, for by now they were almost in groping darkness. Jack's large scrawl certainly did not "keep to the lines," but he and his pals hoped that the few words would be decipherable, when found by Betty & Co.

The note was folded up and placed at the foot of the holly-tree with a stone on top.

Then the boys scrambled through the hedge at another part of it, and careered for their shelter—the cave under the cliffs.

In a few minutes they were down there where the tide brawled in the darkness along Morcove's rugged shore. The blackness of the night, and the sound of the sea, slopping and surging amongst the rocks; all this was sufficient to take damping effect upon normal spirits. But these four boys were proof against depressing influences.

There was a friendship which made any hardships of trifling account. So long as they were together. And they were together now, sustained, too, by the sense of having justice on their side.

Quickly but warily they reached that cave which had become their only shelter. They went in, and

at the far end of it they groped to where a natural crevice in the rock wall gave entry to an inner chamber.

The existence of that inner chamber was not easily discoverable.

The Morcove girls had found it out long ago, and thus Jack and Dave had known of it, from having visited Morcove so often and ranged along the shore with Betty & Co.

The two bicycles by which the four boys had managed to get to Morcove, from Grangemoor, the previous night, had been very safely hidden away up on the moor. But they had brought the cycle-lanterns with them, and one of these they lit, when they were once again within the inner cave.

"This way to the grotto!" jested Jack, as he set the dimly-burning lamp upon the dry floor of the cave. "Well, sit down, chaps; make yourselves at home. And now, how about a spot of grub?"

Packages were taken out and opened.

"Um!" said Jack. "Mine's bread-and-butter. What's yours, Dave?"

It was the same.

"Bob?"

"Quiet so!"

"Gosh! And yours, Calli?"

"Rock-cakes—"

"Gee, hand over! Rock-cakes for the vitamins, boys. I know this, anyhow, those girls are the goods. Now I am proud of my sister Polly; I really am at last!"

And Jack made pretence of raising a glass to "the ladies."

"But," he said, becoming serious, "I'd like to know why they weren't at prep in their studies. I'd like to know why they only had bread-and-butter for us and rock-cakes, when they said that they were going to buy up the Barncombe Creamery. Gosh, boys, wouldn't a cream-bun go down nicely now? Or a good six inches of Swiss-roll-gee! But there it is; and here's this bread-and-butter."

Dave suddenly swung round, where he squatted on the dry sand, to look towards the narrow entrance, listening. Instantly Jack put his cap over the dim lantern.

But there proved to be no real cause for alarm, although it showed how vigilant the boys were, even whilst they made light of their strange conditions. It must have been a stone, rattling down the face of the cliff because decay had brought it away at last. Nothing happened.

After that, however, the four sat on in silence, hearing the roar of the tide dully, from the open shore, until at last their meal was ended and they could make arrangements for the night.

There was to be turn and turn about amongst the four, so that one or another would be always on watch. As this meant broken sleep for all, they decided to start the night's rest at once, so as to make the duty spells less irksome.

Dave took the first turn, and it was like him to wriggle out through the crevice and take his

stand on the open shore, there to remain on the alert, whilst his chums "got down to it" on the cavern floor and were soon fast asleep.

Cora Makes a Discovery!

No. 10, The Crescent,
Barncombe.

"DEAR Cora,—I was over your way last evening, hoping to see something of you.

"Can you meet me this (Wednesday) afternoon in the town? We might have tea together. I do want to see you about something very important, and to ask a favour of you.—Yours,
"ELSIE JACKSON."

Cora Grandways, alone in her study at Moreove School, whistled against the sheet of notepaper,



To their amazement and alarm the boy chums beheld a girlish figure flitting away in the gloom. It was too dark for the boys to see who it was, but they felt vaguely uneasy. Had the girl been spying?

edgewise, which bore this message. The note had come into her hands a few minutes since—when she was dismissed from morning class along with the rest of the Form.

This Jackson girl—she didn't seem to be able to keep away from Morcove! Rather funny—by which, Cora meant rather strange—that a girl so much older than herself should be running after her to this extent!

But there was this in it for Cora herself; through Elsie Jackson she had been able to obtain news about affairs at Grangemoor far sooner than anyone else in Morcove School. It was thanks to Elsie Jackson that she, Cora, had heard what Dr. Trouncer was now alleging—that the missing rebels had committed a theft from his own study on the Monday night.

"So I suppose I had better meet her," Cora

said to herself, tearing up the note. "She's someone to talk to, anyway, outside the school. But I wonder what the favour can be that she wants me to do?"

Meantime, there was a little thing that Cora wanted to do, just to her liking. A bit of spying! She had noticed that the same midday post which had brought her the note from Elsie Jackson had also brought a small parcel for "Miss Polly Linton," marked "Urgent." And Polly, just now, had claimed it most eagerly.

The madcap had gone straight from the classroom, at dismissal, to see if there was a parcel for her.

Things to help Jack and his chums, to aid them? Cora wondered! She knew that an order posted to any Barncombe stores last evening from the school could have resulted in the arrival of that parcel by twelve o'clock to-day. So perhaps that was it!

Cora could imagine how much more difficult it was making it, for Betty & Co., to be deprived of the use of their studies. Where, for instance, had Polly gone with that parcel just now? Where would it be kept in the meantime, presuming that it contained things intended for the boys?

Find out that, and what a "lovely" trick she could serve Betty & Co.; for then she could even get hold of the parcel, on the quiet, and so one more attempt to supply the boys with necessities would have been frustrated.

"Seen anything of Betty and her lot, Etta?" Cora very blandly inquired, meeting the temporary captain at the top end of the study corridor.

"They're out at games."

"Oh, are they!"

"Yes, why?"—rather curiously.

"I only wondered!"

"Well, that's where they are if you want them."

And Etta walked on.

As for Cora, she went downstairs and out into the open air, but not to go across to Betty & Co. There they were, right enough, getting a bustling practice game of hockey—the whole lot of them. Not one of them absent, or Cora would instantly have guessed that this playing games was all a blind, so that the secret activities of a certain member of the chums would stand less chance of being discovered.

Cora walked about in the sunshine, affecting mild interest in the hockey, although that crafty brain of hers was pursuing its spiteful course. That parcel—where was it? Apparently, Polly had put it away out of sight at once, and had then come to join her chums on the green field. If Study 12 had been still available to the madcap and her chums, there would have been the place to look for the parcel.

"And I would have done it, too," pondered Cora darkly. "As it is, goodness only knows what Polly has done with it! Well, I shall have to keep my eyes open, that's all—not forgetting that it's a halfer this afternoon."

She hung about, but not a sign did Betty & Co. betray of wanting to do anything else but play this practice-game. To Cora's chagrin the chums were quite happy to-day—making light of the gating order and all else!

"And yet they must be worrying, when Jack and Dave are two of the last four rebels accounted for!" Cora insisted to herself. "It's pretty certain the girls are in touch with the boys—or would be if they were free to go out of bounds. And how I'd love to get on the

track of the boys myself, and give them away."

She was smiling spitefully as she sauntered back to the schoolhouse, there to slink about on the chance of detecting something. Hit at Betty & Co. through the boys! That was the thing to do—if only she could!

Then suddenly an idea flashed upon her that sent her racing upstairs to her study.

The study window—why hadn't she thought of that before! Now that the chums had finished the practice-game, the moment might be at hand for one of them to do something in secret. Supposing that parcel had to be taken to some appointed place and concealed there, for the boys to come along later and get it? Wouldn't the best time appear to be just before dinner, when all girls had come indoors?

Cora grinned again to herself, feeling proud of her craftiness. She took her stand at her study window, which commanded a good view of the school grounds, and watched on, as patiently as a cat watches for a mouse.

Whang, whang, whang! went the gong downstairs, and Morcove's great schoolhouse filled with the usual hullabaloo, consequent upon so many high-spirited girls responding in boisterous manner.

But Cora still waited and watched, and suddenly— Ah, see what was happening now, down there in the school grounds! A girl, dodging along a side walk, close to the boundary hedge; Polly, and she had got the parcel with her!

In a sudden tremble of excitement, but not forgetting to be cautious, Cora fell back a step or two from the study-window, in case Polly should look back, giving an eye to all the windows.

"Just as well!" Cora exulted to herself. "Just as well I waited, for I know what you're up to now, Polly, and I reckon I'm going to see you do it!"

NOT A MOMENT TO spare had Polly, traversing the winding path that was a good deal sheltered by ornamental shrubs. The gong had gone for dinner, and even now she should have been going in to take her place at table; but it was the one great chance, this! Now, whilst the playing-fields and the rest of the grounds were deserted—to nip along and hide the parcel at the appointed place!

She peeped back between two clumps of bushes, the eager glance taking in all the windows of the schoolhouse from which she might be glimpsed, as well as the porch. Anyone in sight? No! Now for it, then!

