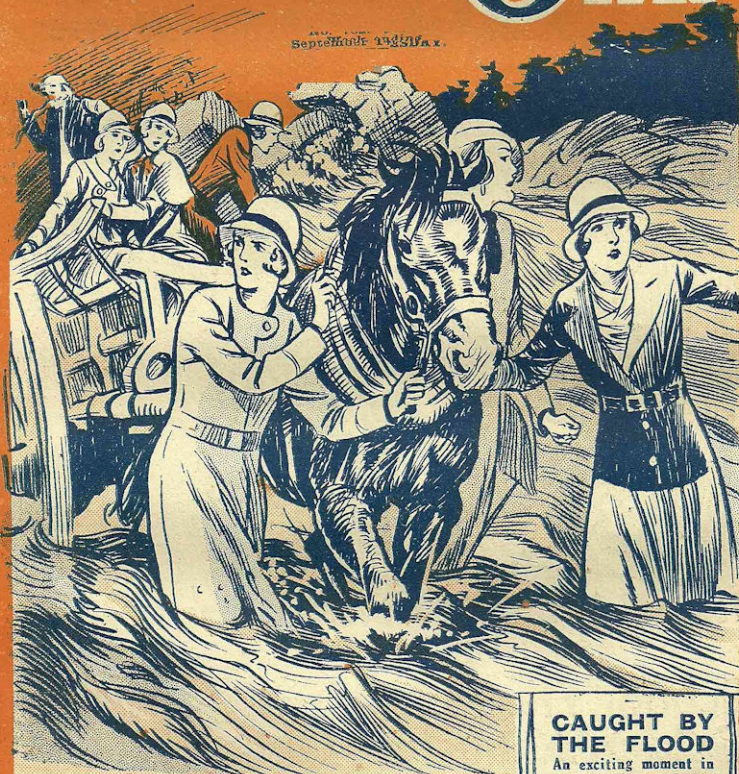


"Morcove and the Royal Refugee"

hoble
Grand Morcove
Holiday Story
Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2nd OWN

September 1933/4x.



CAUGHT BY THE FLOOD

An exciting moment in
this week's grand long
holiday story of Betty
Barton and Co.

"Maureen's Carnival Capture"— Complete in This Issue

Even Though it Means Hazarding Their Own Safety, Morcove Gallantly Comes to the Rescue of a Princess in Peril



MORCOVE and the ROYAL REFUGEE

A Glorious Holiday-Adventure Story of Betty Barton & Co.

BY
MARJORIE
STANTON

Zora's Dramatic News!

IN the great kitchen of the hunting-box at Klosters, in Turania, four girls from Morcove School sat listening to words whispered by a woman whose lovely face, in the candlelight, looked very weary.

She was Mrs. Zora Somerfield—actual owner of the hunting-box and of all the mountain-side upon which the picturesque dwelling stood perched, high above the wooded valley.

And yet, like a homeless wanderer, she had come creeping to the back door, only a few minutes since. With the greatest secrecy had the girls admitted her. It had been "Hush! Not a sound!" as she entered.

At first, she had been able to do no more than lie back in the chair into which she had dropped like one on the verge of collapse. There had been a brief period during which the four girls, after helping the midnight arrival to a reviving glass of water, had stood only gazing at her—deeming it best to refrain from speech.

So utterly dead-beat she looked—she, the very lady who should have been in a position to fulfil her duties as hostess towards all of them and their fellow holiday-makers, in this very house; only, the sudden and unexpected revolution in Turania had made chaos of all plans.

Now, having recovered a little, she was giving a whispered account of that recent ordeal which the revolution had meant for her.

"It was not until twelve hours ago that I was able to get away from Suva Pesth," she said, speaking English with that fluency which her marriage to the brother of Morcove's head-

mistress had helped her to acquire. "Suva Pesth is in a terrible state. The confusion is indescribable. But at last I got away—on foot. It was absolutely impossible to get a lift of any sort. I did not mind, however—so long as I could keep going; so long as I could get to you."

An emotional tremor had crept into her voice now. Very fondly she looked at each of these girls in turn—Betty Barton first, then Polly Linton; then Madge Minden and Tess Trelawney.

"Ah, but what a cruel misfortune," Zora Somerfield whispered on, "that the revolution should break out on the very day you arrived at Klosters! And there was I, who had only gone into Suva Pesth to see about some shopping and some extra maids—quite stranded! I was almost crazy with anxiety on your account!"

"Oh, you shouldn't have been," Betty said, with a smile to help restore the lady's shaken nerves. "We have managed quite all right. Came to an arrangement with the Black Sashes, when they commandeered the hunting-box, that we would keep to this part of it. But, Mrs. Somerfield, there is one thing we must tell you—"

"Yes, what is that?"—eagerly.

"Our numbers are down by three—"

"What!"

"But it's all right—at least, we hope so! Judy Cardew had an urgent telegram from home. It was awaiting her when we got here, the day the revolution started. It told her that her mother was critically ill, at home in England, and implored her to return. So Judy became desperate to get away somehow—"

"And she has gone?" Zora caught Betty up

with an excitable dilation of her dark, lovely eyes.

"We got her away secretly, hours and hours ago. Pam and Helen went with her, for company—to make it safer. They were going to get over the frontier into Rouvakia, where they would be quite all right and easily able to board a continental express."

"Ah, how glad I am that they did not set out for Suva Pesh!" Zora exclaimed under her breath. "That city is quite upside down. No trains—all communications cut. But what a pity that I have turned up here too late! Oh, what a thousand pities!"

"Why, how do you mean?" stared all four girls. "Too late?"

"My dears, I have a message that would have set Judy's mind quite at ease."

"Oh!"

"In Suva Pesh—whilst I was still desperately trying to arrange about all of you—I was told of a wireless that had come through, to the British chargé d'affaires. It asked him, if possible, to let Judy Cardew know that her mother was out of danger."

The listeners turned to one another with looks of mingled excitement and relief.

"Oh, how splendid!" Madge breathed.

"Yes! Great news! If only Judy could know!" Betty said lumpily. "Perhaps Judy and her companions will get to know before—"

"They may even have got the news by now," Polly burst in hopefully. "If they've got to Rouvakia all right, they will have telegraphed home to Priors Wold, to say they're on the way—"

"And surely," Tess carried on the hopeful talk, "a telegram would come back in time to be delivered to them before they got into the train."

Zora Somerfield was nodding eagerly.

"If they telegraph to England, then they'll almost certainly get an answering telegram giving the good news. It would be handed to them at some station en route. Outside Turania all is peace, and there will be officials ready to go to any trouble for those dear girls. And the rest of you—all well?" came the anxious inquiry.

"Sleeping—up there!" Betty was happy to be able to answer, pointing to the kitchen ceiling.

"The servants' bed-rooms!"

"We chose this part of the house—or rather, Marie Preska chose it for us—because it included the kitchen! The local Black Sashes have all the rest of the house." By the way, Betty smiled on, "you know of a man named Bruno Corbusci?"

"The tavern-keeper in the next village—oh, yes! With a daughter, Elise—"

"He is the local Kommandant, in supreme command here," Betty continued lightly. "And his daughter— There is a thing we must tell you about Elise Corbusci. The other night she looted your dressing-room—stole your jewels—"

"Oh, well, that is the revolution!" Zora shrugged. "I cannot bother about jewels now. I have to think of—"

"But—we've got them back for you!" Polly chuckled, bringing an amazed smile to Zora's wan face.

"You have?"

"Yes. Only a few minutes before you knocked, just now, we had seen Elise bury the jewels in the shrubbery. They were to remain there, of course, until the revolution was over. Well, we dug them up again—"

"And here"—Betty grinned, suddenly producing a cloth bag—"they are!"

Zora gasped; but she made no pouncing move-

ment to snatch at the bag. Her gasp was simply due to amazement at what the girls had achieved.

"My dears!" she laughed softly at last. "But how wonderful! Only, as I say, I cannot think about those jewels now, or the damage done to my house, or anything of that nature! I must only think of your safety—"

"Oh, but we—"

"And also," Polly's reassuring remark was checked, "there is Sonia to be thought of."

It was the turn of the four girls to stare wonderingly.

"Sonia?" Betty blankly echoed. "Who is Sonia, then?"

Zora Somerfield became finger-at-lip.

"Sh!" she whispered. "Resume your seats and I will tell you."

Can Morcove Save Her?

SONIA is—a refugee. Sonia is—the Crown Princess of Turania—

Zora Somerfield, since she had been admitted to the Klosters' kitchen, a few minutes since, had not spoken more guardedly than she was speaking now.

"For several years Turania has been a Republic; but the former Royal Family were still popular with many good Turanians, and they were allowed to live on in the country they loved. They occupied a private house in the best part of Suva Pesh. But now this revolution has altered all that. It has come at a moment when Sonia's parents are absent. The night before last there were ugly demonstrations in front of that house in Suva Pesh. Fearing that she might lose her life if she remained there, later in the night some members of a most devoted staff urged her to flee the city."

Zora paused, and her listeners waited for her to resume, feeling too thrilled to hinder the narrative by remarks of their own.

"Sonia and two of her mother's faithful maids escaped from the house—passed unrecognised through the crowded streets. No one had gone to bed. There had been firing and bombing. Then, on the outskirts of Suva Pesh, those three fugitives—one of them a girl no older than any of you!—were suddenly in the midst of great danger. All was confusion, you must understand, and Sonia became separated from her companions—could not find them again."

"How awful!"

"Yes! She did not dare to go back. She had heard and seen enough to know that to return might cost her her life. She wandered on, alone, out of the city, avoiding the roads. As soon as she could, she took to the woods. She has told me that at last she felt she simply must lie down and sleep."

"Poor girl!" came another heartfelt comment from Betty and her chums. "But where is she now?"

Zora leant forward so as to be heard, although she was speaking under her breath.

