

First of a New Series of Complete Morcove School Novels
Co. of Study 12



The Form Captain SILENCE

BY MARJORIE STANTON

CHAPTER I. Between the Fun

THE door of Study 12 at Morcove School came open in a violent manner, letting in a certain girl who was all a-skip with excitement.

"Betty! Polly!" she shrieked. "Ze room downstairs looks lovely—gorjus! I peeped in and I saw— Ooo, such a gorjus spread! And zen—"

Betty Barton, the Form captain, cut the intruder short by playfully pretending to hurl a notebook at her head. But Polly Linton, Betty's best chum, and usually as boisterous as any in the Form, rapped out in a most unexpected manner:

"Get out of here, Naomer!"

"No—bekas—"

"Because what?" cut in Polly. "Quick—we're busy."

Queen Naomer Nakara, to give her her full name and title—she was Morcove's Royal scholar from a tiny desert kingdom in North Africa—looked pained. She rolled her dark eyes in silent reproach at this unexpected behaviour of her admired Polly Linton.

Polly cross on this festive afternoon, of all afternoons! What could it mean?

Betty Barton was asking herself the same question as she peered across the table at her erstwhile madcap chum. Ever since class-time Polly had been gloom personified.

"I say again," shrieked Naomer defiantly, "ze room downstairs looks gorjus and ze spread is gorjus. So it looks as net you, Betty—she turned to the Form captain, sensing a more vivid

pathetic hearing from that quarter—"will have to make a grand speech, thanking Mrs Merrick for giving ze whole Form such a grand party on her birthday. And ze are nearly ready, too." She wheeled round on Polly. "Which sees ze dress you are wearing, Polly?"

"Dunno—"

"Most of ze girls are changing into something special. Paula! Oooo! You should see Paula! But zere—I can't stay—I must do ze bunk—"

"Is anyone stopping you?" asked Polly coldly.

"What ze diggings!" protested Naomer.

Polly seemed to pull herself together.

"All right, kid," she said with a smile—but Betty noted that it was distinctly forced. "Meet you round the festive board and we'll all be 'gorjus' together, with the accent on the gorge."

"Ha, ha, ha!" beamed Naomer. "Zat sees ze good joke. I will recolmember 'im to tell ze ozzers!"

And she departed with her usual slam, dash, crash!

"Ahhh!" shuddered Polly. "No peace!"

"Funny, you wanting peace," smiled Betty.

And her smile also was forced. She had a feeling at the back of her mind that Polly was keeping something from her—something serious. But she didn't like to question her.

"We ought to start changing," added Betty. "Not much time—"

"Pooh!" shrugged Polly. "It won't take me two ticks to dress. I'm not like Paula Creel, who went off half an hour ago to try on her whole wardrobe. Not but what 'Our Beloved Dicks' says for dressing. Wonder what she'll wear?"

"The blue taffeta, I expect," said Betty, feeling relieved that Polly was at last taking some interest in the birthday party.

At that moment the door opened, disclosing a vision of fairy loveliness. It was Paula Creel. Her frock was of rustling pale blue taffeta, with fluttering frills at the hem; pretty, billowy sleeves, and a bunch of pink rosebuds at the waist.

"Geals," she began in her fascinating drawl, "I just looked in. Yes, wather—"

"Very charming, Paula!" applauded Betty. "Pale blue—nothing suits you better."

"Thanks, thanks," beamed Paula, swinging round on her toes. "I did not, however, present myself to be admired, wather not, bai Jove. On the contwawy—being weally wather before the time, don't you know, I merely thought I would—er—west awhile."

And, according to custom, she sank into the armchair.

"Do you like my fwock, Polly deah?" she asked.

"Not bad," grunted Polly.

"Not bad? D'you mean that there's anything not quite wight?"

"No, no," muttered Polly, making for the door. "It's as 'wight as wain.' So long, sec you later."

And with this Polly made a frowning exit.

"Bai Jove, Betty!" murmured the elegant one in surprise. "What's the mattah with Polly? Who's wubbed her up the wong way?"

"No one, so far as I know," Betty hastily assured her. "But, Paula, old thing, just in case there is anything wrong with Polly, and she came back to tell me all about it—would you mind—"

Betty tactfully indicated the door. "Certainly, certainly!" cried Paula, rising to her feet. "Even between friends, sometimes a third party is in the way. I'll just go upstairs and have one more look in the glass. But you do wegard me"—revolving for inspection—"as being—er—"

"Yes, yes, Paula, you're a vision of loveliness."

"Hawdly that, Betty, but you see—"

"Quite so, Paula. I keep on telling you I see—"

"Such a relief to know that you appwove—"

Betty nodded her head vigorously as she piloted Paula through the doorway and made encouraging noises of admiration to hurry her departure. This at last being accomplished, Betty wandered back into the study, and stood at the table drumming her fingers.

"Polly!" her thoughts ran. "What is the matter with Polly?"

A footstep behind her. Betty turned. Polly strode inside and closed the door with a bang.

"For two pins," she burst out, "I'd give the party a miss."

Betty regarded her chum for a second.

"Polly," she said in her usual direct way, for Betty was not one to beat about the bush, "what's the trouble?"

"Trouble? Nothing. Why should there be?"

"I don't know. I'm asking you."

Grim silence on the part of Polly.

Betty waited.

"At any rate," mumbled Polly at length, "it wouldn't be any use telling you. You can't do anything—"

"No—really?"

"Nothing," grimaced Polly, pacing the floor.

"No one can do anything—least of all, you!"

"What a funny thing to say," said Betty placidly. "Not very flattering, either, when you come to think of it."

"Sorry, Betty," Polly was all contrition. "Of course, if you didn't happen to be captain of the Form—"

"Suppose you forget for the moment I'm captain," pressed Betty. "Won't that help?"

"I don't know," returned Polly slowly. "I—don't know."

For a few moments the chums remained silent. The study's hushed state caused the pleasant hubbub to be faintly heard of the Form preparing for the coming party. Girls rushing about; little squeals of laughter—

"Polly," broke in Betty, "we shan't be interrupted for some while. Now, what is it?"

Polly fought her hesitation for a second, then she brought out a crumpled envelope and took from it a letter.

"This is the cause of it all," she muttered. "Read it."

Betty took the letter. The first words caused her to give a slight ejaculation.

"But, Polly," she cried, "this letter isn't for you at all!"

"I know. It must have got put in the wrong envelope by mistake, and the same thing, of course, happened to mine. My brother Jack's mixed things up beautifully, and, incidentally, given himself away as you'll read."