Two seconds later she was where the big holly-tree grew in the boundary hedge, and in breathless haste she dropped upon her knees to start concealing the parcel at the base of the tree.

Plenty of dry litter and dead leaves lay about under the bushes, and she intended to draw a good layer of this rubbish over the parcel, thus concealing it. But she hoped first to be able to dump the parcel in a small depression in the ground, to render it all the safer. She noticed a good-sized stone, and pulled it aside, and then—

"Gee!" she gasped.

A note! A torn-out sheet from a notebook, folded in two; but she must not stay to read it now. No time to glance at it even!

Hastily she dumped the parcel where the note had lain, then set the stone against it and heaped dry leaves and dead twigs over it. In a few moments she had done enough to feel sure that the parcel was safely concealed, and then she rose

from her knees and streaked back by the way she had come. The note remained crushed up in her hand until—a minute later—she was going indoors. Then she opened it, with no one on hand to see her do so, and read:

"Jackson girl in school grounds after dark, so beware.—J."

That was all; just those few words pencilled in an uneven, scrawly hand, it was obvious that the writing had had to be done in the dark—"Last night, of course," Polly reasoned.

But the purport of the message! That fairly staggered her.

It evidenced activities on the part of Elsie Jackson, the motive for which could be guessed. The girl had a part to play—for Dr. Trouncer. It must be so, Polly concluded, and was there much doubt that it all had something to do with the Grangemoor rebellion?

From now onwards, therefore, there must be a good look-out kept for the Jackson girl—after dark as well as by day. There was that task to be undertaken, in addition to keeping Jack and his chums supplied with the necessities of life.

"And it's a pretty good whack to have to do, altogether"—Polly smiled grimly to herself—"for girls who are gated!"

She could not rush to Betty and the rest with the warning note. They had gone into dinner, and she could only hurry in now to take her place at the Fourth Form table—late enough to incur a reproving smile from Miss Everard.

But somebody else was to be later. That was Cora Grandways.

"I shall have to be firmer," deplored the Form mistress, taking notice of Cora's still vacant place. "It is a pity; you girls might just as well be punctual, and save a lot of—"

"Here's Cora, Miss Everard!" voiced several girls, anxious to appease the mistress.

At first sight of Cora Grandways, as she came hurrying to the dinner-table, her amused looks were taken by all to mean the usual impudence. Then it was seen that she held something—a parcel—that appeared to be the cause of her grinning so much.

"You are late, Cora—very late!"

"Yes, Miss Everard, I know, and I'm so sorry. But look what I have found, Miss Everard!" tittered Cora, coming round to the Form mistress, at the head of the Fourth Form table, to show her the parcel. "He, he, he! Just look!"

Cora had already untied string bindings and unfolded the paper wrappings. In a moment, now, she was able to display all the contents of the parcel—Polly's parcel!

"What!" exclaimed Miss Everard, staring. "Where?"

"In the boundary hedge. He, he, he! I—I just happened to be passing," Cora tittered on, "and it caught my notice, so I picked it up. He, he, he! Just look at what's here!"

Miss Everard had to take her eyes off the extraordinary collection to notice scholars who were standing up, all round the dinner-table, to be able to see the better. Great laughter had started, and she said:

"Hush, girls! Behave! Sit down, all!"

But the displayed contents of the parcel were too much for the Fourth Form's decorum.

Girls were giggling and tittering, having observed eatables in the way of plain cake and buns, as well as dinner-rolls, a white-papered quantity of cooked pressed-beef, and also sundry

articles which must have been put into the parcel after its dispatch from the Barncombe Creamery.

"Toothbrushes! Ha, ha, ha!" spluttered Cora, holding up one. "Soap—and this comb. He, he, he! Really, Rit is too funny!"

"Cora, it isn't funny!"

"Bub-bub-but, Miss Everard—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded the dinner-table.

"Silence, all! Girls, how dare you?"

Miss Everard had to be very firm, for this disorder at the Fourth Form table was interfering with those in charge of other tables. She took the opened parcel from grinning Cora, hastily drew the paper wrappings over the contents and dumped it upon the floor, just beside her chair.

"Go to your place, Cora, and not another word about such—such nonsense. All of you, stop laughing!"

Then the Form mistress, looking very grave, directed a critical look at Polly and her chums. Not a word came from Miss Everard; but the look spoke volumes.

Betty & Co. knew that she perfectly understood what the discovery of that parcel in the boundary hedge indicated. She was going to say nothing; simply impound the parcel!

And they would have to suffer that loss, that terrible setback, without a murmur!

Cora Tees the Line.

"COME away, Polly—"

"I can't!"

"Polly—"

"I'm waiting, Betty! Waiting for that wretch of a Cora! I mean to—"

"Polly, don't do anything of the sort," counselled Betty Barton in an earnest whisper. "Oh, far better not to take any notice—"

"How can you talk like that!" stamped Polly Linton, facing round. "Think what she has done, the sneak, the detestable little wretch!"

"I know, Polly. All the same—come away now."

But Polly shook her head and remained steadfast, her teeth clenched.

The dismissal from dinner had taken place a minute ago. In that brief space, Morcove's scores of girls had hurried away. This was a "halfer," and they wanted to make the best use of every moment. But Miss Everard had kept Cora Grandways back—evidently to ask her more, in private, about the discovered parcel.

Mistress and scholar were still in the dining-hall, and Polly was lying in wait, just outside the great room, with Betty at her elbow, wishing she could get her to come away.

Suddenly Polly took one of her furious turns, this way and that, then stamped to a standstill.

"I'll shake the life out of that Cora, I will! The hateful sneak!"

"She always has been like that, Polly, and always will be, I suppose," said Betty. "But what good will it do, to have a scene with her?"

Polly heaved for breath and shrugged, implying that at least it would relieve her feelings to "go" for Cora.

"I wouldn't," Betty persisted in advising. "You know how it will be, Polly. The more you let her see how annoyed you are, the more she'll enjoy the 'joke' of what she's done."

"She must have been spying," raged Polly softly. "Simply lying in wait. Oh, and she's in league with that Jackson girl—of course she is! Talking of that, Betty—I've been so mad about the parcel, I forgot to tell you! Look, Betty—read that!"

A scrap of paper changed hands, and it became Betty's turn to receive a shock as she read the warning in Jack's scrawl writing.

There was no time, however, for Betty to voice any comment. At this instant Cora came away from the dining-hall with Miss Everard, who had the parcel under one arm. Cora was still on the grin and Miss Everard as vexed as ever.

Polly stepped to meet Cora in a way that made the Form mistress exclaim checkingly:

"That will do, Polly!"

"I— Oh— Ugh!" stamped the Form's headstrong scholar furiously. "Dash!"

"Polly! Come here—and you, Cora, be off with you this instant," said Miss Everard, so as to part the two.

She waited until Cora had minced away, tittering; then she looked at Polly and Betty regretfully.

"But I am not going to say anything, girls. One must, I suppose, make allowances for human nature. But you cannot be allowed to have this parcel back."

She moved on with it, then turned round.

"You and the others will not forget that you are gated! Are you playing in this afternoon's home match?"

"Some of us, Miss Everard," said Betty.

"I shall be on the ground, and I shall expect to see you all there, whether you are in the team or not. I shall look out for you."

She walked on again, and under her breath Betty muttered glumly:

"So that's that, Polly! Oh, dear!"

"I don't care," raged the madcap. "Those boys have simply got to be kept going! Oh, come along!"

Force of habit took Polly with a rush towards the stairs; then she stopped, remembering that Study 12 was closed! She and every one of her chums had been deprived of that possible privacy which could have been so helpful at this time.

"Let's find the others," Betty suggested soothingly. "They went out of doors, I believe."

Polly, as she turned to accompany her chum into the open air, glanced at a wrist-watch. Then she frowned.

"Quarter to two, Betty. Dash, and at two o'clock I'm supposed to report to Etta."

"And you must, Polly. Look here, I know what you're thinking," Betty whispered as they passed out into the sunshine; "but leave it to me. I'll break bounds—"

"No! You're not to, Betty! Why should you run the risk of never getting the captaincy back?"

"Simply that I'm your chum, and—well, we're all fond of Jack and Davo; sorry for all four of them."

Polly gave an obstinate shake of the head.

"I shall report at two, and then—the match isn't until two forty-five. Miss Everard won't be on the ground until then. Dash, I don't care, anyhow; I just don't care, and that's all there is to it! Here they are," she added, catching sight of Paula and some others talking together.

Betty and Polly noticed instantly that Judy was not here, and they inquired:

"Where's Judy?"

An uncomfortable silence followed this question.

"Come on!" pressed Polly impatiently. "Where is she?"

"Er—"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Oh, don't beat about the bush, girls!" said Polly.

"The truth is, Polly dear," confided Paula

very distressfully. "Judy has gone off on her bicycle."

