

Grand New Series of Complete Fun-Stories Begins Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^d OWN



Betty Hands Over
Her Badge of Office

A dramatic incident
from this week's
splendid long story of
Morcove School.

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"THAT DARING 'DUTCH DOLL'"—Complete Story Within

Back at Morcove School Once More, Betty Barton Soon Encounters Serious Trouble—
Thanks to the Denvers

DISGRACED BY THE DENVERS



A Splendid Long Story of the
Chums of Study 12

By MARJORIE STANTON

Back Again!

"HURRAY! Hurrah!"
"Yes, cheers for the new term—hip, pip—"
"Hurrah-h-h!"
A class-room door had opened, letting out a lively mob of scholars belonging to famous Morcove.

They were joyous spirits comprising that Form of which Betty Barton was the popular captain.

Betty herself was easily distinguishable during the boisterous exodus. She carried one or two notebooks and some sheets of memoranda which, in a minute or so, would be going into a table drawer in her own study.

Madcap Polly Linton, having headed the noisy dispersal, turned back to be with Betty on the way upstairs, and this resulted in various other particular chums of the Form captain gravitating to her.

"Fine idea it was, Betty—to have a Form meeting the first evening we're all back!"

"And did it go with a bang, too!"

"Bai Jove, wreat success—yes, wather!"

This was elegant Paula Creel, beaming most happily in spite of a temporarily rumpled state, due to dusky Naomer having lost her head during the meeting.

Naomer, denied a hearing, had wanted more elbow-room when she sat down after having stood on a desk with the idea of making a grand speech. So Paula had found herself suddenly elbowed on to the floor.

"Should be the best term, ever," tall P'am

Willoughby remarked. "Never saw greater enthusiasm."

"All the things we are going to do—yes!" Polly again rejoiced, at her blithest. "We were all present, I think!"

"No," Betty responded, losing her smile for a moment. "The Denver sisters were not there."

"Oh, Fay and Edna—who cares about them!"

"No, bekas—zey never do take any injest in ze Form!" Naomer shrilled scornfully.

"As they belong to the Form, I suppose I've got to take notice of them," the captain quietly remarked. "It's a pity they can't join in with the rest of the Form, rather than always wanting to be different."

"They're showing off, Betty—that's all!" Bunny Trevor offered the consoling opinion. "Faithless to the Form—and proud of it!"

"And there they will be, when we go by their door in the corridor," Polly seathingly predicted.

"Just happening to be standing about to let us see them—the only girls who didn't attend the meeting, and, as Bunny says, proud of it!"

"Think they will be upstairs?" Betty smiled gravely. "I am not so sure!"

The captain, as it turned out, proved to be right and Polly in error. As the batch of chums trooped along the corridor, upstairs, making for Study 12, they did not encounter excessively pretty Fay and her almost-as-pretty sister after all.

Yet Polly had no reason to feel humiliated over the falsity of her recent prediction. What she had said the Denver sisters were likely to be doing was, in fact, quite in keeping with their fondness for flouting the Form.

Suddenly Betty took returning steps, to go to the Denver sisters' door and, after a formal tap, opened it to look into the room.

"No," she said, after an immediate remingling with her chums. "They are not there, girls."

"Not! I say—"

"Bekas, what ze diggings! Dark evenings now, and—"

"Sh!" Betty tactfully checked Study 12's human loudspeaker. "It's only what I'd guessed they were up to—breaking bounds!"

"First evening of term, and they had to be up to that game!" Polly said disgustedly as soon as a closed door was rendering conversation private. "They might have waited!"

"I'll have to pull them up about it," Betty said. "Otherwise it's sure to cause trouble for the rest of the Form. Well, let's forget about them for the moment. Everybody beginning to feel settled—and ready for work?"

There were some mock groans at that last remark.

"Unpacked—ready for the fray!" Polly cried. "And—oh, how I hope the work is going to be really difficult, this term! How I long for class in the morning!"

Naomer darted to the corner cupboard. Polly Linton commenced to applaud, legs a-dangle.

"That meeting has left me thirsty. What is there, kid?"

"Lime-juice, left over from last term!"

"Oh, lime-juice—now! Chilly evenings—"

"Naomer will be an angel and fetch hot water," Bunny said, reclining on an armrest of the easy chair which held Paula.

"But—hooray, gorjus!" came Naomer's shrieks from the cupboard. "Bekas, zis is better for zis time of year! Clove corjool!"

She emerged, joyfully slamming the bottle of syrup upon the table. Then she produced glasses, cups and a jug.

"And, you wait! You just wait!" Morcove's dusky scholar excitedly requested. "Bekas, I mix you one of my grand patents—with sherbet, to make him fizz! What ze diggings, we will drink success to ze new term!"

"First, the inaugural meeting, then the inaugural gargle," Bunny commented as Naomer sped away to get hot water. "Betty, you're very quiet! You're thinking about those Denver girls."

"I was only wondering—how they managed to get out of bounds, as they seem to be able to do, whenever they like," Betty said, roused out of a frowning state. "It was like that last term."

