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The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

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Week Ending
March 16th, 1935.
EVERY TUESDAY

"YOU WILL REMAIN A PRISONER, UNLESS —"

One of many dramatic moments in this week's fine complete Morcove School story.

Brilliant Long Complete Tale of Morcove School Within

*Dramatic, Long Complete Morcove School Story, Featuring
Tess Trelawney and the Chums of Study 12*



The TESTING OF TESS TRELAWNEY

BY MARJORIE STANTON

CHAPTER I. Something Found

"WHY so excited, Betty? Any news?"

"Yes!"

And Betty Barton, heaving for breath, advanced farther into a certain study at Morcove School.

It was Study 12—that famous "den" which she, the Form captain, shared with some of her best chums.

"They've found Tess Trelawney's bicycle!"

"They have? Gosh! Where—where?"

There was good excuse for Polly Linton's sudden excitement.

Since yesterday evening, all Morcove School had been full of anxiety and dismay over the disappearance of one of its scholars.

Tess Trelawney was the missing girl, and as she had last been heard of riding back to the school from Barncombe Castle, on her bicycle, the discovery of that machine was a truly sensational development.

"And no trace of Tess herself, Betty?"

"None!"

Polly Linton was not the only chum of Betty's to become aghast at this latest news. Paula Creel was up from that easy chair in which she so often liked to settle her elegant figure. Dusky Naomer Nakara had no more relish for the apple she was munching, and flung the remaining half of it into the waste-paper basket.

"Bai Jove," Paula emitted. "Pwetty alawm-ing, that!"

"Bekas, what ze diggings has become of Tess zen!"

"One thing is certain now," Betty resumed sadly. "Poor Tess' disappearance has had nothing to do with her worry over that missing manuscript. We thought she might have—well, sort of wandered away as the result of a nervous breakdown or something like that."

Polly nodded.

"No mistake, girls, there has been enough lately almost to give Tess a breakdown. All that distress at home—her father and mother ruined—the brokers in—the home to be sold up!"

"Yes, bai Jove, a gwievous catastwophe," fender-hearted Paula murmured. "But she nevah lost her weason, geals—"

"Oh, no," Betty emphatically agreed. "The bike has been found on the moor—lying hidden amongst some gorse-bushes, not far from the road. And if you ask me, I'm beginning to think, now, that it all has something to do with that Barncombe Castle business."

"Shouldn't wonder," Polly quickly responded. "For it is rather significant; Tess happened to be copying the ancient manuscript belonging to Lord Lundy, at the time it was stolen."

"What's more, no sooner had the MS. been stolen, than someone got into the schoolhouse and stole as much of Tess' copying as she had done!"

"Pwecisely!" Paula Creel rejoined, whilst Polly

stood running fingers through her hair again and again, in a brain-racking manner.

"It's a lick, she fumed. "I never shall be able to see why they wanted to steal Tess' mere copies. Anybody can guess the reason for their theft of the original MS. That was worth thousands upon thousands! But a copy, done on modern drawing paper—"

"That's just it," Betty exclaimed, looking equally puzzled. "The copy can have had no value. I mean, it could never be palmed off as the original."

"Yet they did steal the copied sheets—and now, have they also stolen Tess herself, as it were?" gasped Polly.

"It's what I'm beginning to believe," the Form captain responded. "They've got hold of Tess, but I can no more suggest a reason for their doing that, than I can understand why they were after her copies."

"At any rate," Paula said, with a relieved expression, "we can't see any reason why they should do her any harm?"

"No, but—"

"All ze same, rotten for Tess if she is being kept prisoner somewhere!" came Naomer's comment. "Bekas, what ze diggings, zey may not give her enough to eat! Bekas, you never know!"

"Now don't you start!" requested Polly, in mock annoyance. "If that's the best you can say! You always do only think about what people are getting to eat! We others must think of Tess' state of mind, if she is being kept prisoner. With the home to be sold up almost any day now!"

A heavy silence followed this. Then Betty murmured reflectively:

"I'm thinking of that Jumble Sale we held last evening—when Tess was away at Barncombe Castle. We little dreamed that she wouldn't be back in the evening. We hurried through the sale, simply because we didn't want her to know about it—how we were holding the sale as a means of raising some money in the Form, for her sake. It brought in quite a decent sum too—I've got it by me now. But—"

Breaking off there, Betty turned to the door and passed from the study with a slow, thoughtful step. Her study-mates, who guessed that she was going to appraise others of the news, remained lost in thought for a little while.

Then Polly, heaving a big sigh, wandered out of the study. Half-way up the corridor, she heard Betty's voice in that study which the missing girl had shared with Madge Minden.

Polly went in. The captain was in talk with three girls. Madge was one; the two others were tall Pam Willoughby and serious-looking Judy Cardew.

"What do you think of the latest news, girls?" "More serious than ever—that's my opinion." Madge gravely answered, and Pam and Judy nodded to the same effect. "A thousand times better if we could still think that perhaps she was just lost—wandering about—"

"Nice thing for her father and mother to be told, when they turn up at the school—as they are expected to do, any minute now," Judy sorrowfully commented. "I'm terribly sorry for Mr. and Mrs. Trelawney."

"Terrible for them—terrible," Pam exclaimed. "Really, it should cause the sale of the home to be postponed—out of pity. But the creditor who put the brokers in like that—will hardly be the sort, I imagine, to show much mercy." "Not, he—brute, whoever he is!" Polly said fiercely. "When we know, it is no fault of Mr.

Trelawney's that he has gone smash. But what about Tess herself, girls! Kidnapped?"

"Must have been!"

"Then why—why? Dash," Polly fumed, "I do hate being hung up for an explanation!"

"When you girls came in," Madge remarked, after a further pause, "I was just looking through some of Tess' belongings. You know, I believe she must have tried to sell some of her sketches, hoping to raise money to help her father and mother. This portfolio—it holds a picked lot of sketches, and I know she went into town with it, the day before yesterday, and brought it back—"

"Unsold!" Betty sympathetically inferred. "Oh, and it's perfectly obvious, now, she was relying upon the fee that was to be paid her, for copying the manuscript at the Castle. One way and another, girls, Tess faced up to the trouble at home!"

"She did—all honour to her. And we'd have known nothing, only we happened to find out," Madge added emotionally.

Pam, who had taken a small book from the study-table, to thumb the pages over, suddenly remarked:

"When did Tess have this, Madge? It's a new book—nice binding, like a gift. All about painting; so I can guess, it is hers, not yours."

"Oh, yes, that is Tess'," the missing girl's study-mate answered. "It came by post for her, the other day. She laughed about it at the time. It appears that it was sent to her by some people—a lady and gentleman—who saw her at work in the Muniment Room at the Castle, copying the MS."

"Oh!" said Betty.

"Yes. The gentleman in particular greatly admired Tess' work. He chatted with her—in fact, she wished him farther, he so hung about! When he was going away, he promised to send her a little book on Art. This is the book."