"Judy has?" gasped Betty. "Gone out?"

"Yes—"

"There!" Betty almost groaned; but Polly suddenly looked radiantly happy.

"Bravo, Judy," said Polly. "That's the stuff! Gone into Barncombe, of course, to buy rations, and then—"

"Sh!" warned Betty.

Cora had emerged from the porch, walking jauntily. She screwed her eyes up to the sunny sky, then grinned across at the chums, all of whom were glaring at her.

"Glorious afternoon, isn't it? I'm going down to the shore!" Cora called across to them in a false-sweet tone. And she added: "Any messages?"

Next instant she was in full flight, for Polly had rushed to get hold of her.

If Cora had run away from the schoolhouse, she would certainly have been overtaken by the infuriated madcap and given "something to go on with." But Cora, when she took to her heels, dodged back to the porch to get indoors for safety, and that gave Polly an idea—one that caused her to turn in a different direction, without any loss of speed.

It all happened so quickly, she was careering away by herself before and the others had time to realise what a desperate intention must have seized the girl.

But in a moment or so they understood, and from each there came an ill-suppressed exclamation.

"My goodness, girls, she's off—"

"Down to the shore!"

"Howwows! Oh, dear—"

"Yes, bekas, what ze diggings, at two o'clock she is to report to Etta."

"Let's go after her."

"No," counselled Betty. "You'll never catch her up. We shall all be gone in that case, making it far worse. We must carry on, that's all—get ready for hockey. But I must see Etta first. Don't you come, girls."

ETTA HARGROVE was in her study, getting ready for hockey, when Betty turned up there.

"Hallo!" Etta smiled, sitting in a low chair so as to lace up some heavy shoes. "I've gone back to my old pair, Betty. Can't stand anything that's tight on the field."

The school chimes ding-dong'd the quarters; then came the hour bell. Bong, and again—bong!

"Judy and Polly were to report to you at two, Etta."

"That's so," nodded the temporary captain.

"They won't be reporting, I'm afraid, Etta."

"Not? What makes you say that?"

"Oh, I'm afraid I can't explain; but I thought it best to let you know straight away."

"Thanks." Etta got up and walked about, and seemed to be very happy in the more comfortable shoes. After a moment she looked at Betty.

"Bad time for Polly and Judy not to report, isn't it, rather? At the very start of the halfer."

"Well, yes, Etta; but there it is, and you must just do your duty."

A pause.

"They're sort of still at large, aren't they, Betty? The boys, I mean—those four who— But you'd rather not be asked, I can see."

Betty moved a step closer.

"One of them is Polly's brother," she said, a

little emotionally. "Another is Judy's brother. And all four boys are sports, anyhow, Etta."

Suddenly she glanced at Betty. That girl nodded, and was silent—smiling.

"What would you do, Betty, if you were still captain?"

"I'm jolly glad I'm not!"

"No, but if you were, Betty?"

"Etta, don't ask me. I've come to tell you that those two girls have gone off the deep end again simply that you might not be worried at the last moment. I shall be very surprised if either girl gets back in time for play."

"Then I suppose I must see about substitutes at once, and it was good of you to give me fair warning. It was awfully good of you, Betty. Er—if I can, I'll not let it be known. Will they be back by three, do you think?"

"They may."

"Then it may be all right. For all I shall say, Miss Everard will believe that they reported at two, and so—"

"Etta, be careful," Betty warned earnestly. "You make a jolly fine captain, and none of us would like you to do anything which you might consider against your duty. Etta, you must just do as you think right."

There was a dramatic interruption. The study door flew wide round, to let in Cora, all breathless after a rush upstairs.

"Etta—" she began, then checked, observing Betty.

"Well?"

"I—well, I thought you ought to know," Cora resumed, recovering her usual effrontery. "Polly has gone out of bounds, and I believe Judy has broken the gating order as well."

"But I do know," said Etta, drawing herself up. "Betty here has just been telling me, so you needn't have gone to all the bother, Cora. You horrid sneak," the temporary captain added witheringly. "I never could have believed you would be so— Oh, get out of my sight, Cora! Wait, though!"

Cora flashed round again, letting shameless insolence answer the other's scorn.

"What are you doing this afternoon, Cora?"

"Oh—anything I like! It's a halfer."

"You had better go and get changed for hockey at once."

"What!"

"I want two substitutes, and you can very well be one of them, Cora. Be on the field by half-past—"

"But I—"

"You must please do as I say, Cora," insisted Etta. "Any fuss, and I shall simply get Miss Everard to back me up in a reasonable demand. You were not going to do anything special—you as good as said so."

"I was going to—to— Oh, hang, I—"

"Hockey for you, Cora," the temporary captain insisted firmly, "and serve you right for coming here with tittle-tattle."

Cora went out, pulling the door shut behind her with a savage bang. And then Etta and Betty burst out laughing.



Pulling aside the stone Polly was about to conceal the parcel beneath it when—"Goodness!" she cried. For there, in the hollow, was a message!

"She's a beauty," said Betty, changing to bitter disgust at last. "Do you think she will obey your order?"

"She had better," said Etta sternly. "If she doesn't, I'll make it hot for her."

Betty sighed.

"That's having one law for some and a different law for others."

"And why not?" laughed Etta. "Why on earth not?"

On the Rocks!

POLLY! Polly Linton had run herself badly out of breath. Now she was at the edge of the mighty Morcove cliffs, where the rugged zig-zag path led steeply down to the shore.

She looked back in the direction of the school and could see only those scholars who had set out on their bicycles—mostly to go into Barncombe for the afternoon. Cora Grandways was not in sight, and Polly could rejoice on that account.

Her urgent purpose in dashing away from the school so suddenly had been to forestall that despicable girl. Cora had as good as boasted openly that she meant to devote the afternoon to searching for the boys—with the intention, of course, of getting them caught. But Polly had gained this start by acting without a moment's hesitation, and now she went helter-skelter down the zig-zag to the lonely shore.

With hasty, clashing steps, Polly floundered over the fine shingle, making for the cave. Even though she had not seen Cora coming on behind, she still felt that there was not a moment to lose.

The boys must be warned; they must clear out! And where they would get to next was more than Polly could imagine.

Other caves there were along the shore, but they all had the disadvantage of opening direct on to the beach. In fact, if the boys could not remain in their present cave, sure of concealment, they certainly would do no better in any of the other caves. The one they had resorted to had that inner chamber, which made all the difference.

In this breathless state she reached the mouth of the cave and plunged into its semi-darkness, sending out a friendly call that echoed hollowly.

"Jack! Jack—all of you! Come out of there, quick! Come away, boys!"

She had not expected to find them in the outer caves, for they knew it was a half-holiday at Morcove, and would be all the more on their guard. But her subdued cry to them—subdued, and yet how loudly it seemed to ring against the rocky walls—brought no response, and that surprised her.

Then, heaving for breath, she was at the narrow crevice which gave access to the inner chamber, and her heart pounded faster than ever as she listened, still unable to detect a sound.

"Jack!" she spoke into the cleft in the wall of rock. "Jack!"

No answer.

"Is anyone there?" was now her anxious cry.

And again no answer—not the slightest sound in response.

Gone!

Her brother and his chums were no longer here, and the fact that it was so rendered her half-rantic for the moment.

"What on earth shall I do?" she panted to herself. "Where are they? Goodness, have they been found and taken back to Grangemoor?"

But, in that case, surely she would have heard! "Then they must have cleared out—to find some other shelter. But where—where to find them now?" she pondered desperately. "And they can't have got any food. They must have finished the last of what we gave them yesterday evening—eaten the last scrap this morning."

She writhed through the crevice and gained the almost groping darkness of the inner cavern in the hope of coming upon some message or sign.

Her eyes soon grew accustomed to the darkness, although she remained very sorry that she had no electric torch with her. She searched around, often on hands and knees, but there was nothing.

The dry, sandy floor of this inner cave even showed no trace of the boys having sheltered here for the night or two. They must have buried the bits of newspaper in which food had been wrapped, if only for tidiness' sake.

"No," she sighed aloud to herself at last. "Nothing! And that's a nice thing, that is!"

She wriggled out into the first cave, and drifted dejectedly back to the open air and the sunny shore, where the tide tumbled and seabirds mewed.

Only for this had she broken bounds again to-day! Judy the same—Judy in Barncombe at this moment, without a doubt, buying food for the boys!

"Poor Judy!" murmured Polly.

The cruel disappointment for Judy! Just as desperate, she, and the consequences of what she had done were likely to be just as serious, too!

Her half-listless steps were taking her in the opposite direction from the zig-zag. She was not going back to Morcove School—not likely! The whole afternoon was before her, and she might just as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.

A frightful row awaited her, of course, but as to that—oh, hang! She had to think about her brother and his chums, not about herself.