"Sonia is outside at this moment—yes. You stare, but it is so. I would not let her come with me to the door, just now, in case—well, one could not be sure who would answer! She is waiting, at the edge of the forest—"

The four Morcove girls looked aside, as if it were possible for them to see through the stone walls of the hunting-box and make out, even then, the destitute girl—waiting amongst the trees.

"I found her just before dark to-night," Zora whispered on. "I had gone myself to rest for a little while in a lonely barn. I would never

have known she was there—poor Sonia, she had drawn straw over herself, for concealment. But she could peep out at me, and she recognised me.”

“Ah!” Tess nodded. “She knew she could trust you!”

“In happier days for my country, I was often at the Court. I have remained the devoted well-wisher of the royal family. And when I saw that poor girl—a princess, whom I had last seen in such different surroundings!—I tell you, my heart ached.”

Betty & Co. nodded understandingly.

“So, my dears, after that we came on together. Oh, a terribly difficult journey—so slow! Again and again we had to strike aside because of blown-up bridges over the river. We had to hide whilst marching men went by. They were Black Sashes. But, happily, I knew this part of Turania well—every inch of it. At last we are here—Sonia and I. There is no light anywhere. I tell her to wait there whilst I see what can be done. I hope that you are all here; but also I fear that there may be Black Sashes—”

“As there are—at least a score of them, sleeping in their part of the house at this moment,” Betty interjected in a guarded voice. “And if they find out—about Sonia?”

Zora Somerfield gave a gesture of agitation.

“It is as much as Sonia’s life is worth, I am sure! It is not what Corbusci himself would do to her; but he would pass her on, as a great prize—”

“If only for the ‘glory’ it would bring him,”

Polly scornfully muttered.

“Well! Corbusci or no Corbusci, that poor girl has got to be fetched in—to join us!”

“Ra-ther,” Betty declared, whilst Madge and Tess nodded very emphatically to the same effect. “We’ll manage! We outfit them over the princess!”

“Ah, how fine you are, you girls—so splendid!” Zora Somerfield smiled, looked years younger all at once. “How it makes me proud of the British name I bear—Somerfield! Now I shall creep out again. You must wait. That back door must be kept locked whilst I am away. So, to let you know that I am back, I shall give three knocks very gently. Then you will open.”

“Right—ho!”

They all stood up, making not a sound.

Ready to stop dead at the first hint of danger, Betty tiptoed with Zora Somerfield to the outer back door. The other girls remained in the kitchen, exchanging glances of acute suspense. Somewhere far off in the night guns were speaking.

After a minute, Betty had relocked that outer door. A kind of gleeful gesture prefaced her whisper:

“I say—just had a brain wave! Why shouldn’t this

refugee princess pass as one of us? Our numbers are down by three; and the Black Sashes don’t know it! Princess Sonia can easily take the place of one of those who’ve slipped away!”

“Great idea!” Polly agreed enthusiastically. “You mean—if we should all have to clear out of here? At that rate, we may even be able to smuggle Princess Sonia out of the country!”

“If only we could!” Madge murmured fervently. “From what Zora Somerfield has said, it looks as if things are to get worse before they get better. Fancy that poor girl being in such a hunted state.”

The whisperings ceased. All four girls held themselves mute and still, knowing they would be heart-in-mouth if a sound came that meant danger.

All the Black Sashes who had quartered themselves in the house—were they asleep? Had none of them stayed about, on guard during the dark hours? And how about Elise Corbusci? She had crept out of doors, only such a little while ago stealing back after she had buried the jewels. Was she asleep by now?

The Morcove four could only wonder anxiously, whilst the critical minutes dragged by. As Britishers, they and their fellow holiday-makers had never been in any serious danger from the Black Sashes. But for Princess Sonia the danger really was—deadly!

At last Betty stole back to the scullery door, to be ready.

Even as she crept towards the locked door



The chums cheered loudly and Polly waved the Union Jack wildly, then cleverly let it fall in such a way that it hid the royal refugee from view. Polly did not mean Sonia to be recognised by the rebels.

again, it was rapped three times—very softly. The signal!

She drew the bolts, opened the door, and a girlish figure, darkly clad, reeled in out of the night.

It was the princess—so far gone with exhaustion that she was almost dropping, and Zora could hardly support her. Instantly Betty put out both hands and caught her other arm.

"There, it's all right," Betty whispered very tenderly. "We've got you now, and we'll never let you down!"

Princess "Pam" I

IT was morning again at the hunting-box, and dusky Naomer Nakara, one of two "internees" who had enjoyed a full night's rest, was as "full of beans" as she would have been any morning during term at Morcove school.

But it was a gaiety which Naomer was having to suppress somewhat, as she climbed the smaller staircase to get Paula Creel to come down to breakfast.

Naomer was not forgetting that in one of the farther bed-rooms a certain girl was still fast asleep. That girl was the Princess Sonia, about whom Naomer, like the rest of the "internees," knew everything, now.

"Queek, come on down, Paula, bekas—brekker!" was Naomer's stage whisper, after she had tiptoed into the first bed-room above stairs, where the beloved duffer of Study 12 was. Yes, Paula was actually making herself useful for once! Making a bed, in fact.

"A seemply gorjus brekker, too!" the dusky one further imparted, wishing she could shout the news. "Bekas, Marie Preska has said we must cellerbrate, now zat Mrs. Somerfield has turned up safely—hooray!"

Naomer's whispered "cheer" set Paula chuckling.

"Bai Jove, gweat welief—yes, wather, Naomer deah! And as we musn't make a wow, for fear of waking that poor geal, I will leave the west of the bed-making until later on—yes, wather!"

"Have you seen ze princess? Bekas—here, let's take just ze peep at her, before we go down," Naomer said under her breath, and tiptoed towards an inner door communicating with the adjoining bed-room. "I must see her, I am so eggecited about her!"

By the time Paula had put herself close behind her chum, the latter had silently pushed the door ajar, enabling them both to peep into the room.

There on one of the beds lay the sleeping refugee; and she was as lovely as the "Sleeping Princess" of the fairy tale!

"Bai Jove, she is wemawkably beautiful!" Paula breathed—in delight, not envy. Paula would have had every girl in the world be beautiful. "What lovely hair; what wefined features, bai Jove!"

"I wonder if she is dreaming?" whispered Naomer. "Eef it were me, I would be having ze nightmare, after all she has gone through since ze revolution started."

"I say, though—do you see?" Paula voiced softly in great delight. "There are fresh clothes for her to put on when she wakes up—some of Pam's things, I wather fancy, what?"

"Yes, bekas—zat is ze grand patent plan now," Naomer exulted. "And we have got to be jolly careful not to call ze princess by her proper name; at least—not out loud! In case ze Black Sashes should hear."

They left her—poor worn-out Sonia!—still deep

in sleep, closing the door of her room so that no disturbing sound should reach her.

As there was another door that could be closed, at the head of the steep stairs which they had to descend to reach the kitchen, Naomer, when she did get below, was inclined to put much less restraint upon her skittish mood.

Nor, indeed, was the dusky one the only Morcovian to give way to bounding spirits. Polly Linton was very much the madcap, this morning, and Bunny Trevor was bubbling over with fun.

Then there was buxom Marie Preska, looking as if this were quite one of the happiest mornings she had ever known, even though the revolution had robbed her—only temporarily, it was to be hoped—of her faithful Josef!

Jubilation was making Marie want to sing whilst she bustled about, being helped by Betty and one or two others in preparing the breakfast.

"My faith, but how my prayers have been answered!" came one breathless outburst from the good woman. "True, it is a disgrace that the mistress of the house should have to eat in the kitchen—whilst that pig of a Corbusci has the dining-room!"

"Oh, don't mind about that, Marie," laughed Zora Somerfield. "If he has the best rooms, I have the best company!"

"And we have a jolly sight better brekker zan he will get—booh to him!" Naomer exploded. "Ooo!" as she surveyed the laid table. "Who would ever zink we were in ze middle of a war! With sheels banging away—"

"What shells? Where?" Polly wanted to know.

"I am talking about yesterday—"

"Yesterday is ancient history—that we helped to make!" Bunny rippled. "Personally, I think the Battle of Klosters was a poor show."

"If there is any shelling of this place to-day," Zora Somerfield remarked, taking her seat to preside at the breakfast table, "you girls won't be here to see anything of it. I mean you all to be off—before the morning is out!"

"What!"

Morcove had been given to understand that it was to "get a move on." But Zora's determination to make it such a speedy evacuation had come as a surprise.

She, of course, would be going with the girls, and they had thought she would feel bound to put off the start until there had been time for her to get over the effects of the last four-and-twenty hours. Several of the chums gave her glances which, she could tell, meant anxiety on her account.

"I am quite all right!" she asserted, smiling brightly. "We would be off in an hour, if it were not for—your-know—who!"

Just as well that Zora Somerfield had not referred by name, just then, to the refugee who had been left to sleep on upstairs! For, at this very moment, the locked door of the kitchen was rapped at by someone who must have come very stealthily along the passage.

"If you blis!" a masculine voice requested. "Oben!"

"Corbusci!" Morcove named the man who had called out; and there were grins and titters. It was with such significant composure that Mrs. Somerfield was rising, to comply with the demand.

Turning back the key, she drew away from the door as Corbusci threw it open before him. His entry lost all its swagger as he found himself confronted with the very mistress of the house.

"Ach!" he gasped, goggling his eyes at Zora.

"Good-morning, Bruno Corbusci," she said icily. "I was wanting a word with you. For the benefit of these girls, we will converse in English."

"You—you—your highness has come from Suva Pesth!" he inferred amazedly. "Ach, I musd congratulate you on being still alive! Und how vos-things in Suva Pesth?"—anxiously.

"Not too good for the Black Sashes. I think I may say," Zora bleakly answered. "Bruno Corbusci, you commandeered this house of mine?"