Betty read the letter aloud in a low voice:

"Dear Marshall,—I've heard the news. So you're going to use my letter to show 'somebody' up if the money isn't paid when promised. Just the sort of rotten trick anyone might expect from a cad like you. I shan't let 'somebody's' name or Grangemoor's be dragged in the mud, so I'm giving you my word of honour—if you can understand such a thing—that the matter will be settled. As for you and your gambling den, the less said the better.

"JACK LINTON."

Betty read it through twice before making any comment.

"When did this come?" she asked.

"Four o'clock post."

Betty glanced at the envelope.

"Addressed to you all right," she murmured. "Clear enough what's happened. Your letter was put in the envelope addressed to Marshall. Is he any relation to Joyce Marshall, who lives at Gorselands?"

"Yes—her cousin." Polly sounded most unhappy. She clenched her hands and took a turn up and down the room. "Jack seems to be in a pretty nice mess, doesn't he? In debt for gambling—and Marshall's got a letter of his that he's using as a threat. You can see what it means. If Jack can't pay, then the Grangemoor authorities will be informed, and that means—"

Polly stopped. She had no need to go on. Betty knew only too well what she meant—expulsion for Jack!

She went up to Polly and put an arm round her shoulders.

"Perhaps it isn't as serious as it seems," she said in an effort to console her chum. "Jack may have—"

Polly shook her head.

"There isn't a shadow of doubt, Betty. Jack's put a brave face on it, but he must be in a tight corner. You know it, too, Betty."

"Maybe I do," admitted Betty. "I must confess that it's a very difficult letter to explain away. But Polly, why did you hesitate to show me this? What was the meaning of all that tosh you talked about my not being able to help you because I was Form captain? It's true my worldly possessions only amount to half a crown—"

"It wasn't because of that," muttered Polly. "No, the reason I hesitated was because— Well, this letter has got to be delivered to Steve Marshall to-night, or he might use that other letter as he's threatened to do. It's got to be delivered—unless I can get hold of the first letter—so I've got to break bounds this evening and cycle over to Gorselands—five miles away. You're Form captain—how can you help me break rules?"

Betty's forehead wrinkled into a frown. "It's out of the question, I suppose," she said, "going over to Grangemoor School and tackling Jack— No, I see that would be more difficult than getting to Gorselands. Not much chance. Polly, of successfully breaking out and getting back again without an accomplice—"

"Here!" breathed Polly. "Do you mean that you will—"

"Help!" completed Betty with a slight smile. "Yes—that was at the back of my mind—if the worst comes to the worst. You didn't think I was going to be a little prig, and gas about duty, when my best chum wanted help, did you? And my chum's brother, too. I'm as fond of Jack as you are. He's one of the best, and I bet when we hear the whole story he'll turn up trumps—"

"Betty!" burst out Polly, dashing at her and hugging her. "You're a brick! Oh, but suppose we're found out? I'd never forgive myself if anything happened to you, through me."

"Rubbish and stuff!" retorted Betty. "Not like you, Polly, to look on the black side. We shan't be found out. We'll manage. Now do you feel better?"

"Heaps!" returned Polly. "And I'm sure, as you say, Jack will be able to explain everything. Fortunately, the party being on this evening, will help tremendously. No one will notice if I slip away."

"That's where I shall be of assistance," nodded Betty thoughtfully. "While we're dressing, I'll bring my great brain to work on the matter. Good old Nelson—"

"What on earth has Nelson got to do with it?" demanded Polly.

"Really, Polly," rebuked Betty with mock seriousness. "You ought to pay more attention to history lessons. Don't you remember how

Nelson put his telescope to his blind eye and disobeyed orders? That's what I'm doing with you. This evening I shall pretend to see that you're not absent."

Polly, in silent thanks, slipped an arm round Betty's waist, and together the chums proceeded upstairs to put on their pretty dresses in honour of Miss Merriek's birthday party.

And all the while they were doing this, Polly was muttering to herself: "What a chum—what a chum!" with many a swift glance of affection towards Betty.

Not only that, Polly's usual spirit and determination had come back to her. The risks she was going to take seemed less now. Oh, she'd win through all right, and dear old Jack would be helped in a way he never expected.

If she were only sure— But, of course, she was sure. Jack, as Betty had said, was one of the best!

JUST about this moment in Grangemoor School, some few miles from Morcove, a boy was pacing his study, obviously deep in thought. Not pleasant thoughts, either, judging by his expression.

The door opened, revealing a stout youth.



In sudden acute dismay Betty scanned the few lines of disguised handwriting. It was a message to Miss Somerfield—saying that a Morcove girl intended to break bounds! And Betty realised at once that Polly's mission was known to someone!

"Jack, old spud!" the newcomer expostulated. "We've been waiting half an hour for you down at the gym. Don't say you've forgotten?"

Jack Linton clapped a hand to his head. "I jolly well had!" he exclaimed. "Frightfully sorry, Bobby. I'll come at once." "Fancy you forgetting an appointment!" breathed portly Bobby Bloot. "Unlike you, Jack—"

"I know I know," returned Jack Linton hurriedly. "Fact is, I was thinking of—of something else, and you and Dave slipped my mind." "Oh!" queried the other. "Something important?"

Jack shook his head and darted for his cap. "Only something about a letter," he muttered. Then he added to himself: "Gosh! There's going to be some trouble if it turns out that I can't get that money!"

CHAPTER 2.

After the Party

FIVE-AND-TWENTY girls at least, sitting round the long table in Moreove's music-room, and all tongues going!

Cups being passed up for refills, and cake-platters offering that assortment which dusky Naomer had styled "Gorjus!" The Form thoroughly enjoying itself at this joyous gathering—and Polly Linton quite the life and soul of the party!

Betty was glad. Evidently it had done Polly a world of good to know that this evening there would be a chum to aid her.

The desperate enterprise was of just that nature to make a chum's assistance valuable. Easy for a girl to slip out during forbidden hours; not so easy for that girl to return undetected, unless she had some faithful, resourceful ally working for her.

Everything arranged beforehand; signals agreed upon in case signals should be needed: "You do this, whilst I do that!"—what a difference it meant when the time came!

Another peal of laughter went up from some of the merry-makers, and Betty heard it being gurgled: "Did you hear that, girls—what Polly said? Ha, ha, ha!"

Polly again, sending them into "fits." "And all the time," Betty said to herself, "she is thinking about later on—how we are to work it."

"Ten pounds!" someone said, amidst all the babel of talk; and Betty gave a violent start. To her it meant the crying aloud of that amount Jack was probably owing, here at the festive board!