"And that," said Tess, whilst pencilling away at a sketch of Bunny lolling very inelegantly beside elegant Paula, "that is just what I was going to say, only you all stopped me. They've found a secret way that nobody else knows about."

"Yes, well," Pam nodded, "they will do it once too often. "It can't be such a secret means as that!"

"And yet—"

Betty, however, broke off there. The temptation to debate the Denver sisters and their puzzling ability to avoid being caught was one that had to be resisted.

Presently, Betty would be going round to that much smaller study which, as captain, she had all to herself. Then she could put on her thinking-cap. Meantime, Study 12 must continue to

enjoy the jollity sanctioned by authority on this, the first evening of term.

Jollity enough there was when Naomer came back with the brimming jug of hot water. Received with loud cheers, the dusky one was left to do all the mixing of her "grand patent" in the various tumblers and cups, whilst the idea of making it a health to the captain was mooted by Polly and resulted in hilarious preparations.

Polly was to propose the captain's health, and so she took her stand upon the table. Then Naomer handed round the hot clove-cordial.

It was a moment charged with great possibilities, with Polly likely to be at her best as a speech-maker, and Bunny in fine form as a flippant interrupter. But it was also the moment when all Morcove School was due for one of the most sensational happenings ever known.

So far as the chums of Study 12 were concerned it seemed like the end of the world when they felt a shock, of earthquake violence, go through the whole building.

There had been nothing to give warning of what was about to happen. All in an instant Betty and Co. felt a kind of jolt take them all. They heard a strange boom! thunder in upon their ears from the outer darkness of the autumn night, and they and everything in the study did a jump.

Polly, on the table, was thrown off her balance and had to make a wild leap for the floor. In doing so she crashed against Naomer, who was just then handing Paula her glass of hot drink.

The tumbler shot its contents into Paula's lap, and poor Paula would have jumped up, yelling, but Bunny had flopped sideways upon her.

"Ow! Healp!" squealed Paula, far more frightened than hurt. "My gwacious—ow!"

"Yes, bekas—hi, what ze diggings! What's happening!"

"Well, what is happening?" gasped Betty, not knowing whether or not to laugh. "Goodness!"

"Whew!" Polly panted, picking herself up from the floor. "But—but—"

"Hold tight!" cried Bunny. "There may be another like it—ha, ha, ha!"

Such a Scare!

BUT there was to be no repetition of that appalling and mysterious shock—as much like an earthquake as Morcove could ever have imagined.

For several seconds the girls in Study 12 were mute and still, looking scared—waiting for another shock, if one should come.

Then, as they became vocal again in their puzzled and startled state, so did scholars everywhere else in the school.

Missesses as well—and the servants! Betty, now whipping open the door of Study 12, was aware of other study doors being opened just as excitedly, whilst the great schoolhouse rang with cries of mingled wonderment and dismay.

"What's happened—does anyone know?"

"Oh, but wasn't it awful!"

"Terrible! I felt—"

"So did I! As if an earthquake—"

"Was it an earthquake?"

"Perhaps it was! The whole place rocked—"

"I know!"

Such were some of the excitable cries which Betty and her chums heard as they flocked into the passage, there to mingle with Form-mates who had rushed from other studies.

The lights were still on. Fortunately, there had been no fusing, no interruption of the current anywhere. This helped greatly to dispel alarm. Consternation gave place at once to a general

desire for that fun which seemed to be the right sequel to the scare.

"Let's find out, all!"

"Yes, come on!"

So Betty's Form, cascading down a flight or two of stairs, became tributary to a flood of youthful humanity consisting of Fifth-Formers and seniors.

Some of the top-Form girls, taking their seniority seriously, were all for calling upon their juniors to "Keep back!" and not be afraid! To which Polly and a good many other roguish ones made answer with remarks far from respectful.

There was no panic, and the juniors, well aware of this, gaily did their best to simulate one. Miss Merrick, the Form-mistress, knew her charges well, or she might have been taken in by all the mild yells and screeches and general hullabaloo.

As it was, she looked only amused as she put herself amongst her unruly girls—very different from Miss Massingham, of the Fifth Form, who was stern-visaged authority itself!

"Girls, girls—now, that will do!" Miss Merrick laughed. "And why you have all come down like this—I would like to know!"

The scene was now the large front hall on the ground floor.

"We want to know what it was, Miss Merrick."

"Yes, Miss Merrick—"

"Bekas, eet put zo wind up me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was something happening out of doors: so Miss Merrick," Betty clamoured, "can't we go out and—"

"Yes, please! Oh, Miss Merrick, be a sport, and—"

"Certainly not!" was the refusal, delivered with a smile which robbed it of all sternness. "The idea!"

"But—"

"Sweeindle!" shrilled the dusky one. "Bekas, you never know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eeef zere is going to be another earquake, zen we better get outside before zo school falls on top of us—whallo! And nothing to laugh about, either!" Naomer protested, on account of shrieks of merriment.