Suddenly she stopped dead. She was at a part of the shore where the cliffs were most rugged. Around her were gigantic masses of rock which in times long past had broken and fallen away from a cliff which was inclined to overhang the shore, with many big ledges, crowned with grass and even growing a bush or two.

Here the jackdaws had their favourite nesting-places—high above the shore. Some of those rascally black birds were squawking now, as they flapped about the towering cliff; but Polly did not look up for that reason.

It was a quite different sound that had startled her; a low whistle, like an attracting call—thrilling, when all her thoughts were of Jack and his chums!

"Oh!" gasped Polly.

For there was her brother, looking down upon her.

Only his head came over the edge of that large ledge, twenty feet above the shore, where he was obviously lying flat, to keep watch in the safest manner.

"Jack!"

"Cheerio!" he spoke down to her, as gaily as ever. "How goes it, Polly?"

"Oh," she said, rushing in closer to the face of the cliff, to be able to speak up to him the better, "it's sickening, Jack. The food we put out for you— But I'm coming up!"

"You can't, Polly! I say—"

"I can! Are the others there?"

He nodded, looking entirely happy.

"We remembered it was a halfer at Morcove, Polly-wolly, so we got a move on. Got a fine balcony suite up here; patent sun lounge! But you'll never be able to climb—"

"If you boys could, then I can!"

And Polly make good that claim to agility as good as theirs.

During the next two minutes there were moments when she was emitting a rather scared "Goodness!" or a perplexed "Pouf!" But she clambered and scrambled, rested and got her bearings, then struggled upwards again, to have Jack reaching down at last to help her.

"Steady, Polly."

She gurgled a laugh, having to let herself be fairly hauled up by her brother, over the crumbling edge on to the grassy shelf. Landing on all fours, she required a few moments for self-attention, beating dirt from her hands and brushing herself down.

Then she looked at what the place had to show her, and became agape with surprise.

"Scene Two, the Brigands' Lair," jested Jack.

"So I should think," said Polly.

It was not simply that the four Grangemovians had withdrawn to such an unapproachable spot as this. What astounded Polly was to see the tiniest wreath of smoke coming from a gipsy fire that had been kindled upon the grassy ledge, close against the rising rock-face.

She looked at Dave, who calmly smiled. She next looked at the Honourable Bob, catching him in the act of re-knotting his tie, as if the arrival of a visitor had made him suddenly careful of his appearance.

Finally, she looked at the Comrade, and wondered how many inches his hair had grown in the last day or two.

"I presume, Polly," said Jack affably, "that the others will be along presently?"

"They won't," she said; "worse luck! Oh, boys, it's just too awful the way things are going. But, thank goodness, I've found you again, anyhow!"

"Had lunch?"

She stared at her brother.

"Why?" she gasped. "Aren't you all starving?"

Jack pointed to the gipsy fire.

"We might heat you up a little rabbit, Polly-wolly—"

"Thanks, but I had a splendid dinner," she said hurriedly. "And you—you have really been able to—to keep alive?"

"Quite so," said the Honourable Bob, finishing with his tie. "And where's Paula Creel then?"

"Yes, where is Paula?" inquired Comrade Calligan, with just as much eagerness as his schoolmate was displaying.

"Paula is having to play hockey," answered Polly. "So is Betty. We all ought to be at hockey, only I—well, I'm here instead, and Judy is in Barncombe, buying more rations, and I'm going to strafe Cora next time we meet, if that means anything to you? So now you know!"

"Be seated," requested Jack gallantly, indicating the sunlit patch of grass. "And cheer up, Polly-wolly; things might be worse. We chaps might be back at Grangemoor, having old Shudders caning us until his arm was tired. Instead of which, as the judge said, we go about the country catching rabbits."

"You have actually caught—"

"One," Jack claimed proudly. "And eaten most of it, roasted. And didn't it go down well, chaps, with the last of the bread-and-butter? Oh, it's a great life, Polly!"

"You can't sleep here to-night—under the stars!"

"No intention, Polly. This has been just a strategic withdrawal on account of the halter at your school. After dark, it's us for the cave again."

Polly got up from the grass in sudden, joyful excitement.

"And so we are not done for, after all!" she cried. "You'll be able to struggle on, and we at the school—we'll try our hardest to get hold of something that will put an end to Dr. Trouncer's little game! You are not forgetting, boys; Betty and the rest of us are hoping, all the time, to do that!"

"Quite so!"

"I say," she rattled on, "don't you think one of you might keep a look-out, in case Judy should come along the shore with rations? It's quite likely—"

"Gosh, chaps, do you hear this?" burst out Jack. "Gee, Dave, supposing your sister comes by with creamery stuff—cheers! So keep a look-out, boys!"

Dave, even whilst Jack was saying it, had crossed over to seat himself in the tussocky grass, where he could keep an eye upon the shore below. Now Jack's two other schoolmates also placed themselves on the look-out, and Polly became happier than ever. It was a breathing-space, this—opportunity for a much-needed talk with her brother with no risk of being taken by surprise.

"We got your written message about Elsie Jackson," she remarked eagerly. "That girl, Jack—"

"We've got to be careful about her, Polly."

"We have, Jack. But," Polly was continuing, when there came an interrupting murmur from quiet Dave.

"Here's Judy," he said.

Up jumped the madcap and her brother. They had only to advance a pace or so towards the edge of the shelf of rock, and they had a bird's-eye view of the seashore, with Judy Cardew as the only person in sight.

She needed to raise her eyes to see any of them, and so they let her come on.

"See what a lot of stuff she's carrying," Polly said rejoicingly. "She must have left her bicycle somewhere up on the cliffs and made her way down by that other cliff path, to come along the shore to your cave."

Dave gave a low whistle, and at that his sister looked up sharply. Polly, who had had precisely the same startling experience a few minutes since could guess what Judy's feelings were at this moment. The madcap waved, and then her schoolmate came on at a run.

"Coo-ee, Judy!" Polly called down softly.

"Yes, this is the latest. The boys have taken a flat! Coming up?"

Of course Judy was coming up to join them.



Girls were giggling and tittering at the contents of the opened parcel. Cora Grandways had successfully carried out her mean resolve to spoil Betty and Co.'s plans!

But it was impossible for her to tackle the really difficult climb whilst hampered with so many packages. So Dave and the Honourable Bob went down to take the purchases from her, after which she was able to manage the climb quite successfully, the boys aiding her.

"Hip-hip!" Polly cheered under her breath, as Judy came floundering over the crumbling ledge. "Oh, splendid of you, Judy—to have turned up like this with such huge supplies! You're the one!"

Judy was much too out of breath to be able to answer. It was not simply that she had just then had the difficult climb to make; before that she must have been on the rush.

Ever since she took her bicycle and made off from the school she had been tearing about—getting to the town with lightning speed, then shopping as quickly as possible, then riding back part of the way, hiding her machine, and hastening down to the shore. No wonder she looked rosy-red!

"Calli boy," said Jack, with great levity, a couple of minutes later, "in that new state of society which you envision, every man will do his whack, what? So blow up the fire, Calli boy. Gee, but we're going to have a proper meal at last, boys! She's bought a kettle!"

"She's bought everything!" was Polly's joyful comment now that Judy's purchases were all on view. "Tea, sugar—"

"Soap!" put in Jack. "Towels! Gosh, at this rate, boys, we can last our for months!"

"I saw that Jackson girl," Judy now remarked. "I believe she was making for Morcove; she was cycling that way. Oh, I am so glad you boys cleared out of the cave for the time being. As I came along the shore I was dreading to find that other girls had come down and had discovered you all."

"No fear," chuckled Jack, emptying a bottle of water into the brand-new kettle. "Now, Comrade Calli, out of the way before your hair catches fire."

He of the tousled head had blown the red embers into a cheery blaze, the tiny fire giving out very little smoke, for the bits of driftwood serving as fuel were dry and tindery. Jack dumped the kettle on, and it soon interrupted all the happy chatter by starting to boil.

"Tea up!" said Jack. "Now, Polly; now, Judy, you're not to do anything. You're our guests! Calli boy, in your forthcoming book on the Cave Dwellers of Morcove, don't forget a chapter on—Eh, what?" the facetious one broke off, for Calligan had voice a rather excited exclamation.

"It's Paula!" said Comrade Calligan; and the Honourable Bob chimed in with a delighted:

"Quite so!"

"Paula?" echoed Polly blankly. "Where?"

She and Judy stepped to where they could look down upon the shore as the two boys were doing, and then they saw not Paula Creel only, but Naomer as well.

"Gosh!" gasped Polly. "Oh goodness!"

"I thought they were to play hockey!" said Judy.

"So they were!"

"Well, they're not," grinned Jack, now that he had taken his stand where he could observe the two girls who were hurrying along the shore, coming from the Morcove end. "Have 'em up, boys; the more the merrier."

"Oh, but Jack!" said Polly. "You'll never get Paula to climb up here. And Naomer—she'll eat you out of house and home! And they shouldn't be out of bounds, anyhow."