"Jah, so! Ve musd have der local headquarters. Ve do our besd about der kels, you understand?"

"There is one thing I do not understand," Zora took him up frigidly. "War is war, I know, and private property gets knocked about. But

nesses who saw me, when I caught that girl at Brakia village, take the jewels from her pocket!"

"That was a trick of yours, Elise, which is not going to save you now," Zora calmly answered.

"Those very witnesses must be aware how easy it was for you—accuser and searcher, all in one!—to pretend to find the jewels in Judy Cardew's pocket. You yourself looted those jewels from my dressing-room, the night before last—"

"I did not! It is a lie—"

"Ach, yes! Your highness—"

"And last night, Bruno Corbusci, your daughter crept out to bury the jewels in the shrubbery. She dug a hole with a spade and put them into it, in a cloth bag. She was seen to do it—"

"Impossible!" Elise stamped, whilst her gesturing hands frequently made clawing passes over her hair. "You say all this—"

"I say all this so that your father may be warned! Unless he provides me, within two hours from now, with at least one conveyance enabling me to evacuate these British girls from the danger



Suddenly there was a tremendous explosion. The Morcove party stood transfixed. They had wanted to cross that bridge in their flight with Sonia, but now—

I do not understand that sort of 'patriotism' which sees in civil war a chance for—looting."

His flabby face turned very pale; his great chest went in and out as he heaved to recover his lost breath.

"Your highness!"

"Commandeering my house may be justified, I suppose, as an act of necessity. But—"

There was a sudden dramatic interruption. Elise, the daughter of Corbusci, must have been lurking in the passage, listening. Now she had rushed into the kitchen, yelling passionately:

"It is a lie—a lie the girls tell you, that I took the jewels! I did not touch the jewels! I knew they would try to blame it on to me! Father, now you see how I was correct! I am to be accused! It is to be said that I, the Kommandant's daughter, looted!"

"As you did," Zora sternly rejoined. "I know all about it—"

"No, you only believe what those girls tell you, who tell all lies, lies, lies! The one who wished to return to England took the jewels! What! You shake your head? But I have wit-

ness, I shall hold him and you both to account for that affair of the jewels."

"But—my father!" Elise turned to him frantically. "I deny it! I did not loot—"

"Ver is der kel my daughter accuse, your highness?"

"She has gone—back to England! Yes," Zora smiled, "she went off again—made a second start!"

"Den I say, midout her, you haf no right to make der counder accusation against my Elise!"

"Oh, but I have," he was calmly answered. "Two of these girls who are with me now can bear witness! They saw your daughter creep out to bury those jewels—"

Elise, in tears, moaned wildly:

"I did not, I did not! It is a lie!"

Then, dropping her hands away from her wild, tearful eyes, she raged out again:

"If they saw me do that, why did they not get the jewels—tell me!"

"But they did get the jewels; here they are!" Zora patly answered, suddenly producing the cloth bag. "Bruno Corbusci, it is no use! Take

your daughter away now. Instead of trying to reform Turania, try reforming her. And you will not forget, will you, that I must have a conveyance of some sort or other within two hours from now?"

"Ach, but—your highness—"

"You can commandeer it—Kommandant!"

And she bowed to him dismissively.

His dazed look; his crestfallen state as he drifted out after a daughter who, in a frenzy, had rushed away—it all left Betty and Co. doubled up with laughter.

Bang! went the door—violently slammed by Naomer, who, next instant, stood comically horrified at the noise she had made.

"Bekas, what ze diggings," she stage-whispered. "I forget about ze pr—"

"St, you goop!" Polly hissed.

"Ha, ha, ha! How perfectly lovely, though!" Bunny gurgled. "Paula darling, you won't have to carry all your luggage to the frontier, after all!"

"No; gweat relief!" beamed Paula, as if there really had been a serious prospect of her having to do that.

"She's awake—out of bed and dressing; I can hear her," came Betty's excited remark about the princess. "So—do excuse me, Mrs. Somerfield, and let me run up!"

"Very well, dear."

Three stairs at a time Betty mounted to the floor above, to hasten through the first bed-room to the one adjoining, and there was Princess Sonia—in front of a mirror, seeing how she looked in borrowed clothes.

"Morning—Pam!" Betty cried. "We have decided that you must be Pam."

The princess turned round.

"Oh, is that to be my name? Too pretty for me, I think!"

"And I think—you are too pretty for words! Oh, but how nice to see you looking so much better for your long sleep! Mrs. Somerfield got a good rest, too, and presently we are all to be off out of this!"

"I am to be—a British schoolgirl, going home!" Princess Sonia exclaimed, with an amused look. Then her expression saddened. "Home," she repeated in a changed tone. "I shall have no home, now."

"Your parents will make one for you, somewhere—"

"Not in Turania," Betty was sighingly answered. "Ah, well, that is the last time you shall hear me grieve! I know I am lucky to be alive."

"It must have been terrible for you; but now—"

"Yes, I should forget all that, I know. Only, I think there is one thing I shall never forget. It is not to do with myself—oh, no"—with a shrug—"I am nobody, now, that it should matter whether I live or die. But I shall always think of the people I saw in the streets of Suva Pesh—fighting each other—"

She moved to the open casement window and stood silent for a long while, gazing out over the sunny prospect of mountain, forest and valley.

"So peaceful, at this moment," she murmured

at last. "Turania, my country that I love—this is how it should always be. Peaceful!"

"Some day," Betty said comfortingly, putting herself close to the musing girl.

Yet she knew what little comfort there was in that one whispered word, when at this very moment a dull rumble of guns sounded. Guessing how distressing that sound must be to the princess, Betty gently drew her away from the open window.

"If you're ready—'Pam'!—we can go downstairs? They are all at breakfast, and—Hark, though!" Betty broke off, as a very different sound now reached her from the outer air, "Not already, surely!"

She darted back to the window, and at the first peep she fairly jumped with delight, giving a clap of the hands.

"It is—already! A horse and cart," Betty joyfully shouted. "Oh, and—goodness knows where he has been, all this while, but there is Marie's Josef!"

The Great Retreat!

"HOORAY!" cheered half a dozen Morcovians as they crowded at the kitchen window. "Hurrah!"

"Bekas, gorjus, hip-pip! We can all take it in turns to have rides!"

"And then take turns at pulling," Bunny jested.

"Oh, the poor old horse!"

"Taxi!" Polly playfully yelled in the tone of an hotel porter summoning one from the cab rank. "Where have you been since the day before yesterday, Josef?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Much of this hilarity was due to Marie's husband having turned up again. The girls were not unmindful of a certain inimical look in Marie's eyes as she now watched her errant Josef bringing the aged horse and the creaking cart towards the back door. Clearly, Marie was going to demand a full account of what Josef had been doing with himself, in something like the last forty-eight hours.

He was a mild man; so Morocco gave him some more heartening cheers, which, incidentally, helped Princess Sonia to realise what a jolly, roguish lot they were amongst whom she had been pitchforked by Fate.

Admitted to the kitchen, Josef was not immediately taken to task by his better half. He was given the opportunity to do much respectful bowing to Mrs. Somerfield, who elicited the information that Corbuser had ordered the horse and cart to be provided at once.

Then Marie began her cross-examination, but as this was all in Turanian, the chums could not follow it. They only knew that Marie had a great deal to say, and Josef—very little.

Presently Sonia merrily offered a translation for Morocco's benefit.

"Marie asked her husband where he has been since the day before yesterday. He says the Black Sashes ordered him not to come near the house, but to stay at the stables. Or they would shoot him!"

"And he obeyed them!" gasped some of the girls.

"He says—he humoured them."

"Oh! Ha, ha, ha!"

But Josef had received such a blowing up from his wife that Betty and Co. were bound to feel more inclined to pity than condemn him.

"Bekas, what za diggings, has he had anything to eat?" yelled Naomer, doing a dash to

SCHOOLGIRLS
WEEKLY

Every Wednesday

the breakfast table. "He must be starving! Here you are, Josef!" as she turned to him with liberal offerings of bread and meat. "Stuff to give ze troops!"

At last Zora, who was like Sonia for being all laughter at the way Morcove was carrying on, tinkled a teacup, and then Polly said virtuously: "Yes, order, some of you! One would think you were at Morcove School!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I only want to say that we may as well be off at once—"

"Loud cheers!"
"Hooray, yes; bekas—you never know!" said Naomer, still thinking of possible shelling. "So, queek, everybody; upstairs to get packed!"

What the chums really had to do, of course, was to do more picking out than packing. Their luggage would have filled the cart, as it had filled it on the day of their arrival. Only the barest necessities could be taken, all other belongings having to be left behind to take their chance.

So, in a few minutes, Betty and Co. were downstairs again, ready to be off with Mrs. Somerfield and the princess. Marie was remaining at the hunting-box, with Josef to take care of her. Or perhaps Morcove was right in thinking, privately, that she was staying to take care of Josef.

For last runnings in and out, and jocular cries and frequent peals of laughter, it might have been a going-away on the morning of breaking-up day at Morcove.

Yet all the while every heart was beating anxiously; each mind was more or less a prey to dread. The dread of Sonia's being singled out as a girl who was not one of the original "internees."

Secrecy over the departure it had been impossible to expect. Even if they could have had the yard to themselves, just outside the back door there would still have been the certainty of their being seen off by a crowd of Black Sashes, waiting somewhere beyond the yard.

As it was, they found a number of the revolutionaries sauntering into the yard, to stand and stare and make sullen jokes amongst themselves.

Corbusi was not to be seen; but at the last moment some of the girls noticed Elise—at the back of the group, standing on tiptoe, her fierce eyes flashing with hatred.

Let that venomous girl be the one to detect the trick that was being played, and it would be only a little way that Princess Sonia went with them all, before she would be arrested, taken away—dragged back, perhaps to meet with a violent death.