"Order, order! Girls, now stop! I cannot say for certain, but I imagine there must have been a fall of rock from the cliffs—"

"Oh, was that it?" gaped a dozen of the girls. "Was that all?"

"Wait a moment!"

Loud cheers, then, for Miss Merrick, from the Form. Her being the one to think of going to the outer door and opening it to take a look was vastly pleasing to her own adoring scholars. All the more so as Miss Merrick's action was bringing a vinegary look to Miss Massingham's face.

"Er—do you think it wise, Miss Merrick?" the Fifth Form mistress bleakly called out. "Will it serve any useful purpose?"

"Oh, it can't do any harm!"

"It will cause a draught, at least!"

Betty and her chums, surging with the rest of the Form to be close behind their own mistress in the doorway, exchanged delighted glances. They would not have belonged to any Form but Miss Merrick's. Fancy being in the Fifth—booh! For the Fifth, as usual, was being very strictly controlled by Miss Massingham. "Back, all of you!" it had been—and back the Fifth Form girls were going!

Miss Merrick, opening the great outer door, had nothing to see or hear that was abnormal.

The autumn night was dry, calm and quiet. Beyond the gravel sweep there was the games-field, dark and deserted, and beyond that there would be the highway which knew little after-dark traffic, then the lonely headlands which were a feature of Morcove's rugged coastline.

"Don't come out after me, girls!"

But, human nature being what it is, and the Form being what it was, no sooner had Miss Merrick gone a little distance from the porch, hoping yet to see or hear something which would account for the recent sensation, than all her girls were flocking into the open.

Then Bunny thought what fun it would be if a draught caused the porch-door to shut.

As there was no draught to do this, Bunny herself nipped back and pulled the door shut—slam!

Another "panic"! It was at its noisiest when Betty, for one, became really excited. She was the first to notice that two girls who certainly had



There came a strange, booming noise like thunder, and the whole school shook. Polly, thrown off her balance, crashed against Naomer, and the contents of the latter's tumbler shot into Paula's lap!

not flocked out with the rest just now, were suddenly mingling with the crowd.

Fay and Edna!

They were coatless, hatless—just like any of the others. But Betty could instantly guess how easy it had been for the miscreants to get rid of hats and coats—so as to pass indoors presently as if they had been with the Form all the while.

This was not the time for Betty to have anything to say to the lawless pair. She simply took note of them, and then saw them again, half a minute later, as two of the first to go rushing into the schoolhouse, the door having been opened by—Miss Massingham!

Fair and False!

BUT, Fay—did you see Betty Barton looking at us? He, he, he!”

“She can be blowed! We no more care about the captain this term than we did the last!”

And Fay Denver—like her sister, a little breathless after the dash upstairs to their study—dropped down into an easy chair to lie back, extended legs a-straddle.

Edna, the younger, had flopped into an easy chair on the other side of the study. She and her sister grinned across at each other, then they burst out laughing.

“But it did save us all the trouble of getting indoors our own private way—”

Edna chuckled when Fay interrupted with a flourish of the hand.

“Not so loud!” she said. “Can’t you hear girls going by in the corridor? And if they should chance to hear—”

“Oh, rabbits! They’re much too excited about the great sensation,” Edna grinned. She always was the stronger-nerved one. “I can hear them, right enough—jabbering away! I suppose there was almost a panic just now!”

“And what wonder?” Fay grimaced, becoming serious. “Didn’t you and I have a sort of end-of-everything feeling whilst it lasted?”

“It wasn’t—pleasant,” Edna conceded, still grinning. “Especially as we were so much closer than any of the other girls could have been. I heard some of them saying that they thought it was an earthquake.”

“Miss Merrick has been suggesting that it was a huge fall of cliff. Not so very far wrong, either,” Fay added, keeping her voice subdued. “We know, Edna, there is a huge bit of the cliff gone—crash to the beach.”

“Yes, but it was not simply a breakaway—a mere fall—I’ll never believe that!” Edna muttered, sharing her sister’s inclination to turn serious. “We saw rocks flying up into the air. Now that means—there must have been an explosion.”

“And yet—no flash, no smoke afterwards, that was the amazing thing!” Fay said, with a puzzled frown. “We were coming along the road, in the dark, so if there had been a flash we would have seen it, surely?”

“Oh, yes,” her sister nodded. “As you say, it’s a mystery. We certainly did see masses of rock acting as if they had been blown up.”

“Some chips even fell around us! From all that distance away! Can’t account for it, at all.”

“We need dad here, don’t we?” Edna smiled. “He’d be the one to explain. That’s his special line now—explosives.”

Fay nodded.

“Yes, dad would be interested, even if he couldn’t explain how it occurred. I say, Edna

“Well?”

“What happened just now makes you realise how terrible some explosions can be—in mines, you know, and—and then, some of these modern explosives—”

“Oh, don’t let’s bother ourselves about such things as that,” Edna shrugged, and got up to take a look at herself in a little mirror on the wall. “Didn’t you have enough of dad’s talking about his new syndicate in the hols? I did! At breakfast every morning—”

“Dad always does take his business with him on holiday,” Fay remarked, in a brooding way. “Oh, well; after all, Edna, he makes piles of money one way and another—and what more could we want than that!”

