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# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN

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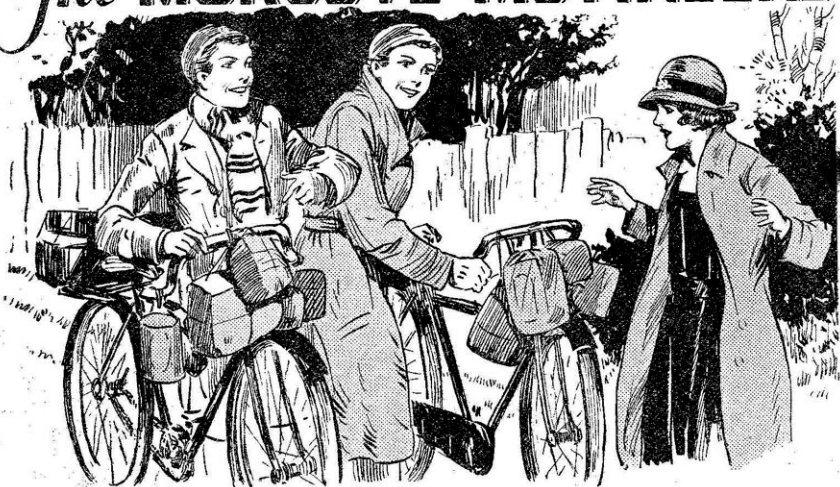
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**Naomer  
Deals With  
the Traitors**  
A jolly incident  
from this week's  
fine strike story.

A Vivid, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of Morcove School

# The MORCOVE MUTINEERS



BY MARJORIE STANTON

**D**ETERMINED not to surrender, the Morcove mutineers enlist the aid of the Grangemoor boys. Meantime the net is closing round Miss Kitten, the spurious mistress on whose shoulders rests the blame for the strike which has startled the school.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Grangemoor Hears the News

"Oh, do be quick, miss! I've been hanging on to this line for—Hallo? Hallo, is that Grangemoor School?"  
No. And so Betty Barton, who seldom lost patience, heaved a big sigh and then appealed again:

"Exchange! I've been five minutes trying to get through to Grangemoor School. It isn't far, so surely—"

But now something sang in the receiver that Betty was holding to her ear, and she knew that she was "through"—at long last!

"Hallo, hallo! Grangemoor School? Can you put me on to Mr. Challenor's House, please? Thanks."

Another wait—of only a few moments this time—and then a masculine voice growled:

"All-lo?"

"That sounds like old Banting, the House porter," Betty said to herself, whilst she sweetly apologised for any trouble it might be giving,

but could she—COULD she be allowed to speak to a scholar, please?

"Wot scholar, then? 'Oo do you want?" growled the voice which Betty, familiar with the personnel of Challenor's House at the great Public school for boys, associated with old Banting, ex-Service and very much battle-scarred.

"I want Master Jack Linton, if you please," said Betty Barton, speaking from a call-box in the Headland Hotel at Morcove.

"Wot a time to ring up! Or! right; see wot I can do. 'Old the line, then!"

"Thanks ever so!"

Not a bad sort, old Banting! His bark far worse than his bite! Ten-to nine on a Saturday morning certainly was a rather unreasonable time to ask for a scholar to be fetched to the telephone. But Betty had been unable to make it sooner.

For she had first had to go across to Morcove School—her own dear old school, from which she had been kept away all this term owing to an accident sustained in the last week of the preceding holidays.

Even now, Betty could not do the mile, roughly,



between the hotel and Morcove School at any-thing like her normal pace, for she still limped slightly.

So this morning's trudge to and from the school had taken her a good while to accomplish, not to mention that a necessary secrecy about the fleeting visit had caused some delay.

Suddenly deciding, on her way back, to ring up the brother of Madcap Polly Linton, it had become Betty's fear that she would hardly be in time to catch him before he went into class at nine. But now— Why, here he was, at the other end of the line, already!

"Hallo, that you, Jack? Betty speaking! Yes, Betty—at the Headland, you know!"

"Oh, is that you, Betty!" came the very hearty response that caused her to retain a happy smile.

"How's the foot?"

"The foot's not worth asking after any more, Jack, thanks. I say, you haven't had a line from Polly? And Dave hasn't heard from his sister, Judy, has he? I thought not. Then you don't know, perhaps, what's happened at Morcove?"

"Why, what then, Betty?"

"The whole Form has gone on strike!"

A long-drawn-out "Wha-a-t!" from Jack, expressing joyous excitement, urged Betty to supplement quickly:

"It has, Jack—the whole Form, except for the Denver sisters, and you know what they are! They really don't count. The rest, under Pam, are in the gym—"

"The what, Betty?"

"The gymnasium, Jack. G, for George!"

"Oh, Gee! But—but—"

"And I wondered if you and Dave, with Jimmy and Tubby, could manage to get over this afternoon? That's why I rang up. Got anything special on?"

"Footer; but we'll be over after footer, Betty."

"Well, if you can, I think you should. Because—"

"Oh, rather! We'll be along, Betty. Say, though, when did it start?"

"Yesterday mid-day, Jack. And they've been in the gym all night, fancy! Oh, but they're all right this morning! I've just been across to make sure! They—"

Betty checked, listening eagerly as Jack voiced something that a buzzing of the line rendered difficult to follow. Then "Exchange" said:

"Three-ee-ee minutes!"

"Whoa! Wait!" Betty exclaimed whilst she heard Jack shouting:

"Hi, don't cut us off, miss! You there, Betty? What started it?"

"Oh, you know what Miss K. has been! She ended by using the cane upon Polly."

"W-H-A-T!" exploded this brother of the very girl who had been caned. "CANE? Before they cut us off, though! How are they off for grub? I mean to say—"

"That's what I want to see your and your chums about, Jack, if—"

Again the line buzzed; then came a sharp click, and Betty had to replace the receiver.

She did so with a satisfied smile. It would have been nice to be able to talk on and on. Oh, and the things there would have been to tell Jack! But "Exchange" had been very decent, really, making it a jolly good three minutes, and, in any case, Jack now knew the one important and thrilling fact:

Rebellion at Morcove!

JACK LINTON'S careless replacement of the receiver at his end of the line resulted in a minor crash. Then he rushed to the stairs and went up one flight after another, three steps at a time.

"I say, you chaps!" This, as he whisked into that study which he shared with Messrs. Dave Cardew, Jimmy Cherrol, and Bobby Bloot—alias Tubby.

"But this is, you fellows!"

"What is?" asked quiet Dave, throwing aside a learned-looking book, whilst Jimmy Cherrol paused in the collection of books for morning school.

As for Tubby, he was so impressed by Jack's staggered look, he returned an apple to his pocket instead of taking an intended first bite at it.

"Strike at Morcove, boys!"

"How do you mean, strike?" jerked Jimmy.

"Amongst the staff?"

"Staff! Man, I mean amongst the girls—the Form that Polly's in, and Judy, and Pam Wil-



With exaggerated relish Polly sipped the first spoonful of stew. "Not so bad!" she commented, ignoring Naomer's repeated requests to "Hurry up, bekas I am starvink!"

loughby. And, for the matter of that, Tubby—Naomer, too!"

"But that," said Tubby heavily, "is pretty awful!"

Jack turned about to kick the door shut, then faced his three staunch chums again.

"Betty phoned me up from the hotel where she is staying with her mother. She says the girls have been holding a grand bar-out in the school gym ever since yesterday mid-day. They've spent the night in the gym. They're there now—think of it, you fellows. And do you know what? That Miss Kitten of theirs—she tried using the cane!"

Dave stood up then, looking graver than ever. "On Polly," Jack nodded on grimly. "My sister—she's been caned! And we know that the Head is away from the school, so there you have it, and I ask you!"

"Bit thick," said Jimmy; "caning. You said we'd be over, at that rate—eh?"

"I did," Jack responded, walking about the study.

"Still in the gym? Then how," Tubby asked anxiously, "are they managing about grub?"

"I suppose they've got some—"

"They can't have got enough," said Tubby, who had very thorough ideas about food values. "And when fighters get hungry enough, they give in."

"Speak for yourself, Tubby," Jack said crustily. "You might give in; but if you think those girls, just because they're a bit pressed for food, will suddenly chuck it in, you're mistaken!"

"Naomer—"

"Naomer isn't the Form, Tubby!"

"No, but I'm thinking about Naomer. She just mustn't be allowed to starve. I can't have her starve."

"And do you think," Jack exploded, "I'm going to let my sister Polly go without? Or is Dave here going to leave Judy to struggle along on a biscuit a day! I won't say anything about Jimmy's leaving Pam to do that. Pam, so far as I've ever seen, doesn't eat."

"All the same," said Jimmy, "she's got to be lent a hand."

"We must do something for all of them," Dave quietly stated, and drew out some pocket money, to total it up. "I've got four-and-a-tanner. What have you chaps got?"

"Three and seven—no, call it five bob, roughly, counting what I can get back from young Callaghan that I lent him," said Jack.

"Five and four is nine—"

"And four bob I've got," Jimmy announced.