And Betty and Co. realising this, marvelled at the coolness which Sonia herself was displaying. She certainly was Pam all over again, for serenity in a time of crisis.

She was one of four who were to have first turn as passengers in the cart. Pretending to be a bit sleepy after a night of broken rest, she promptly settled herself on a plank seat. At the same time, she held a hand to one side of her face, as if a tooth were nagging!

As for her fellow-passengers, they had been specially chosen for their ability to fool about and so draw attention upon themselves. There was Bunny standing up announcing that she wished to make a farewell speech to Marie Preska, whilst Polly and Naomer each claimed a right to be heard.

In the end, the fun-loving trio were all standing up together and all speaking at once—and then the old horse made a false start, and they all nearly fell over one another.

"Bye for now, anyhow, Marie!" yelled Bunny,

recovering her balance. "See you again some day!"

"And thanks for all you've done for us, Marie!"
"Bekas, your cooking, Marie—gorjus! We shall sink of you when we eat our sangwidges, presently!"

"Hold tight!" Betty laughed up to the cart-load of girls, for Mrs. Somerfield, at the horse's head, was now intending to set him plodding.

"We're off!"
"Hurrah!"

And suddenly Polly provided a grand surprise by unfurling that home-made Union Jack which had hung from one of their bed-room windows, during the "interment."

She set it waving—a painted sheet taken from one of the beds. The louder her chums cheered, the more wildly she waved the flag, letting it flop down at last in such a way that it completely draped Sonia.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Elise, at the moment when Morcove shrieked its laughter over that "nonsense" with the flag, was at her very fiercest.

She clenched her teeth and stamped, suddenly paying less attention to Mrs. Somerfield and the girls, as they passed towards the gateway. The fierce eyes of Elise were now more inclined to glare at one and another of her father's comrades, hoping to see some at least who felt as she did—ready to make a scene.

But the men were content to remain passive. It may have been no fault of theirs that they had taken no active part as yet in the revolution; but idleness had caused a loss of morale, a slackening of enthusiasm for the "big push."

At the same time, Zora Somerfield's return had not been without effect. Mostly simple-minded peasants, these fellows were inclined to react to that respect which they had been accustomed to show to Zora.

Elise flared out at some of them at last. "Cowards!" she stamped, getting herself only smiled at scornfully in return. "You are fine fighters for your side, you are! If I was a man, I would take a gun and shoot that woman!"—meaning Zora. "Ah, I have no patience!"

And she turned away, passionate steps taking her indoors again.

The building seemed to her to be deserted. At least, she encountered no one in those ground-floor rooms which the Black Sashes were occupying.

Whilst drifting from one such room to another, she came to what was properly the gun-room of the hunting-box. Now it was being used as an armory.

Here the men had put by their rifles and ammunition, and Elise took up one rifle and seemed to consider purloining it.

Then she must have changed her mind. Setting down the gun, she prowled to a low cupboard, pulled open its door and peered in.

Her expression hardened and her fierce eyes gleamed with crafty delight as she saw what the cupboard held. High explosives—bombs, with time fuses!

Elise took one of the deadly things from the cupboard shelf.

With a little laugh, she was next moment flitting away from that room, taking the bomb with her.

Once again, a little after this, she had sight of Mrs. Somerfield and all the girls, wending their way down the steep road which served the hunting-box.

Only for a few moments did she watch them all—some on foot and some riding in the cart.

Then, with another laugh and a look in her eyes that was more insensate than ever, she threw a dark cloak about herself, took up the bomb again and crept away from the house—unseen!

The Hand of an Enemy!

"**W**HOA!" "Why, what's the trouble, Polly dear?"

"Nothing, Mrs. Somerfield! Only that I think it's time I got down and walked!"

"Same here," cried Bunny, preparing to take a flying leap from the cart. "Come on, Naomer, out we get! Oh, but not you, Pam!"

"No—Pam!" It was a general cry, the "Pam" being loud enough to be heard a quarter of a mile away. "You aren't quite up to walking at present—Pam!"

Down jumped Polly and Bunny, and then Naomer yelled a "Look out, everybody!" as if she required as much room for landing as would an aeroplane.

"A gorjus ride!" declared the dusky one, after flumping to ground. "Eet has given me quite an appetite."

"Walk a few miles, dear," Polly said sweetly, "and then you'll enjoy your meal—if there is one—all the better."

"May I not get down and do my share of walking?" came Sonia's entreaty. "Please!"

"No!" Morcove decreed with one voice, and Zora confirmed this. So the refugee princess retained her place in the cart, being joined by Paula, Madge and Tess.

Then the strange cavalcade moved on again.

Four miles of the journey already lay behind them, and now they were in surroundings untouched by the recent upheaval.

It was between Klosters and Suva Pesh that bridges had been blown up and other destruction wrought of a warlike nature. Morcove, on its way to the Rouvakian frontier, was traversing a valley road devoid of obstacles.

But this did not mean that all danger was at an end.

The girls were realising, as was Zora Somerfield, that at any moment the tide of battle might flow this way. The Black Sashes might be rolled back, in which case Morcove would be more in the thick of hostilities than ever!

This possibility, however, although it existed in the minds of Betty and others, was not one to be talked about. At present, anyhow, they had to themselves a peaceful area of wondrous beauty.

"Anyone seeing us would think we were just a lot of picnickers, out for the day!" Betty remarked to Polly.

"With all ze purvisions on board—yes!" Naomer agreed, and smacked her lips. "And when we DO stop for a meal, I vote we make him a good one! Marie Preska packed a ham, I know, and a big meat pie, and yards and yards of sausage!" "You haven't had a lift yet, Betty!"

"I'm as fresh as paint," Polly was answered blithely. "We're out of the heat, down here where the river keeps the road company so nicely. Well! We might have had a topping holiday out here in Turania, if it hadn't been for this bust-up!"

"It's been fun, though!" Bunny chuckled.

"Oh, rather!" Betty heartily agreed. "And we shall have done some good, too—if we can only contrive to smuggle you-know-who over the

frontier. She has no passport, of course; but still—we'll manage!"

It became a moment for the marchers to lapse into silence. They had glanced behind, to take a look at "Pam." She had wanted to give up her place in the cart, just now, but these girls could see how unfitted she still was to undergo any exertion.

The cart, as it came creaking on behind, had already shaken that ill-fated refugee into a huddled state again. The long lashes had veiled her lovely eyes once more; she was nearly asleep again!

At last Bunny resumed her usual frivolity. "I hope, kid," she said to Naomer, "you are taking in all the beauties of the countryside!" "I am just zinking how I could do with a refresher!"

"Look out for the Lesser-spotted Black Sash," Bunny staidly counselled. "Another rare and beautiful creature to watch for—the Purple-nosed Corbusci!"

"I zink a drink from ze river would be better zan no drink at all!"

"Good idea!" Polly nodded. "Let's!"

So, gaily making known their intention to the rest of the party, these four scampered aside from the road, picking their way across ferny ground to the margin of the river.

The water went rushing by in a strong current, showing eddies here and there. And loudly sounded the brawling and swirling where great boulders lay in midstream, doing their best to impede the rapid flow.

"Gosh, no place for a swim," Polly laughed, as they all took a look up and down the river before kneeling to cup some of the water with their hands.

"What it must be like, Suva Pesh way!" Betty grimaced. "Where they have blown up the bridges! Shouldn't wonder if the water is all over the main road by now, in that direction. The road seems so often to follow the river in its windings along the—Hallo," she broke off, and turned excitedly to Bunny and Polly in a consulting way. "Did you see—just then?"

"See what, Betty—where?" "Instantly that girl was looking over an outstretched, pointing hand which directed her chum's attention to a spot a little way upstream, on the other side of the river.

"Can't see her now," Betty whispered tensely; "but just then, girls—I could vow I glimpsed someone who looked just like Elise Corbusci."

"What! That girl again!" Polly gaped. "Bekas, what ze diggings," Naomer jabbered, "zere was nothing to bring her this way!"

"Except to follow us," Bunny frowned. "But if it really was Elise, she has done more than foHow—she has got ahead of us even."

"Only, she's on the other side," Betty pondered aloud. "She must have crossed lower down—at the railway bridge. She's been dodging along through the forest on that side."

"She can't have heard us saying anything about the princess," Polly thankfully commented in a guarded voice. "We haven't once mentioned her by name."

"But what's her game—getting ahead of us?" Bunny questioned.

"That's what I'm wondering," Betty muttered. "Here, let's get back to the others and tell them."

Their drink of water was obtained in a brace of seconds, and then they picked their way back to the road and ran to catch up with the led horse and cart. Mrs. Somerfield made it a halt whilst Betty told of what had just been discovered.

"You say she is ahead of us, but on the other side of the river? Then, all I can suppose is that she is meaning to lie in wait for us so as to overhear our talk—for, a little farther on, girls, this road goes over a bridge."

"But, this spying—this wanting to overhear our talk," Betty exclaimed. "It must mean that she suspected something, after all, about—'Pam.'"

Zora Somerfield shrugged.

"She will have something to do, to turn suspicion into proof, that is all!"

They went on again then, as one party, and after a few minutes they rounded a bend in the road and saw the bridge.

It was an old stone bridge, the masonry weather-worn and mossy, and it so harmonised with the grandly romantic scenery that the girls would have continued to gaze towards it admiringly. But, all in a moment—that bridge was no more.

Before their very eyes a tremendous explosion took place, sending tons of shaped blocks and broken mortar high into the air.

After the appalling roar-r-r! of the initial explosion, there was a thunderous falling back of all that blown-up material into the river.

Zora Somerfield was showing presence of mind in keeping a tight hold on the horse, lest fright should cause him to bolt.

As for the girls, they stood transfixed—unable for a moment or so to speak. At a distance of two hundred yards at least from where the bomb had exploded, they had yet felt a blast of air come against them almost violent enough to throw them down. Pebbles and particles of mortar were raining down all round them.