Edna had picked up an illustrated Society weekly, bought for the journey down to Morcove that morning. She nodded, glancing through the pages of photographs again.

“Piles of money—yes. Yet I’ve never seen mother looking so worried as she has lately. My belief, she feels dad has made a mistake for once—going in for this invention business that he is so crazy about. After all, as fast as one person invents one thing, somebody else seems to invent another thing to knock it out of the market.”

There was a tap at the door. Fay and Edna looked at each other, then the elder sister drawled:

“Come right in!”

Betty entered. Closing the door behind her, she made a commencing remark whilst the sisters were displaying studied insolence by refusing to meet her eyes.

“I saw you come in, just now; I didn’t see you go out, earlier in the evening.”

“No?” Edna returned provokingly. “I don’t suppose you did!”

“First evening of term,” the captain went on bitterly, “and you had to go sneaking out of bounds. Well, I warn you! It isn’t summer-time now. There’s got to be a stop to your being out during forbidden hours. You’re not going to be allowed to make things bad for the whole Form—just understand that!”

Fay got up.

“Hark who’s talking!” she said impudently. “Next time it happens—report us!”

“But first be sure you can prove it,” Edna added with a toss of her head and a grin. “Fay darling, we must be more careful after this! Remember to wear gloves, so as not to leave fingerprints on the class-room window-sill—he, he, he!”

Betty knew what was behind these twitting words—a veiled boasting that the lawless couple, as she had begun to suspect last term, possessed some secret means of going in and out of the school.

“And then there is the iron staircase outside,” Edna grinned on. “We shall have to be careful not to—”

A flashing open of the door caused an interruption. Polly, putting her head just inside the room, spoke to Betty, ignoring the sisters.

“Betty—wanted! Miss Somerfield has sent word for you.”

“There!” Fay laughed, as Betty at once turned to pass out. “There’s a chance for you to complain about us!”

“And not wait,” Edna called out, for Betty was already in the corridor with Polly, pulling the door shut, “until you have got our fingerprints—ha, ha, ha!”

“Bossy Betty!” Fay sneered, now that she and Edna were alone together again. “Throwing her weight about—as usual! Ugh, how I do hate that girl!”

"She's the sort of girl who WOULD be a captain," Edna said, with great disdain. "Get rid of her, you'd only have someone of the same stamp put in her place."

"All the same, I would like to see her ousted," the elder sister seethed. "The worst of Betty Barton—she's got so many chums who would sort of die for her. Another captain might want to be as—what's the word for it—"

"Zealous!" Edna chuckled.

"But any other captain would hardly have such a backing, would she?" Fay suggested. "Er—Edna, you shouldn't have said that about window-sills."

"Oh, why not? We can afford to rile her, and I do love doing so! Wonderful girl, Betty—according to the Form! And, as you say, she has her own set of friends ready to spy for her at any time. But it will take someone cleverer than Betty to make us toe the line."

With a little laugh, Edna started some confident strutting about the study. Then she stood still, to add:

"And, if she isn't careful—we may yet out her, instead of her ousting us!"

"If only we could!" muttered Fay.

Miss Somerfield's Decree

BETTY, returning upstairs a quarter of an hour later, burst out laughing at finding herself being waited for by quite a crowd in the corridor.

It was such an anxious-looking throng of Form-mates; their one concern to know why she, the captain, had been sent for by the headmistress.

For the Form had a very human way of expecting "rows." At any time, it had only to become known that Betty's presence had been requested by Miss Somerfield—and it had a way of becoming known in all the studies, instantly!—and there would be an excited wondering. Who had been doing what?

Betty laughed, because it was so obvious that the Form in general was thinking of that recent dash out of doors as being something which might have brought wholesale punishment in its train. But she changed quickly enough to a rueful expression, for what she had to tell all the girls was not going to be pleasant news.

"No—nothing about our all running out just now," she prefaced, by way of breaking the news gently. "I don't suppose Miss Somerfield had heard. She—er—wanted to let me know, so that I could pass it round. There has been a terrific fall of cliff, quite close to the school, and there is to be no bolting off before brekker in the morning to get a look."

"Oh—rotten!" mouthed several listeners. "But why not?"

"Yes, bekas—sweendle! What ze diggings, eet must be a grand sight—gorjus—"

"It may not be safe, that's the reason Miss



Miss Somerfield handed over the shoe to Betty. "Now go away and find Etta Hargrove," she said. "And, at the same time, hand over the captain's sash to her!" And Betty knew then that she was to be suspended from office—for what she had not done!

Somerfield has given," Betty supplemented. "And, after all, you can't wonder at her being a bit fussy. She says nothing is known as to the cause yet, and there might be another fall even hours—days after the first."

"Then are we to stay in bounds?" the wail went up.

"Oh, no!" Betty was happy at being able to say. "But there is to be no going anywhere on the coast side of the road. The cliffs and the seashore are all that have been put out of bounds."