"That's thirteen—unlucky number. But, come on, Tubby—"

"Eight shillings—"

"Crumbs, what it means to be a millionaire, like you, Tubby," said Jack. "Thirteen and eight is twenty-one, which is about a bob's worth of grub. I suppose, for every girl over there on strike. Um!"

"I've got the remains of that hamper—"

"Good man, Tubby! We'll take it along! And now give thanks, Tubby, that we didn't scoff the lot yesterday! And don't eat that apple, either!"

"I'm not going to," said Tubby, chivalrously returning it to his pocket.

"Would they have a stove to keep them warm, do you think, in the gym?" asked Jimmy.

"How should I know?" Jack demanded. "But there they are—making a stand, boys! Keeping the jolly old flag flying! Biting on the bullet!"

He walked about again. "No," he stopped to say grimly, "we don't go on the field this afternoon. We go to Morcove—directly after dinner. Fall in the Relief Force! And now for a spot of staff work. Tubby, you're a flying column. Your bike must take you and the remains of that hamper somehow. So get the tyres seen to before dinner. Sir Jimmy, I appoint you O.C. Flying Column, to see that Tubby doesn't make a mull of it. That leaves me and Dave to go via Barncombe and buy up a whole grocer's shop with the quid we've got."

"Message to the rebels in the meantime?" suggested Dave crisply.

"Yes, tallywag. To Betty, and a thousand to one she'll get it to the gym."

"Congrats on Form's stand for fair play. Stop. Rations on the way. Stop. All orders faithfully executed. Stop. How are you off for coal? Stop. Inform Betty any special requirements."

"Won't that telegram cost a lot?" asked Tubby.

"Ass, I meant something like that. And now—dash that bell; school again," Jack sighed, casting about for his books. "But come on, chaps; get the morning over, and then—"

He paused. It was an extraordinary happy smile that came to his face.

"We are proud of those girls," he wound up heartily. "Let's jolly well do something to make 'em proud of us!"

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Rebel Stronghold

THE scene changes. It is Morcove School now; but—it is nowhere in the schoolhouse itself.

The interior of that spacious, isolated building normally devoted to physical culture and gymnastics, and at present—the rebels' stronghold.

Such the scene, and a most animated one at that!

More than a score of girls, in great good spirits after their first night without beds and bedding; Pam Willoughby, the captain, and all her following, here they are—cheerfully making the best of their conditions.

The stock of coke beside the tortoise stove has lasted through the night, but it is nearly all gone now. Never mind! One and another of the girls felt pretty stiff, first thing this morning, and again—never mind!

Breakfast, an hour ago, was certainly a scratch affair; but at least there was plenty of hot tea for all, and so—let the cry be still:

"No surrender!"

"BEKAS, lunch at twelve o'clock will be a proper meal, any old how!" rejoiced that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, with Paula Creel and one or two others for an audience, close to the tortoise stove. "Bekas—stoo!"

"Did you say—"

"Stoo, Paula! What ze diggings, I can't spik plainer zan zat!"

"Oh, stew, bai Jove! Yes, wather," beamed the beloved duffer of Study 12. "Nice and warming, what?"

"Not feeling chilly, are you, Paula?" inquired Madge Fending. Her kind nature made her mindful of Paula's "fwail" constitution, rendering that elegant young person a bad one at roughing it.

But Paula, like the best of them, was all for making light of any hardships. The stove certainly was dispensing rather less warmth now; but she beamed as she answered:

"Chilly, bai Jove! Wather not, Madge deah! I considah it wonderful, how comfortable we are, yes, wather! In the night—perfect wepose—"

"Zat is bekas I let you make a pillow of me!" piped in Naomer.

"On the contaway, Naomer deah, and without wishing to be wude—I wather think I was providing a westing-place for your head," the amiable one submitted. "Not that I minded—far from it! One did sleep wemawkably weall, yes, wather! A slight clamp on awaking; nothing to complain about, oh, no!"

"I should hope not," said Polly Linton, joining the group just in time to make that mock-serious rejoinder. "Considering there was a mug of hot tea for you when you did wake up—at last!"

"For which, Polly deah, as I wemawked at the time, I was twuly gratefule—yes, wather! Most wewefeshing!"

"You little knew!" the madcap chuckled. "When you were still asleep, Paula, you little dreamed that a most awful thing was nearly happening to make us get out of here far quicker than when we locked ourselves in yesterday."

"Bai Jove, is that so?"

"It is! That fire-hydrant wants some careful handling, if you're to draw water without flooding the place out! Those of us who were first up—we nearly had the hydrant getting out of control. I've never seen a bucket of water fill so fast as that one did. Swoosh! and there it was—running over!"

"Practice makes perfect," quoted Helen Craig gaily. "We'll be experts at drawing water from the hydrant, long before the strike is over!"

"It's a great thing to have such a good supply of water," came Judy Cardew's serious comment. "So long as they don't cut it off!"

"I don't suppose they can," said Polly blithely. "If only we could draw supplies of fuel as easily!"

Holding a hand over the top of the stove, she gave a grimace that repeated itself when her eyes flew to the almost-empty coke-box, near at hand.

Then Polly took up the poker and used it to lift aside the top plate, so that she could peer into the furnace.

"Goodness! How the fire has gone down, girls!"

"But be careful—sparing with the last of that coke," Judy warned, as the madcap now snatched up a shovel.

"Careful be blowed!" laughed headstrong Polly. "We are going to have all the warmth we want. Besides, I must have my hot fire for cooking presently!"

"Zen what do we do?" shrilled Naomer in great concern. "Bekas when zat coke is gone—"

"Get some more, that's all," the madcap decreed, shovelling on the last of the present supply. "We know where it can be had, and I am going to ask Pam if some of us can slip out—"

There was a loud interruption. Someone standing on a bench to look out of a window gave the shout:

"Girls! Here come the blacklegs!"

"Oho!" and "Booh!" went up the scornful cries, whilst a good many of the rebels rushed to look out of one window or another. It meant standing on something that would serve as a plat-

form, for all the gymnasium windows were placed somewhat high.

Three seconds later there was a veritable yell of execration from light-hearted rebels at the windows. The girls intended to put no restraint upon the scorn they had for Fay and Edna Denver—the only members of the Form who had not joined the strike.

As a couple who, plainly speaking, were leaving the rest of the Form to fight the battle for them, they had been termed "blacklegs"—not undeservedly.

But the sisters, both of a brazen disposition, cared little that they were being held in such contempt. They never had troubled to take any part in the life of the Form, as a Form. Outside interests were more their mark—stolen pleasures! So they came flaunting towards the gym now, ready to glory in being "all on their own."

"Morning!" they both called out, with mocking affability. "Had your breakfast yet?"

"Oh, yes!" they were answered heartily. "And he was a gorjus breakfast, too!" shrieked Naomer. "So don't you zink we are starving, bekas we are not—booh, blacklegs!"

"And even if we were hungry—we wouldn't give in!" Polly shouted out of window. "We fight to a finish!"

"And don't leave others to fight for us—booh!" half a dozen of them twitted the blacklegs.

Fay and Edna came a little nearer, giving wide grins.

"You call it a fight, do you?" sneered Edna. "Isn't it?" Etta Hargrove retorted sternly. "In what way isn't this a fight?"

"If you want to know what we call it—a fiasco!" said Fay. "Just as if you'll ever do any good for yourselves or anyone else! You wait until Miss Somerfield comes back!"

"Just what we intend doing!"

This was Pam Willoughby, the captain, at her very serene. She had mounted that bench under a window which also served Polly and other chums.

"Then you'll have to wait several days!" retorted Edna.

"We don't mind!"

"Bekas—are we downhearted?" yelled Naomer.

"No-o-o!"

Fay and Edna, as that deafening shout came, put fingers to their ears.

"Just a low-down lot of strikers, that's all you are," Edna sneered again. "Talk about disgracing Morcove—pooh!"

"And booh to you!"

"Bekas—"

"When it comes to disgracing the school—who were the girls who were sent down last term?" Polly demanded hotly. "Who were the girls Miss Somerfield almost refused to have back this term?"

"You were!" the rest of the rebels shouted out to Fay and Edna. "So don't come here—"

"We thought we'd just come across to see if you were still alive," Fay said in mock sympathy.

"Oh, we are that all right!" laughed Helen Craig.

"So push off, queek!" Naomer furiously advised the blacklegs. "And give our compliments to Meess Kitten, hoping she is quite well!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Miss Kitten is not going to do another thing about you all—"

"So kind of her!" Polly promptly caught up Edna. "But we are going to do one thing about Miss Kitten, and that is—"

"Get her ze sack, yes!" Naomer was again ready with her shrill voice. "Bekas, as a mistress she is a wash-out, a sweendle!"

If the rebels had known how strictly true it was that Miss Kitten, as a mistress, was a "swindle"! If only Morcove, in its entirety, could have known! But that vital fact was Miss Kitten's own guilty secret—although it was a secret that Fay and Edna, most fatefully, had discovered for themselves.

Fay gave a proud fling of the head.

"Well, Edna and I have got the morning off!"

"Thanks to you goops—yes," Edna said twittingly. "So greatly obliged to you for holding this strike! We are not doing a stroke whilst it lasts!"

"So do try and hold out a little longer. He, he, he!"