"But who—who were the lady and gentleman then?" asked Polly. "Friends of Lord and Lady Lundy?"

"Oh, no! Tess told me that they were simply a couple of foreigners, on holiday in the district. They were being shown round the castle; that's all."

"Foreigners? Then I remember them—yes, I do!" Betty burst out excitedly. "I happened to be there at the time! I had called to see if Tess would be riding back to Morcove, in which case we could go together. But she wanted to stay on a bit longer, so I left her still at the work. The lady and gentleman were still in the Muniment Room when I came away; foreigners—Germans, I would say."

"That's right," Madge nodded. "Tess told me; the name was Borgman."

"A shortish, stout man, and his wife a very smart lady—fair hair; film-star look about her," Betty raved on expressively. "I've never seen them again. Just fancy, their being as interested as all that in Tess!"

"In her work—the copying," Madge specified, and then saw Polly becoming open-mouthed. "Well?"

"You say, Madge, interested in Tess' copying. Does that mean—interested in the original MS? If so—Gosh, girls, I've got an idea!"

"Not—not that the Borgmans have had something to do with it all?" Betty jerked.

"That's it!" Polly nodded. "Perhaps it seems rather a wild suggestion—but when you come to think of it, it's a bit strange—"

"Whew!" said the captain.

Then Betty glanced at her wrist-watch. "There's no school this afternoon. Girls, we shall have to mention the Borgmans to the Head. It may be only a mare's nest; but we are not going to leave any stone unturned! For what it's worth, she can ring up the castle."

"And we?" Polly questioned eagerly. "Are we to do nothing more than mention the Borgmans to Miss Somerfield? Simply go out to games, afterwards—"

"Not likely!" Betty said. "Let's get together for a scout round. Bit of luck, that I would know the Borgmans again, if I saw them! We'll get along into Barncombe, and if any information can be picked up—Hallo"—and she made a wondering turn so as to face the closed door—"come in, if you want to!" she called out.

But no one accepted the hearty invitation. After a moment or two, Betty went to the door and opened it, looking out to see who might have been going by just then.

But in that moment or two there had been time for a certain girl to nip into the adjoining study, without making a sound!

EDNA DENVER it was who had so narrowly escaped being seen by the captain, as a loiterer outside the other study. Now she was in this adjoining room, with the door quickly closed.

Her frightened eyes met those of her sister Fay, who had started up from an easy chair as if her nerves were on edge.

"Sh!" Edna gestured, lest Fay should blurt out a question loud enough to be heard next door. "The Borgmans, Fay!"—in a whisper.

"What—what about them?" "Betty and Co.—I don't know why, but they have been discussing them. They—they seem to be connecting them with all this dreadful business about Tess!"

"Oh!" Fay swept a hand across her forehead. "Then it's coming—it's coming at last—as we feared—"

"Quiet!" Edna hissed. "Pull yourself together, Fay!"

"But we're friends of the Borgmans," muttered the elder sister. "We took up with Mrs. Borgman. I don't like the look of it, Edna!"

"Neither do I," was the snapped response. "But don't you begin to talk of owning up—Hark!"

There were sounds suggestive of several girls going away from an adjoining study, making for the stairs.

"There they go—Betty and her chums," Edna whispered. "To tell Miss Somerfield about the Borgmans."

Fay chafed her hands together as if they were icy. "It's what we should be doing, Edna! The right thing—"

"The right thing—puh! Do we ever do the right thing" the younger sister

retorted scornfully. "Then what's the use of talking!"

"But, Edna—what are we to do then?" "Nothing," was the tart reply, "except hold our tongues and just trust—to luck!"

CHAPTER 2. Freedom's Price

TESS TRELAWNEY, awakening out of heavy sleep, started to blink her eyes at a small oil-lamp, burning upon an otherwise bare deal-table.

Close beside that bare table was the low basket-chair in which she had sunk to sleep—how many hours ago she could form no idea.

Now the chair creaked as she roused into an alert posture. As soon as those faint creakings ceased, all was dead silence in this collar-like place in which she had been put under lock and key.

No wrist-watch did Tess possess, nor was there any timepiece in the brick-walled chamber. The hour now? It was more than she could tell whether it was even night or day!

The lamp, the table, the chair, and a motor-rug that had been given her for warmth—except for these things, the cellar was perfectly bare. Having been forced to descend a flight of steps, when she was being conducted as a helpless captive to this makeshift prison, she knew that it



"That book was given to Tess by some people she met at the Castle," Madge explained. "A German and his wife." Little did the chums guess that Tess was now the helpless prisoner of those same two people!

really was an underground cellar—not simply a windowless room at or above ground level.

There were the steps now, facing her; brick steps, looking quite clean in the lamplight—not blackened with coal-dust, of which, indeed, there was not a trace on the cellar-floor. And a realisation that the place had never served the purpose of an ordinary coal-cellar—this was something that now increased Tess Trelawney's horror of her surroundings.

It made her feel that she had been shut away like this in a place prepared for her, as secure as any dungeon in an ancient castle. No window; no iron grating through which, were it daytime, a ray of sunlight might have been shining, or beyond which, in the night, she might have seen the stars!

Shut away, if ever a prisoner was, so that now she must have thought herself as one doomed to remain here, only it had been told her that she had it in her power to ransom herself.

Suddenly her eyes, accustoming themselves to the dim illumination, made out a very feeble line of light at the top of the cellar steps.

Instantly, she heaved up from her chair, casting aside the motor-rug which she had wrapped about herself when she felt sleep coming upon her—at last.

Unsteadily she stepped to the foot of the steps and mounted the first half-dozen. Then she paused. The line of light was daylight under the locked and bolted door at the top of the steps.

So she knew—had been able to find out, after all, it was daytime. But whether morning or afternoon she could not decide. Only a little after daybreak, perhaps, and so that was why the whole strange building, to which the cellar belonged, was utterly silent? Nobody astir yet?

Another moment would have found her sending up a shout for help, whilst banging and kicking at the door; but Tess was wise enough to realise that she would do better to wait until she had a more exact idea of the time of day.

If it was only as early as she feared it might be, then any shouting for help at once might prove worse than useless. The most promising time would be when she could be more sure of somebody being within earshot, outside the building.

For she knew that it was a most strangely positioned building—in a lonesome spot where, at the best of times, passers-by must be few indeed.

At dusk, last evening, she had been made to get out of the car into which, an hour previously, she had been hustled. Then, whilst passing with involuntary steps from the car to the place to which she had been brought, she had quickly taken in the surroundings.

The sea was close at hand. She was actually treading a sandy bank at the top of the beach as, in her helplessness, she let herself be conducted to the building.

No other dwelling was nearer than a mile away. The strange habitation, with the sea at its front door, had low-lying, reedy swamps behind it.