"Calli will tell you," said Jack; "the Cave Dwellers of Morcove, in spite of their barbaric state, were not devoid of the social instincts. No, sir!"

And he gave the soft whistle that was to attract the attention of Paula and Naomer. They both stopped dead, look up, and then—

"Ooo!" was Naomer's inevitable shriek of joyful surprise. "Bekas—look!"

Without waiting for Paula, who had looked as if she little relished the rushing about to which Naomer had been subjecting her, the latter came running up.

"This way to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon," Jack spoke down gaily. "Admission Free! Sorry, Naomer, but the escalator is out of order, if you wouldn't mind climbing?"

Meantime, as Polly and Judy noticed with some amusement, the Honourable Bob and Comrade Calligan were all eyes for elegant Paula, who was standing still on the sands to look at herself in a pocket mirror and give tidying touches to her hair.

"Much good will that be," chuckled Polly, "by the time she gets up here!"

And, indeed, elegant Paula ultimately came over the edge in a dreadfully ruffled state. She had been all squeals of alarm as she negotiated the crags, with Bob and Calli most gallantly offering assistance.

But she was safely landed amongst them all at last, and suddenly Polly could only rejoice greatly that the numbers had been added to like this. It was becoming such a jolly party—all the delights of a picnic, with many special thrills added.

"Bai Jove," beamed Paula, as soon as she had got her breath back, "I'm afraid I look an awful wreck, what? I wouldn't be here, but that wascal of a Naomer—she simply made me come with her, dragged me!"

"Bekas, you see," sparkled the dusky one. "I heard Mees Everard asking where were Polly and Judy, and so thought to myself, well, some of us had better go and find zem, queek! So I said to Paula: 'Come on, queek!' And we did, ze bunk, coming down to ze shore, bekas we thought you would be at ze cave. But zere was nobody there at all, and so I said to Paula: 'What ze diggings, come on again, bekas, we're not going back!'"

"How will it all end?" said Polly grimly. "Oh, but what does it matter? We'll just sit here for a talk with you boys whilst you make a good meal, and then—"

"Not a little bit," struck in Jack. "You're our guests, girls. An considering we owe everything to you—"

"Quite so," nodded the Honourable Bob. "So whet will you hev, Paula?" She was sitting between him and the Comrade. "A sandwich?"

"Or cake?" suggested the Comrade.

"No, weally—"

"Naomer, what'll you have?" cried Jack.

"Nuzzing, plis—no!" stated the dusky one, with truly heroic self-denial. "Bekas, you boys need every crumb zere is, yes!"

"We shall have a good tea when we get back to school," Polly supplemented gaily.

"After which—what?" rejoined her brother. "Detention-room for the lot of you, and expulsion in the morning, isn't that it? Never mind, boys; all for a good cause. Besides," he added, "we know very well they couldn't expel you really. Morcove couldn't go on without you girls."

"It's perfectly certain you boys couldn't, any-

how," laughed Polly. "And that's all there is to it!"

ELSIE JACKSON dismounted from her bicycle at the main gateway of Morcove School, to leave it leaning against a wall.

She felt a little afraid of riding the machine right up to the school porch; didn't quite know what to do, in fact. She was desperately anxious to get in touch with Cora Grandways, and had been hoping to meet that scholar on the road between school and town. But the encounter that would have been so welcome had not taken place, and so now Elsie Jackson was convinced that the schoolgirl she was after had been unable to leave bounds.

Looking in at the gateway, she saw that a hockey-match was in progress, with a good many scholars and a mistress or two as on-lookers. Elsie could see one mistress to whom she had been introduced that day when Cora obtained permission to show her over the school. On that occasion the mistress—Miss Everard was her name—had been most cordial; but there again Elsie did not know what sort of a reception she might meet with to-day. Something might have been suspected by now!

In any case, she had to be very careful. All along hers had been a difficult, crafty part to play, and now things were coming to a crisis. On the success or failure of her next step vital matters hinged, and so—

"Do you want anybody?"

She gave rather a guilty start as the question was voiced by someone who had come towards her from behind, whilst she was absorbed in thought. Turning round, she found that it was a Morcove senior who had put the question—not resentfully.

"Oh—er—no, thanks," stammered Elsie Jackson, finding it hard to keep her self-possession. "I see there's a match on; but I—I won't go in to watch."

"You may, if you like, you know."

"Er—thanks, but I—I looked on at a match the other day, as a matter of fact. So I don't think I will— Yes, I will though!" Elsie suddenly changed her mind. "I do love to watch a good game!"

Something in this senior's unsuspecting, genial manner had emboldened her. She inferred that no suspicion had fastened upon her, or surely this scholar would have been aware of it, along with the rest of the school.

"You'll not see much of the game, I'm afraid, they'll be finishing now," was the affable remark with which the senior walked on through the gateway, leaving Elsie to do as she pleased.

What Elsie did then was to saunter in and go across the grass, to become an unnoticed onlooker amongst so many. At least a few persons were standing to watch the game who had come from the town, and their presence helped her to feel at ease.

Hardly a minute had she watched the rival teams waging a final conflict for a winning goal than she saw Cora Grandways. That girl was



"Betty has already told me!" Etta Hargrove said, directing a withering look at Cora. "You horrid sneak!" Get out of my sight!"

playing for the Fourth Form, and Elsie noticed that she, Cora, didn't appear to care whether her own side won or lost.

It bore out Elsie's estimation of Cora Grandways' character, and from that moment this girl from the town could rely all the more on getting that help which she so badly needed.

The match ended in a win for the Fourth Form—no thanks to Cora! There were some very audible remarks to that effect by other members of the team; but Cora only laughed shamelessly. She was going to be one of the first to go running off the field, when she caught sight of Elsie in the dispersing throng.

Somehow it gave Cora a bad turn to find her town acquaintance on the games-field, looking eager to speak with her. She remembered the note that had come through the post and felt vaguely perturbed. It would have been different, Cora felt, if she had been in Elsie Jackson's confidence; but she wasn't!

All the same, Cora hastened across to her casual friend, and, for appearance' sake exchanged light-hearted greetings.

Then they walked off together to where they could be by themselves.

"I got your note," Cora said, in a guarded tone. "I was meaning to bike into Barncombe to find you, but I was suddenly called upon to play in the match. So sorry!"

"It doesn't matter," said Elsie silkily. "It wasn't as urgent as all that. But, look here, Cora, will you do me that favour I mentioned in my note?"

"I must know what it is first!"

"I—I hardly know how to explain," was the rather nervous answer to that. "If I tell you that I only want you to do a simple thing that

will help me to—to sort of—well, you know those schoolmates of yours whom you so dislike?"

"Betty & Co.?—Yes—well?"

"You don't want them to come out well over that Grangemoor business that you've got mixed up in, do you?"

Cora's gleaming eyes gave sufficient answer, and then Elsie continued in a whisper:

"How would you like it to be proved, Cora, that those boys really did take money from Dr. Trouncer's study the other night?"

"But, look here," Cora remonstrated, "how is it, Elsie, that you always seem to be so—so concerned yourself in that Grangemoor business?"

"Oh, I—Someday, perhaps, I will explain," was the evasive answer from Elsie, who had reddened. "I might be able to tell you to-morrow say, if only you'll prove that we are good friends, you and I."

"Well?"

"After dark this evening," whispered Elsie, "could you manage to let me into the schoolhouse? I would only be a few minutes, and surely there is nothing risky about it to you?"

"But why?" stared Cora.

"Something I have to do if possible; but I must have someone like yourself—a friend in the school—to let me in, unknown to others."

"But why?" Cora asked again, with increasing amazement. "Come to that, Elsie, why not go with me indoors now. Here you are, and you could go in to have tea with me—"

"That wouldn't serve the purpose. No, Cora," the other whispered, "it would be worse than useless. Afterwards, it might be remembered that I was in the school, and—and that might upset everything."

"What do you mean by everything, Elsie? Goodness, you are being mysterious!"

"Oh, I'm not," disclaimed the girl from the town, with a forced laugh. "But will you do that for me—such a little thing, really!—and then you'll see the most wonderful results."

"Affecting the boys who are still at large?"

Elsie Jackson nodded.

"And Betty & Co.?"

Again she nodded.

"Right then," said Cora, all scruples gone by the board. "I'll do it. After all, as you say, it's a very little thing to do, to oblige you! Oh, and by the way, if—if things should go wrong, you won't say that I let you into the schoolhouse, will you?"

"Just as if!" was the fervent answer. "Oh, you needn't have the least fear, Cora. What time then shall we fix?"

The scholar reflected for a moment or two.

"Half an hour after dark," she suggested.

"All the school should be at prep then. But we mustn't forget that Betty & Co. have to work downstairs in the classroom at present. It's part of their punishment for having taken sides with the boys."