"Oh, we shall hold out—don't worry!" said Pam, causing all her followers to give another ringing cheer.

"Hurrah! Up, the Form! Fair play for the Form! Hurrah!"

Fay nudged her sister then to walk away with her.

"It's their strike, Edna, so let them get on with it!"

"Idiots!" Edna stigmatised the rebels loudly. "I don't suppose they've washed their faces this morning—pah!"

As the rebels, thanks to soap and the ample water supply, had enjoyed splendid ablutions on rising, they particularly resented this insulting remark. There were some very effective retorts to it; but perhaps the most effective of all was Naomer's.

With her usual agility she needed only a moment or two for proving, by better means than the tongue afforded, how well off they all were for water—and soap.

There happened to be a fire-bucket, full of soapy water, awaiting disposal. She jumped down, caught up the bucket, mounted with it to the bench, and—

SLO-OO-SH! She pitched all the water towards the sisters, who had to jump aside pretty smartly to escape a sousing.

How the rebels laughed, then! Perhaps Pam and a few others thought it a rather undignified proceeding; but they laughed along with the rest, all the same.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And eef you come hanging around any more!" the dusky one yelled at the retreating sisters threateningly.

Then Pam thought it time to say an amused:

"Yes, well, that will do, girls, don't you think?" Whereupon most of them jumped down from the windows, the rest lingering to send a final withering cry of "Blacklegs!" after the renegade pair.

As for Fay and Edna, their remarks to each other as they sauntered away betrayed malicious regret that the rebels were not, apparently, in a desperate state.

"But there," Fay shrugged, "what little food they managed to get hold of yesterday, after the start of the strike—it can't last them long!"

"And how are they going to get hold of fresh supplies?" Edna rejoined. "It can't be done!"

"No!" Fay rejoined. "They are in for a bash, if they think they can send in a party to buy more stuff in Barncombe. Miss Massingham said that she has given orders in the town—nothing to be sold to Morcove girls."

"But we're all right," chuckled Edna. "We

can go into the town, later in the day, and have tea just as usual at the Creamery—that is, if we want to. I think we ought to do something better than that, don't you, Fay?"

"What can we do?" the elder sister pondered aloud. "Get along down to Exeter by train and do a cinema there—have a jolly fine time altogether?"

"It would be nice! And if we should be back a bit late—what does it matter? We know we can snap our fingers at Miss K. Oh, look here, let's go and ask her—"

"But here she is!" cried Fay. "So we can ask her now!"

And instantly the sisters diverted their steps so as to meet Miss Kitten as she came skirmishing near the gym—with one eye, as they could see, upon that stronghold of the Morcove rebels!

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Their Chance

SKIRMISHING is the exact word by which to describe those movements which were Miss Kitten's.

She was keeping at a discreet distance from the gymnasium, whilst walking slowly enough to be able to pay close attention to that building out of the corners of her eyes. As soon as she was aware of the Denver sisters approaching her she made a great show of pretended unconcern, and her first words were:

"You two girls—you don't need to hang around the gym!"

"No, Miss Kitten," said Fay demurely. "Fay and I were just saying to each other, we'd keep away from those girls altogether. And we were wondering, as there can't be any classes for the Form—"

"Besides this afternoon being a halfer," put in Edna sweetly.

"Yes, what?" asked the Form mistress, with some of that nervousness which always seized her when these two girls were with her.

"Miss Kitten, you'll let us do the half-day trip to Exeter that runs from Barncombe?" Fay said in a taken-for-granted tone.

"That is a lot to ask at a time like this—"

"But it is not our fault that the rest of the Form is on strike!" Edna blandly submitted. "And don't we deserve some reward for—well! For not taking part in it?" This was said in a "Not to mention" tone which did not fail to increase the bogus mistress' agitation.

"If we don't go to Exeter—just to do a bit of shopping," Fay threw out carelessly, "the only thing we can do is to spend an hour or two with uncle and auntie at the Headland Hotel. They are staying on there, and—"

"You have been to the hotel quite a lot lately," Miss Kitten exclaimed huskily. "Surely you don't want to see your uncle and aunt so soon—"

"If we may go to Exeter—oh, of course, we'd much prefer that!"

Fay said it, smiling full into those eyes that wore horn-rimmed glasses; and once again those eyes wavered and fell aside! The guilty secret known; known to these two girls!

Unscrupulous as Fay and Edna were, was it a wonder that they laughed inwardly again? What a time they were enjoying, able as they were to hold this drawn sword over Miss Kitten's guilty head. "Let us do as we please, or else—"

"Very well, then," the deservedly wretched impostor gave in drearily. "You may go to Exeter."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Kitten—thanks!" smirked both sisters. "It IS good of you!"

Miss Kitten's eyes followed them as they went prancing off. A shallow, unworthy pair, likely to do no school any good; and yet it was to them that she was compelled, by her own false position, to grant favours.

It must have been a moment, this, when she felt her guilty wretchedness to the full. Those two sisters—compare them with any of the girls who were now in open revolt!

Full well Miss Kitten knew that in the school—amongst her colleagues, and amongst those girls of other Forms who were not involved in the rebellion—it was being said that every excuse must be made for the strikers. What then would Morcoove say—what would the outside world say—if everything became known!

A secret, still, that she had obtained her position by downright fraud; but it was a secret which Fay and Edna had discovered.

Lucky for her that they were a couple of girls who cared not a rap for the welfare of the school.

Supposing it had been any others in the Form who had found out! Supposing it had been the captain? Or Betty Barton, who was still on the roll of the school, although not attending this term?

Miss Kitten drifted on again, feeling an inclination to shiver. That was because she had suddenly thought of Betty Barton, at the hotel out there on the cliffs. Mr. Mordaunt, the uncle of Fay and Edna, was staying with his wife at that hotel. And he was that business man whom she, Miss Kitten, had robbed when she was his lady clerk in London.

Across the deserted playing-fields she wandered aimlessly, trying not to heed the happy hubbub which came from the gymnasium, proclaiming the rebels' dauntless spirit.

The other Forms were in class; but it would have been a farce for her to take only Fay and Edna into her class-room this morning. So she had nothing better to do herself than brood over the perilous position in which she stood.

At the best, a mistress who had so far mismanaged her Form, so tyrannised, that the girls had rebelled; at the worst, an impostor, liable at any moment to be—unmasked!

Presently she found herself down by the gateway, staring dully along the road in the direction of the Headland Hotel. Her gaze was an uninterested one for a minute or two; and then suddenly the eyes behind her glasses dilated excitedly.

Someone—a young woman—had come off the verge of the moor to walk upon the road. In continuation of a ramble, this person would certainly have come towards the school's gateway; but, as if at sight of her—Miss Kitten—there was a sharp turning round to go the other way.

And after that Miss Kitten could entertain no doubt; the dismaying fancy that had seized her, directly she saw that lonely pedestrian had been, correct.

"It's Hetty!"

So she exclaimed to herself tensely, watching the other young woman in her drifting away to avoid an encounter.

Hetty, the sister whose qualifications and credentials, stolen from her whilst she was lying ill, had made it possible for Miss Somerfield, the headmistress, to be so easily duped!

There went the chief victim of the great fraud; the one who, at last recovering from her illness, had risen from the sickbed to find that she had been robbed—and left in the lurch.



From her precarious perch Polly had a wide view through the gym windows. "I can see Betty," she suddenly cried. "Coming this way over the moor." What news had Betty for them, wondered the strikers, to cause her to make this special journey?

But why—why was she hanging about the district still?

That was the question which taxed the wrongdoer's mind at this moment. She had been traced to Morcoove School by her sister, a little while ago, and it was a dramatic meeting which had taken place between the two, at dead of night.

Afterwards, however, Hetty had been prevailed upon to go away, with all her wrongs unrighted. Money had been supplied to tide her along; she had hated the acceptance of it, but grim Want had used compulsion.

With that money the guilty sister had hoped that she, Hetty, would leave the district; had hoped not to see anything more of her. But she was still lodging in Barncombe, presumably.

Something else, that, to make every heartbeat of Miss Kitten's one of guilty dread! Something else to make her feel that at any moment exposure might come about.

She watched the receding figure of her sister until it was lost to view round a bend in the road. Then, sighing in a hard-driven way, she turned to go back to the schoolhouse.

As she did so, she saw two girls dashing across a part of the field to get to the gym with all possible speed. They ran, carrying a bulging sack between them, and there were some of the rebels at the windows on that side of the "stronghold" cheering the couple on.



In a flash, Miss Kitten understood. Greatly daring, those two girls had slipped out to obtain supplies of something badly needed—fuel, perhaps. Indeed, it looked like a sack of coke which they were lugging along, and they had come from the direction of the fuel sheds.

The girls at the gym window laughed and cheered all the louder, because this thing was being done under the very eyes of "the enemy."

"Hurrah! Come on, Polly; come on, Helen!" "Bekas—queek, queek, zere is ze Tyrant!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Miss Kitten, stung by the term that had been applied to her, became infuriated. She started to run, with some angry idea of trying to intercept the two girls and take the sackful of fuel from them. But they were up to the gym wall a few seconds later, and the bulging sack was quickly passed inside.