"To the whole school?"

"Yes—it's the same for all."

The disgruntled Form found a certain amount of consolation in that. Nothing would have been more maddening than to know that the Fifth Form, say, had been exempted from the decree! But even the seniors were subject to it, so that although there was to be an irksome restraint, there was nothing humiliating, anyhow.

"What a sickener, though, all the same—not to be able to go and see!" grumbled Polly. "There will be crowds there in the morning—and yet we, Morcove School, next door to where it occurred, as you might say—"

"Yes, pretty awful!" grimaced others, starting a slow dispersal. "It must be a fine sight."

"Thrilling!"

"It'll still be there when we are allowed to go," Betty remarked comfortingly.

"When!"

"Just whereabouts has it happened—do you know, Betty?" asked Etta Hargrove.

"Yes; close to the zigzag path—"

"As close as that?" cried several girls, turning round.

"The zigzag is gone, in fact," Betty continued. "Miss Somerfield had it from one of the gardeners, who went along to see. All the cliff is down just there."

Betty sauntered back in the direction of Study 12 with other members of the chummyery, whilst a retirement of various groups to the studies caused an emptying of the corridor.

Fay and Edna had opened their door and stood at the threshold whilst Betty was making known Miss Somerfield's decree. Now the sisters shut themselves in again.

"It'll be a halfer to-morrow—always is the first day after reopening," Fay pondered aloud.

"What shall we do then?"

"Oh, never mind about to-morrow," the younger sister answered. She had just glanced at her wristwatch. "I say, Fay, how about slipping out now?"

"What, again!"

"We've an hour."

It had suddenly become an exchange of deep whispers.

"Just for a spree, Fay—let's slip out and get a look at the fallen cliff in the moonlight," Edna urged. "Think of the fun of being able to boast that we've seen everything, when the rest of the Form has simply been—"

"Yes, that's all right," Fay struck in, her eyes glinting excitedly. "But—I'm just thinking, Edna, better still! Whilst we're about it—"

"Well?"

"Couldn't we have a shot at getting that Barton girl into a row? I mean—oh, but you'll see my idea, when we get downstairs," Fay decided, in a sudden fever to be off. "If we are going to slip out, then let's not waste time talking."

Edna, with a sly wink, tiptoed to the door, softly opened it and peeped out.

The corridor was deserted. Making this fact known to her sister by a beckoning sign, she made a silent rush for the stairs. Fay, having come out quickly and closed the study door behind her without a sound, followed with the same stealthy swiftness.

But they took care to go downstairs in no furtive manner. To all appearances then, they were simply a couple of girls—and sisters at that—who were going down, perhaps, to put in a half-hour in the library, or perhaps to pop letters in the box in the front hall. Neither Miss Merrick, nor anyone else chancing to encounter the pair, could have suspected them of any lawless intention.

Finding it safe, downstairs, to proceed with that intention, they would now both have slipped aside into the school's museum—a single room adjacent to the front hall. But Fay, with her crafty idea about getting the Form captain into bad odour, needed to go first in a different direction.

She whispered her sister to wait for her in the museum, and so they parted, Edna understanding that she would not be kept waiting long.

The door of the museum was open, and any girl so minded could have been doing a saunter-round now; but she would have had to do some switching on of lights. Like the library and the wireless-room, the museum was intended to be a resort for girls in their spare time, and they were free to go in and out. But most Morcovians knew

all the exhibits so well that they seldom came here.

Edna, having slipped into the great long room, did not switch on any lights. To her and Fay the museum meant even less than it did to other girls of the school—and yet it meant so much more!

For it was via this ground-floor chamber, with all its glass cabinets and curio-hung walls, that the sisters, last term, had discovered what was still their secret means of going in and out of the school.

At the far end there was a richly-carved Indian screen—given to the museum by Pam Willoughby's father, whose Swanlake collection of Eastern rarities was famous. The screen had been so placed that, whilst it occupied a good position for being admired, it served its proper function, screening a rather unsightly doorway.

That doorway was treated, these days, as being of no use; indeed, by now its very existence had become forgotten, the handsome screen doing so well to keep it out of sight. But Fay and Edna had used the doorway often last term—had used it already, this evening!

A doorway, leading through into a small brick-and-tiled engine-house, where the school used to make its own electricity. Now the school had the main supply, and so—as the sisters had gleefully whispered each other when first they made their thrilling discovery—"no one ever comes here!"

The scrapped electric-light plant had never been cleared away, or the shed might have become a store for canvas deck-chairs and so on during the winter months.

Fay was suddenly with her sister at the far end of the unlighted museum. She had brought with her something which she held up, close to Edna's peering eyes, for her to see. It was a girl's outdoor shoe.

"One of Betty's!" Fay whispered.

And then Edna, understanding, gave her wide grin and a delighted nod.

Whilst one sister stood on watch, lurking amongst the display cabinets, the other moved an outer leaf of the carved screen.

In the darkness, a knowing hand got the school's forgotten door open, and then there was a whispered:

"Right—come on!"