Such was the impression of terrible isolation which Tess had gained at dusk last evening; an impression that had haunted her mind for hours afterwards, when she had been shut away down here.

Far into the night she had kept awake; but in the end sheer exhaustion had got the better of all anxieties on account of what others must then be suffering, and of her own fears.

She had slept at last, to dream confusedly of everything—the state of ruin at home, the forthcoming Sale by Auction, the stolen MS., and the

fee she had hoped to earn but which she must go without now.

Nor, in her sleep, had she failed to see again the form and the face of the woman who had kidnapped her; a tall, fair woman, beautiful as one of those film stars or actresses whom the world goes mad about!

But the fair face was one that could change to that of a fiend—Tess knew! Fiendish the look it had assumed in that never-to-be-forgotten moment of the kidnapping. And fiendish it had appeared to her, in her sleep.

Of a sudden Tess heard, or thought she could hear, a stealthy footfall, bringing someone to the locked door.

She retreated down the steps, to take her stand beside the table on which the lamp burned.

Even though she had been told that no harm was to be done to her, there was a faster pulsation of her heart.

What she dreaded—because it had been hinted at overnight—was an overwhelming temptation to her, to buy freedom at the expense of Barncombe Castle.

In other words, she was to be tempted with the offer of freedom, if only she would disclose certain information that would benefit the very swindlers who had stolen the Lundy MS.

The door at the top of the steps creaked open, after the withdrawal of bolts, and Tess saw Mrs. Borgman descending to the cellar.

There she was, the tall, slim woman whose trickery had caused one to be taken quite unawares, last evening. Even now, Mrs. Borgman was smiling; but Tess knew how much pity was in the smile.

"Ach, you are ready for a leedle to eat, perhaps?" came the woman's first remark. "You half sleep, shoost a leedle, hein?"

"I want to know what the time is, please," Tess requested, with desperate composure.

"Der time now, fraulein—shoost a leedle after von o'clock."

Past midday! Tess was astounded. She could never have guessed the hour to be as late as that. There was no reason for supposing that Mrs. Borgman was deceiving her, so it was now apparent that she, Tess, had not fallen asleep until the small hours of the morning, and had then slept for a great length of time.

"I soon led you haf some dinner," Mrs. Borgman hastened to promise. "I gook it now, mineself—for I haf no maidt now. My husbandt and I—ve lif all alone here since a few days. Bud first, I shoost come to haf der talk mit you."

"Mrs. Borgman, if you mean that you want to make me an offer—"

"Ach, so! I gif you der hint last night—hein? Und you haf not forgotten—goodt! So, I now make myself quite glear to you, fraulein. You shall shoost tell me vere are der remaining copies you make of der Lundy manuscript—"

"I am not going to say!"

"Ve know, my husbandt and I, you do not bring all der pages of your work home to der school, to be shown on der board—no. Der pages you do bring home like that, ve now haf—"

"Because you stole them from the school!"

"Fraulein," Tess' disgusted outburst was answered, "you must control yourself. It will be bedder you do so—mooch bedder. Ach, maig it a bargaint, at vons, und so I go to see about some food for you—hein? Der last pages of your work—you shall dell me vere they are to be found."

"I shall not! I simply refuse, so there! I know why you want those few old sheets—all that remains of my work," Tess spoke on hotly. "For

the same reason that you stole the sheets that were put on show at the school; because such exact copies of the original MS must be destroyed by you and your husband! If Lord Lundy had any of my copy-work, it would help him and the police to prevent the original MS from being sold by your husband!"

Mrs. Borgman nodded and smiled.

"Ve always acknowledge, my husband and I, that you are a most glever girl. Vot vos de word for you, my husband gif? Sheenius—ja, so!"

"That be hanged," Tess stamped. "But I do know a thing or two about antique paintings and manuscripts, and how they can be palmed off upon unwary collectors, years after they have been stolen. But if Lord Lundy had any of my copy-work, he could have it photographed, and the police would circulate copies of the photographs all over the world. That's the snag for you—I see it! That's why you stole my copies from the school, and why you want any other sheets that remained over."

"Vell?"

"It won't come off, that's all—not with me!"

copy photographed, as I have said. You don't know where those remaining sheets are——"

"I pay you twenty pounds for der information, at vons, and let you go free—ve vill say, by der end of der week, hein?"

"No!"

But Tess, as she voiced the fresh refusal, seemed to hear the voice of temptation whispering her:

"Twenty pounds! Think what you could do with twenty pounds, Tess Trelawney! Think of your father and mother—how they are to be left without a penny now!"

"Fraulein, I will be shenerous mit you. Twenty-five pound!"



"Sandton Bay?" Jack asked, stumbling into the coach. "Good!"—as the conductor nodded. "Mustn't keep Aunt Jessica waiting!" Purposely he was being flippant—hiding the seriousness of this dramatic dash to Sandton Bay—in quest of Tess!

"No! Oh, go away; get out of here," Tess cried out wildly. "I won't—I won't give in to you, I tell you! I'll take my chance! They'll have you yet—and your husband——"

"Nodt so," laughed Mrs. Borgman, with a confidence that struck a chill to Tess' heart. "Ve run no risk of subscision—not in der least! My husband—vot has he to do mit manuscripts? He is shoost a merchant in jewellery in Shermany, dot is all!"

Tess, for a full minute after this, was like one reduced to silence by despair. Tragically she was realising that the woman could afford to make a boast of their immunity from suspicion. Why should they be suspected?

"Fraulein, liden," Mrs. Borgman again wheedled. "You vant der money; ve want der remainder of your work done to der castle. All ve vish to know—and you can say at vons, if you shoosle!—vere are der odd sheets? At de castle? At der school? Vich?"

"I'm glad you don't know!" Tess said, with a wild laugh. "It has got you beat—hung up!

"Lisden, fraulein," the woman said, changing to a beguiling tone; "by der offer I maig you, you can help your people, I dink, ven you maig der copy of der manuscript for der Lord Lundy, you haf der promise of a fee? Der money, very usef, ven your people haf lost all? So, I shall now maig you der offer of money——"

"I won't take it!"

"More money than der fee was to be——"

"I don't care if you offer me a hundred pounds!" Tess again refused fiercely. "I'm not going to buy my freedom! You have got the original manuscript. It was your husband who stole it from Barcombe Castle. But he can do nothing with it—he knows he can't!—whilst a chance remains for Lord Lundy to put a stop upon its sale in any part of the world. And he can do that by having the remaining sheets of my

You'd have to know exactly, whether they were at the one place or the other, and where to lay hands upon them. And I'm not going to tell you; I'm not, so you needn't hang about, trying to get me to give in!"

"Ve haf der means," Mrs. Borgman said darkly, "of maiking you gif in, fraulein!"

"Then try them—that's all; try them!"

"Ach, so! I go, then, to see about a leedle dinner for mineself!"

There was a sinister emphasis upon that last word. Nothing for Tess to eat, until she had closed with the villainous offer, that was what it meant!