She had the humiliation of seeing it seized and dragged in over the window-sill, and then saw Polly and Helen themselves helped over, whilst the triumphant cheering came again!

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Rolling Up For Rations

"HOW it will turn out, I don't know," said madcap Polly Linton, standing to watch something that bubbled and steamed, in a makeshift saucepan, on top of the hot stove. "But this stew smells good, anyhow!"

It did. Most of the rebels were ready to say as much, experiencing a midday readiness for another "hand-round."

"And here is what I am going to eat my share out of," Naomer put in, standing well to the fore in the gather-round at the stove. "So you can begin, Polly, with me, if you like!" "Come on then—and mind I don't upset the lot of it!"

So saying, Polly hoisted the fire-bucket—that is to say, the saucepan—off the stove, setting it on the floor in front of the tortoise-stove.

If only for fun's sake, she had made herself look as much like a cook as rolled-up sleeves and an exaggeration of her naturally plump figure would enable her to do. But, joking apart, the madcap was proud to have been entrusted with this morning's cooking.

She had felt a big thrill when tipping the contents of two tins of "bully beef" into the bucket of heating water. And during the last hour or so she had hung over the simmering concoction with all the anxiety of a chef who has a reputation to maintain.

"Gosh, this spoon is hot!" Polly now remarked, hardly able to hold it.

"Ah, bah, hurry up!" fumed Naomer, offering one of the empty corned-beef tins, the lid of which—not quite taken off by the opener—served as a handle.

"Half a sec," said Polly, holding a spoonful of the stew towards her own mouth. "Must taste it."

"Why?" yelled Naomer.

Polly looked at her in mild surprise, but said nothing. This keeping Naomer waiting convulsed other girls waiting to be served, although it far from amused the dusky one.

"I am starving!"

Polly blew upon the spoonful of stew to cool it. Then she sipped. She swallowed with a relishing closing of one eye.

"Not so bad!"

"Zen hurry up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that tin quite clean inside, kid? Let's look at it—"

"I shall jolly well dip him in ze bucket and help myself, eef you don't look sharp!"

"And then," Polly rejoined grimly, "you will be court-martialled and shot at dawn!" The meat," said Polly, spooning from the surface into Naomer's tin, "has rather gone to the bottom; so those who are served last will come off best—"

"Hi, sweindle, if ever zere was!"

"You would be served first; so there you are."

"What!"

Naomer, after looking at a few spoonfuls of watery gravy at the bottom of the tin, was now looking at Polly.

"Next, please!"

"Look here, zough! Bekas—"

"Now, Biddy," beamed Polly, for Biddy Loveland was due for her ration. Let's see what I can do for you. Ah!" sparkled Polly, managing to spoon up quite a nice lump of corned beef from the bottom of the fire-bucket. "That's better!"

It was so manifestly a tremendous improvement on Naomer's helping, the protesting yell from that hungry imp could have been heard a long way off.

But the madcap, of course, was only behaving in fun. She soon appeased the dusky one by fishing up a steaming mass of meat for her, bidding her "Take that on the mat!"

Then the "thin bread line" could make a steady filing past Polly, who had a joke for everybody. An early intimation from Naomer that the stew was "gorjus!" soon received general confirmation.

"Tastes as good as it smells!" was Helen Craig's emphatic opinion.

"It certainly tastes better than it looks!" said someone else. "Bravo, Polly!"

"And what I want to know is," chimed in Naomer, "any seconds?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bekas, if so—"

And she made a return trip to the "saucepan" only to find Polly grimly on guard. Healthy appetites were making short work, everywhere, of the first issue, and the madcap could tell that there was going to be a run, so to speak, on anything left over.

"The things I could cook for you all," she sighed wistfully, "if only I had the raw materials! And, you know, we shall have to see about getting in more stuff to last us over the week-end."

"Oh, yes," Pam responded, with all her usual equanimity. "Later on, a foraging party must go out again. We still have enough money in the common fund to—"

"Hark, though!"

A rap-rapping upon the locked doors was creating a sudden sensation. Unfinished plates and cups and tins of soup were set down hastily, their owners exchanging wondering glances. Now who was this knocking at the door?

Pam promptly called out, calmly:

"Yes, what do you want?"

"You girls are to come out at once!"

Miss Massingham, as they knew by the voice!

"Do you hear me? There has been more than enough of this nonsense, and so—let it end at once, I say!"

Pam ran closer to the locked doors, to make herself heard the better by that mistress who, in the absence of the headmistress, was more or less in complete charge of the school.



"Miss Massingham, it isn't nonsense. You know what caused the whole trouble; you know how much we put up with before we rebelled. If you'll promise that you'll suspend Miss Kitten—"

"I am not going to do that; I told you so yesterday!" cried Miss Massingham, still reluctant to admit that she had no power to suspend her colleague.

"Then, as I said yesterday," Pam gently returned, "we must simply carry on until Miss Somerfield comes back. She'll excuse everything, when she knows."

"Don't be so sure! As ringleader, Pam Wiloughby, you are likely to be expelled for this."

"I will take full responsibility, as I have said before. The school that expels me for making a stand against a mistress like Miss Kitten is no school that I wish to belong to. But I can't believe that that school is—Morcove."

"Pam," came Miss Massingham's voice again, after a telling pause, "you are subjecting yourselves to needless hardship!"

"Not needless, Miss Massingham."

"The hardship is there, anyhow, and it must continue so long as you maintain this stubborn attitude. I have given orders that you must obtain no supplies from the school. I warn you, also, it will be no use your trying to obtain fresh supplies from the town. I have informed all the tradespeople that any who supply you girls will never again receive any custom from the school itself. Miss Somerfield would uphold me there!"

"At last Miss Massingham had said something that left the rebels in a state approaching consternation.

No supplies to be obtained from the town! There was a setback, and no mistake!

"Nor will a single scholar belonging to any other Form be allowed to come near the gym," Miss Massingham added sternly. "From the head girl, downwards, that rule is to be observed on pain of severe penalties."

"We don't want any of the other girls to come near us," Pam quickly answered.

There was no rejoinder to this, and after a few moments the rebels realised that Miss Massingham had walked away.

As captain, Pam had been left to speak for all; but now every other tongue was let loose again. There was a babel of comment on the one point, in all that Miss Massingham had said, which had really disturbed the rebels. Supplies from the town cut off!

"Bekas, what ze diggings, now we jolly well will starve!"

"Miss Massingham has got us there, right enough," was another of the dismayed remarks. "Even if we eke out what we've still got—"

"It would never last us—never!" Polly struck in grimly. "Look at the crowd we are; not to mention an appetite like Naomer's!"

"How about a village shop?" questioned Helen eagerly. "The trouble is, there are no villages within miles! They're all on the other side of the moor."

"The nearest village is five miles away—across the moor, as you say, Helen," came Pam's calm voice. "That's ten miles there and back, and across the moor—it can't be done, not on foot."

"Gosh then," Polly said, "it will have to be—siege rations now! We must eat the peel as well as the orange!"

As oranges formed a part of the remaining stock of provisions—such a slender stock as it now was!—the madcap's figure of speech was so

appropriate that a good deal of laughter went up.

Then Polly stepped to the fire-bucket that had done service as a saucepan.

"As for second helpings—not much!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

What a one she was—their madcap—for giving a humorous turn to a desperate situation of this sort! The very way in which she took up the "saucepan," as if the remaining pint or so of stew must be guarded at all costs, created fresh peals of merriment.

"But we shan't starve," Pam serenely announced. "I'm answerable—"

"Oh, Pam, you're not!" she was reassured. "Not to that extent!"

"Yes, well, it's up to me—so I think," she quietly insisted. "And a plan has occurred to me. I might slip out, hire a car, drive to Swanlake, load up, and return."

"Gosh!" gasped Polly. "That's an idea!"

"But how will you hire a car?" Helen cried. "You've not enough ready money for a double journey running into—let me see—more than a pound, counting waiting time!"

"I shall get money, as I shall get supplies—at Swanlake," was Pam's cool reply. "Mother and dad are away; but I have only to ask our housekeeper. Mrs. Greddon is a dear. And there is an arrangement, whenever my people are away and I find myself running short, I can apply to her."

Following Pam's calm statement there was a burst of applause. Not beaten yet!

"Bekas—gorjus!" Naomer fairly capered. "Stuff to give zem—hooray! At zat rate, Pam, we can have a grand banquet—even before ze strike is over!"

"Will you take one of us with you, Pam?" clamoured Polly. "Will you take me?"

"Not you, Polly; you're too valuable here!"

"Valuable! How so?"

"Bekas, eef you mean ze cooking, I can—"

The rest from Naomer was lost in another burst of laughter.

"We might find another cook," Pam smiled as soon as she could obtain a hearing. "We couldn't find another madcap! I wonder, Judy, if you would care to come with me?"

"Would I not!" was the enthusiastic response—not at all surprising to other girls, who were even then giving mock groans at Judy's having the luck to be selected.

But the envy was of an affectionate nature, and Judy came in for many a congratulatory clap on the shoulders.

"We'll get away at once," Pam decided. "And it is quite likely we can hire a car from the Headland Hotel. They keep several cars for the use of guests."

"And so you may see Betty over there!" several of the girls cried.