But it was only some girl hazarding a guess at the weight of Miss Merrick's birthday cake, now going round the table; a mighty cake from the Barcombe Creamery, to which the Form mistress had treated herself, only for the sake of being able to treat—the Form!

"Enormous!" shrieked Naomer as the cake came to her. "Whoa! Bekas I must have ze bits of izing that belong to my slice!"

"Enormous is right," said Polly, peering at the slice to which Naomer had helped herself.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Cups," requested Miss Merrick blithely. "Betty dear? I haven't seen you making much of a tea yet?"

"Betty is thinking about what she is going to say for all of us," laughed one of the captain's chums. "So can't she say it now, and get it over?"

The entire tea-table hailed this suggestion with delight.

"Yes, Betty—yes! Come on, Betty—speech by the cap! Spee—eech! Ha, ha, ha!"

How she managed to fulfil the pleasant duty which had devolved upon her, as captain, Betty never knew.

It was a case of having to grope, suddenly, for phrases which had gone to the back of her mind. Those few graceful sentences which she had to speak, conveying the Form's felicitations to its adored mistress—Betty had put them together earlier in the day. Since then, however, the affair of Polly and her brother had become an all-absorbing interest.

At one point in the brief speech, Betty was aware of some derisive murmurings; but they came only from Fay Denver and her sister Edna, two girls who always did make themselves objectionable.

The rest of the Form appeared to be quite pleased with what she was saying on its behalf. As for Miss Merrick, rising to reply, she dealt with what had just been said very appreciatively.

Afterwards, when the happy gathering had broken up, with much cheering for Miss Merrick, and the Form's own noble self, and Morecove School in general, there were comments from some of Betty's best chums to set her mind at rest.

"You were splendid, Betty," came from tall Pam Willoughby, whose own innate sense of how to do the graceful thing made her a reliable judge. "Brief and to the point!"

"Yes—wather, bai Jove! And naow, I pwe-sume, one must pwepare for pwep—ah, deah! I must change first, howevah, or I shall hev Naomer spoiling my fweck!"

The chimes had been ding-donging six o'clock when the Form came away from the music-room. In chummy twos and threes, girls were mounting to the studies on a floor above.

But a few had remained to help clear up and return borrowed chairs, and Naomer was one of these jovial volunteers. Helping to clear up, Naomer was realising, meant helping to "scuff" some of the left-over eatables.

What with the dusky imp staying below to do this, and Paula's going off to change out of her dainty frock, Betty and Polly found themselves alone in Study 12.

Bit of luck at the start, this! "My bike is ready to hand, out-of-doors," Polly whispered. "So now, Betty, let me get away at once—in case Madge or Pam or any of our other chums come in."

"Out by the side door downstairs, is that it?" Betty said, under her breath. "And I'll lock it behind you. Then, about your getting in again, by-and-by? To make quite sure, the position of this study-window's blind will be a signal to you. If drawn down crookedly, that means I'm ready to help you in at the class-room window. If the blind is straight—"

"Oh, Betty, I don't like the idea of your doing this for me; I hate it! Do let me take my ch—"

"No! A straight blind means keep away from the class-room windows and make for the outside iron stairway—the fire-escape. I'll touch the push-bars when the time is near, so you can come in that way—on the top floor."

"I can see you having to do things that would lose you the captaincy if they were found out."

"What about you, Polly, and what you are doing?"

"I'm different. Jack's my brother."

"I've said before, dear; he's the brother of my dearest chum. But now—I'll go first."

Betty was moving to the door as she said that. An end to talk! They had arranged what little could be arranged; so much had to be left, desperately, to pure chance. And the longer they debated together, now, the more Polly would suffer in her mind.

Those scruples, which did her such credit, still troubled her—poor Polly, born to make life go so gaily for those around her, and yet fated to undergo such an ordeal as this!

Not without many an encounter with some Form mate or other, who would have her stop for a friendly word, did Betty get downstairs. On the first floor, she had even to skirmish past all those volunteers who were lugging chairs away from the music-room.

But at last she was in the Form class-room, on the ground-floor—quite alone there, making a pretence of seeking something from the stationery cupboard.

One of the windows was nearby, and that window had its top sill lowered to air the class-room after the day's work.

Suddenly Polly was with her, carrying hat and coat.

Not a word passed. It was for Betty now to dart across to the doorway, to be on watch there.

She did so, feeling a terrible sense of guilt; and yet—No, she was not going to regret having lent Polly aid.

Moreover did not own a more headstrong girl than Polly. Unaided, she would still have made the attempt this evening. That was a terrible certainty. And, unaided, she would almost as certainly have been found out.

Her very popularity in the Form rendered her absence all the more liable to be noticed—unless she had a friend working for her whilst she was away.

Scree—eech!

Ah, why was that window making such a row with its sashes as Polly raised it! But it had been opened wide enough now to let her wriggle out over the low sill—and there was no one coming.

Betty, at the doorway, peering out into the hall, waved a "Go on—yes!"

And then, looking round, she found that Polly was GONE.

S CREE-EE-CH! again.

Betty was drawing down the lower sash of the window.

She did not dare linger to peer out for a last glimpse of her chum, flitting away in the darkness.

Dashing round to the stationery cupboard, the captain of the Form knelt to take out a tray of pens, and it was a ready-witted decision of hers to spill some of the pens all over the floor when she heard—a footfall in the room.

Betty was returning the upset pens to the tray when another girl reached the cupboard, after a slow saunter across the deskless part of the class-room.

"Hallo, Betty!"

"Oh—hallo, Edna!"

One of the Denver sisters—bother her!

"Don't you use a fountain-pen, then, for evening work?" Edna airily inquired.

"Sometimes," said Betty.

She then pulled out a wad of foolscap from a ream-packet, to imply that it was not for a fresh pen only that she had come downstairs. Nor, indeed, was it!

"I want a pen, too," Edna said, "so' you can leave the tray out."

"Oh, right!"

Betty, rising from her knees, walked away. As she crossed towards the half-glassed door, she had a faint, dark reflection, in the pane, of the girl whom she had left behind her at the cupboard.

That reflection showed Edna Denver to be staring after her, Betty—suspiciously!

"Oh, but how can she be suspecting?" Betty rallied herself half-angrily. "No, the girl always is like that—grinning behind your back."

Edna's pursuing stare did, in fact, end in her starting to grin to herself, when Betty had passed

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out. Not wanting a pen, after all, and disdainful to bend down to put back the tray that had been left on the floor, this excessively pretty girl—the younger of the two sisters—sauntered out of the class-room.