And still, all honour to her, the tempted girl stuck to her resolve, even though she saw Mrs. Borgman retreating up the steps, to pass out of the cellar.

Never would Tess have remained as passive as she was remaining, only she saw how warily the woman was retiring—going backwards up the flight of steps, so as to be ready to resist any desperate dash for freedom.

Then, at the top of the steps, Mrs. Borgman spoke down to the hapless girl.

"For der last time, fraulein——"

"No! You're not as safe as you think," Tess found herself saying defiantly. "They mayn't connect you with the theft at the castle. But the way you kidnapped me, last evening, on my way home to Morcové—they'll have you over that, Mrs. Borgman!"

"I gannod believe you tink it possible," she retorted, smiling down upon her captive. "If you remember, fraulein, it vos done mit a car. Und my husband and I—ve haf not kept any car. Also——"

"Oh, go away!"

"Ja, so! Ven you tink, how der is no von in sight at der time ve stop you on der road—shoost to ask der latest news about der robbery," Mrs. Borgman mocked on; from the top of the steps. "Und you are kind enough to dell us—vot ve already know—how der Lord Lundy offer a tousand pound reward for der recovery of der stolen manuscript! A reward of von tousand pound——"

Tess heard no more; she had put up a hand to either ear, to shut out the mocking voice as it came to her.

When, a few seconds later, she dropped her hands again, the woman was gone and the door closed.

Faintly, Tess heard Mrs. Borgman's movements about the place, at ground level. Presently, a faint hissing and sizzling was audible, as of something cooking in a frying-pan.

Dinner for Mrs. Borgman. But none for Tess!

Nor would there be food for her—she knew it—until she had closed with the offer which many

another girl would have jumped at, without waiting for hunger to do its work!

CHAPTER 3. Council of War

"YOU don't want to worry, girls! What you want to do, just keep your heads!"

It was Jack Linton, the sturdy brother of madcap Polly, whose cheery voice tendered this bit of advice.

He, with three of his best chums of Grangemoor School, had just encountered Betty & Co. in the quiet High-street of quaint old Barncombe.

The news that Tess Trelawny was missing from Morcové School had caused Messrs. Jack Linton, Dave Cardew, Jimmy Cherril, and "Tubby" Bloot to "cut" games, this halfer. They had been making for Morcové, via the town, when they met the girls. This was just after the latter had parked their bicycles at the bake-house yard adjoining the Creamery Tea-rooms.

So, in happy proximity to that popular resort, the boys had soon been told all that the girls could tell them.

Polly, as usual, was ready to treat any comment by her brother with withering scorn.

"When you say don't worry, Jack——"
"That doesn't mean stop thinking—no," came the genial proviso. "There is certainly a call for brains——"

"Then why not go and call for yours, wherever you left them to be repaired?"

"A round table conference, boys," Jack proposed, affably. "And where, may I ask—where better, than in the Creamery!"

"Yes, bekas—gorjus! We can——"

"Tea, when we're still without news of Tess! No thank you," Polly snorted. "So, good afternoon——"

"Whoa, Polly-wolly! If the terms seem a bit steep—you girls to pay for us fellows' refreshments——"

"Wha-a-at!" screeched the madcap, so that Betty and the others had to chuckle.

Jack looked painfully astonished in return.

"Surely," he gravely submitted, "you didn't expect us chaps—the Big Four of Grangemoor—to handle this mystery without something in—er—recognition of our services?"

"You're the Biggest Four I ever saw, but what kind of Four you are, I won't say," Polly mock-scornfully retorted. "Tubby is welcome to take Naomer and give her tea and cakes—at half-past two in the afternoon! Anything to get rid of Naomer!"

"Come on zen, Tubby, we will take each other, and treat each other!" Naomer gaily proposed. "Bekas——"

"Company!" Jack interposed, in his best sergeant-major style. "Shun! Form—two deep! R-r-right turn!"

But Morcové meant to take its orders from its own captain.

"What do you say, Betty?"

"I think we might as well go in, for a talk—now that we've met the boys," was the blithe response. "I'd like to describe the Borgmans to them—very carefully."

"Yes, bekas—you never know! So, come on, everybody, queek!"

Tubby Bloot, at any rate, was ready to keep pace with the dusky Morcovian in her hasty descent upon the Creamery. He and she, were inside the shop when the rest were still only straggling towards it, in chatting twos and threes.

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Dawdling Pam was not surprised to find Jimmy keeping close beside her. As he was always too shy to speak, before he had been spoken to, Pam—nothing reluctantly, be it whispered—now accorded him a belated and very special:

"Well, Jimmy!"

"Hallo, Pam?" said he, brightening at once.

"Shocking thing about Tess, isn't it, Jimmy? Now we feel certain; a look-out should be kept for those Borgmans—a German and his wife. It's strange, to say the least, that the MS vanished so soon after they had seen it at the castle."

"You've never seen them, Pam?"

"No, Jimmy; Betty is the only one, of us girls, who would know the Borgmans at sight. She happened to— But what?" Pam changed, to a wondering murmur, as she became aware of sudden excitement seizing some of her companions.

They were all still outside the Creamery, but with only a few steps to go to be inside. The excitement noticed by Pam was the very reverse of the talkative kind. It was, in fact, a sudden check upon others' chatter which, to Pam, seemed significant of surprise and agitation.

Then she understood! A man had come out of the cakeshop—a short, stout man, with a Teutonic look about him. Betty, instantly recognising him, had nudged Polly with an elbow, and Polly had transmitted the silent signal to Madge, who had just as swiftly nudged Judy.

Mr. Borgman!

With all a German's fondness for rich eatables, he had emerged from the Creamery smiling fatly over purchases which comprised two bulky packages, hugged under either arm. That smile he gave to Betty as, faintly remembering her, he nodded to her and her only.

But Mr. Borgman, on a previous occasion so affable towards "der young fraulein," was not now disposed to engage Betty or any of her companions in talk. He was, it seemed, in a hurry, toddling quickly along the pavement in the direction of the Town Hall.

"Quick!" Polly breathed, as soon as his back was to them all; but Betty quick-wittedly made an urgent sign: "No standing about out here! In—in quick!"

So they all trooped into the Creamery, although they were no sooner inside than Betty herself turned to go out again.

"One or two of you," she whispered; "come with me. The rest, stay back. We're going to keep an eye on that Borgman."

"But, Betty—"

"She's right, boys," Jack jocosely breathed, in support of Betty's cautious idea. "Not too many! Polly—you and I!"

But it ended in 'six of them getting' outside again, with Betty. Somehow Judy, having her brother Dave on hand, had felt that he and she must take part also! Then there had been Pam's serene: "Yes, well!" to Jimmy, resulting in their passing out to the pavement.

"There he goes, though—still in sight," was Betty's gratified comment. "Lodging in the town then, are they—he and his wife?"