"Judy and I must not try to see her," Pam answered. "Betty is with us heart and soul over this business; but that doesn't mean we must let her do all she would like to do. You ready, Judy?"

"I'm ready, Pam!"

And in a moment they were gone.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Betty Brings News

"WHY, look here, girls—if only we had thought of it before—"

"What, Polly—what?"

"Anyone climbing as high as the top sash to

one of the windows, on this side of the gym, might have seen whether Pam and Judy got away in a car from the Headland!"

"Oh!" Polly's belated idea was greeted excitedly. "But, of course!"

"Bekas from high up you can see out over ze boundary hedge—"

"See over the moor—get a glimpse of the road that goes across it, leading to Swanlake!" Naomer was caught up by the others.

"But is it too late, after all, Polly?"

The madcap's answer to that questioning chorus was to let her fellow rebels see her rush to do the necessary bit of climbing.

In a flash it had occurred to her that she could do even better than simply mount to one of the window-sills, high though they were.

From the gymnasium's roof dangled a couple of stout ropes, each with a ring at the lower end, to provide fine exercise by swinging. Leaving other girls to do their scrambling up to the high sills, Polly made a big leap and seized one of the ropes.

Agile as a monkey, next moment she was far enough aloft to have one foot in the ring. Cheered on by an hilarious batch of spectators, she went up and upwards, hand over hand, swaying violently, her smile showing how she was enjoying the effort.

So, triumphantly, she got to within a foot or two of the roof—as high as she needed to be, and in a much more commanding position than girls had obtained by climbing to the sills.

"What can you see, Polly—any sign of a car on the road across the moor?"

"Nothing," called down the madcap. "Too late, I suppose. Or else they couldn't get a car, and have had to go on to Barncombe to get one. I say, though!" she next moment yelled. "I can see Betty!"

"You can!"

"Yes! It's Betty—coming this way, amongst the gorge on the moor."

"Ooo, queek, has she got some purvisions with her?" yelled Naomer. "Bekas zey will all help!"

Polly, from above, glared down at the dusky one.

"All you think about—food!"

"Why shouldn't I? Bekas it is ze same zing, isn't it, as thinking about winning ze strike?"

"Mind out, anyhow!" shouted Polly, swinging violently as she slithered down the rope.

Mirthful notice might have been taken of Polly's letting go, in full swing, so that she "accidentally" landed hard up against Paula, who went over like a ninepin. But this, with Paula's inevitable "Owch!" of distress, went unheeded, owing to the great excitement about Betty.

Guessing that she meant to scramble through a gap in the hedge and then nip across to the gym, they opened a window in readiness for her. It was a window facing the boundary hedge, and it was not in sight from the schoolhouse or any important part of the playing-field.

Sure enough, she was soon observed by as many as were able to look out on that side of the gym, making for the building as fast as her slight limp would allow. They wanted to receive her with terrific cheering, but thought it best to refrain. The welcome, however, although mute, was none the less enthusiastic. Joyous looks and wildly waved arms atoned for the silence that discretion decreed.

"Come on in, Betty!" the gleeful entreaty was softly voiced by one and another, the moment she reached the open window. "Stay for a bit—you must!"

"I don't think I had better," she laughed up breathlessly. "I'd love to, but I can be more helpful, I fancy, by staying around outside the school bounds. For, girls, read this!"

To their amazement, it was one of the buff-coloured envelopes in which telegrams are delivered that she held up to them all. Polly reached out and took it, and saw that the telegram had been addressed to "BETTY BARTON, Headland, Morcove."

Then, taking out the flimsy sheet of paper, she read—with other girls looking over her shoulder to do the same:

To BETTY BARTON, HEADLAND,  
MORCOVE.

TELL THEM RATIONS ON THE WAY.—  
JACK.

"Gosh!" Polly gaped. "Well, I'm bothered! Girls," she yelled, waving the telegram at those who could not get close enough to read it. "From my brother Jack, and he says—rations on the way!"

"What! Oh! Hurrah!" the cries mingled. "Bekas—pipooray! Zat means bigger meals than ever—gorjus!"

"Betty darling," Polly spoke over the high sill again, very eagerly, "seen Pam and Judy?"

"No, why?"

"They were going to get a car from the hotel, to go to Swanlake for rations! Perhaps you were at lunch when they got to the Headland?"

Betty was now the one to be utterly amazed.

"Gone to Swanlake? My goodness! And what a pity—when the boys are coming with rations, as the tallywag says! I dare say they are buying up half the grocers' shops in Barncombe by now!"

"But are they?" Polly demurred. "Miss Mas-singham has warned all the tradespeople not to supply us."

"She has! Here, I must come inside, after all," Betty suddenly decided. "It's not safe for me to stay talking out here, and I want to know exactly how you stand, and—"

"Come on, then! But mind the bad foot, Betty!"

"Oh, that's all right," Polly was answered.

She was leaning far out to offer her best of chums a helping hand. Betty took it; two or three of Polly's fellow rebels hung on to her, pulled when she bade them: "PULL!"—and up came Betty then, to be helped over the sill and so down to the floor.

After which she had to submit to any amount of hugging by schoolmates overjoyed at having her in their midst once more!

"So that's the position, is it?" Betty exclaimed five minutes later. "Um!"

One and another of the rebels had been bombarding her all that time with the very latest information.

"So it's just as well Pam and Judy have gone to Swanlake?"

"I should say so," Polly grimaced. "If the boys try to buy anything like provisions—especially on a large scale—in the town, the tradespeople will smell a rat!"

"Worse luck, they will," sighed Helen. "Jack and Dave and Jimmy are boys who have so often been seen with us. Tubby's another!"

"Sweendle!" shrilled the dusky one. "Bekas we should have been able to have such gorjus meals! Bekas you know, what Tubby is for looking after you!"

"Well, I shall get away again," Betty announced briskly. "By-the-bye, I did my best and bought some chocolate for you all, at the hotel. Here it is—"

"Oh, Betty, how good of you!" the chorus went up as she lugged out two large packets of chocolate from jacket pockets.

"And now," she was resuming, when something occurred at the window, which had been left open, to cause her to break off into a staggered cry:

"Good gracious—what's that!"

It was something that the rest of the girls, as soon as they twitched their gaze in its direction should have been able to name instantly. It was, in fact, an easily recognisable hamper, of the sort which more than one of the rebels had received, at some time or other from home.

But they were just as staggered as was Betty, merely following her astounded cry with an astonished:

"Yes, what is it?"

Invisible hands, as the rebels gazed, seemed to leave the hamper balanced on the window-sill. And then, to the increased amazement of all, the head and shoulders of a schoolboy rose into view.

A bullet-shaped head it was, possessing a very fat face. Massive were the shoulders, short the neck. For a moment the girls simply stared, transfixed, whilst the fat face treated them all to its fat smile. Then from Naomer came the wild and joyful yell:

"What ze diggings—Bobby!"

#### CHAPTER 6.

##### Supplies For The Siege

YOUNG Bobby Bloot, having treated the Morcove rebels to this initial surprise, lost no time about giving them another.

Without a word—with simply a grand gesture to indicate that the hamper was theirs—Tubby released his hold of the high window-sill and dropped to ground again.

Then he ran back to the boundary hedge, retaining a smile of supreme satisfaction.

At the gap in the hedge, Jimmy Cherrol was waiting with parcels under his arms and pockets bulging very significantly.

"That's that," said Tubby, apropos the hamper. "Now you go, Jimmy. There's still no one about?"

"A few girls belonging to one of the other Forms, over yonder," Jimmy remarked. "But they can't see us; the gym is in between. I spotted them from farther along this hedge."

"If I whistle, you'll know," said Tubby, mopping a hot forehead. It had cost him, the portly one, a good deal of exertion to hoist that hamper up to the high window-sill.

"Oh, that's all right," said Jimmy, starting to write through the gap.

Watching this chum of his, Tubby smiled on in huge delight. He saw Jimmy get close in under the open window of the gym, which now showed a whole row of girlish faces. The hamper was gone—claimed! And now Jimmy pitched one package of his after another up to hands ready to make adroit catches.

"Jimmy!" laughed some of the rebels. "How ever much more?"

"Bekas zis is simply gorgus!"

"Extremely good of you boys—yes, wather!"

Jimmy said nothing, but started to extricate a package tightly wedged in a right-hand pocket. He got it out, and next moment Polly held it, nicely caught.

"Jimmy!"

Like a conjurer, he was producing "rations" from every pocket he possessed. Slabs of chocolate even came out of his waistcoat pockets. Apples were stowed in the lining of the jacket, a rent in the lining making them get-at-able.

"Jimmy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think that's the lot, girls—"

"So we would think, too!" chuckled Helen.

"No, it isn't," Jimmy contradicted himself, producing a bottle of boiled sweets from a hip-pocket.

"Jimmy!"

"And Jack and Dave are buying all they can in Barncombe," he remarked, in case the rebels were not aware. "Tubby and I came direct. I got those few things at a village shop. They're nothing much—"



As the hamper was raised to the window ledge a head appeared. "Bekas—Bobby!" yelled Naomer, recognising him. Grangemoor had managed to get supplies, after all! Now the strike could go on.