Two minutes later she was putting her head in at the Study 12 doorway.

"I say, Betty—"

"Yes, what, Edna?"

"I could do with a sheet of that foolscap, if you can spare it? I don't want the bother of going down again—"

"Oh, here you are, then—have a couple for luck."

"Thanks so much! Where's Polly, then?"

"Can't say."

"Helping to clear away in the music-room?"

"She might be. Do you want her?" Betty questioned boldly. "If so—"

"Oh, no! I only wondered. Usually, you're such a crowd in here!"

Humming a tune, Edna sauntered away, going half-way up the corridor to turn in at that study which she shared with her sister Fay.

"What I told you about Polly," Edna smiled darkly to Fay, who was sitting away from the table, reading. "I thought I wasn't mistaken in what I overheard before tea. She's done it!"

"She has!"

"Yep! So now, Fay—what do we do?"

"This!" said the elder sister, her eyes a-gleam with malice.

And, rising to come to the table, she sat down to write, using a sheet of paper torn from a writing-pad.

"My handwriting won't be recognised," she muttered a few moments later. "I'm taking care to disguise it!"

CHAPTER 3.

Taken By Surprise

PAULA CREEL, drifting into Study 12 after an hour upstairs, was surprised to find Betty all by herself.

"Bai Jove, Betty deah! Wheah, then, is—"

"Naomer? Oh, she stayed behind in the music-room to—"

"Nevah mind about Naomer—wather not, bai Jove! Naomer will matorialise quite soon enough for me, I'm sure. But Polly—wheah is she?"

"Oh, Polly—she's doing something for her brother Jack, Paula; something that's made her go away from here—"

"Fow a little peace and quietness, what? A weppit fwom Naomer's unwiliness, I gathah? Weall," Paula beamed, subsiding into the best armchair, "I can quite appreciate a wesort to the libwawy, or somewheah similawly wemote fwom intewwuptioun—yes, wathah, bai Jove! You, I see, are busy, Betty!"

"Just a spot of prep. I suppose you'll be pushing on with your work, too, Paula?"

"Er—pwesently—yes, wather!" The twuth being, Betty deah, I find myself extwaowdinawly fatigued after the birthday party. It did me no good, I may wemawk, sitting next to Naomer. Er—may I inquire, Betty deah, pweicely what Polly is doing for her bwother Jack?"

"Oh, Paula, I'm busy. I—"

"Sowwy! I will wefwain fwom further talk, Betty deah. Merely wemawking that the ideal pawty would hev included Jack Linton and his Gwangemoor pals—Dave Cardew and Jimmy Chewwol and Tubby Bloot; but particularly Jack—yes, wather! Chawwning fellow, Jack—chawwning! I sometimes wondah if Polly even is as pwoud of him as she ought to be, bai Jove!"

At this instant the door was tapped. Then it opened, revealing the trim figure of Ellen, Morcove's most popular parlourmaid.

"If you please, miss, will you go down to the headmistress—at once!"

And Betty, to whom these words were said, felt her heart miss a beat and then go throbbing on—in sudden fear for absent Polly.

WAS the whole thing known? Had something reached Miss Somerfield's ears? This unexpected, unusual summons to report at once to the headmistress—it seemed to presage disaster!

But until one knew—perfect calmness; that was the thing!

"Right—ho, Ellen—thanks."

That response of Betty's enabled her to rehearse, as it were, an unconcerned manner. Similarly, she did a scamper up the corridor, and then went rushing downstairs as if she were a girl without a care in the world.

But, arrived at a certain door marked "Private," she seemed to hear her heart knocking just as loudly against her ribs as her knuckles knocked upon the mahogany.

"Come in!"

Then something—something HAD upset the headmistress! One could tell, by the absence of that gentle amiability from the voice which had answered.

Taking a grip upon herself, Betty went in. She closed the door behind her and went forward, unlooked at by Miss Somerfield, who stood by

her desk, pondering the contents of a recently unfolded note.

"Oh, is that you, Betty?" came at last.

"Yes, Miss Somerfield."

The headmistress tossed down the light sheet of paper to her desk. After it had settled upon the paper, she still eyed it in evident annoyance.

Then she turned to Betty with an effort at the old cordiality, so that the guilty-minded captain experienced a secret sense of relief.

"You showed me once, Betty, how good you could be at correcting printers' proofs. It must be your editing the 'Morcove Magazine' that makes you so expert. I wish you would do the same for me this evening—correcting these that have just come from the 'Barncombe Herald' office. You may, if you like, do them here."

Whilst speaking, Miss Somerfield had picked up a sheaf of the long strips of printed matter that are known as "galley proofs." The local newspaper office, in Barncombe, did a good deal of printing for the school, including book-form collections of the headmistress' addresses and lectures to scholars.

"I would rather, Betty, you did not take the proofs to your study. As I say, you can do the work here, as I have to go out." And after a pause:

"By the way, Betty, I do not need to ask if you know anything about a girl's intention to slip out of bounds this evening? You would, I am positive, have taken steps had any such intention become known to you. I could, of course, find out if every girl is in school, but that would mean publicity, I fear."

"Yes, Miss Somerfield." The attentive remark was a safe one to make. Daringly, Betty added: "Could Polly Linton help me with the proofs—a double check?"

"Certainly. Polly is very good at revising—and this is all good practise for you. I'll be reading the sheets myself, to-morrow, and will see how many misprints you have missed! Now I'm going out in the car—to catch that girl who has broken bounds!"

Betty felt her heart give another big leap.

"I—I may use this room, then, until you come back, Miss Somerfield?"

"Oh, I shall not be coming to this room again to-night. Just remain, to do the revisions, for as long as you feel inclined, Betty—leaving the revised proofs on my desk for the morning."

"Very good."

Miss Somerfield returned to her desk, to put the note she had been reading, when Betty came in, under a paper-weight. Then, with a hard sigh and an annoyed look, she went from the room.

And, before she had closed the door, Betty craned over the desk to scan the lines of writing that were under the paper-weight. They were in a round hand, all down strokes sloping backwards, and Betty thought: "Some girl—disguising her writing!"

"To Miss Somerfield," she said,—"This is to inform you that a Morcove girl has gone out of bounds this evening to pay a secret visit to a house called Gorselands."

That was all.

All! But it was terrible, naming as it did Polly's intended destination. Gorselands! And to Gorselands the headmistress was even now on the point of setting off in her car!

Hot and cold went Betty. Her breathing jerked as if she had just run half a mile. What

to do now—to save Polly from being caught in the act; caught—at Gorselands!