"Which door are you likely to let me in by—which side?" questioned Elsie eagerly. "Then I must go."

From where they were standing in secret talk Cora was able to point out to her acquaintance a door that was likely to be the one. It was on the west side of the schoolhouse.

"You'll find yourself in a narrow passage when I let you in," she said softly. "I don't know if you'll want to go upstairs—"

"No," Elsie exclaimed, very decidedly. "So long as I can get from that passage to where the girls hang their coats—"

"The cloak-rooms?" broke in Cora; and her face lit up suddenly, as if she had begun to

understand Elsie's intentions. "Oh, yes, you'll be able to do that easily enough! And—er—you'll find all the coat-pegs labelled, you know."

"Splendid!" nodded Elsie Jackson. Then, meeting Cora's eyes, she smiled. "Perhaps you are sort of—guessing?"

"Well, I've an idea!" grinned Cora. "But don't tell me, Elsie; I don't want to be told now, thanks. I want to be able to say I know nothing!"

Then they enjoyed a little laugh together.

"It will be best, perhaps, for me not to explain exactly," said Elsie. "Only, you are sure you don't mind, Cora, now that you have—guessed?"

"Oh, no, I don't mind!" Cora said, with a shrug and a grin. "Best of luck, in fact. For, as you've no need to be told, Betty & Co. are no friends of mine!"

They talked for a minute or two longer; then Elsie Jackson went to the gateway, to recover her bicycle and ride off, whilst Cora sauntered towards the schoolhouse, looking very jaunty.

Caught in the Act!

NO one wanted to have tea at the school tables this Wednesday afternoon. If there was one time more than another when scholars were all for sociable little parties, in the studies, it was at the close of a happy "halfer."

But five juniors there were, at least, who had to get their tea at the school-tables, whether they wanted to or not.

Nine there should have been, but four of them were absent.

"And a nice old row there will be when they do turn up," sighed Betty, slamming down the teapot after replenishing empty cups. "Still?"

"If they've done some good," agreed Madge Minden very gravely. "And it begins to look as if they must have—staying out as late as this."

"That was a spoke put in Cora's wheel, anyhow," rejoiced Helen Craig. "Her being collared for hockey!"

"Lovely," laughed Pam Willoughby.

"But that Jackson girl had the cheek to turn up again," muttered Tess Trelawney. "And the pair of them—you noticed?"

"The Jackson girl didn't stay long, anyhow," said Betty. "They may be going to meet again presently, whilst it's still light. But it won't matter if they do go down to the shore and search the caves. Polly will surely have warned her brother and the other boys that—"

And there Betty was interrupted by a voice from over by the door of the dining-hall.

"Any tea going?" it inquired gaily, if softly.

Five girls, as they switched their eyes to the doorway and saw simply the smiling face of Polly Linton, jumped up from the tea-table.

"Polly!" they emitted. "At last!"

In walked the madcap, followed by her royal impishness, after whom came Judy and Paula. It was Naomer who reached the tea-table first. She was seated and starting upon bread-and-butter and jam in a twinkling.

"Bokas, what zo diggings, we are starving!" she said, taking a huge bite. "We had to go without, for ze sake of ze boys!"

"Believe me or not," said Polly, "Naomer went without! She did. Cake and ham-rolls and sardines, and goodness knows what else—and not a mouthful would she touch. And so I say she deserves a medal."

"Well, I'm sorry, but I don't think there are going to be any medals for any of you," grimaced Betty. "Far more likely you'll all get—Um!"

she broke off, hearing a step she knew. "Looks as if we're going to get it now!"

They saw the door open wider, revealing Miss Everard.

"So!" she said, including all four truants in a look of unmistakable anger. "You have come back—when it suited you to do so, is that it? Very well; get your tea, and then will you go straight to the detention-room!"

Nothing more was said by the irate mistress; but she came forward and remained whilst the miscreants silently went on with their belated tea. It was so perfectly obvious that Miss Everard would remain until they had finished, the meal was hurried through by all four girls.

"The headmistress knows, I may tell you," remarked Miss Everard, as they rose from table, "and she left word with me to have you placed in the detention-room until her return. She is away at present, and will not be back until after eight. Until then—that is where you are to remain, and I can only add that you really have forfeited all claims to clemency. Go along!"

They fled away, the Form mistress accompanying them to the detention-room.

The door closed upon them, and there they were, in that seldom-used punishment-room, with its barred window.

"Fwom bad to worse, bai Jove!" sighed Paula.

"This, geals, is a weal catastophe."

"Oh, don't grumble!"

"I am not grumbling, Polly deah. I mcrely wemawk—"

"And in ze morning, expulsion!" put in Naomer, quite cheerfully. "Well, I shall go home to my own country, that is all, and be a queen!"

"We shall come and visit you," said Polly lightly. "Perhaps you'll find us all jobs about the palace at Nakara?"

Paula turned to Judy, confident that that girl, at least, would show less levity in this dark time. But the very look in Paula's face made Judy burst out laughing.

"How you geals can treat it as a joke!" protested Paula. "When theah is nowhere to sit down—"

"There's this form," Polly indicated sweetly.

Comfort-loving Paula looked at the wooden bench which offered the only seating accommodation, and failed to cheer up.

"Dweadful!" she groaned. "Nothing to wead, either. And I did so want to see if that book was in the libwawy that the Calligan boy pwaised."

"Which book?" asked Polly. "He praised so many!"

"I zink he is ze bit potty. Bekas—"

"He is a bwiliant youth," said Paula. "I have been most impressed. He will go faw, that boy."

"Not yet," chuckled Polly. "Back to the jolly old cave, for the night, will be about as far as he and the others will get—"

"And good job," rejoiced Naomer. "Bekas it means zey are winning, cef zey not get caught. And zey have plenties of food, you know. Hooray, and as for Old Shudders—boo!"

Some chuckling over this remark was followed by a silence—one that evidenced serious reflections at last. Polly, after porching herself on the small, bare table, got down to pace about the room.

"Eight o'clock before we shall be let out—ugh!" she began to fume. "And, even then, we'll only have to go before Miss Somerfield. And we were to keep a look-out for that Jackson girl after dark."

"Betty and the others will do that," said Judy.

"I'd like to know why that Elsie Jackson was prowling about the school grounds last night," muttered Polly with a heavy frown. "Simply to watch out for the boys, was it, in case they should come along to get help from us? Dash, and there's Cora Grandways, too! I'll never forgive Cora for what she did to-day—never!"

Judy had drifted to the barred window, and Polly joined her there. Literally prisoners behind those bars, they both stood peering out wistfully, chafing against the loss of freedom—at a time like this!

They were still there when a tell-tale sound startled them, causing them to flash round and gaze across to the detention-room door.

Tap-tap! The sound came again.

"Ooo!" exclaimed Naomer. "Bekas—"

"Sh'rrp!"

And Polly flashed across to the locked door, with Judy at her heels.

"That you, Betty?" whispered the madcap; and the whisper came in return:

"Yes!"

BETTY WAS alone in the passage, outside the detention-room, with her lips to the keyhole. There was no key in the lock; Miss Everard had doubtless thought it advisable to go off with the key.

"I say, Polly," whispered Betty. "don't you or Judy get doing anything rash. The others and I will carry on."

"You mean, watch out for the Jackson girl?"

"Yes! We've got to do our prep in the class-room again, and it's just as well, we think," Betty whispered on through the keyhole. "Gives us a better chance to—"

She broke off, turning her head to send a wary glance over a shoulder.

"Sh!" she warned those in the detention-room very softly, and flitted away.

Half a minute later she strolled into the Fourth Form class-room, confident that she looked quite innocent enough. But Miss Everard was there, having come down to see that certain girls of hers, numbering five, were ready to begin prep in the class-room, and the Form mistress had found only four! She now eyed Betty closely.

"Don't you go hanging round the detention-room, Betty, to talk with those girls. If I catch you doing that, I shall regard it as a very serious offence. All of you, get your books out now and begin."

Glumly the five went to their accustomed places in the desks, their spirits going lower than ever as they realised that Miss Everard appeared to be going to occupy herself down here in the class-room, so as to have them under her eye all the evening!

HALF AN HOUR later.

Nearly dark out-of-doors now.

Cora Grandways was aware of this, alone in her study, loling in an armchair, with a box of chocolates upon her lap.

She closed the lid over the box of "assorted" and put it aside. Rising, she stepped to the study-window.

Very little could be seen of the school grounds, so deep was the dusk. In a few minutes, then, it should be time for her to act.

Whilst she waited in the study, Cora had time to reflect how often she had been balked in her desire to bring about the downfall of Betty

Barton and all her best chums. Never yet had she, Cora, quite succeeded. Often she had made trouble for those girls, but that was not enough when something in her craved for their total break-up as a band of close friends. Well, perhaps the next hour or two would provide her with the final triumph of her undying enmity. Many an old grudge paid off; many a past humiliation wiped out—at last.