"Nothing much!"  
"Bekas—"

But Naomer got no farther. It was found that she had already uncapped the bottle of sweets and started upon the contents.

"Mustn't stay," Jimmy spoke up to the other girls. "Best of luck, all of you, and—"

"But, Jimmy—we want to thank you—"

"Oh, no need to do that."

"And Tubby—tell him, we are ever so grateful for his hamper!"

"It isn't as full as it looks. We chaps had started on it last night. But—"

"How on earth did he manage to get it here, Jimmy?"

"Oh, he—he just had to manage, that's all. Tied it to his handlebars."

"Poor Tubby!" gurgled Polly, visualising the gallant but corpulent Bloot, plugging along on his bicycle with that hamper at the handlebars. "Ha, ha, ha! But he's a trump, and so are you, Jimmy! Girls, three cheers for—"

Jimmy fled, whilst a deafening "Hurrah!" was being given over and over again. Back at the hedge, he waved to those girls who were still looking out of the gym window; then he and Tubby made off together, across some of the rough gorseland.

"Just look at all the stuff Jimmy passed in, not to mention the hamper!" Betty said delightedly. "Oh, you will be all right now, girls, even though Jack and Dave are going to be unable to buy stuff in Barncombe. Besides, as I was going to say, when Tubby bobbed up just now; I hope to slip across, later on, with stuff from the hotel. I can buy certain things there. If I thought it would be any use my going into Barncombe—"

"Betty, it would be NO use," Polly stressed. "They know you so well as a Morcove girl—one who was even captain of this very Form!"

"And zere are Pam and Judy, don't forget!" piped in Naomer. "You wait till zey turn up with a motor-car simply full of purvisions!"

"So I can leave you now," Betty said, letting wisdom rather than inclination guide her, "and come back by-and-bye. Mother knows that I am absolutely with you, over this business."

"What does she say about it all, Betty?"

"Say? That you girls must have been driven past all bearing, to have done such a thing—as you were, of course. But, although I can see how she sympathises, I hardly like to ask her to—"

"No, Betty, don't you," pleaded several of the rebels. "It's different, accepting help from the boys."

"We know that Ethel Courtway and lots of the girls in other Forms must be sympathising with us; but we only hope," said Polly, "they won't seek to help us. It might be awkward for them, afterwards."

Betty, on the point of departure, looked a little emotional. Thoughts too deep for words were coursing through her mind. They dealt with her old, old appreciation of the Form's fine spirit; with phases of the life of the Form seldom expressed in speech but often felt.

The Form—her Form!—in this determined stand for so much that was the very life-breath of Morcove as a school, how fine was its spirit now.

So her ultimate return to the Headland Hotel was a very pensive bit of walking. Her heart was back there with the rebels—her schoolmates, many of them beloved chums.

Splendid it was of them all, to have seen eye to eye with her about that delicate matter of

gladly accepting help from the boys and herself, but not from others.

When another hundred yards would have found her at the turn-in to the hotel's private carriage-way, she stopped dead, freshly surprised—and delighted as well!

Along the road from the town two schoolboys were coming on bicycles. Jack and Dave—she could recognise them, even at this distance. And what did their parcel-bladen handlebars mean, but that they had obtained goods in Barncombe, after all!

She waved to the boys, then limped on quickly to meet them. Putting on speed, they came sprinting up, Jack finally alighting with his usual acrobatic gaiety, whilst Dave smiled his grave smile whilst dismounting.

"How's the Morcove front now, Betty?"

"Going strong," she blithely answered Jack. "They're still in the gym!"

"Good!"

"And Tubby and Jimmy have been and gone again," Betty further reported. "They just left some things and fitted."

"That's what it is to have good staff work," jested Jack, tapping his forehead to imply that his was the master mind. "Well, Dave and I haven't done so badly—"

"So it seems! But there was a rumour that no provisions would be sold to—"

"Just so," Jack playfully scowled. "And we came up against that order with a bang, did Dave and I. All the same—"

And he blandly drew attention to the parcels of groceries and other things, tied to the handlebars.

Betty, laughing, felt one or two of the parcels.

"Tinned stuff? Splendid! And in this— oranges? They're awfully useful! Can't have too many. This, wrapped up in brown paper, feels like—I was going to say, like a joint of meat."

"Ham!" said Jack proudly.

"Oh! Cooked, of course?"

Jack turned then to Dave.

"Er—it is cooked, Dave?"

"I don't know!"

"In case it isn't, Betty," said Jack cheerfully, "here's the explanation. We chaps couldn't get any of the shops to sell us anything. Not even shops in the by-streets would serve us. They rumbled us, if you get me?"

"Of course they would! And with that warning put through from the school—"

"Ah, but we got round the difficulty; staff work again!" Jack exulted. "Found a chap to shop for us, yep! So if he has bought a raw ham, instead of a cooked one—Polly and the rest have got to understand; you can't expect G.H.Q. to take the blame for that!"

Betty burst out laughing.

"Oh, you boys! Now, I should think, the rebels have got enough to last them a week or more! You must go along and deliver the goods—"

"As per order, yep!"

"And I do wish, presently, you could be given some tea at the Headland, after such a strenuous time. You'll be finding Jimmy and Tubby?"

"The flying column was under orders to lie up," said Jack, who would, as part of the joke, employ military terms, "at map-square thirty-nine; just this side of No Man's Land!"

"All four of you be around," Betty entreated gaily, "and perhaps mother will feel like giving you some tea! I mustn't keep you now, so-ta-ta!"



"Cheerio, Betty!"

And so, for the time being, they parted. Jack and Dave, remounting, rode on towards the school, whilst Betty went along the hotel's private drive.

Her elation had been increased by the encounter with Jack and Dave, and only her tire-some ankle kept her from walking very jauntily. Yet this was the moment when Betty was due for a big upset.

As she passed in by the revolving doors, it amazed her to see a policeman in the entrance-lounge of the hotel, and beside him the manager. They were not in conversation, but appeared to have nothing more to say to each other until someone else, for whom they were waiting, appeared upon the scene.

A few guests were sitting about in the inner lounge, obviously interested in the policeman's presence, but disinclined to come across inquisitively.

Betty herself would have passed on; but suddenly she found her mother getting up from a nearby chair, at the same time beckoning. In a moment they were together, and it quite horrified Betty to observe the distress in her mother's looks.

"I have to remain at hand, Betty dear, in case I am wanted during the inquiry," came the agitated whisper. "You remember my losing an evening bag, the other night?"

"With more than twenty pounds in it—yes, mumsie," Betty quickly responded. "You lost it somewhere in the hotel, that night the Denver girls came to dine with their uncle and aunt, bringing Miss Kitten with them."

"Some of the lost money, Betty, was in five-pound notes. The bank that I got them from, in Barncombe, was able to give me their numbers. Now one of those notes has been passed—in Barncombe."

"It has! And is that why the policeman has called here?" Betty whispered, sidelonging the burly officer of the law. "But, mother darling—"

"Oh, Betty, it is terrible!" was the quavered interruption. "The manager has sent word to that new dance hostess—"

"What, that nice young lady who was only taken on a day or so ago! But the missing money—the note that has been passed in the town—it has nothing to do with her, surely!"

There was just time for Mrs. Barton to whisper, tragically: "They think it has!"—and then she and Betty saw the young lady in question leaving the lift to come across to the waiting policeman and the Headland's manager.

## CHAPTER 7.

### She Stands Accused

**V**IOLENTLY was Betty's heart beating as she watched the young lady coming across to submit herself to a verbal examination.

They had become acquainted, being under the same roof, and Betty had taken to the new dance hostess greatly. A most charming young lady, rapidly finding favour amongst the guests; her manners perfect, her proficiency as a teacher—when dancing lessons were sought—undoubted.

Yet suspicion, it seemed, had fastened upon her, and although she was surely going to be able to clear herself, it meant a cruel upset.

So Betty pitied her, managing to convey silent sympathy by a full look as the young woman, in passing, glanced at mother and daughter.

"How pale she does look, Betty dear," Mrs. Barton whispered.

"And no wonder, mumsie. How would we like it!"

"Not at all, Betty. Ah, well," murmured her good-hearted mother, "as soon as she's satisfied them, we can do something to comfort her."

The hotel manager was rather frigid, Betty thought, as the dance hostess got to where he and the policeman were waiting.

"H'm! Er—Miss Holland," he said, at the same time signing to Betty and her mother to draw nearer. "Something about a five-pound note, given in part-payment of a dance frock at a costumer's in Barncombe."

Betty saw the dance hostess go whiter than ever in the face.

"You might just answer a few questions the constable wishes to put, Miss Holland."

"Yes, sir." She seemed to sway a little as she turned to face the policeman.

"Well, then, miss, it's like this, you see," he began gruffly. "A five-pound note, taken at that shop by a young lady making purchases there—"

"I made some purchases there—"

"Ah, you did, did you! Well, we'll come to that in a moment! As I was saying, when the note was paid in to the bank, this morning, along with the rest of yesterday's takings, it was found to be one of two notes that had been stopped. The numbers of those two notes, you understand, had been took."

"Yes, I understand that," was the faltered response.

"So the shop people were informed, and asked if they could say who tendered that note. They gave a description—and a name—corresponding to your'n, miss!"