But could anything be done to save her—could it? How in mercy's name was it possible when Miss Somerfield was going there by car! Even with a few minutes' start, who could hope to keep ahead of a car? And the headmistress was starting at once!

"No," Betty said to herself, turning to and fro in a fever of excitement, "it just can't be done. I'm whacked there—whacked! The only thing now—hope that Polly will not be seen when Miss Somerfield gets there. And yet—oh, if only I could do something! It is so awful to—leave her to her fate."

Suddenly then it flashed upon Betty's mind—one thing she could do that might mean much, after all. Acting on the idea, she ran out of the headmistress' room, and was next minute dashing into Study 12.

"I say, Paula—"

"Bai Jove, Betty deah; you gave me quite a stawt!"

"If you see Polly, tell her I want her in the headmistress' private room. I've been given some proofs to revise, and she might like to help me."

"Oh, wight-ho!"

"But," Betty was careful to add, in the act of withdrawing, "I may be seeing Polly myself before she comes in."

Then, as quickly as she had come up to the study, Betty ran down again, returning to Miss Somerfield's room. Another idea had now suggested itself. It had been a good plan to leave word at Study 12 for Polly like that. It meant that, as the evening passed and Polly failed to turn up there, she would be presumed to be helping with the proof-reading in the headmistress' private room.

But now there was this further idea—a really daring one: *Get to Gorselands by the very car which was taking Miss Somerfield!*

Everything during the next minute or so was done by Betty to the order of an inward voice that was certainly not the Voice of Reason. It must have been her love for Polly that dictated action. "Get your hat and coat and come back to this room—quickly!" And when she had done that:

"Now, out by these french windows! Latch them behind you, and they will be the way in if you have the luck to get back—with Polly."

So, ere another minute had sped, she was passing out by the double glass-doors which opened on to a tiled veranda.

As she quietly drew the doors close—to after her exit from the room and latched them shut, she heard the whine of a car coming slowly round from the school garage.

Miss Somerfield's chauffeur was bringing the car to the main porch of the schoolhouse to pick her up.



Creeping round behind the car, Betty saw Miss Somerfield reach the porch and ring the bell. If Polly was in the house, Betty realised, nothing could now prevent her being caught by the Headmistress!

CHAPTER 4.

The Deed She Dared

BETTY crept away from the veranda. Many ornamental shrubs grew close at hand, and by some stealthy tiptoeing she was able to conceal herself whilst making for the best bit of shelter to be had, close to where the car had now pulled up.

The engine was ticking over—very smoothly and softly—yet even so faint a noise was something for Betty to be thankful for. If she herself made the slightest sound now, that the waiting chauffeur could detect, then she would be done for—and so would Polly!

But, by making every movement with extreme caution, she got to where it was only necessary for her to stand perfectly still.

None too soon had she taken up her position there, amidst the screening shrubs bordering the gravel. Now the porch door opened and Miss Somerfield came out to the car.

The chauffeur, down from his seat at the wheel, had stationed himself close to the door by which Miss Somerfield would enter the car. This was all right for Betty, as it meant that the car itself was between her and the chauffeur.

He opened the door and Miss Somerfield got in, voicing certain directions to him as she did so. Then the door was closed by the chauffeur with a slam, and he darted back to his driving-seat.

Now!

The car was starting to glide away when Betty made her dash—for the luggage-grid at the back. It was folded up, but she guessed that the sections worked by a simple hinged device, and, running to keep pace with the car, she got the grid opened out to its full extent.

Then, when another moment must have found her either dragged off her feet or letting the car go from her, she gave a desperate running leap, both hands gripping ironwork.

For one frightening moment she had the sense of having failed in her leap. Her position was insecure, and she was going to be unable to hold on!

But some frantic writhings instantly made a difference. Remembering to keep a good grip with both hands, she wriggled again and seemed to settle into a safe position. For the present, at any rate, she was almost comfortable—with the car already going fast.

It was rather a hair-raising moment for her when the car turned to the left sharply, whilst passing out on to the high road. After that, she felt confident of being able to keep her place for the whole five-mile journey.

Just under her huddled figure glowed the tail-light of the car, faintly illuminating the surface of the road. To look down in the darkness and see the dimly illumined road going away from under the car like a travelling belt under rollers, was to feel an awful giddiness.

She stopped herself from watching—shut her eyes, so that only the rising purr of the car should tell her of the rapidly increasing pace.

Another swerve, as the car turned off the highway on to a by-road traversing the moor; but she was more firmly settled by now and felt no alarming effects. Nor did the lumpiness of the by-road let her in for any violent joltings. The car was beautifully sprung, and all shocks were "absorbed."

So, feeling quite sure that she was going to endure to the end successfully, she now had time to ask herself: Was this the thing to have done? And again, if Reason could not answer yes, her love for Polly could.

By no other means could Polly have been warned. Perhaps, at the journey's end, it would be impossible to warn her, after all; but, at least, this was an attempt to do so. And there was this to remember—to count upon hopefully all the time. The car would be there only a few minutes after Polly's arrival on her bicycle.

Everything had happened with such fateful rapidity the moment Polly had slipped away by the class-room window. Five miles she had to cycle, along a rough road for most of the way. And here was the car doing a comfortable thirty-five—yes, comfortable even for her, Betty, getting this "ride behind!"

She started to do the sum in her head. If Polly rode at sixteen miles an hour, with the car going thirty-five, after giving Polly a start of ten minutes, what would the result be?

"Oh, I don't know!" Betty gave up her bit of mental arithmetic with a low laugh. "Roughly, it would take Polly twenty minutes and the car ten. Allowing for Polly's ten-minute start—why, we ought to get there about the same time!"

Or—would they overtake her?

At that very real possibility, Betty felt a sinking of the heart. For the car to overtake any young girl, cycling towards Gorselands, would be the signal for it to stop. Miss Somerfield was assuredly watching from the windows as the car bowled along this dark, lumpy road. Very likely,

too, she had told her chauffeur to look out for a girl on a bicycle.

From that moment onwards Betty was in constant dread of a sudden braking-up on the lonely road, and of Miss Somerfield springing out to confront the dismounted culprit with a recognising:

"You!"

This terrible suspense was aggravated by Betty's huddled position on the luggage-grid, where she could only see that road as it slipped away behind the car. Impossible to see ahead! But she could imagine how the road ahead was receiving the searchlight glare from the head-lamps.

Suddenly the car slowed, whilst a significant glare came from the electric horn.

Betty had one thought at that critical moment: "If they have overtaken Polly—if they have found her—then they are going to find me as well. I shall just get down and show myself, that's all."