She saw the dark night close down, and she turned away from the window to cross to the door and pass out.

Unseen—for other scholars were all in their studies at present—she went along the Fourth Form corridor, then made her way downstairs.

Not until she was at the bottom of the last flight did she feel any need for extra caution; but then she realised that Miss Everard, as well as Betty and the other girls, were in the class-room.

This was a "snag" for Cora. She had known that some of the Study 12 chums would be in the Fourth Form class-room throughout the evening, having been deprived of the use of their studies. But she had not reckoned to find the Form mistress down here. It meant that at any moment Miss Everard might come away from the class-room, and so be very awkwardly in the way.

But there was an even nastier "snag" than this, as Cora discovered in the next half-minute.

The side passage which she had to creep along, to reach the outer door that was to admit Elsie Jackson, served the detention-room, and Cora, as she went by that room, was quite horrified by the sudden knowledge that there were girls in there!

The murmur of voices that she had picked up suddenly broke off; and then came a whisper through the keyhole.

"That you, Betty?"

They had heard her soft footfall in the passage! Cora had the readiness of mind to give an answering "sh!" that might easily have been Betty's, then hastened on, making not a sound.

So in a few moments she was at the outer door which, like all others, had now been locked for the night. But whether to fulfil her part or not she could not decide; the fact that Polly and some others appeared to have been placed in the detention-room was a most unnerving circumstance. Anybody going from this end of the passage towards the centre of the ground-floor would have to pass the detention-room—and supposing someone came the other way at the same moment? Supposing Miss Everard did that, intending to give an eye to the girls who were "in deten"?

Suddenly it became Cora's conviction that Elsie Jackson was even now waiting outside in the darkness—close outside. There had been the faint sound of someone drawing a hard breath, as if from impatience or excitement.

Cora looked back along the dim passage. She listened intently. After all, it seemed safe enough! And, with any luck at all, the admitting Elsie to the schoolhouse should mean so much!

"Oh, hang, I'm going to do it and chance it!" Cora said to herself recklessly; and she turned back the key.

"Sh!"

That was her cautioning whisper as she opened the outer door and found Elsie Jackson, dark-clad and shadowy in the darkness, ready to dart in.

"You must be awfully careful," Cora whispered in Elsie's ear. "The detention-room is on the left, and there are girls in there to-night."

Elsie Jackson peered along the passage, then nodded.

"And a mistress—in one of the class-rooms," Cora added the warning whisper. "I don't know how you are going to manage!"

"I'll not get caught," boasted Elsie Jackson with an excited smile.

"Very well, then," said Cora hastily. "I'm off. I'll come down again presently and lock this door. You'll be gone by then?"

The other nodded.

"Best of luck," the scholar whispered.

And she crept away.

IN THE Fourth Form class-room, at that moment, Miss Everard shook some papers together, to leave them upon her desk. She had finished with them for to-night.

"I must go now, girls. But, understand, you are to remain here! I'm sorry, but it's your own doing."



Accusingly Miss Everard eyed the four girls. "Miss Se room pending her return," she stated gravely. Polly, Ju

Capping a fountain-pen she sauntered away, leaving five girls with books still spread before them, in the desks.

On her way to the stairs, Miss Everard paused to send a glance in the direction of the dim passage serving the detention-room. She must have been half of a mind to go along and give an eye to the four delinquents; but, deciding that there was really no need, she passed to the stairs and went up them.

It could have been only a few moments later when a girlish figure came round a corner into the open hall from the direction of the Fourth Form class-room.

Betty!

In spite of all orders to the contrary, she had been unable to remain at her desk. She was feeling that she must creep to the detention-room door again. She had set Pam and Helen to watch from the class-room windows, now that

Miss Everard had departed upstairs, and she was very anxious to know if it had occurred to the detention-room prisoners to watch from their window.

Safely Betty slipped round into the side passage, but next instant she was dodging back in alarm. Someone there!

She had seen a tall, feminine figure at the far end of the passage, and she wondered—could it be Miss Everard, lying in wait?

That did not seem a likely thing for sporting Miss Everard to do. Back she ran, on tip-toe, towards the class-room, although she did not go all the way back. As soon as she was round the corner she stood still, listening eagerly.

If it should be Miss Everard, and if that young lady now came across the hall to return to the class-room, Betty knew that she herself could easily slip back into that room in good time.

But no footfall sounded across the hall-floor,



erfield left word with me to have you placed in the Detention—
Paula, Naomer—all knew they had only themselves to blame!

and after a few moments Betty ventured to peep round the corner.

What she saw then gave her one of the biggest surprises of a life-time. She saw the same tall, feminine figure again that she had seen lurking in the detention-room passage, and it was neither Miss Everard's nor a senior's.

Elsie Jackson!
It was she—in the schoolhouse, now that night had fallen! And why?

At the first peep Betty had recognised the girl, although the latter's back was turned this way. If only from pure shock, Betty had retreated a step or two, but she instantly felt that she must peep again. She did so, and was more amazed than ever to see Elsie Jackson going into the cloak-room at the back of the hall.

To have seen the girl creeping upstairs, whilst a chance offered, would have surprised Betty much less. But Elsie Jackson had gone in there!

The hall was now deserted, and there was no sound to tell of anyone's approach. Betty went forwards again on tip-toe—straight across the hall to the entrance to the cloak-room.

Not a sound had she made, and in another moment there was abundant evidence of her having taken Elsie Jackson completely by surprise. Betty calmly walked into the cloak-room, to catch the girl in the very act of fumbling with a coat hanging from a certain peg. With one hand she was pulling it clear of other apparel, so as to dive a hand into one of the pockets.

Such an action, to Betty, meant only one thing, and she rushed towards the crafty girl with a loud, denouncing cry:

"Oh, you thief!"

Even before that cry went up, Elsie Jackson had become utterly unnerved by seeing Betty. Now, in guilty confusion she let the coat fall to the ground and made as if to dash past Betty and be off out of the schoolhouse.

Then, to Betty's further amazement, the guilty-minded girl pounced to pick up the dropped coat. She thrust a hand into one of the pockets as if to obtain something without which flight would be useless—something that she must not leave behind.

Even then, Betty still imagined that it was something this other girl had come to steal. Thinking to prevent the theft, Betty made a grab at the coat, and next moment they were struggling with each other to possess it.

There had been that loud cry of Betty's however, and the struggle was to last only a brace of seconds. Then there came an agitated: "What's the matter!" from someone rushing upon the scene, and they were parted—by Miss Everard!

The Form mistress, as she forced the struggling girls apart, had snatched the coat from them. She looked at it—looked to see whose it was, by the labelled peg from which it had been taken—gazed bewilderedly at Betty, then at the girl who had no right to be in the schoolhouse.

"Well, what does it mean?"

Elsie Jackson was without an answer. She stood, pale and shaky, shrinking under the eyes of the Form mistress.

"Betty, what does it mean?"

"She seemed to be wanting to steal something from that jacket," panted Betty, a little breathless after the tussle. "Oh, and it's Polly's outdoor coat!"

"Yes. But what should there be to steal?" cried Miss Everard.

"I—I wasn't stealing!" Elsie Jackson protested, in a wild, hoarse voice.

"Then what were you doing here? In any case, by what right are you in the schoolhouse?"

"Miss Everard," burst out Betty, for it was obvious that Elsie Jackson must remain guiltily silent, "this girl should not be allowed to go until—until it has all been cleared up. She has had something to do with Dr. Trouncer of Grangemore School—"

"What!"

"We girls believe she is his daughter—"

"What, Betty!"

"It is so, although we may not be able to prove it, and no doubt she will deny it. But Polly and the rest could bear me out—"

"Go and fetch them, Betty," said the Form-mistress. "Here—take the key of the Detention-room. And you," she added, returning her stern eyes to quailing Elsie Jackson, "don't you move from here!"

Away flew Betty, shouting to Pam and the others to come away from the class-room, whilst she rushed to set free Polly and the other

"prisoners." In a few moments all nine girls came swarming to the cloak-room.

"This coat of yours, Polly," said Miss Everard, holding it out; "do you know of anything in the pockets that this girl could wish to steal."

"No, Miss Everard!"

"Do you mind my turning out the pockets?"

"Of course not, Miss Everard!"

The Form-mistress dived a hand into one of the jacket-pockets, and the instant she did so her face changed—as if she had come upon something the very feel of which was sensational.

"Polly," she said very gravely, "how did you come by this?"

"By what?"

"This!"

Miss Everard opened the hand which she had now withdrawn from the coat-pocket, and on the upturned palm lay a folded bank-note.

The flimsy paper was so thin that even in its folded state all the girls could see the lettering, stating the value. A banknote for five pounds.

At that moment, when utter consternation reigned, the telephone bell gave its urgent tr-r-r-ring!