"Oh, boy!" Jack exulted softly; "but this is great! Only got to keep after him, and— Gee! Look though! He's starting to run!"

"Goodness!" Polly jerked. "Not because he thinks we're after him?"

"How can he?" Dave muttered crisply. "He hasn't looked round; doesn't know—"

"Then why?" wondered Judy. "Why his haste?"

They themselves were now going at a trot along the pavement. A couple of hundred yards

ahead of them, Borgman was obviously running himself into a breathless state.

A few seconds more, and Betty panted softly:

"I know why! Oh, don't you see, all? A bus or coach—he's running to catch one, at the Town Hall!"

"That is it, you bet, boys!" Jack said. "Look here, then—I say, what do we do when we get there? All get in the same bus?"

"Only some of us," Betty flashed. "The rest—see where the bus is going, and follow—"

"On the bikes, that's right," Judy quickly rejoined.

"Betty," said Pam, "you and Jack and Polly go in the bus. We others will say good-bye to you before you get in."

"Right! Lovely! Come on then!"

There was one public vehicle—a motor-coach for Sandton Bay—on the point of starting when the boys and girls got to the parking-place, hard by the Town Hall.

It was a well-filled coach—and there was Mr. Borgman, as one of the passengers, mopping his head as he now sat panting in his seat, after that race along High Street.

"Hurry up, please!" requested the conductor, realising that two girls and a schoolboy were intending to scramble aboard at this last moment.

"Whew!" Polly laughed, mounting behind Betty. "Just in time! Good-bye then!"—to those who had "come to see them off."

"Bye, Polly! Bye, Betty! Hope you enjoy yourselves!"

The coach started, and Jack purposely toppled about as he climbed in.

"Wow! You are going to Sandton Bay?" he asked the conductor, as if to make quite sure.

"That's right, sir!"

"I mean to say, we don't want to find ourselves at Exeter, when Aunt Jessica is expecting us to tea at Sandton!"

Thus Jack romanced, as he got aboard, adding a jovial "Cheerio, boys!"—meaning Pam and Judy as well, of course.

"Bye, all!" responded those who were seeing the coach off. "Hope you have a jolly time."

"And our love to Aunt Jessica!" cried Pam, quite understanding why Jack had suddenly created that fictitious person.

CHAPTER 4.

'Twixt Marsh and Sea

BETTY and Polly had also taken the cue from Jack about an imaginary aunt at Sandton.

Finding themselves sitting quite close to Mr. Borgman, who had already twinkled his eyes at them whilst he cooled down, they began some animated talk that he could hardly fail to overhear.

"I wonder what her house is like, Betty!"

"It's on the front, so it must have a lovely view of the sea!"

"Oh, rather! But I meant—modern, or 'old world'?"

"Most of Sandton is brand new."

"All I hope is that there's a new cake for tea, for once," Jack joined in, now that he had found a seat next to the girls. "Remember, last time we went to Aunt Jessica's—"

"But that," said Polly, "was when she lived in London! A horrid little flat! She must find it a difference, living at Sandton now!"

"The cake, that afternoon, was like a brick," Jack further improvised. "I suppose she still keeps all those cats?"

Betty and Polly burst out laughing. They were

sure that Mr. Borgman was being supplied with a very convincing belief in the existence of an Aunt Jessica.

"Ach, my young friends!" the stout German presently exclaimed ingratiatingly. "So you go to Sandton for der afternoon—hein? Grand vedder! As for me, I nearly miss der goach. I have to roosh!"

"So did we, sir," Jack affably responded. "We didn't want to miss it."

"You go to—public school, hein?"

"That's right, sir. And my sister and her chum, here, go to Morcove."

"Ach, so! Perhaps, you can dell me: Der young fraulein who is missing—no news, hein?"

"None that we have heard, sir," Betty answered gravely. "We were rather inclined to think that she must have lost her memory and gone wandering off."

"Ach, der over-work, hein? In Shermany," chatted on Mr. Borgman, "ve haf many of der boys and der girls at school preak down, shoost so! Und I tink der Fraulein Drelawney vos too clever, perhaps? My wife und I; ve see her at der castle, von day, hard at der work."

"Yes, Tess was copying an ancient manuscript for Lord Lundy," Betty responded. "The one that has since been stolen."

"Ach, so!" nodded the German. "So I read, in der baber."

"And now Lord Lundy is offering a thousand pounds reward for the recovery of the MS," Jack chimed in. "Gee, it would be fine to pick up a fortune like that! But the chances are that the thieves have got right away."

"Shoost so," Mr. Borgman nodded. "Und so, you go to visit an aund, hein? Good place, Sandton. Respegdable!"

"Yes, it's very quiet and all that," Polly blandly agreed. "Are you—living there?"

"My wife und I— Ach, no," with a big shrug. "Ve shoost stay a leedle while, for der air! Und vere, my friends, does your aunt lif at Sandton?"

"We can't describe the house, for we have never seen it," Jack glibly evaded the direct question. "Do you happen to know a house on the front called 'The Gulls'?"

"Ach—no! 'Der Kulls'—vod is dot?"

"Gulls, ~~sea~~-seagulls; birds! Then there is a sort of slang meaning for 'gulls,'" Jack breezily imparted. "We say that people are gulled when they are easily kidded. So that gulls are people who gull others, so to speak!"

"No," Polly dissented. "Gulls are the people whom you gull, surely—that is, if you ever do go in for that sort of thing!"

She said this with an angelic expression of being far above that sort of thing herself. And Mr. Borgman assuredly had no suspicion that he himself was being—gulled!

Throughout the run to Sandton, he was in talk with the trio, with the idea, they suspected, of gulling them. But they reckoned they had had the best of it when the general setting-down took place, near the bandstand on the Sandton parade.

"Und now, my young friends, I shall say goot-pye!" he smiled, again hugging his Barncombe Creamery purchases under either arm. "I drust you enjoy a good dea at your aunt's!"

"Thank you, sir! Good day! And now," Jack said loudly to Polly and Betty, "to find the house!"

He meant, of course, the house where the Borgmans lodged. But Mr. Borgman, possibly overhearing, was not to suspect that.

"It'll be this way?" suggested Polly, starting

off in an easterly direction, simply because Borgman was going the opposite way.

"I'd like to know why the chap has to buy eatables in Barncombe, when there are fine cake-shops here in Sandton," Jack muttered, putting himself in step with Betty and Polly.

"The pair of them don't like to show themselves too much in Sandton, at present?" was Betty's conjecture.

"That's about it," Jack nodded. "And, look here, boys! We mustn't lose sight of him."

"Goodness no!" And there was some glancing over shoulders.

"He's keeping to the seafront," Betty remarked.

"Here, Aunt Jessica doesn't live this end of the town," Jack suddenly decided. "Let's go the other way!"

"I think we should!" the two girls assented.

So, turning back, they sauntered in a westerly direction, with Borgman going on before them, a good distance ahead.