But, to her wild relief, the car had only slowed to turn aside into another secondary road, where four wicks met.

They picked up speed again, and now, as Betty knew, they were on the last half-mile of the run. The lighted windows of Gorselands must be in view to the driver now. The big house was one that had been built on a picked spot, with grand views, in the very heart of the moor, amongst the miles of gorse.

Little more than a minute later the car gradually slowed. This time, Betty had no apprehensions. They were going to turn in at the entrance gates to the Gorselands drive.

She waited until the car had done that, and then she shifted in her huddled position, so as to get rid of any cramp in legs and arms.

Unless she could act with lightning speed the moment the car stopped, she would be seen. At the best, the risk of being seen was going to be very great. There might not be shrubs or other shelter near the Gorselands front door. There might be a very brilliant outside lamp burning in the porch. The Marshalls were people who liked to make a display.

The car stopped—opposite the front door. And it was Betty's horror to realise that there were no shrubs to shelter her, and there was a light—a brilliant one.

But she could not stay where she was, on the grid. The chauffeur was springing down to open a door of the car for Miss Somerfield.

Betty, with only this moment in which to do so, without being detected, came foot-to-gravel behind the car. If she ached in every limb, she was too excited to notice the cramping pains.

Hush!

Not a sound did she make as she crept round, stooping low, to that side of the car which was away from the lamp-lit porch.

Miss Somerfield advanced to give her ring at the bell. The chauffeur returned to his seat at the wheel. And Betty, only shielded by the car, wondered wildly:

"Supposing he moves on!"

CHAPTER 5.

When Polly?

BUT, after a few heart-in-mouth moments, Betty knew that the car was to stand here, whilst Miss Somerfield would be indoors, making her sensational inquiry.

The chauffeur was back in his seat, Betty realised.

Desperately she glanced this way and that, hoping to see some bit of shelter, after all, close at hand. But there was absolutely none.

"Steady, then," she said to herself. "Wait!"

Miss Somerfield had given her ring at the bell. Now the front door was opened by a parlourmaid. Betty heard the voice of her headmistress, putting a question in a quiet tone. Then the maid must have said a—"Will you come in, please?"

When Betty next ventured a wary peep round the back of the car, she saw that Miss Somerfield had advanced into the hall and that the maid was closing the outer door.

Never in her life had Morocco's Form captain drawn such a big breath of relief. Here she was, her presence still unsuspected; and now—where was Polly?

It was like Betty to know when to act with a dash of roguish audacity.

On tiptoe she simply walked away from the car—her one bit of shelter on that spacious gravelled area. The chauffeur—and he was sitting at the wheel—was the only person whom she now had to fear.

Using the back of the car to screen her from any straying glance of his, she calmly tiptoed away like that, reached a lawn which had a row of laurels on one side of it—and was safe!

The southing of the night breeze through the evergreens was the only sound she heard. The house was not showing many lighted windows, and it was perfectly quiet—a rare state for Gorselands to be in, she imagined, for the Marshalls were great people for entertaining.

Perhaps Miss Somerfield's turning up, "on information received," had created a sensational break in the normal gaieties of the evening?

Betty only noticed this deep silence because her ears were straining to catch any sound which might come to her from round about in the darkness, suggestive of Polly's lurking presence.

At the same time, Betty kept on the move, peering about most eagerly—frantically. As the car had not overtaken Polly, it was to be presumed that she had got here before it. But—

Hallo, what was this, lying concealed amongst some young firs? Plated parts shining dully in the darkness; a girl's bicycle—Polly's!

And then, as Betty stealthily crept past the machine, her eyes came away from it to peer about again, and she saw—Polly herself!

THERE she was; a dark shape in the darker night, dwarfed by that stoop which caution demanded, as she stole through the grounds of the country-house—working round to the back of it, apparently.

Polly, arrived upon the scene and now setting about the next daring step in her great venture!

What form that step was to take, Betty could guess, and with a silent rush she went forwards to make herself known to her chum. Polly was already at some french windows and had the near one open.

"Polly!"

The imploring whisper caused her to turn about sharply. Her face was like a white mask in the darkness to Betty, who slipped nearer, and then whispered again:

"Come away, Polly—come away, quick!"

"Gosh!" the madcap gasped. "You, Betty—here? Oh, why—what—"

"Sh! You know a car has turned up?" Betty breathed into her chum's left ear. "It's Miss Somerfield! I—I came with her, but she doesn't know."

"What!"

"I rode on the grid. Polly, do for goodness' sake come away with me at once—at once! She's in the house now—Miss Somerfield is, letting them know that she had information; a girl from Morocco was coming here in secret."

"Information?" Polly echoed blankly. "How?"

"Oh, don't ask me now," Betty entreated. "A girl at the school. Come away! Both of us—we must get back as fast as ever we can manage. If we do that, Polly—if only we get back before Miss Somerfield, then there is still a chance that it will never be known. If we don't, it's expulsion for you—"

"And for you as well, Betty—now! Oh," Polly almost moaned, "why did you, Betty? Why—why did you come!"

"I had to save you if I could, and this was the only way. Do come along—back to that bike of yours. It must get the pair of us back to Morocco, somehow!"

Polly took a retiring step or two under the compulsion of the other's urgent, guarded voice. Then she checked, casting her eyes round to the house-wall again and the window.

"I'll put the letter inside," she muttered. "Put it where Steve Marshall's certain to see it. I was hoping for a chance to search for that first letter of Jack's—the one that's being held over his head, but that'll have to wait now."

In a moment Polly had slipped the letter on a table just inside the room, then she closed the window and moved away with Betty.

For a few yards they kept together; then Betty diverted her steps to go by stealthy means down to the gateway, leaving Polly to retrieve the bicycle and come to her with it.

There seemed to Betty to be a long waiting at the gateway, and all the while she dreaded to hear sounds of Miss Somerfield's coming away from the house to re-enter the car.

At last Polly came wheeling her bicycle down the grassy verge beside the gravel. Betty moved out from a hiding-place, and that was the signal for her chum to mount the saddle, whispering an eager:

"Hop up behind me, Betty!"

A moment more and the two girls were off and away. Betty sat on the saddle, and Polly stood up on the pedals and worked them hard, holding on grimly to the handlebars with her hands.

Not until they had gone some little distance from the Gorselands gateway did Polly switch on lights. Luckily, her bicycle was fitted with electric lamps.

Meantime, Betty was keeping her head turned so as to peer anxiously in the direction of the house from which this stealthy retirement had been made.