"My goodness!" gasped Polly, the first to find her voice again. "A bomb!"

"And that bridge was the way we had to go!" Betty dismayedly rejoined. "So now we know why Elise—"

"Look—look! There she goes!" Tess yelled, throwing out a hand to point to the other side of the river. "Look at her—running away now!"

"Oh, the wretch!" several of them angrily shouted, and Polly, for one, shook a clenched fist.

Elise was even flaunting herself as she went running back; going home, now that her malicious deed was done! There were trees amongst which she could have obtained shelter, but she preferred to keep in the open, close to her side of the river.

Mockingly she laughed and waved, and there were some taunting cries which Morcoove might have been forced to hear, but now a great noise of rushing water had commenced.

It was a significant sound which caused the girls to take no more notice of Elise, but to look again in the direction of the shattered bridge.

Then, to their utter horror, they saw a boiling flood finding its way out on to the road.

The latter, except where it took a steep rise to go over the bridge, was at river level. It had only needed the dropping back of all the blown-up masonry into the water for a dam to form that completely stopped the channel.

Across a patch of the low bank the water was surging now, drowning all the lovely ferns and wild flowers, and even bearing down sapling trees.

The girls could even see bushes being uprooted by the violence of a flood which was finding its outlet upon the road.

"Howwows!" was Paula's faint cry, as she stood up, with the others, in the cart. "We shall be drowned!"

Nor was there one of her chums who did not feel that a fate, every bit as tragic as that, might overtake them all, unless they acted swiftly.

Their Luck is Out!

ON came that great and deadly brown tide, racing towards them now that it had only smooth road to traverse.

There was something dreadfully fascinating in the sight of it—a bemusing effect which Betty and others instantly realised must be resisted.

They tore their gaze from the spellbinding sight, and then saw Mrs. Somerfield turning the horse aside, to get off the road in time.

"The woods—that track there, girls!" came her urgent cry. "Run—run!"

They lost her voice for a moment in the ever-increasing roar of the approaching flood, then heard it again:



"Good-bye, dear friends," the Princess said emotionally. "It is better that I go." But Betty and Co. did not for a moment intend to leave the plucky girl to her fate. Somehow they would find a way of saving her!

"To the trees, quick! It may be higher ground in there. If not—climb trees—do anything!"

"Come on, then!" Betty shouted.

Yet she herself did not run, after all, with those others who were on foot. The horse, though too old to take fright, seemed to have become panic-stricken. Zora, unaided, could not get him to move. So Betty started to render what help she could.

Then Polly was there as well, and between all three of them they got the horse plunging off the road and so on to rough grassland, at the verge of the dense woods.

They literally dragged him on, by the head, and with every enforced step that he made the cart rocked along with him. Paula, if only because she was being violently jolted about, squealed as if her last moment really had come.

Then the flood caught them.

Suddenly it was swirling and surging all around them. Every plunging movement of a hoof sent up fountains of water to the faces of those who were gamely compelling the horse to flounder on in the hope of reaching higher ground.

Up to their knees Betty and Polly could feel the water rising, its mad eddies all but throwing them over. They were only able to keep standing by holding on so grimly to the harness.

"Gosh!" Polly panted. "Some 'picnic,' Betty!"

"You're right!"

For those in the cart to see these two girls floundering with Mrs. Somerfield in the raging flood was more than they could endure. First Tess jumped out, and then Madge and the princess did the same—if only to lighten the load.

Nor was Paula actually hanging back. If she was still in the cart when others had leaped out, that was only because she could not decide whether to jump or clamber.

At one moment she could be seen, poised for what appeared to be a high dive; then she changed her mind and started to climb over the back of the cart. Another moment, and she was thinking that she would do better to climb over one of the sides.

Finally, the horse and cart got amongst the trees, on the grass track which Zora had hoped would mean safety; and then Paula would have been swept out of the cart by a hanging branch—but a monkey-like hand reached down and seized her.

"Ow!"

"What ze diggings, when I am saving you!" was Naomer's disgusted yell. "Bekas, eet quite all right, I am up zis tree—hooray!"

"Ow, deah—ow! My gug-gwacious—whew!"

"Ah, bah, come on up with you—can't you?"

"That's a big fish you've caught, kid?" came Bunny's remark, voiced from the lower branches of another tree. "Oh, pardon—a mermaid, I see!"

It was not much of a joke to laugh at, but the others suddenly went off into yells of merriment. Somehow, they had all floundered clear of the flood, and the sense of escape from what had been deadly peril was sufficient to cause half-hysterical feelings of relief. Moreover could only see something extremely comic in the situation.

It was funny to see Bunny and Naomer each up a tree, the dusky one grappling with her "catch." It was even funnier for the others to know that they were soaked to the skin from the waist downwards.

"What a life!" Polly sighed. "Well, I for one am not going back to Klosters, to hunt up a change of things!"

"Must do a little sunbathing, that's all," Betty chuckled.

But although they could afford to make light of their sopping state, the ugly fact had to be faced quite seriously—that they had lost the use of the road, and that this meant losing the use of the horse and cart.

Zora, who knew the district so well, had regretfully to decide that the cart must be abandoned and the horse turned adrift.

"We would never do any good, trying to carry on along this track. It is certain to end somewhere in the heart of the forest. We must let him out of the shafts, to go free, and very likely he will find his way back at last. At any rate, he will find plenty to eat, and perhaps some peasant may come upon him and take him in charge."

Accordingly, a few minutes later, they all wished him a quite fond farewell, afterwards finding that he was not minded to roam away on his own, so that all those last tender partings and petting words had been premature, at least.

He was still close at hand, cropping the woodland grass where it had escaped the flood, whilst wet stockings were being stripped off.

Bunny and Naomer, having escaped a wetting, were free to parcel out the provisions which had been carried, thus far, in the cart.

Each member of the party now expected to be burdened with a more or less ungainly bundle; but once again calculations were sensationally upset.

For, suddenly, some hog-like gruntings caused most of the girls to make a startled turn, so as to face that path of undergrowth from which the ugly noise had come.

The brambles just there were being violently rustled.

Only a moment or two had the girls stared uneasily, when they saw the hideous head of a wild boar force itself clear of screening foliage.

Deadly looking tusks were champing as those angry gruntings came. The savage creature's small eyes blinked evilly.

Out to the very track on which the girls were standing rushed the wild boar—and they were defenceless!

From Paula a sort of swooning cry came, whilst the others could not help giving mild yells and screams.

"Look out, Bunny—Naomer! Look out, there! It's a wild boar!"

"What!"

Busy at the cart, the warned pair took one startled look, and then they darted aside—only in the nick of time.

The tusky brute must have scented food that had been off-loaded from the cart. He made his rush for it with that speed and savagery which makes his kind one of the deadliest animals a hunter can be called upon to tackle.

Very likely it was only the attraction of the food which saved one or another of the girls from being charged and gored. Thankfully, they knew themselves to be safe and free to put themselves at a still safer distance. But there was the dismaying knowledge that they were now to be without food.

Ferociously the wild boar began his smoutings amongst the provisions, and there must have been what seemed to him rare tit-bits, causing him to grunt warnings against his being disturbed.

So certain was it that not a particle of food would be left by him fit for human consumption, even if a wait were made, they left him making his gorge.

Many a mile still to go, and no horse and cart,

now, to provide a lift for any who might feel overcome with weariness; no rations, either.

Yet still Morcove kept smiling, and so did Zora and the princess. As to food, they hoped to strike a village where something could be bought; but first of all there was the river to be forded, now that that bridge was down.

Full two hours later they were still faring along the river bank, seeking a fording place. Everywhere, so far, it had been the same; no chain of stepping stones to be found, and the river always too wide and deep and full of dangerous eddies either for wading or even swimming.

Most unluckily, they were dealing with one of the most difficult stretches of the whole torrent-forded river, where it wound through a forest-filled valley, Turanian scenery at its very wildest and loneliest. No habitation had they come upon.

At last they were feeling forced to sit down for a good rest, in a riverside clearing from which a narrow track seemed to lead away steeply uphill. Then it was, during a pause in the talk, that they heard the unmistakable sounds of someone's approach—on horseback.

"Wonder who this is!" Betty softly exclaimed. "First person we shall have seen since we had our last sight of that hateful Corbusci girl."

A man soon appeared, looking very fine and handsome upon a spirited saddle horse. They were not surprised to see him rein up and treat them all to an amazed look; but when, a moment later, he raised his hat, the polite action was done in what seemed to them an insincere manner.

He dismounted, tied his horse, and came towards the party with a lounging stride.

"Ah, Zora!" he said—and added something else, in Turanian. But he could speak English. Next moment he was remarking to the girls:

"You do not remember me, then? I would not have known you so quickly, only yesterday—I chanced to meet some girls who, I think, belonged to your party? Three girls—making for Rouvackia! I hope, by now, they have crossed the frontier! But now I think you begin to remember me—hein?"

It was Betty who answered him.

"Yes," she said tensely. "You are Rupert Cosetti—the man who wanted to—"

And there she broke off. With Zora Somerfield standing by—oh, and how deathly pale Zora had turned—Betty felt it wiser not to say that she knew him as a man who had wanted to marry that young lady, and that Zora's refusal of him at the time had turned his love to hatred!

A New Foe!

HE began to speak again to Zora, in Turanian, but she checked him coldly.

"Rupert, in the presence of these girls, we will converse, if you please, in English. But what is there for us to discuss?"

"Well, the question of your accepting my hospitality at the castle."

"No, thank you—"

"Your Uncle Nicolai is away—in Suva Pesth, where, I understand, the Black Sash Party have obtained complete power. I hope to hear that your Uncle Nicolai has obtained a post in the new Cabinet!"

Zora stared at the speaker.