He looked round once and must have noticed them; but they were artfully pretending to look out for the imaginary home of the entirely fictitious maiden lady who kept cats.

"Ach," Jack imitated the Teutonic voice, "Vere, my young friends, is 'Der Kulls'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But five minutes later the youngsters were done with all levity. By keeping Borgman under observation, they had become aware of his walking right away from the little seaside town.

By now he was a lone figure, strutting along a narrow bank of land which ran between the top of the beach and some low-lying fields. Much of the ground was marshy—only saved from inundation by the protective bank, the top of which had been merely trampled out into a rough road.

"Then where is he making for?" Betty tensely asked, as she and her two companions surveyed the flat and dreary bit of coast along which Borgman was trudging. "Where do they live—he and his wife?"

"Unless," Polly rejoined, "it's that building about a quarter of a mile further on from where he is now? Gosh, what is that building—not an ordinary house?"

"No," Jack muttered, peering hard. "Ugly old place—must have been there before ever Sandton came into existence. Sort of coastguard place, perhaps?"

"Anyhow," breathed Betty, "there's no other dwelling in sight, that way."

"Nothing whatever!"

At Jack's suggestion, they crouched in some reedy grass, so as not to be seen by Borgman if he should again look back. They themselves were only just outside the town, on land "ripe for development," as a board had it.

From that watch-point, a few minutes later, they saw the German go up to the queer, almost fortress-like, building.

It was surrounded with much screening vegetation of the kind that grows well at the sea's edge. Even so, they could just manage to see him being admitted to the building.

Jack, when at last he twisted about to meet the excited eyes of Polly and Betty, had a rejoicing look.

"Oh, boy!" he chortled. "What about it, now! That's where they live—and could you—I ask you—could you imagine a more—"

"Lonely!" Polly exclaimed, returning her eyes to the distant building. "Right away from everything and everybody! Gosh, if they *did* have a hand in the Barncombe Castle theft; if they *have* kidnapped Tess—"

"Then she's there!" Betty jerked.
 "Come on, boys!" Jack said gaily. "You may be thinking, tell the police—"

"No," Betty answered decisively. "We're not certain of anything yet. It may be, we're altogether mistaken. So what we must do—all we can do, at present—try to find something to go upon."

"Easy!" Polly said. "Call there!"
 "You've said a mouthful, Polly-wolly. There are times, Polly," Jack joked on, "when you are a credit to the family! I'm sorry, boys, about Aunt Jessica. But she does, you know, supply such stale cakes always. So we are not going to miss much there!"

"I wonder—I wonder," Betty smiled queerly, "how much we're going to gain, by calling on the Borgmans!"

"I'll venture a guess," said Polly. "One thousand pounds!"

"Eh—what!" gasped Jack. "Oh, you mean—"

"I mean Lord Lundy's reward—yep!"
 "Come on!" Jack said again, in greater eagerness than ever.

And on they went, without one thought for any personal danger into which they might be walking, every quick step taking them nearer to the mysterious, lonesome building, lying yonder between marsh and sea!

CHAPTER 5. Success in Sight

"IT'S no use our trying to creep up to the place in secret—"

"Not a bit, Jack," both girls answered him. "That would only lead them to suspect that we—suspect!"

"Just a plain call," Jack proposed calmly. "Afterwards—if we've been turned away, and if our suspicions have been increased; that will be the time for some scouting."

"Two of us stay around then, to keep an eye on the building," Betty whispered. "Whilst one of us runs to the town for the police."

"That's the idea, boys!"
 In silence they sauntered the last few hundred yards to the unattractive building, coming to a tamarisk-bordered path of loose shingle leading to a forbidding front door.

A modern brass knocker had been affixed to the door, and Jack plied it, extracting a dull wump, wump, wump!

No one came to the door; but after a while they heard, or thought they could hear, excited whisperings and furtive movements, within the building.

"Try again," said Jack cheerfully.
 Wump, wump—wump!

"Hark!" whispered Polly.
 Now there was an approaching footstep. Bolts were shot back and a key turned over in its lock.

The door opened, revealing the German's tall and beautiful wife; fair, slim—amiable!

"Oh—er—good afternoon," Betty began blandly. "Are you Mrs. Borgman?"

"Vy do you ask?"

"We think it was a Mr. Borgman with us, in the coach from Barncombe," Betty recited her prepared part. "You would be his wife; he mentioned you—"

"Vell?"

"That chum of ours who is missing from Morcove," Betty pursued, in a suitable tone of innocent anxiety; "she received a little present from you or Mr. Borgman—a book—"



"Mr. Borgman, we want to know about Tess!" cried the chums, and even as they voiced the words there came, from somewhere in the mysterious house, a cry for help. And the voice was the voice of Tess Trelawney!

"Ach, so!" Mrs. Borgman nodded and smiled. "Vell?"

"Did Tess Trelawney ever write to thank you for the book?" Betty asked. "If not, as chums of hers, we thought we ought to let you know that she did receive it, and liked the book awfully."

"Thank you," rippled Mrs. Borgman pleasantly. "I shall tell my husband. Und dot is all—hein?"

"Why, no—not exactly," Polly now spoke. "Mrs. Borgman, may we come in for a minute?"

"Vot to do?" was the question, in a less cordial tone. "No, I do not tink I gan invade you—"

"But, Mrs. Borgman—"

"I haf no servand! Und my husband—he is shoost back."

"Mrs. Borgman," and this time it was Jack who spoke crisply "you can be good enough to spare us a min—"

"No, no, I dell you—"

"These two girls," Jack held on, raising his voice because he was interrupting one that had grown excitedly loud—"they are anxious about their missing chum—"

"I gannod helb—"

"Tess Trelawney!" Jack named the missing girl, in a yet louder voice. "Tess," he almost shouted, "is—"

"Vot is all dis!" came now the interrupting cry from Mr. Borgman, as he joined his wife in the doorway. "Ach, you go away, vill you! Der imbudence, der colossal imb—"

"Mr. Borgman, we want to know about Tess—Tess!"

All three youngsters shouted the words as with one voice, whilst the door was still open. It was going to be closed in another moment—banged in their faces.

Jack, realising this in time, stuck out a foot so as to prevent the door being closed, and next second he was mighty glad to have done so.

For, in that moment, there was an attempt by the Borgmans to shut the door, whilst a faint, appealing cry came in a girlish voice.

Tess—crying for help!

So now they knew, and they forgot their youthfulness, Betty and Polly being just as ready as Jack was—to battle a way into the building somehow.

"You don't!" Jack roared at the German, who was trying to dislodge that obstructing foot. "Let us in, I tell you!"

"Ludwig!" the woman gasped. "Ach, Himmel

"Schwein!" raged her husband, now that all three were storming the half-open door. "Ged out!"

"Tess!" the three yelled. "Coming, Tess! Morcove!"