"Car's still waiting, Polly! What a bit of luck that Miss Somerfield hasn't come away yet. We may do it!" Betty whispered joyfully. "And—listen; it'll be all right about getting in unnoticed, I hope. Through the french windows of Miss Somerfield's private room."

"What?" panted Polly, whilst she plugged away at the pedals.

"It doesn't matter, dear; I had better not talk. But we should be all right, if only—oh, if only we get back before the car! Hark, Polly! Oh, Miss Somerfield has come away from the house. I can hear the car—I can see it—yes, moving off now! It's on the drive!" Betty's voice whispered. "It will be overtaking us in a minute. Polly, stay—we must get down—hide!"

Polly switched off the lights, braked-up sharply, and next second both girls were down from the,

machine. Taking it with them, they dived aside into a screening patch of gorse, there to lie concealed whilst the car should go by.

What else could they do but that? To Betty, who knew more than Polly about the position back at the school, all seemed over for both of them. Miss Somerfield had only to go to her private room, when she got indoors, to find her, Betty, not at work upon the proof-revising.

Then there were the french windows—left by Betty only on the latch! Miss Somerfield might easily notice the unbolting state of the windows. Again, she might send a maid to find Betty.

In any case, how could the pair of them hope, now, to get back into the schoolhouse undetected? There was no chum of theirs standing by, as it were, to aid them; nobody to give a signal or to slip back a bolt at the right moment!

With the car coming on fast in the dark night, Betty, as she crouched in concealment with Polly, felt that she was going to deserve nothing but reproaches, after all, from that dear chum.

Better if one had stayed at the school—a thousand times better! It was all up with the pair of them now. Polly was fated to be found out over a deed that would appear so serious, expulsion itself might be the penalty. And it was going to be discovered that the Form captain, of all girls, had aided and abetted her!

The very speed of the car when, a few moments later, it went by them on the road, seemed to mock at both girls in their beaten state.

A whizz, a glare of lights, and it was gone, except for the starlike tail-lamp; red for danger—a final mockery, for the red light seemed to say:

"Come on, if you dare!"

Yet that was what they had to do now; go on again at a mere snail's pace compared with the car's.

"I'm awfully sorry, Polly—"

"Why?" Betty's rueful mumble was answered as they got back to the moorland road with the bicycle. "You've done what no other girl would have attempted to do for me."

"It has all turned out for the worst, anyhow."

"It's for me to be sorry," Polly muttered grimly. "Now you'll be in the soup along with me. I don't care for my own sake. But when I think of you, Betty—the captain—"

"Don't you bother about me, dear. Here, let me pedal this time—yes, I insist! You shall take a turn again, later, if you like. Not that it is any use," Betty grimly added, "our going in for frantic speed."

And then, before there had been time for her to move, wild excitement seized her and Polly alike.

By its glaring headlamps the car was still showing them its course through the darkness of night, and both despair-ridden girls had suddenly noticed a turning-off in an unexpected direction.

"Betty!" the madcap almost yelled. "Geelook!"

"Yes, gone to the left, Polly!"

"When it should have kept straight on to make for the main road between Barncombe and Morcove!"

"Yes!"

A tremble with the agitation which it meant for both of them, they stood watching in the darkness for a few seconds longer. Then Betty emitted a cry of sheer delight.

"Not going straight back to the school, Polly—that's what it means!"

"Yes! Oh—hooray!" the madcap agreed wildly. "Betty, are we saved, after all—are we?"

"Come on and see! A chance yet, perhaps! Come on!" Betty panted, hopping up to the pedals.

Instantly Polly was astride the saddle and holding her chum by the shoulders.

How Betty pedalled now! The thrust she put into each downward motion of her feet, so as to send the doubly laden bicycle whirring along the moorland road—faster, faster!

And even when they were careering along with a gentle incline in their favour—never fast enough! How could she touch the brakes whilst whizzing downhill, when every moment was so precious!

Whir, whir, whir! Hard and fast she rode the machine, with Polly up behind, joyfully visualising a triumphant ending to the night's adventure, after all. Back before the headmistress—after all! Nothing—nothing ever known of what the pair of them had done to night, after all!

"Here, Betty, let me, now!"

"Right-ho, then!"

They had won back to the main road, with less than a mile to go to the main gateway of the school. Betty was breathless after her own bit of hard plugging along. So she had no hesitation about changing places with Polly. A moment saved might mean all the difference between triumph and disaster.

The time now? They could not tell exactly; but they knew that it must be just about the time for all evening work to have finished, the time when girls began to mingle chummily. A chance inquiry up there in the Form quarters: "Where's Betty? Where's Polly?"—and what it might lead to!

But here was the gateway at last, with Polly still keeping the pedals whirring vigorously. Half-way up the nightbound drive—the cycle lamps being switched off now—both girls dismounted. Together they ran on foot with the machine to the cycle-sheds, and left it there.

Then, at tip-top speed, they dashed for the schoolhouse.

"Bother! There's a light in Miss Somerfield's room," Polly panted as they neared the french windows on tiptoe.

"I left the lights on. I was supposed to be there," Betty whispered breathlessly. "It may be all right! 'Sh!"

There was the tiling of the veranda to tread now, and for all they knew the faintest clack of a toe-tip on the tiles might be their undoing. Someone might be in the room.

Betty made a last cautioning sign to Polly to keep back, and went the last yard or so alone to the french windows.

Curtains were drawn across them; but there was just a chink offering a peeping-in place. Betty peeped.

Next second her right hand was going up to the outer knob of the double-doors.

She unlatched them, pushed them open, and calmly walked in, then beckoned Polly who, with a gleeful caper, instantly joined her in the room.

Back! And no one, apparently, was ever to be one whit the wiser!

But at that very moment there came a tap-tap at the door.

CHAPTER 5.

Someone Must Suffer

BETTY and Polly simply tore off their hats and coats, and with great presence of mind they rushed them, in two bundles, under one of the settees.

That done, with the same lightning speed, both girls darted to seat themselves so as to appear at work—upon the printers' proofs.

Rap-rap-rap! the knocking was repeated.

"Come in!"

Then the door opened and Edna Denver entered. She came micing in with a prepared smile that faded as her eyes beheld Betty and Polly, sitting with printers' proofs in front of them, as busy as could be!

"Oh—er—Miss Somerfield's not here, then?" was Edna's taken-aback stammer.

"Miss Somerfield is out," Betty calmly answered, without taking her eyes off her sheaf of proofs.

Just as calmly, Polly made a marginal correction upon one of her "galleys," and continued to read down the column of print.