"Uncle Nicolai, then, is supporting the Black Sashes?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And you?"

"Certainly! Self-preservation—first law of Nature, you know!"

The girls saw Zora treat him to a look of scorn. "I, at any rate," she said, "am not concerned with self-preservation—only concerned to get these young friends of mine out of this unhappy country, and so out of danger."

"I understand," he smiled. "You are making for the frontier town of Bukajero? You have eight young ladies here to get off your hands—and yesterday's three make eleven! But how is that," he blandly questioned, "when I was told the original party numbered—only ten?"

"Rupert, you can go on concerning yourself with your own self-preservation—"

"Oh, but that, permit me to remark, involves concern for the success of the revolution. I have backed that horse; I must see him win. Eight young ladies now—all with passports, hein?"

"At the frontier, the matter of their passports will be—"

"But—permit me to point out," and he literally pointed to Sonia. "Here is one young lady who looks so fatigued, she might very well be spared a wasted journey to the frontier. She will not get through, let me tell you—having no passport."

"Rupert, how do you know that she has no passport?"

"For the simple reason," he laughed heartlessly, "that my memory for faces—always so good!—is telling me! I think I have the honour," he said, taking off his hat again to make a sweeping bow to Sonia, "to greet the ex-Crown Princess of Turania?"

Zora advanced with an interposing stride.

"Rupert, you are not going to be so cruel, so despicable—"

"I am going to be patriotic enough—in the Black Sash sense," he smiled, "to invite the Princess Sonia to come up to the Castle of Brancovar."

"She will not go with you!"

"She will go with me," he insisted coolly, "or these other girls will not go on to the frontier."

Betty and Co., their hearts beating fast, saw Sonia separate herself from them instantly, by a few paces.

"I will go with you," she informed Rupert Cosetti, looking him straight in the eyes, "to your castle—back to Suva Pesth, if you like; I do not mind, so long as you let these British friends of mine go on to Bukajero."

"The castle first, shall we say? Good! My sister, Ettel, will be pleased to—I will not say, resume the acquaintance, no! But she also was introduced to you once, at Court."

H.R.H. Princess Tcherina

—but she prefers to be called "Cherry"—and she has a heart of gold as well as whimsical ways.

Look out for the first of her sparkling adventures in SCHOOL-GIRLS' OWN, the week after next!

"You are a beast, Rupert!" Zora stamped. "It is men like you—"

"Who are needed at this time? I agree! Men with a good memory for faces—ja! You see, Zora, I, who have never been able to forget your face, could hardly be expected to forget—others!"

Sonia suddenly turned back to the Morcove girls, offering both hands.

"I called you, just then, British friends of mine," she said emotionally. "It is what you have proved yourselves to be. I pray that you will reach your own dear country in safety at last. Good-bye, good-bye! It is better that I go!"

"Sonia!" several of them said together half-frantically. "Oh, we can't—"

"Ah, my dear friends, but you must," she smiled calmly. "We had the wild boar; now it is the wolf. Good-bye!"

And she quickly left them, walking across to the tied horse.

"Good-bye, Zora!" said Rupert Cosetti, bowing himself away.

She did not answer. Her back was turned to him, her eyes making an earnest appeal to Betty and the others to be silent until he had gone.

Jauntily he stepped to where Sonia was submissively waiting for him, beside the horse. She was petting the fine steed as Rupert reached her.

Morcove saw him assist the ill-fated girl up to the saddle and politely offer her the reins.

Then, lighting a cigarette, he walked horse and rider away with him, along the rising bridle-path. The trees immediately screened them, and in a few moments even the dying away pad-pad of hoofs had ceased.

Betty's quick-working mind had become one great and desperate resolve. Turning to her chums, she read in their looks such thoughts and feelings as were her own. So, unhesitatingly, she faced Zora and spoke.

"We could do nothing then; but we will save her yet. We must!"

"Oh, my dear girls—"

"Betty means it, and so do we others!" Polly burst in fiercely. "We must get Sonia away from

that man and his sister; must get her safely over the frontier!"

"I am thinking," Zora said, a note of hopefulness creeping back into her low voice; "the Casettis cannot do any telephoning or telegraphing. They may even be unable to get a messenger away, to take the news to Suva Pesh."

"Then there it is!" Bunny rejoined delightedly. "Why can't we all stay around, secretly, and then at least make the attempt to get her away from the castle?"

"It's the only thing to do!" Betty insisted, growing calmer as she became even more determined. "Not a yard farther do I go towards the frontier, without Sonia!"

"Nor I—nor I!"

"Wather not, bai Jove!" came Paula's agreeing murmur. "I know, geals, I am geneawly more of a hindwance than a heap. Fweedom, howevah, would mean misewy to me, knowing that that poor geal is in enemy hands."

"To be sent to her death, most likely, unless she is saved," Madge whispered in horror. "The Cosettis will do it, to curry favour with the Black Sashes—"

"Yes, we know what a heartless pair they are, those two," Tess nodded blackly. "But luckily we're well acquainted with the castle, having stayed there that other time we were out here in Turania. That should help us quite a lot."

"After dark!" Betty whispered. "Mrs. Somersfield, you will let us, won't you? When you see how we all feel about it—oh, you must!"

"Very well, then—I will!"

And, by that decisive answer, a great gladness was granted to Betty and her chums.

The old team spirit, cultivated at famous Morcove—never had it been stronger within them than it was at this critical time. Nor had they ever stood in greater need of it.

For what, now, stood between Princess Sonia and the terrible fate with which she was threatened, unless it was the readiness of these chums—only a handful of British schoolgirls though they were—to dare all in her behalf!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

Bravo, Betty Barton & Co.!

They're Determined to Stand by Princess Sonia in Her Time of Peril

You'll want to read how they fare in their efforts to penetrate the Castle of Francovar and help Sonia.

Don't miss next Tuesday's magnificent Morcove holiday story:



BY
MARJORIE
STANTON

Expelled from Grangemoor in Disgrace, Dave Cardew Still Carries on With His Task of Aiding Hetty Morland



Grangemoor to Guard Her

Removed from the School Roll

FOUR boys were sitting in a study at Grangemoor School, expressions of deepest gloom on their faces. This was all the more remarkable because the four in question—Jack Linton, Jimmy Cherrol, Tom Trevor, and Bobby Bloot—were usually among the cheeriest to be found anywhere in Grangemoor.

But this morning there was every reason for their despondency, for was not their dearest chum, Dave Cardew, to be publicly expelled?

Dave had been found guilty of breaking school rules, defying authority, and even assaulting prefects, but only Jack Linton and his three study-mates knew the real truth—that Dave's plight was solely due to the fact that he had promised help to Hetty Morland, who assisted her uncle, Ezra Joab, to run a tea-shop not far from the school.

This self-imposed task of his, undertaken from the best of motives, had brought him inevitably into conflict with "authority," chiefly in the person of a prefect, Ralph Gayner, who, secretly, was deeply concerned to prevent Dave carrying his efforts on Hetty's behalf to a successful conclusion.

Hands in pockets, Jack Linton strolled over to the study window and looked out gloomily.

"What's that striking now, you fellows?" he asked. "Half-past eight?"

"No, quarter to nine," was Tom Trevor's answer.

Bobby Bloot, better known as "Tubby," because of his ample build, shook his head in melancholy fashion, thinking, as they all were, that the time of Dave Cardew's ordeal was getting painfully near at hand.

"Poor old Dave," he muttered. "It's a rotten shame—"

"Oh, shut up!" interposed Jack irritably, then

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flung himself into an armchair. "Don't we all know it, and yet we can't do a thing to help Dave. We're pledged to secrecy over the whole business. Besides, if we did say anything now we'd probably only make matters ten times worse—if that's possible."

He scowled blackly at nothing in particular.

"But it's all very well," he went on a moment later. "I know I had the luck to get a minute's talk with Dave in the night when I had to fetch his clothes for him to go across to Head's House and spend the rest of the night there. I know he explained to me that expulsion may easily prove a blessing in disguise, as he will not be hampered by school ties. But—"

"Expulsion is expulsion, say what you like," Jimmy Cherrol pointed out. "What must chaps be thinking of him who don't know all that we know?"

Jack got up.

"I'll fight any chap who says a word against Dave after he's gone."

"Then you'll have to fight the House," Tom grimly rejoined. "No mistake, there's a change towards Dave this morning. Challoner's has always thought all the world of him. But I suppose they feel 'No smoke without fire.' They take it that he really must be as bad as he's been made out to be, after all."

A pause.

"Wonder if we shall get a last word with him?" Jimmy pondered aloud, ending the heavy silence at last.

"I mean to, somehow," Jack stated desperately. "That minute's talk in the middle of the night

was not enough. We fellows want to know what he's doing about those papers he's been guarding for Hetty Morland. He's had them hidden somewhere in the school. Is he taking them away with him? Or is he leaving them in the hiding-place?"

"We ought to be told where the hiding-place is, at that rate," Jimmy agreed. "Say, though, he could always write to one of us."

"Oh, yeah!" Jack frowned. "And have the letter intercepted by that Gayner cad! Bet your life that rotter will watch the post—as he easily can, being a prefect."

At this instant a bell began to send its loud summons far and wide. It was not the minor ding-dong of any of the bells associated with the various routine activities of the day. There was an impressive tolling which, as these four boys paid heed to it, seemed to hold a solemn note.

"Got to fall in now," Jimmy commented. "So there it is, and in half an hour's time, I suppose—"

"Oh, heck!" Jack stamped. "Don't be surprised, chaps, if I suddenly make a scene. Jolly good mind to shout out that Gayner's story was all lies, and—"

"You wouldn't do any good, if you did," Tom grimaced.

"Well, push off; I'll come—presently."

It was like Jack Linton to be as human as all that! Suddenly—he didn't know why—but he felt he must linger alone, up to the last possible moment, in this study where Dave had so often worked and talked with all of them. Their Dave, for whose schooldays at Grangemoor that bell was even now tolling the death knell!