Edna, who was going first, went silently down a couple of concrete steps into the equally dark shed. Her sister came after her, pausing to draw back into position that portion of the screen which had been moved, and then closing the door without a sound.

Groping dark for both girls, but how well they knew exactly where to step! To and fro so often had they been this secret way of theirs that they could have gone blindfold to-night—skirmishing round the obsolete machinery which took up the centre of the concrete floor and managing not to brush against dusty shelves and benches.

The outer door of the disused engine-house let them through to the night-bound grounds, and next minute they had recovered and were putting on hats and coats. These were the outdoor things which Fay and Edna had hastily discarded when, an hour or so ago, they saw a chance of returning indoors by simply mingling with all who had followed the Form-mistress into the open air.

Some expert flitting to a certain privet-hedge, and then the sisters were on the run again—out of bounds!

Warily they crossed the main road, lest someone should be about who belonged to the school.

The vicinity of Morcove School, aloft on its own great headland, had lost much of its usual night-time solitariness. There were the lights of cars and bicycles to tell of people coming along from the direction of Barncombe, on account of the sensational happening.

But Fay and Edna were not going to mind being seen by strangers. They had audacity enough for that. As they roamed over the gorse ground lying between the road and the edge of the cliffs, they scarcely troubled to pay attention to people alighting from stopped cars, or others who had obviously come from anywhere but the school.

The sisters kept a sharp look-out ahead of them, in the starlight, and often glanced behind. All they had to fear—someone belonging to the school, either coming on after them, or returning from a hasty visit to the scene of the strange happening.

Suddenly they both stopped dead, their peering eyes discerning enough to create an awe-struck state. Fay's mouth was a round O of mute amazement, whilst Edna quavered an impressed:

"Whew, I say!"

In front of them, where an hour or so ago there would have been still another hundred yards to go to the edge of the cliff, it was now a kind of terrifying void. Thousands of tons of rock had gone down to form mammoth mounds upon the shore, for the wintry seas to rage about.

Some of the sightseers, from all of whom Fay and Edna were keeping at a discreet distance, had started to flash pocket-torches into that dark void. The roving beams of light picked out parts of the altogether new face which the cliff had assumed, just here, and after a minute Fay exclaimed:

"You can see, Edna, the old zigzag really has vanished!"

"Absolutely!"

A "CAPITAL" GAME!

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"Don't let's go any nearer. You—you can hear stones still rattling down. In fact, we had better get back, Edna—"

"Oh, now we are here—for it's too thrilling for words!" the younger sister declared, and she was taking an advancing step when Fay, more inclined to turn away, saw a dark figure approaching—from the direction of the school.

Next second, Fay was gasping her frightening belief:

"It's Miss Somerfield! Oh, Edna—quick—away!"

"What? Goodness!"

And Edna, dropping upon hands and knees, started to crawl for the nearest patch of sheltering gorse.

Fay, in the instant that she bobbed down, thought of Betty's shoe. She filched it out of her coat-pocket and cast it away. Crawling on, she felt less alarmed, for her sister was already in concealment, and she herself had only a few yards farther to scurry.

Suddenly, however, Miss Somerfield switched on her own pocket-torch, to light her way to what had become such a danger spot in the darkness.

The ray shone before her strongly, wavered a little—lighted upon a crawling figure that seemed, to the headmistress, a girlish one. And promptly Miss Somerfield, having so much to do with girls, voiced a suspicious:

"Who's that?"

She got no answer. Fay and Edna, both deep in cover now, were snaking away.

Nor did they fail to work round, unseen, until they were behind their headmistress in the darkness and, rising up at last, could dash full speed back to Morcove School.

Left with the Blame!

"HERE, where's my other shoe!" Betty, with only ten minutes to go before classes began on the first morning of the new term, was hunting about in the Form's coat-room.

It was really a lobby, where the Form had pegs for all outdoor things, and where the girls kept all their footwear—walking shoes, house shoes, tennis shoes, gum boots and drill slippers.

An alternative name for the lobby was the changing-room, and there were at least half a dozen times a day some very lively rushes by girls, to get out of one thing and into another—quick as possible!

"Oh, bother—"

"Is that all you're looking for—a shoe?" laughed Polly Linton, seeking something herself in a hung-up coat. "I can't find anything this morning—as usual!"

"Miss Betty!" A parlourmaid's voice suddenly interposed, and the Form captain was aware of Ellen, the maid, hovering in the lobby-entrance. "Oh, Ellen, do you know something, then, about my other shoe? Hasn't it been brought back—?"

"I do not, miss! But Miss Somerfield is wanting you. I've been trying to find you this last five minutes!"

"Sorry, Ellen! All right, I'll go along right now."

So Betty, retaining the slippers she had on—a pair of rather bed-roomy nature—scampered for that ground-floor passage which led to the headmistress' sanctum.

The door was ajar, and Miss Somerfield, busy with the first delivery of letters, voiced a bracing:

"Yes, come on in!" directly Betty reached the threshold.