"I—I see," floundered Edna. "And so—er—there you are, Polly!"

"Here I am—yes," the madcap nodded, a

Miss Somerfield watched in amazement as Laddie dragged from beneath the settee a girl's coat and hat. "What does this mean?" she demanded. Betty was silent, knowing that she had been—found out!



pencil between her teeth and a pen between her fingers. "Why?"

"Oh, I—I only wondered why I hadn't seen you with Pam and the rest this evening, that's all!"

"I had Miss Somerfield's permission," Betty remarked casually, "to get Polly to help me with these proofs. Does that explain the mystery?"—with a smile.

Edna changed colour, then. Quick though she was to turn away with a toss of the head and make her exit, the two chums noticed that sudden guilty flushing.

No sooner had the door closed, leaving them alone together, than Polly muttered fiercely:

"You said something, Betty, about a girl who had informed? Was THAT the girl?"

"Well, was it?" the captain softly answered. "I fancy it was!"

"So do I! The mean thing!" Polly gritted.

"The sneak!"

"But, Polly dear, there's no time to think about her now. Oh, and besides, we are all right," Betty quickly whispered. "Only we must get our coats and hats to the cloak-room. And how had we best do it? To be seen with one's hat and coat at this time of night—fatal! Just a sec.!"

She went from the room, adopting a light-hearted step. Polly went on with the proof-



reading, which task was urgent enough, for it should have been completed by now. A minute's further reading was all she got; then Betty came in again.

"I've been as far as our class-room and back," the captain whispered. "The coast seems to be clear. Anyway, I saw nothing of Edna. Here, Polly, you go along with your things now, and—"

"Shall I take yours as well?"

"No, better not," Betty decided. "The double lot would be more awkward to hide, if—if you should be in danger of meeting someone. I'll slip to the cloak-room with my things when you get back."

"Right-ho! You know, Betty," the madcap whispered, whilst reaching her hat and coat from under the settee, "you have been wonderful to-night—"

"Oh, rabbits! Anyway, dear, scoot now," the captain urged. "And about Jack and that letter business—don't worry. There may be another chance, some day, for you to get hold of it."

"I wonder!" sighed Polly, moving away to the door with her rolled-up coat and hat. "I only hope I can, for it's certain that, as long as Steve Marshall has got it, Jack's in terrible danger."

AND now it was the Form captain who was alone in the headmistress' room, rushing on with the task of revising the printers' proofs.

Goodness, what a lot of sheets there were to be

were supposed to have been hard at work upon them all the evening, if Miss Somerfield should come in now—

Hark!
Oh, there was the whine of a car as it drew up to the school porch! So, even now, Miss Somerfield was back again!

Would she come in here? Supposing she did that—and one's rolled-up coat and the hat still under the settee!

But again Betty could say to herself: "Keep calm, and it will be all right! She can't see the coat and hat. In the night, you can creep down and fetch them away."

She bent her head to the proofs again. Miss Somerfield's voice became audible close at hand, indoors—and Betty went on revising the printed matter.

The joyful scamperings of the headmistress' pet dog caused a gentle "Down, Laddie—down!" to be voiced in the passage outside this room. Betty understood that the black spaniel was mad with delight over his mistress' return.

Then Miss Somerfield came into the room, with Laddie in loving attendance.

"Well, Betty, still at it!"
"Yes, Miss Somerfield. I was just thinking of knocking-off for to-night and—"

"It is what you should do, Betty. I never intended you to try your eyes over the proofs. It will be quite all right if you— Oh, Laddie, be good!" Miss Somerfield broke off, as the rascally cocker suddenly dived under a certain settee. "What ever is that doggie of mine about, Betty! What is he after, under there?"

Betty could guess, and she had only one thought to comfort her in this moment when she

realised that disaster was coming upon her, after all. She was able to think: "Polly's things are not under the settee, anyhow; only mine!"

"Laddie!" stamped the headmistress. "Bad doggie! Come out of there!"

Out came the glossy cocker, backwards, from under the settee. First the fluttering tail showed, then the long-drawn-out body, then the fine head with its dangling ears, and finally—a scholar's outdoor coat, unrolled.

Laddie laid the retrieved coat at his mistress' feet and went in under the settee again, to come out with a scholar's hat.

"What!" gasped Miss Somerfield amazedly. "A—a girl's outdoor jacket? A hat of hers as well! But—but—"

Betty reached down and picked them up. There seemed nothing else to do! As for Laddie, he sat looking up at her as much as to say: "Well? Aren't you going to thank me?" She did smile upon him, too, sadly. For the life of her, Betty could never have been angry with the dear doggie, over what he had done in all innocence and playfulness, even though he had done for her—utterly.

"Betty! Those outdoor things—they are not yours?"

"I'm afraid they are, Miss Somerfield."

"But—"

Words were failing Miss Somerfield. After a few moments of stupefaction, she removed her staring eyes from the Form captain and glanced away to the french windows.

"Ah!" the headmistress said at last, with a nod of comprehension. "So that is what it means, Betty! That is why I did not catch the culprit at Gorselands! You—you, the captain!—have been out of bounds yourself this evening! You knew that I was going to Gorselands. You WARNED her in time!"

Betty, under the stern eyes of her headmistress, shook the coat out of its crumpled state and folded it neatly over a crooked arm.

"Do you deny that, Betty?"

"No, Miss Somerfield. I'm not going to deny it."

"And the other girl's name?"

"I'm sorry. I can't—"

"Betty, remember!"

"I do remember, Miss Somerfield; but I simply can't tell you her name."

The pause, after that. It was one which Betty would never forget—so intensely dramatic it was.

"You are not the appointed captain of your Form, Betty, to do things like this," came in a sterner tone than ever. "Now, understand me! I will not press you at a time when, perhaps, you are unable to act calmly. But unless, by this time to-morrow, I know the name of the girl whom you have shielded to-night, the captaincy will be taken from you. That is all I have to say, and so now—you may go!"

And Betty, as she acted in obedience to this ominous dismissal, could only find comfort in the thought: "Thank goodness Polly will never know about this. She will never know why I have lost the captaincy—as I am going to lose it, for a certainty!"

A bitter blow, indeed, to have to suffer; but a thousand times worse the only alternative, which was to give Polly away over the night's thrilling escapade.

Polly, already in such a harassed, anguished state over the brother whom she loved!

NEXT TUESDAY

There will be another brilliant long complete story of Morcove School, featuring Betty Barton, Polly Linton and the other famous chums of Study

12. It is entitled:

HUMBLED FOR FRIENDSHIP'S SAKE



BY MARJORIE STANTON