"The Latest!"

T R R R-RING! Tr-r-r-ring, rrr-ring! The insistent call of the telephone sounded louder than ever, now that silence had fallen upon all in the thronged cloak-room.

Miss Everard was waiting. Already a parlour-maid hurried forward from the kitchen regions to answer the phone. Betty & Co. could not be certain, but it seemed to them that Elsie Jackson had turned paler than ever directly the bell rang.

"If it is someone for Miss Somerfield, I must speak for her," remarked the Form-mistress. "Yes, Ellen?" as the parlourmaid came to the cloak-room doorway.

"Dr. Trouncer, if you please, wishing to speak to Miss Somerfield."

"I will speak for her. Girls, not one of you must go from here whilst I am at the phone. Nor you, Miss Jackson."

With that injunction the Form-mistress hurried out to the telephone.

At last Miss Everard came back.

"Dr. Trouncer was ringing up about the alleged theft of money from his study the other night, by certain Grangemoor scholars who are still at large. That money included a five-pound note."

As Miss Everard let fall those last words, slowly, there came gasps of renewed amazement from Betty & Co.

"He wished Miss Somerfield to search every girl at this school who has been associated with those four boys against whom the theft is alleged. He has advanced the theory that one or another of the girls will be found to have some of the stolen money upon her."

"Oh!" shouted Polly; but Betty's was an understanding:

"Ah! Now I see. Miss Everard—"

"Yes, bekas—"

"The five-pound note!" cried several others.

"Exactly," nodded Miss Everard.

Like the chums, she was keeping her eyes fast upon Elsie Jackson.

"What do you ask me to believe, Elsie Jackson?" the mistress pursued very sternly. "That the five-pound note was given to Polly Linton during the day by her brother or one of the other boys? If so, I do not believe you."

"No, bekas—"

"Sh'rrp!" Polly silenced Naomer, who was all a-dance with excitement.

"I am now convinced," resumed the Form-mistress steadily, "you have entered the school-house this evening, not to steal but to create circumstantial evidence incriminating these girls! Do not attempt to deny it. You had no right to be found on these premises alone, and handling that coat belonging to Polly Linton. You were not taking anything from the pocket; you were placing something in it. This!" And the speaker flourished the crisp banknote.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Paula, slower than the rest to follow what had been said. "That's about it, yes wather!"

"Very significantly, a banknote," commented Miss Everard, smiling disgustedly. "So that its number could be traced, of course! Elsie Jackson, this banknote was never stolen by any of the boys from Dr. Trouncer's study at Grangemoor School! It was given by him—to you! Given to you, that you might contrive to place it—"

"I deny everything," said Elsie Jackson huskily. "Look here, I want to be off. I am not going to be kept here, to be—to be insulted!"

"You're to be kept here to be dealt with," was Miss Everard's calm retort to that outburst. "You can either decide to give no trouble, Elsie Jackson, or compel me to phone for the police. It is a most serious matter. All this that has come to light in the last few minutes suggests that Grangemoor School has been imposed upon. Dr. Trouncer cannot be the man who—"

"Bekas, he is a jolly old swindler—"

"Naomer," said Miss Everard severely, "that will do! And now, all you girls—do you know where those four boys are in hiding?"

"Yes, Miss Everard!" It was an answer in chorus.

"Bekas—"

"Go and fetch them to Morcove School at once," spoke on Miss Everard. "I will accept full responsibility for your doing that. Find them, bring them here—"

"Gosh!" cried Polly. "Oh, come on girls!"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Hooway! Gwand, bai Jove!"

"Splendid!"

Nine of them, getting into outdoor things as they careered away; nine of them, going full pelt down the night-bound drive to the gates, and then fast as ever for the seashore! Less than an hour ago they had been under a gating order. Less than an hour ago four at least of them had even been under lock and key in the Detention-room; but now—

Night had compelled Jack Linton and his chums to resort to the cave for shelter. A bicycle lamp, turned down to the merest glimmer—for the last drop of oil was nearly gone—feebly illumined four faces that were stoically cheerful still. There in the inner cave were the last of the Grangemoor rebels, feeling all the better for the proper toileting that soap and towels had enabled them to enjoy.

"Gee, but it's a great life, boys; and here's the comb, Calli chum, if you'll be so good, comrade, as not to break all its teeth at one go. Try and get a parting, Calli boy; she'll think more of that than all of your talk about world states and chaos and all that tosh, if I know Paula Creel!"

Thus facetious Jack, when Dave started up: A sudden enmurmur of voices from the open shore changed to ringing shouts within the outer cave. The boys heard themselves being called, each by his name—called upon to come out and

come away, "queek, queek!" as one of the clamorous voices urged.

"Jack! Dave! All of you! It's all right at last—all over!"

"Eh, what? Is that you, Polly?" cried her brother, rushing to the cleft in the rocky wall. "What's happened then?"

It was like madcap Polly, in her great jubilation, to answer like a newsboy, crying "the latest."

"Speshul!" Polly bawled through into the inner cavern. "Great capture at Morcove School-ool! Elsie Jackson de-tained! All the latest!"

"Gee, boys—"

"End of the great re-bellion! Downfall of the Trouncer government—extry!"

"Hi, Polly, is that right?"

"Yes, bekas—"

"We've won!" the madcap yelled into the astounded boys. "Can't you understand—we've won!"

If It Hadn't Been For Morcove!

HOW well they had won, in the fight between right and wrong, was not to be known that night to Betty & Co. and the boys.

It was the following day that brought to light facts revealing the full extent of the triumph.

Then indeed it became known to both schools—to the world at large, in fact—that the exposure of a most amazing imposture was due, primarily, to the activities of the boys and girls.

If it had not been for Betty & Co.'s loyal support, desperate at times, given to Jack and his chums, the Tyrant of Grangemoor would never have fallen into the hands of the police on charges that were likely to get him sent to penal servitude.

All that Betty & Co. had detected or deduced in regard to the bully proved to be correct. He was a fraud!

From the first it had bewildered Grangemoor School that such a man should ever have been nominated to act for Dr. Halden when the latter broke down in health. Now it was revealed that the Dr. Trouncer whom Grangemoor's stricken headmaster had had in mind was a gentleman who would have been worthy to assume the high position, only, when the call came, he himself was away on a voyage for his health.

He had lodged with people who were, unknown to him, most unscrupulous. They had started to tamper with his correspondence during his absence, and thus they had conceived the daring idea of profiting by an offer about which he was kept in ignorance.

In a few words, it had been a man only posing as the real Dr. Trouncer who had come to Grangemoor School, and that man, knowing the risk of being found out, had decided to make himself so objectionable that the governors would stop be anxious to get rid of him at any price.

He had calculated that, for the sake of the

school, they would pay him a lump sum in hasty settlement, rather than have him continue on the terms upon which he had been engaged.

His daughter—"Elsie Jackson"—as she had called herself—had been his confederate all through, lodging in Barncombe, and nobody doubted that all would have gone "according to plan" if Morcove had never joined forces with Grangemoor.

How "Elsie Jackson" had gained entry to Morcove's schoolhouse on the previous evening remained a matter for speculation. Betty & Co. had a certain theory that it had been Cora's doing; but they lacked proof, and so they had to say nothing about that.

As for Cora—it may be guessed how thankful she was that "Elsie Jackson," having nothing to gain by giving her away, was content to say nothing.

Miss Somerfield's car took "the last of the rebels" back to their own school after dinner that midday—a convenient time for all Morcove to turn out to see them off with great cheering!

Jack Linton & Co. were going back to be fêted by Fenwick's.

Nor were Betty & Co., at their own school, under any cloud now. Quite the contrary! That Miss Somerfield would have much to say about the whole distressing affair was not to be expected; but that the chums were more than forgiven they had the most ample assurances.

And, a few minutes after the car had whirled the boys away to Grangemoor, came the moment for Betty and her chums in Study 12 to find Etta Hargrove entering, with certain books and papers.

"Here, you are, Betty," said Etta, setting down all the captaincy things as if thankful to be rid of them. "Yours again!"

"What again!"

"Don't you want to take the captaincy back then?"

"Do I, or don't I?" was Betty's genuine uncertainty.

"It's not what you want, Betty," said Etta; "it's what we all want, and what's best for the Form. Not to mention that it's in Miss Somerfield's own handwriting on the board downstairs."

"Oh!"

"Hooway!"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Cheers!" cried Polly. "Although I must say, Etta, you didn't do so badly! You were better as deputy captain of the Fourth Form, than Dr. Trouncer was as deputy Head of Grangemoor!"

"I should say so," said Betty heartily. "You were splendid, Etta."

Etta smiled.

"But there's no captain like you, Betty! And there never will be!"

THE END.



"FROM SCHOOLROOM TO SHOWGROUND."

is the title of next week's thrilling, long complete story of Morcove School by

MARJORIE STANTON.