The door yielded a few more inches to them. Then it gave way altogether. The united efforts of the attackers had driven in the German and his wife.

But now, as he and she retreated a little, his right hand flew to a hip-pocket, and Jack shouted:

"Look out, boys, he's got a gun! Keep back—Betty, Polly!"

The revolver was out and was levelled for firing even then. Borgman waved the outthrust weapon menacingly at one and another, exclaiming gutturally:

"I vorn you—Imbudence! Ged out of my house, all of you!"

"Gosh, if you fire—if you do!" Jack panted, forced to stand with the two girls, flouted by the gun. "You've got Tess Trelawney here, and that's enough for you to have to answer for, I reckon? Ludwig Borgman, we will give you one minute, for your wife to go and set free—"

"Close der door!" the German roared at his wife.

She advanced to do so, in great agitation. The door could be closed, for the scholars had been forced to back into the open air.

But, in the very instant that Mrs. Borgman prepared to slam the door, they saw a great change take place in her looks. There had been excitement enough in her expression—wild alarm even. Now her altered look was one of horror and dismay.

Her eyes, dilating with fright, looked past the grouped scholars, causing all three to look behind them to see what accounted for such terror.

"Hooray!" Polly yelled then, joyfully. "Oh, hooray—hurrah! Here are the others—"

"The rest—all of them!" Betty similarly rejoiced. "Hurrah!"

Along that rough road by which they themselves had come from Sandton—a mob of youthful cyclists, pedalling hard! Pam and the other girls, heads low over handlebars, whirring at the pedals! Dave, and Jimmy, and Tubby—riding as in a life-or-death race!

Such was the heartening sight which Betty and Polly and Jack saw for a moment. Then they turned to the doorway again, to find it deserted.

The Borgmans were gone!

Into the building dashed the three, letting some triumphant cheering alternate with eager cries of:

"Tess! Tess! Where are you, Tess?"

It was a wailing answer as from somewhere underground that took them at a run to a side-passage, by which they expected to reach some kitchen quarters. Their thought was that any means of descent to a cellar must lie in that direction.

But, half-way along the passage, they were abruptly halted by a bang-banging upon a door upon their right. Polly had never in her life yelled louder than now.

"Why, she's here—she's here!"

"Oh, boy!" Jack exclaimed. "Whoopee!"

"All right, Tess!" shrieked Betty, banging reassuringly upon the door, whilst Polly forced back some bolts. "Coming!"

Another moment and they had the door wide open, and had Tess under their eyes as a drooping, tottering figure. Betty and Polly held her up, steadied her, spoke to her comfortingly, whilst she sobbed in an unstrung way.

As for Jack, he had run through into the kitchen, and it was a full minute before he came back, bringing a glass of water.

"Can see the Borgmans, boys," he cried, meaning girls, as usual. "Making off for all they're worth, across the marshes. What a coup for us! Let Tess have this though, boys!"

"There, Tess!" Betty said, as the rescued girl took reviving sips at the glass of water. "You'll soon be better now. Oh, and look here—"

"Those Borgmans," Tess struck in eagerly. "They stole the Lundy manuscript! Is it in this building then—is it? Oh, quick; never mind me, but see—see if you can find it!"

"Why, so we will!" Jack vociferated. "Come on, boys! Hi, Dave—Jimmy—all of you!" he roared on, for now the cycling contingent, as it might be called, was surging in. "We've got Tess! Now to get the manuscript!"

Another minute and the whole place was being ransacked—turned upside down.

Tess herself, far from needing further attention, was even taking part in the routing out of every likely repository for the priceless parchment. Desk—and table drawers, pulled right out of their recesses whilst the search went on, were not put back. Their contents were left where they had been scattered.

"How you others must have come along, to be here so soon," Betty exclaimed, whilst the rummaging about was still going on.

"Well, we did!" Pam laughed. "Our getting the bikes from the bakehouse yard, in Barncombe, was like the turn-out of the fire brigade."

"And me and Tubby just going to begin a gorjus spread!" shrilled Naomer. "Sweendie, ze way we had to jump up! Never mind; we make up for eet bimely! What ze diggings, we will have a grand celebration, when we find ze jolly old menu-scrap!"

"You should say 'if,' not 'when,'" Polly grimly muttered, still on the scurry round. "Supposing Borgman had it on him!"

"Impossible!" cried Tess. "It's not a paper, to be folded up; it's like a book of parchment leaves, sewn together. It weighs—"

"Hi!" Betty suddenly shouted. "Here, what's this, girls!"

She was mounted upon a chair in front of a bookcase, in the richly furnished sitting-room. Those who were in this room with her saw her displaying a book-like object which she had found on top of the bookcase, hidden behind the ornamental woodwork.

"Isn't this it, Tess?"

"Yes—yes, it is!" was the agreeing cry which

went up, whilst the rest of the boys and girls came swarming in. "Oh, found—found!"

"Whoopie!" roared Jack, and dealt Tubby a rejoicing slap on his fat shoulders. "Oh, boy! 'Rah, 'rah, 'rah!"

"Bekas—gorjus! Ooo, look, look—"

"Found!" echoed others, in varying tones of relief and joy. "Found!"

Betty handed down the ancient volume to Tess, and then jumped to ground. Then, as they noticed, Tess' eyes filled with tears as she looked at the recovered treasure which her hands were fondling.

"I'm so glad—so glad, for Lord Lundy's sake," she said emotionally. "It doesn't help me. I mean—the work I was doing at the castle; the fee I hoped to get—"

"Doesn't help you, Tess?" burst in Betty. "Oh, but you are forgetting—the thousand pound reward!"

CHAPTER 6.

A Cheque is Signed

TWO hours later, in response to an urgent telephone message, Miss Somerfield, headmistress of Morcove School, arrived by car at Barncombe Castle.

She was ushered into a great and stately room, to find Lord Lundy in genial conversation with Betty & Co. But not one of the boys was there.

"Ah, Miss Somerfield!" his lordship greeted her, heartily. "You obtained a pretty good idea as to what had happened, from what I told you over the 'phone?"

"I did—yes! And here is Tess!" cried the headmistress, who seemed to have eyes only for the girl who had been missing. "Oh, Tess, my dear!"

"But I'm quite all right! I'm fine!" came the flustered assurance, so that Miss Somerfield refrained from being too demonstrative. "And all I can say is, please, I—I'm sorry for any upset and worry that I've caused."

"That you have caused, Tess!" laughed the headmistress. "Oh, my dear, as if you were to blame! Never, never was there a Morcove girl who deserved such sympathy!"

The speaker added eagerly:

"One thing let me tell you at once, Tess dear. Your parents know that you have been rescued. They are at home now. I telephoned to them there, at home."

"Oh, so they are at home," Tess said, and then seemed to swallow down a lump in her throat. "At home! Miss Somerfield, I wonder if I could be allowed—presently—instead of going back to Morcove—to go home to mother and dad. I—I—"

"My dear certainly! I understand how you feel, and my car shall run you there without delay."