Again Betty saw the young lady swaying a little as she nodded.

"Do you admit having tendered a five-pound note, miss? Or are they mistaken at the shop?"

"No, they—they are quite right. I did pay for a frock with a five-pound note."

"Ah," said the policeman, whilst the manager seemed to swell with indignation. "Then do you mind saying where you got that five-pound note from?"

Betty saw the young lady opening and shutting her hands in a helpless, hard-driven way.

"Well?" fumed the manager. "Answer!"

"I'm sorry, sir; I—I can't very well—"

"What! Do you realise?" he said angrily. "If somebody landed you with the five-pound note, and you can say who it was—then say so, and it may be all right for you! Simply tell us how you came to have that note upon you—"

"But I can't, sir."  
"Can't? Why not? This is the position," the manager fiercely stressed: "A guest of ours—Mrs. Barton, who stands here—lost a theatre-bag with money in it, in the hotel—"

"But that was before Miss Holland was engaged as dance hostess!" Betty could not help butting in.

The manager bowed to her.

"I am aware of that, miss, thank you! And I am not for a moment suggesting that this young lady was secretly about the place that night as a hotel thief. What I am suggesting is that, on her own admissions, she has been in possession of some at least of the lost money. And unless she can satisfy us that she had it from someone, in course of payment for something or other, not knowing it was money that other person had no right to—why, she must stand the consequences, that's all!"

"Oh, Miss Holland," Betty's mother burst forth distressfully, "do try to do yourself better

justice. Try to explain a bit better, for I'm sure you have done nothing to be ashamed of really. Is it that you are shielding someone that you can't say who it was gave you that bank-note?"

The constable sprung another question: "Have you any of the rest of the money, miss?"

"Is Joan Holland your true name?" the manager suddenly wondered. "Come, come; there you stand, making no answer! I tell you candidly, I don't like the look of it."

"Yet be patient with her," Betty's mother pleaded. "She is in an awkward fix, and yet may be quite innocent."

"We have no wish to be harsh," protested the manager. "But a hotel must be sure of the integrity of every member of its staff. Constable, I don't think you should go away without having looked further into this."

"I'm not a-going to go, sir, without doing that," came the stolid answer. "It wouldn't be doing my duty. Young lady, I must ask you to show me up to your room in this hotel, and no doubt there'll be a chambermaid to lend a hand, so that your things can be searched, all proper."

"Very well," the dance hostess answered huskily. "I—I can't prevent that, of course. I—I recognise the case against me is very black."

"Well, it is, miss, and so you won't be surprised if I ask you to come along to the police station afterwards—"

"What!" cried out Mrs. Barton in horror. "You mean she is under arrest?"

"Whether any of the rest of the money is found amongst her belongings or not, ma'am, I must charge her in regard to that three-pound note. With passing it, the same being a missing note, believed stolen, and failing to give account of it!"

"Oh!" Betty and her mother exclaimed together in horrified accents. "How awful!"

"This scene must end," the manager muttered, looking very worried. "Go along, Miss Holland, up to your room with the constable. And the housekeeper will attend to conduct a search—"

"I must go, too—oh, please!" Mrs. Barton insisted to Betty's intense relief. "And I suppose—if the young lady is charged—I can go bail for her, as it were? My dear, my dear," she turned to say to the accused tremulously, "anything I can do—anything! For I am so convinced you never could have made use of any money not honestly come by!"

"Can't you say more?" Betty implored, drawing eyes upon her that looked enlarged, set in a face so marble white. "Anyhow, we are with you—mother and I! We—we'll manage!"

The generous, heartfelt words proved too much for the young woman in her upset state. She seemed to turn giddy, so that the first step she took, to go with the policeman, was a tottering one.

And then he took her by the arm—a firm grip, perhaps meant kindly enough; but it was none the less an outward sign of her being under arrest.

"Betty darling, I don't know how long I'll be—"

"Oh, that's all right, mumsie—you go!"

As Betty answered her mother with those fervent words, the arrested woman looked round over a shoulder. It was meant to be a farewell glance of gratitude; but Betty could only notice the tragic despair in that lovely yet stricken face.

After that, Betty waited a full half-hour in

acute suspense. What was happening upstairs? On top of this there was the still bigger question: Why—why had the young lady been so dumb in front of her accusers?

Questions had been asked that demanded an answer; if that incriminating silence were maintained, it would end in a term of imprisonment.

At last Betty went up by the lift to find that room which had been assigned to the dance hostess. The door was ajar when she got to it, but neither the young lady nor the policeman was there, nor was Betty's mother. A worried-looking housekeeper came out of a reflective state to ask sharply:

"Yes, miss, what do you want?"

"I thought my mother—Mrs. Barton—might be here with—"

"They've all gone along to the police station in town. It's a clear case, right enough."

"What!"

"They found the other banknote in this room of hers. And she got the job under a false name, too. That isn't her rightful name! There are handkerchiefs of hers, embroidered with initials that don't stand for the name we've known her by."

Worse and worse!

"What is her proper name, then, please?"

"How should I know when she won't say! The initials—let me see—one of the letters was K, I remember. But you run along, miss. I must say, your mother's a good sort to be going to go bail for the young woman—an utter impostor, by the look of it!"

Betty drifted away then with something of the tragic listlessness that she had seen in the accused's movements, after the charge had been made.

A black affair it was, upon which there seemed to shine only one ray of light to give comfort. Mother, in the goodness of her heart—mother, the very loser of the money!—was doing her utmost for the accused.

But Betty knew—to go bail for the young woman meant only saving her for the present from a police cell.

The hour must come when the case would be heard in court, and if no defence could be offered then—it must be prison for her, after all!

## CHAPTER 8.

### The Hour at Hand

IN the early dusk of the gloomy autumn evening, a car came bounding along the bumpy road that traversed the vast stretch of moorland lying between Morcove School and Swanlake.

Pam and Judy sat close together in the car, with packed baskets and bulging bags, and even a half-filled sack to occupy the vacant seat. It was the load carried upon the luggage-grid, however, which made the car lumber along so heavily.

"This driver-fellow has been awfully obliging, Pam!"

"He has," agreed the captain of the rebel Form. "And we'll make it up to him. Of course, he knows by now!"

Judy gave her grave smile.

"Yes, I could tell, as soon as we started to load-up at Swanlake; he had guessed, and was thinking it a great joke! All the same, Pam, it isn't your idea to get him to deliver us and the stuff—at the door, so to speak?"

"Oh, no. We'll get him to drive round to—"  
Bang! with a metallic ring in it, and then the car so jumped and floundered about, emitting extraordinary sounds, Pam and Judy clutched each other, bobbing up and down on the seat.

"Oh, Pam!" was jerked out of Judy, during one of these violent joltings.

But the car stopped, and the two girls and the driver were quite unharmed, and Pam was as serene as ever in commenting:

"Back axle, I take it."

"You mean—a breakdown, Pam?"

"Oh, a breakdown, right enough! Not much to be done now, is there?" Pam blandly addressed the driver, after throwing open a door to jump out. He was already down from the wheel.

"No, miss, that there isn't—except to get a

"That is quite out of the question, thanks all the same," Pam gently checked him. "You have to see about the car at once. Hallo, though! Judy!" was the cry, in a changed tone. "Look!"

"Oh—the boys!"

The driver of the broken down car must have noticed a considerable brightening of his passengers' faces, now that those two schoolgirls were agaze at four schoolboys, coming along on bicycles from the direction of Morcove.

Pam, in a moment, turned to the driver.

"Nothing to worry about!" she said, with that charming smile of hers. "One of these boys is my chum's brother. We know them all, quite well. Any rate, you see about getting help for the car whilst the light lasts."

"Thanks, miss! At that rate, I had better



"Do you mind telling me where you got that five pound note?" asked the policeman. Joan Holland clasped her hands. "I'm sorry—I can't," she faltered, and Betty, standing nearby, felt a wave of compassion for the girl she was certain was being wrongly accused.

breakdown lorry, to fetch her in. I'm sorry, young ladies—"

"It wasn't your fault at all; this road is in a shocking state, and perhaps—" Pausing, Pam laughed softly. "Perhaps our couple of sacks of coal on the luggage grid were a bit unreasonable."

"Shouldn't have been, miss," grinned back the driver. "No, I suppose the back axle has been waiting to go. Question is, how am I to get you to your destination—and the stuff as well! You're sort of in need of it?" He was trying not to laugh.

"A mile from the school," Judy reckoned, taking the bearings by a glance around. "We can easily walk, of course, Pam—and take as much as we can carry?"

"Dumping the rest out of sight," Pam calmly nodded. "I am sure this gentleman will not—"

"Oh, I shan't give you away, young ladies! If I could, I would take upon myself to—"

get a move on. Oh, don't pay me now, miss; I hardly know what the charge will be, now this has happened."

"Have this for yourself, anyhow—and thanks ever so," Pam said, tipping him handsomely. "If we don't see you again—we are ready at any time to bear witness that you were not the least to blame."

He saluted, then set off at a brisk pace on foot for the nearest telephone, leaving Pam and Judy to greet the Grangemoor four as they peddled to the scene of the accident. The boys' general appreciation of what had happened was voiced by Jack.