Instantly, it seemed to Betty, Miss Somerfield's eyes took notice of the slippers. It should have meant, Betty felt, nothing worse than an amused comment, this being the first morning of term, but the headmistress frowned.

"It is not the time to be wearing slippers, Betty!"

"No, Miss Somerfield. But"—with a short laugh—"one of the shoes I should have put on by now—it's missing!"

"I know it is!"

Then, before Betty could get over the breath-checking effect of this amazing remark, Miss Somerfield pulled open a desk-drawer and took out—a shoe!

"There, Betty Barton—there it is!" the headmistress said, with undiminished sternness. "A shoe of yours, as the name inside tells me."

Morcove girls had to mark all their belongings with their names—everything! Otherwise, in such a big school, chaos would have resulted.

"And you know where I found this shoe, Betty?"

"No, Miss Somerfield! I can't imagine—"

"Betty!" Sterner than ever was Miss Somerfield. "You must know very well just where I chanced to find this shoe of yours. Last evening—out there on the cliffs—"

"Oh, but—"

"Come, come, an end to bluster, Betty! I am sufficiently displeased with you, without—"

"But, Miss Somerfield, if you are imagining—"

"I am inferring, Betty—as I must infer—that you went out last evening to gratify your curiosity over the fall of cliff at the zigzag. That I went out to the cliffs to take a look round is a different matter altogether. I am the headmistress, and naturally I felt very concerned. You, Betty, are a Form captain."

"But—"

"And as a captain, Betty, you received from me, directly after the happening, a warning that the cliffs were out of bounds to all scholars. Do you suppose," Miss Somerfield went on, indignantly, "that my order applied to other girls in your Form and not to you? Is it likely that I could have meant you to be at liberty to visit the place—after dark, too, after dark!"

She added sternly.

"I have made inquiry, and you asked no one's permission. Naturally, if you had, it would have been refused. But no, you simply took it into your head to—"

"Miss Somerfield, please let me say I did nothing of the sort!" Betty burst out, rather hotly. "What time was it? For then I can prove—"

"The time would be a little after eight, if that will help you to prove your innocence; but I don't see how it can. Well?"

Fatal for Betty, then, was her failure to answer, her changing colour. She was suddenly realising there were no chums of hers who could vouch for her having been in bounds at the time in question. From eight o'clock onwards to Last Assembly she had been busy—alone in her own study. ALONE!

"I took a torch with me," Miss Somerfield resumed, gravely, "when I went out to see what could be made of the strange occurrence. I was shining that torch as I approached the scene, when, in the beam of light, I most certainly saw a girl—a schoolgirl—creeping away to avoid me. I did not manage to find her, but I did come upon—this shoe!"

"You said, just now, you could prove you were indoors at the time. But can you? No! Your looks tell me—"

"That is only because I happened to be at work in my own study just then, Miss Somerfield. It's a—a great pity," Betty said rather fiercely. "I never wanted to have a study all to myself. If I had been in Study 12 I could have proved I was there at the time. But you—you would insist upon my having a study of my own—"

"As captain, yes. Well, you will not be burdened by something you don't appreciate for the next week or so, at any rate, Betty. I am sorry, but I take—I must take—a very serious view of this."

She took up that unlucky shoe.

"There it is, for you to wear, Betty. But, for the next two weeks you will not wear the captain's sash. Now go away and find—let me see—yes, Etta Hargrove—send Etta Hargrove to me. At the same time hand over the captain's sash to her!"

Betty took the shoe.

"Thank you!" she said.

Feeling quite dazed, she went from the study. Such a blow as she had been dealt—oh, the unfairness of it!—seemed to be best taken this way. Quietly—until one's head had stopped spinning and one could think clearly. At present, one thing only was apparent. Miss Somerfield was to be pitied, not blamed, for what she was doing.

A lover of strict justice, if ever there was, and yet she, the headmistress of Morcove, was dealing out such an undeserved punishment to a girl. Punishment that, unlike lines or a gating, could never be laughed about by one's schoolmates. This was a loss of office, and therefore a public degradation.

Away went Betty and, back in the changing-room, she got into the pair of shoes, angrily stamping her foot into the one that had so mysteriously brought about her suspension.

To her own study Betty went—the one she would have to vacate shortly—and took the captain's sash from a table-drawer. Any Morcove captain, if she liked, could wear her sash almost all day. Betty had preferred to reserve it for absolutely necessary occasions.

No upset look was in her face, no tears were in her eyes as she folded up the sash to take it to Etta Hargrove. Betty was never a girl to sit down and howl over a calamity. Already she had obtained that steadiness of mind which enabled her to face up to the present disaster spiritedly.

There was Betty's state of mind, expressing itself in the calm, grim resolve to right herself sooner or later.

Sash in hand, she went out into the corridor, seeing only the backs of other girls—for the bell had rung for school, and there was a stampede for the stairs. Far from wanting to hang back, so as to remain unnoticed, Betty even brisked up her step, realising that Etta Hargrove might be caught just in time by a hastening to that girl's study.