"But first of all!" interposed his lordship, with undiminished heartiness. "There is no need, Miss Somerfield, for me to say what this is?"

She looked overjoyed at sight of an ancient volume to which he was directing attention, on the table.

"The famous manuscript, Lord Lundy?"

"That's it! Undamaged, too! Restored to me by all these girls, less than an hour ago! And, as I had offered a reward of one thousand pounds to whomsoever should recover the MS—"

"Lord Lundy, please!" broke in Betty. "You say that we girls brought you the manuscript just now; but that's not quite correct. We only came with Tess, who was the one to hand it to you!"

"Oh, what rot!" Tess promptly protested. "Lord Lundy, please don't listen to such talk! It's true I carried the MS all the way back from Sandton, and so I happened to be the one to hand it to you. But those girls were the means of its being recovered—of course they were!"

"That be blowed!" Betty herself dissented merrily. "The search counts for nothing! As if it matters who actually laid hands on the MS and who didn't! The point is, if Tess hadn't stood out against the Borgmans, then the MS would never have been there, to be found!"

"That is so!" cried Pam and others.

"And so, all-zee reward to Tess, too, wizz three cheers!" Naomer urged. "Hip, hip, hooray!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's too bad for you girls!" Tess protested. "Lord Lundy! Please, now, if that is a cheque you are making out—"

"For one thousand pounds—"

"Then make it payable—oh, please do—"

"To Tess! To Tess!" insisted the other girls, in chorus. "All to Tess!"

"Miss Somerfield!"

"It is not for me to decide," smiled the headmistress, to whom Tess, in comic desperation, was now appealing. "Betty and the rest certainly deserve a share of the glory. But if they prefer to make over all share in the reward to you, I shall not dissuade them, knowing the reason why. Then there are the boys—"

"Oh, it's all right about the boys, Miss Somerfield!" broke in Polly. "Their last word to us, before they went off to follow up the Borgmans, was that Tess must have all the reward!"

Lord Lundy got up from his seat at the table. He flourished the cheque which he had been making out.

"A thousand and ten pounds, ten shillings—"

"What!" gasped Tess. He was handing her the cheque.

"I have added the fee you were to be paid, for copying the MS. And now, young lady—as I know you are thinking about your dear parents—you would like to be off? Miss Somerfield, I'll arrange for a car to run her to her home. And doubtless you will allow one or two of her chums to go with her?"

"Most certainly! Tess dear—"

She was in tears—overwhelmed by such a rapid succession of happenings.

The dramatic rescue; the recovery of the priceless relic; her chums' generous insistence upon her acceptance of the entire reward—it all seemed too good to be true!

Such a little while ago, a helpless captive in the hands of the Borgmans, with only tragic thoughts about her parents and their ruined home; and now—this!

Betty stepped close to her, taking the cheque from her to fold it up and then return it, with a loving smile.

A few moments' after this, whilst Tess was starting to smile through the last of her tears, a faint hubbub outside the room heralded the inrush of Jack and his three chums.

"O.K., boys! Beg pardon, your lordship!" a very heated Jack hastily apologised. "But the police have got the Borgmans—"

"They have! Splendid!"

"We kept after the pair, who were making off across country. They got aboard a train just in the nick, at a halt on the single-line railway; but it was all Sir Garnet, sir! We got the signalman to let us use his 'phone."

"Warm work, eh?" smiled Lord Lundy, particularly noticing breathless Tubby's tomato-

coloured cheeks. "Well, my lads! As soon as I've got Tess Trelawney and some of her chums away in a car, the rest of you can, as it were, enjoy a little—"

"Cellerbration!" Naomer supplied the word.

"Quite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THEY must have been "cellerbrations" over which the girls and boys concerned took plenty of time! For it was after seven o'clock when those who belonged to Morcove School were under Morcove's roof once more.

They got indoors to find that Betty and Madge—the only chums, for reasons of tact, who had gone with Tess to her home—were back. Tess herself was remaining at home for the next day or two.

"You others should have been there to see!" Betty said to the returned revellers. "I'll never forget it as long as I live—"

"Nor I!" chimed in Madge. "When Tess showed her father and mother the cheque, saying it was all for them—every penny of it!"

● Bunny Will Banish the "Blues"!

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BUNNY COMES to MORCOVE
BY MARJORIE STANTON

"Bai Jove!" beamed Paula, sinking into the best armchair, "most gvatifying, yes, wather!"

"Gorjus!"
"It would be hard to imagine anything better," the Form captain declared rejoicingly. "The broker's man is gone already. There will be no sale—won't have to be, now! The home is saved; and Mr. Trelawney told us, although they will still be very, very poor, the future is not nearly as black as it was going to be."

"And aren't they proud of Tess?" Polly gaily inferred. "But no prouder than we are—couldn't be! The Form is simply off its head about her!"

Betty nodded.

"I know it is! Even Fay and Edna Denver seemed glad to hear about it when we got indoors just now. As if even they, for once, could think of others besides themselves."

But Betty had been deceived about Fay and Edna.

Only for selfish reasons after all had the sisters been so eager to hear details of the afternoon's great happenings.

At this moment, in their study, the guilty-minded pair were almost quaking with dread, knowing that the Borgmans were in custody.

"Dash!" Fay muttered. "They'll be brought up at the local police-court—and how do we know that Mrs. Borgman won't say something about us?"

"Wish to goodness we had never had anything to do with her," Edna grimaced. "Even if nothing comes out at the police-court hearing—there will be the trial, later on!"

"Yes—before a judge and jury. Ugh, hang it!" the elder sister muttered on. "We loathe Morcove; but that isn't to say we want to be hoofed out, Edna."

"For a thing like that, too!"

Normally, Edna could begin to laugh away a scare, whilst her sister would be still a prey to vague dread. But it was not like that, this evening. The one sister was as fearful as the other as to what might yet be revealed.

And serve them right! Betty & Co. would have felt bound to say so, had they known how disgracefully Fay and Edna, in their waywardness and folly, had been associated with Mrs. Borgman.

Knowing nothing about that, however, Study 12 was without another allusion to the sisters, during all the talk which went on concerning the affair of the Lundy MS. and its fateful bearing upon the very existence of Tess and her people.

Happily they talked about Tess, picturing her with her father and mother in the home that had been saved.

A fabulous reward it was, the one that had been made to her by means of the cheque; but did she not deserve it?

We know what Study 12's answer would have been, to any question of that kind. As for the school as a whole—

Hear the girls cheering again and again in Big Hall, last thing that night!

Some of the plaudits were for Study 12, as was only fitting. Nor were Messrs. Jack Linton & Co., of Grangemoor School, being forgotten. All honour to them as well!

But loudest of all was Morcove acclaiming Tess Trelawney, knowing that hers had been an endurance test, triumphantly survived, such as Fate had seldom demanded of a girl—still at school!