For a couple of minutes, perhaps, Jack was alone there in the study—irritable, resentful in his grief, as joyous natures usually are. Then the door flashed open and a senior looked into the room.

"Here, hanging about like this! Get on down, Linton, to special assembly!"

It was Ralph Gayner—not so pallid and nervous-looking this morning, as Jack instantly noticed. In the coming expulsion of Dave Cardew, this prefect was finding something to rejoice over. He, Gayner, was himself again to-day; self-important, officious—glorying in that authority which an "unblemished" character had won for him!

Jack rose up to drift away, under the goading eyes of the prefect.

"Take your hands out of your pockets, Linton! Or do you want to be the next to get hoofed out?" Gayner contented himself with smiling.

But Jack kept his hands in his trouser pockets and sauntered away. Another minute and he had found Jimmy, Tom and Tubby, and with them walked towards Big Hall, where the whole school was mustering.

"Linton!"

They all four halted and turned round; but as Jack was the only one for whom the arresting cry had been given, he was the one to turn back. Now it was "Old Tony," the Housemaster of Challenger's, who wanted him.

"If I let you take this note to Cardew, Linton, will you promise not to hang about? Be sharp about it, then! He's still in Head's House; but you've only a few minutes."

Good "Old Tony," to have devised a thing like this!—although very likely Mrs. Challenger had had something to do with it. The note for Dave appeared to be from her. Jack recognised the handwriting on the envelope.

He simply streaked for Head's House, where his panting demand to be taken to Dave resulted in

a brisk parlourmaid conducting him to what was known as the interviewing room—just off the entrance hall.

Dave was there, alone—waiting for the headmaster.

"Hallo," he greeted Jack cheerfully. "How did you wangle it?"

"Old Tony—told me to bring you this," Jack said rapidly, passing the note to Dave. "Can you read it later, old chap? Look here, this is our last chance, very likely—"

"Yes, Jack; and so—listen," the other calmly entreated, pocketing the note. "About Hetty Morland. She's bound to hear that I have been expelled. I don't want to go near her; it would only upset her. So this is where you can take a hand. You must write her a note, saying that everything is O.K. really; nothing for her to worry about."

"Or shall I slip down to Joab's and—?"

"No! Joab's is out of bounds to you. Let it be a note, Jack—but not to go through the post. I arranged with her; the boundary wall between the games field and the road—a bit of the stone coping is loose. She knows. Put the note under that—"

"Right—ho! But—"

"And now, about the papers, Jack. I will tell you where they are. They are hidden in the belfry."

"The belfry? Gosh, man—"

"I was not going to have them known anywhere in Challenger's. In the end, I favoured the belfry. I took the papers up there. They're in an old biscuit tin—stowed away in a niche of the right-hand wall, where the bells hang. An old nest left by some jackdaws is stuffed in front of the tin."

Jack was suddenly impelled to seize Dave by the hand and wring it.

"And you," Jack said, "are the chap they are going to expel! Brains! Brains, as well as—"

"Oh, don't be a fool, Jack. You understand, then? When I want those papers, you'll know where to get them. My next step, though, must be to get a talk with Gayner's guardian, Mr. Gordon."

"And until I do get word from you, I shan't go near the papers. I may tell the other chaps, Dave?"

"Course!"

At this moment they heard a door open and close, and then an approaching footfall.

"That's the Head, Jack. So, good-bye—"

"Bye, old man; but it isn't good-bye, really; is it?" Jack rushed on in a whisper. "You're not really going home? You are going to make it a chance to get hold of Mr. Gordon and—"

"Sh!"

The door was opening. Dave, who had whipped out the note just received, calmly started to read it as the headmaster entered. This austere personage, in cap and gown, conferred a disagreeable stare upon Jack.

"Why are you here?"

"I was given a note, sir, to bring to Dave."

"Go to your place in Big Hall! Cardew, I am ready for you now. But if you wish to go on reading—"

"No, sir." And Dave put the note back into his breast-pocket.

He had not quite finished it, but he had read sufficient to feel greatly stirred. Mrs. Challenger—she who used to be an adored Form-mistress at Morcove before she married—sending him just a few lines that said so little and yet they meant so much!

No going into the case, or leading him to think

that she deemed him to be the victim of a miscarriage of justice; but just a few heartening words to help him through this trying time.

Jack had effaced himself. Now the headmaster strode out of the room, and it was for Dave to follow him on the short journey to the dais in Big Hall.

Silent, in their respect rows, stood the hundreds of boys which Grangemoor could always muster for a full assembly. Line behind line, Dave saw all the Forms from all the different Houses. There was the line to which he had belonged, and there were his four best pals—shoulder to shoulder, looking steadfastly at him. Dave swallowed. Close as brothers had they stuck to him, who had no brother—

What was coming now was to make not the slightest difference, where that friendship was concerned. But he could not see them there in the line and remain unmoved. Odd, how even the fat face of Tubby Bloot could have the same emotional effect as those encouraging lines penned by the Housemaster's wife! Yet so it was—

And now the Head was speaking.

Dave, when he might have been expected to stand with eyes cast down, was all the while gazing upon the sea of faces. He realised that he was being gazed at in return, but he was not ashamed of anything he had done.

Here and there, Dave thought, some fellow or other looked genuinely sorry for him. But, to discover anything like an undiminished regard for himself, he had to return his gaze to Jack, Jimmy, Tom and Tubby.

Those four; they were the ones! They were the only ones now—now that the Head was so clearly demonstrating why nothing short of expulsion would have met the case.

"It has been, of late, one disgraceful affair after another, and always this boy Cardew for the proved culprit, the instigator of mischief involving boon companions! A newly formed contempt for all authority; a complete disregard of warnings, of punishments that one had hoped would serve as a deterrent! All this we have had from a boy who, at one time, gave such fine promise. Why there has been this grievous lapse, I do not know. But I do know that Grangemoor is far too great and famous in the land for it to be continually disgraced by such conduct—certain to reach the ears of the public!—as this boy has been guilty of just lately!"

The Head had been moving this way, that way, on the dais, since he began his address to the school with an impressive statement as to why he had decreed these public proceedings. Now he

(Continued on the next page.)

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stood still, giving a hitch to his gown to mark the commencement of a stern summing-up.

"Out of bounds when ordered to stay in bounds! Found upon premises which he had been expressly forbidden to visit. Missing for several days and then turning up again, to allege foul play—than which I have never in my life heard a more preposterous story! Finally—last night!"

He cleared his throat, and then—how much louder and fiercer the ringing voice went on!

"To every rule, an exception. We often hear it said that what cannot be cured must be endured. But the scholar who cannot be cured of lawlessness need never be endured by the school he disgraces! At the last, there is that one form of punishment which, by its very nature, must prove effectual! That punishment the boy who now stands before you must receive; and you—the school—must understand that, like all other punishments, its main purpose is to act as a warning, a deterrent to others!"

Dave, knowing what the procedure was to be, glanced aside to his Housemaster, who was standing by, holding a stiff-bound book of large folios.

"Mr. Challenger!"

"Sir?" the Head was formally answered.

"Bring me the register of your House, if you please!"

Not a sound from all the scholars in their ranks; only such a stillness in the body of the hall as made the most trifling noises come loudly from the dais—each footfall of Mr. Challenger's, as he stepped to the Head's desk, there to lay the book down; the slap of the covers as it came open at a certain folio; then the dipping of the Head's pen.

"I remove the name of David Cardew from the roll of Grangemoor School!" the Head solemnly announced; and all heard his pen scratching a single line across the page.

The scratching ceased. The pen clacked down. Dave Cardew was—expelled!

What was the sound which Dave heard just then, even if others did not?

Whilst the tense silence was enduring for a few moments longer, in Big Hall, he heard the car drawing up that was to take him to the station.

Whither Now?

EXCITED scholars, under orders now to return to their various Houses and start work for the day, were disobedient in the mass.

There was a wholesale defiance of prefects, as soon as the open air was reached. By the score, younger boys managed to hang back, and there was much dodging about to avoid being dropped upon, much nipping behind buildings to keep out of sight.

Then, when Dave was in the car, with his luggage on the grid, and a solemn-visaged chauffeur took Mr. Challenger's hint to "look sharp!"—out surged a hundred boys and more from their lurking places.

They mobbed round the motor as it started to glide away, and Mr. Challenger, anyway, was feeling too upset to call them to order. He stalked away, stony-faced.

Jack, as he made his rush to get to the motor and keep up with it, shouted and gestured incitingly:

"Three cheers for Dave Cardew! Come on, the school; give him a cheer, boys! Hip, hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!" roared Jimmy and Tom and Tubby. "Good old Dave—hurrah!"

But if others joined in, it was in a quite different key. Only a few "hurrahs" did the rest of the crowd supply, and these were of a feeble, derisive kind. At least half the number of those who were galloping to keep pace with the car, on its way down to the gates, were even booing.

Jack's face, then! The whiteness and ferocity of it told how he was torn between two desires. There was a raging desire to whip round and single out two or three of the boosers and "go" for them, and a frantic longing to keep beside the car, seeing Dave still at the lowered window.

Jimmy and Tom and Tubby, managing somehow to keep with Jack, were aware of his incoherent cries.

"Bye, Dave—but only for the present! The brutes, I'll smash some of them! Shut up, there, can't you! Hurrah! Dave for ever—hurrah!"



Loyally Jack Linton and his chums gave Dave a pa-
from some of the other boys the cheers were half-h-

And "Hurrah!" bellowed Jimmy and Tubby and Tom, trying to make themselves sound like fifty.

"Best of luck, Dave! You'll be back—hurrah!"

"Yes," Jack panted fiercely, when the speeding car had passed out by the main gateway; "he will be back! And then we'll see if all these chaps still want to boo him as they have done to-day—shame, shame!"