"A breakdown! But nobody hurt?"

"Not a bit!"

"Thank goodness for that!" said Jack, dismounting with his chums. "So all we've got to do, chaps—another little job; fall in then! Fall in, the Grangemoor Diehards! About turn!" And he slewed round his own bicycle.

"Isn't it a shame, Dave," Judy smiled ruefully at her gravely-smiling brother. "And getting dark, too!"

"Now here it is," jested Jack; "we chaps ask no questions. We've simply come upon a case of beauty in distress. What they were doing—driving with perishable goods, are they?"—as he peered into car—"we are not concerned to know. Likewise"—walking round to inspect the load on the luggage grid—"two sacks of coke, is it?"

"Coal," smiled Pam.

"Good," Jack nodded. "Coal will do just as well to cook that ham by. For he was raw, you know!"

"Ham? What ham?"

"Oh, we don't ask you questions," said Jack with dignity, "so you mustn't put questions to

us! Sir Jimmy, just take a 'man'—Corporal Tubby will do—and let him shoulder one of those sacks of coal. You might take the other—"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy cheerfully.

"Well, then, take it, man—take it! Don't stand in a dream, looking at Pam! Dave, old son, we'll load up with the things that are inside the car. My hat," Jack gasped, backing away from the open door with something he had groped hold of, "what the—"

"A brace of pheasants," Pam commented blandly.

"There's been some dirty work," Jack remarked grimly. "Poaching, eh?"

"Then they were poached a week ago," smiled Pam, who had received them from the game-larder at home. "But I can take those. Judy and I can take quite a lot."

"Apparently you can," said Jack, fetching out more things from the car. "And you've done so! Whilst we poor wretches—we haven't had any tea yet!"

"Shame!" sympathised Pam and Judy.

"Oh, we don't mind," the jester declared heroically. "Do we, Tubby?"

"Poor Tubby!" said Pam and Judy.

There he was, grappling with the sack of coals, his school cap half-off, his shoulders almost bursting his coat at the seams. And yet he smiled, second to none in Grangemoor's chivalrous desire to serve Morecove!

So, just after dark, there was renewed rejoicing in the rebels' stronghold. Pam and Judy had got back, and with them had come everything that had been on board the car.

To take stock, after the boys had finally departed, was to have more than a joyful vision of the Morecove flag still flying, proclaiming "No surrender!" There could be visions of liberal helpings at every meal, and of an unstinted fire to gather round.

The brace of pheasants, although brought along more as a joke than anything else, were much admired in all their gaudy plumage; and what a vision it was that Polly had, of cooking them! What a vision, Naomer's, of the "bangquit" they would mean!

Betty, making an after-dark approach, could hear her rebel schoolmates holding a grand singing in the gym. So could Miss Kitten, as she came prowling near.

Now that dark night was in her favour, the bogus mistress was yielding to a longing felt all day—the longing to be an unsuspected listener to any talk that might be going on.

Outwardly, she had to make a show of being determinedly aloof. Inwardly, she yearned for signs or scraps of information that would reveal dissension amongst the strikers, a readiness to give in.

They were all singing away like this, at the present moment; but she told herself that that might mean a mere "singing to keep their spirits up."

At any rate, it seemed possible for her to get close to the walls on this side of the building, without being seen, for the blinds had been lowered for the night, and no one was keeping watch by peeping round the edge of a blind.

Suddenly, when she was almost at the end of her stealthy advance upon the building, she stopped dead and then crouched behind a hawthorn bush.

Her hearing had picked up a significant rustling over by the boundary hedge.

A few moments more, and she saw one girl

## NEXT TUESDAY'S

*Brilliant long complete  
Morecove School story  
is entitled:*

### *The 'No Surrender' Schoolgirls*



BY MARJORIE STANTON

Pam Willoughby and her co-strikers are determined not to give in. They are certain that right is on their side—and that, in the end—right will triumph. Be sure to read what happens next in this thrilling struggle against tyranny in next Tuesday's

## SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN



making a stooping run from the hedge to the gym. Miss Kitten did not then recognise the girl as Betty; she thought it must be one of the rebels, slipping back after some venturesome excursion.

But presently the bogus mistress, feeling that it was safe for her to do so, tiptoed closer to the building, and then she heard girls speaking out to one who was standing below an opened window on the other side of the gym. "Betty dear" came frequently, and so she understood; that girl had come across from the hotel, to hold converse with the rebels in this fashion.

Miss Kitten moved to a better position for over-hearing, and something Betty was saying to the girls became perfectly audible.

"If it hadn't been for that, I might have seen the boys again—got them some tea before they rode back. But you can imagine how mother and I felt about it."

"What an upsetting thing to have happened, Betty! And you say you'd taken such a fancy to the young lady?"

"Yes, and even now I simply can't believe—and neither can mother—that she knew they were missing banknotes. But they were the very notes that formed part of the money mother lost, along with her bag at the hotel."

As if a shattering shock had come upon her, the listener round the corner of the building swayed where she stood.

"Now I must scoot back, girls, or mother will be anxious. The case is to come on, on Monday morning, at the police court."

"And you don't think the young lady will get off?" Betty was asked sadly.

"I don't see how she can. Not a ghost of a chance, when it's already proved that she was at the hotel under a false name. Besides, she's told mother; she's not going to say how she came to be in possession of that money."

"Then they'll send her to prison! How awful!"

Miss Kitten, her knees almost giving way under her and her brain quite reeling, felt she must sneak back without waiting to overhear more.

If Betty Barton should make any movement that called for lightning counter-movements to avoid being seen—one could not hope to make them. Oh, but those few remarks that had been audible just then—into what a state of terror they had plunged one!

"The money I gave her; the money that was in the bag I picked up in the hotel!" ran Miss Kitten's mind, as reeling steps took her across the night-enshrouded grounds, back to the schoolhouse. "It has been traced to her, and now—"

Now it was to become a police-court case, and she, Hetty, in the dock!

Silent until this hour, would she be silent still? Could it be expected of her, to choose unmerited imprisonment, rather than save herself by speaking out?

Miss Kitten let herself in by a side door of the schoolhouse. She mounted to her room and shut herself in there, going close to the fire to warm icy hands, a shivering frame.

**H**ARK! There went the Morcove chimes again, sounding in the night. Ding-dong, four times over.

Another hour gone; another hour begun. And every hour leading on, so surely now, to that dreadful exposure by which the rebel scholars were to be proved, at last, to have fought a worthy fight!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

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**R**ECENTLY I have received several inquiries about Peter, my dog. I say "my dog," but I often wonder whether he is mine. True, it was I who paid for the licence, and it was I who footed the bill for damaged furniture, torn carpets, chewed slippers, etc., when he was a puppy. All the same, I have an uneasy feeling—caused by Peter's treatment of me—that he doesn't belong to me. I am no longer the master in my own house!

Now that he is grown up, Peter is the master of the home. It's all wrong, I know, and I blame myself for not having shown a firm hand in those early days, when I really was the master. But how could I? How could I ever be really stern with such an adorable creature?

No, when Peter, in his puppyhood days, rolled over on his back and waved his feet in the air and looked up at me with those lovely eyes, I simply couldn't be stern. And the threatened punishment for some misdeed was forgotten and Peter received a tit-bit instead of a thrashing!

And now I am paying the penalty for my leniency!

#### PETER IS PLEASED

His affection is unbounded. When I returned from my holiday—I had been unable to take Peter, as I was doing a lot of travelling—his joy at seeing me was intense.

He was so excited that he really didn't know what to do. He barked and sniffed and ran round in circles and jumped up at me and upset everything. . . . and for a time there was chaos. And he wouldn't leave me alone. Wherever I went, on my return Peter followed close at my heels, as much as to say: "You shan't escape me again—not if I know it! I'm going to keep my eye on you in future!"

It is only by exercising great cunning and stealth that I am able to reach the office unseen by Peter. At first I thought I should have to disguise myself as a butcher's boy or a "Stop-me-and-buy-one," but fortunately I was spared the necessity of that!

#### TOPPING TALES

Next Tuesday's number of THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN will contain another powerful long complete Morcove School story entitled: "THE 'NO-SURRENDER' SCHOOLGIRLS," by Marjorie Stanton. This is a magnificent tale!

And don't fail to read the ensuing instalments of our two fine serials, and Mildred Gordon's delightful Empire story: "The Pearl-Seekers' Peril."

"The Four Dundonians."—The reason why no story of Pam has yet appeared in the "Schoolgirls' Own Library" is because Pam was not at Morcove at the time of these early adventures. It is possible that a story of her may be published in the future. Best wishes.

"An Admirer of Pam" (Golders Green, N.W.11), "Naomer's Admirer" (Nr. Spalding, Lincs), "Our Gang" (Birmingham), Audrey Simmonds (Thornton Heath, Surrey) "Curly" (Barking, Essex), Anne Reed (Kettering, Northants).

"A Regular Reader" (Leicester), Alice Langton (Derbyshire), Elsie Dudwoodie (Nr. Shiremoor, Newcastle), Joyce Course (Portsmouth), "Naomer's Admirer" (Melbourn, Royston, Herts).

With best wishes,

YOUR EDITOR.