"They don't know what we know," Jimmy reminded his impassioned chum. "Any more than the Head does."

"That doesn't matter!" Jack raged. "They know Dave just as well as we do, and so—"

"Here's Gayner," Tom struck in, observing the hated prefect as one of several seniors who had turned up in policeman-like manner. "So come away, Jack, before you do him harm!"

And Jack was almost dragged away, glaring back at Gayner as if spoiling for a fight.

DAVE, in a third-class compartment of the train—which he had boarded at the nearest station for Grangemoor, did not look at all like a scholar going home in dire disgrace.

He had bought himself a magazine—a rather technical one—and he was finding the contents quite absorbing.

By-and-by he had to change, with a half-hour's wait for the connection, and then, leisurely, he went to a telephone call-box and asked for a long-distance call.

"Hallo, is that Yewleigh Manor?" was Dave's calm inquiry, when at last a voice came through on the line. "Is Mr. Gordon there, please?"

"I'm sorry; Mr. Gordon is away, motoring," a

At any rate, it was not using for that gentleman's Somersetshire home new.

Then, like the ready-witted fellow he was, he saw clearly what he must do. Go back to Grangemoor!

Not back to the school itself, but to its neighbourhood—there to lie low, his whereabouts made known only to his four pals!

By this means, he realised, his expulsion could be turned to the very greatest purpose after all. At Grangemoor had the strange drama of Hetty Morland and her packet of papers started; at Grangemoor it would end! He would be there, if and when Mr. Gordon turned up, and that, as matters now stood, meant everything.

One talk alone with Mr. Gordon, and there would be a sudden crystallisation of all that was at present so elusive.

Dave found a porter and took him to some dumped luggage.

"I shall want all this to go on without me," he said coolly, taking one small portmanteau and a raincoat from the pile.

"You can see to that for me? Thanks!" Dave said, and conferred a silver tip.

Then he walked towards the booking office, and, as he did so, he took out and tore up his ticket for the journey home.

His mother was on the high seas—voyaging for her health. So he had only to send a telegram to the housekeeper at Priors' Fold, in the Cotswolds, and that would be that!

Dave sent off the telegram, bought himself a fresh railway ticket, and then went into the town to do a little shopping.

When, two hours later, he was again alone in a third-class compartment, he used his recent purchases to effect a complete change of garb. Everything that stamped him as being a public school-boy went into his one portmanteau, leaving him dressed in nondescript "ready-mades."

The train was taking him back by the way he had come earlier in the day.

He left the train at a station several miles short of Grangemoor, boarded a bus running between the various lonely villages, and finally tramped it, by leafy ways, to the riverside that he knew so well.

Expelled—and yet he was within sound of Grangemoor bells once more!

He could hear the familiar chimes as he came in secret to that old, ruined mill where such fateful things had happened to him, only a little while ago.

The afternoon was clouding over, threatening a wet evening. But nothing gloomy in the weather could oppress Dave's spirits.

Rain or shine, he would carry on! Hetty's friend-in-need, feeling his way towards a triumph which, freeing her for ever from the clutches of "Uncle Ezra," would set her feet upon a path in life that should be roses all the way!

"The Papers!—The Papers!"

IT was a gloomy evening at Grangemoor School. In many a study the lights were switched on, to counter the untimely darkness due to an impending thunderstorm.

Since tea-time there had been intermittent rumblings and mutterings, whilst inky clouds, drawing together, finally resolved themselves into a purplish pall.

Jack Linton, slipping out alone by a side door of Challenor's House, was well aware that at any moment his bare head might feel the first splash of "thunder-drops." But he was not going far—only as far as the road just outside the main



ing cheer to hearten him in this time of trial. But started and even mocking, while a few were boing!

feminine voice answered. "I'm his Lousekeeper. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I suppose you can't say where I could get him on the 'phone at once?"

"I'm sorry, sir, I can't! I only know that he is away in the West Country—had a business call to make there."

"Do you think he will be taking in Grangemoor School on his way back? Where his ward—you know—?"

"You mean Master Ralph Gayner, sir? Yes, I know! Mr. Gordon did say something about coming back, perhaps, that way, so as to see his ward. But who is that speaking, please?"

"I'd rather not say. 'Bye, thank you!"

And Dave came out of the call-box.

Now, if only he had not been expelled from Grangemoor!

gateway—and from there it would not take him a minute to run back through any sudden pelting.

The road running past the school gateway was deserted when Jack reached it. He kept to his lounging pace as he traversed a mere hundred yards or so of the road.

Then he halted, because he had observed the loose coping stone in the boundary wall that Dave must have meant!

Now—anyone about?

In the deepening gloom Jack surveyed more than the road; his peering eyes also watched the fields and their hedgerows, on the other side of the highway, before he could be sure enough. And so, when at last he started to “do the trick,” it was with a sense of complete safety.

Standing close to the wall, he reached up his right hand to the slab of loose masonry. All in a moment he was imparting an upwards thrust to the bit of coping, whilst his other hand whipped an envelope from his breast-pocket.

That envelope, unaddressed, contained a note for Hetty Morland.

Jack slipped the missive under the lifted stone and let the latter sink to rest again. His upturned face, whilst he did all this, received a sudden spatter of rain.

Then, as he started his first returning steps to the gateway, the heavy drops fell smartly.

He laughed, putting his head down and turning up his coat collar as he got into a run, with the rain suddenly drumming around him.

One vivid flash of lightning streaked down the black sky whilst he was still running to get indoors again. A deafening thunder clap extracted from him a “Wow!” of mock dismay—for Jack, now that he had disposed of the note so successfully, was feeling more himself again. He ultimately dived into the study where Jimmy and Tom and Tubby were awaiting him, towelling his wet hair and looking entirely gleeful.

“This,” Tubby stated the obvious, as usual, “is a storm! You’re wet, Jack.”

Promptly a rolled-up towel was aimed at Tubby’s head. He dodged it, and the missile went out through the open window, to find a resting-place for the night in some likely puddle.

“All I hope is,” Jimmy gravely exclaimed, drifting to the lightning-lit window, “Dave is all right for the night.”

“Dave? Why worry about him, because of this storm? Isn’t he at home by now?” Jack submitted—and then he winked.

“Is Yewleigh Manor—where that Mr. Gordon lives—on the way Dave would go from here to his home at Priors Wold?” Tom blandly inquired.

“Well, is it? I don’t know!” Jack grinned.

Tubby, who had groped into the corner cupboard, came to the table with the ingredients for a hand-round.

“Only four to-night—”

“Tubby,” Jack said inimically, “you say another word about Dave not being here—”

“But you chaps are talking about him all the time!”

“We’re different! You state the obvious; we say just the opposite! We,” Jack supplemented, his eyes a-sparkle, “say that Dave, of course, is at home at Priors Wold by now, when—obviously—he isn’t!”

“Just so,” came Tom’s agreeing murmur. “Dave, you bet, is not letting the grass grow under his feet.”

“I call that stating the obvious,” Tubby remarked. “But, anyway, the sherbet’s all gone,

and we’re down to a half bottle of squash. This cake—cut into four—not much of a helping!”

“Well, you’ve got something else?” Jack snorted.

“Only a jar of tongue. No bread.”

“Open it, Tubby. Must have something!” Jack insisted. “Didn’t fancy my dinner—couldn’t, after seeing Dave expelled! Not much of a tea, either!”

“Same here,” sighed Tubby, starting to open the jar of tongue with a broken penknife. “It gets you down, even though you know that Dave himself didn’t mind a bit. I only hope he has been asked to stay the night at Yewleigh Manor. Satisfactory interview with Mr. Gordon; asked to stay on—sitting down to late dinner with him now, perhaps!”

“Whilst we poor beggars,” Tom said, “have to make do with cake and tongue. It’s a bit thick, when there’s no bread to go with the meat.”

He sampled his glass of squash, and then gave Jack a consulting look. Jimmy was still watching the storm from the window.

Tubby gave his fat smile.

“All right. I believe, now, I could beat up something else.”

He did! He emerged from the cupboard, after a good deal of rummaging about, with an unopened bottle. Tubby’s was the cherubic smile of a connoisseur anticipating a rare treat.

“You chaps won’t like this, after that other,” he remarked, getting a corkscrew to work.

“But lime juice,” Jack warned the beefy one, “is the very worst thing for your complaint!”

“My complaint is a big thirst,” said Tubby. “And for a thirst like mine”—pop!—“there’s nothing better.”

Jimmy, without looking round at the window, spoke in sudden excitement.

“Here, come and look, you fellows! Something funny about the belfry.”

“The what?” Jack cried, and was at the window instantly, with Tom and Tubby crowding behind him.

Another lightning flash illuminated the stormy darkness, and they all saw some thick smoke rolling away from the slatted windows of the belfry.

Then, in the renewed darkness, they detected a fitful gleam.

“My gosh!” Jack gasped, recoiling in an appalled manner. “But that’s a fire!”

“In the belfry!” Tom jerked. “It’s been struck by lightning. That first big flash must have done it.”

“On fire—the belfry is!” Jack rushed on wildly.

“The belfry—where Dave hid those papers!”

“And they’re still there,” Jimmy whispered. Tom drew a hissing breath.

“I say, that’s a nice look-out! Oh, and look at the smoke now—that red glow; see it! There’s going to be a blaze. Those papers of Hetty’s—they’ll all be burnt!”

“They’ll not be burnt—they shan’t!” Jack panted. “Got to save them, that’s all! Here, come on, boys!”

And in his eyes, as he turned to rush away, there was a look of do-or-die.

CAN Jack Linton possibly get to the burning belfry in time? If not he will feel he has failed Dave in the latter’s time of need. Be sure to read what happens in next Tuesday’s chapters of this grand story of life at a boy’s school. Order **SCHOOLGIRLS’ OWN** in advance.