She tapped at Etta's door—or, rather, the door of that study which Etta shared with two other girls. It was Etta's voice which answered—pleasantly. Entering, Betty found that only Etta was here, looking good-tempered, keen.

"Not late, are we, Betty?"

"No, Etta. And, look here, you're to go to Miss Somerfield straight away—taking this with you."

"This" was the sash, which Betty let fall out to its full length and proffered to Etta.

"What! I—I don't get you, Betty!"
 "It will soon be explained to you—why I am suspended for a fortnight and you are to act in my place. So, best of luck, Etta. Of course, anything I can do—"
 "But—Betty! Oh, surely the term hasn't begun like this for you? I don't want to take on on these lines! In fact, I won't, so there! I—Betty, wait!"

She, however, with a parting smile of goodwill, was already whisking out of the study, and it was for nice-minded Etta Hargrove to stand mute and still, acute distress in her looks—and in her right hand that sash which how many other girls would have jumped at the chance of wearing!

On Their Own!

It was over the teacups that afternoon that tongues were busiest with the name of Betty Barton.

In one study and another—and not in the studies only, by any means! For the "halfer"

summer holidays that we've been hearing about. They had so much excitement—"

"That's it! Oh, and, of course, her having a study to herself made it so easy for her to slip out."

"A pity, when she did the slipping out, that she couldn't keep that shoe from slipping off!"

"Yes—ha, ha, ha!"

It was obvious that Betty now stood in that worst of all lights—she was one who, having been entrusted with a good deal of authority, had herself flouted authority!

Accordingly, it did not need a Fay Denver or her sister Edna, to-day, to give a very scathing turn to some of the talk.

That Fay and Edna were not taking tea with any schoolmates, either at the school or in town, goes without saying. Something better to do than that—much better! This term, as last, anything that meant being faithless to the Form!

The Headland Hotel—only a mile from Morcov School—was out of bounds to girls at all times, unless any girl happened to have parents or other close relations staying at the hotel. But



"You have come down with your parents for a holiday?" Mrs. Vanderloo asked Fay and Edna, with a disarming smile. It was just what the sisters had hoped—that she would talk to them. There was much they wanted to find out, if they could.

had meant some cycling along to Barncombe, and tea at the famous Creamery.

But, whether at the school or in the old town's best cake shop, all the jabber-jabber of talk was to the same effect. Morcove was wanting to know not so much how Etta would "turn out" as captain, as what Betty could have been about to get herself suspended.

Except for Betty's own best chums and a few others—Etta one of the latter—it was not imagined that any injustice had been done. Miss Somerfield had a reputation for just dealing, and anyhow, the case against Betty had been proved up to the hilt.

"She shouldn't have done it!"

"No, silly thing—when she must have known Miss Somerfield was liable to be there!"

"If you ask me, it's what comes of Betty and her chums having all those adventures during the

Fay and Edna, living up to their creed that rules were only made to be broken, had fancied tea at the hotel this afternoon, all on their own.

Never mind that the hall-porter, as they passed through the revolving doors into the luxurious outer lounge, had eyed them rather challengingly! They had their excuse.

"We've come to make an inquiry," Fay had sweetly informed him, so that all he could do was to bow most politely and direct them to the reception office, with its lady bookkeeper busy behind the counter.

"I suppose you've a brochure of the hotel?" Fay airily inquired as she and Edna got to the mahogany counter. "Could you let us have one, please, and—er—how about rooms facing the sea, for next month?"

"We are very booked up," said the stylish young lady. "But, no doubt, we can reserve

something. If you will give me the name and address of the person for whom you are inquiring I might write, enclosing the brochure."

"Oh, I'll just take it and send it on myself—thanks," Fay said; accepting a handsome booklet which she would be consigning to the wastepaper-basket in her study later on. "Dad," she fibbed, "just asked me to look in and inquire, as we are so close by."

"The accommodation would be for your father and mother, may I take it?"

"That's right! Mr. and Mrs. Harper Denver," Fay gave the name proudly. "Well, Edna," turning to her, "whilst we are here I suppose we can get some tea and listen to the band!"

Edna came to herself with a slight start. She had been lost in admiration of a very beautiful lady who had sauntered to the bureau, waiting whilst the book-keeper dealt with Fay.

"Any letters for me—Mrs. Vanderloo?" the bookkeeper was asked, now that she had finished with the two sisters.

They, hearing the lady give this name, treated her to glances of quickened interest. Vanderloo—a not a common name by any means.

"I say, isn't that strange?" Edna whispered Fay after they had found seats in the lounge and ordered tea. "It's some people called Vanderloo—either a firm or a company or something—who are dad's rivals over his new venture."

"Wonder if she is connected with them?" Fay muttered, watching the beautiful and richly dressed woman opening letters on her way to the lift.

Then, just as Mrs. Vanderloo was stepping into the lift, she sent her glance across the lounge to where Fay and Edna were sitting.

"She heard us give dad's name," Edna remarked. "And she has just looked our way. You know what, Fay? Shouldn't wonder if she wants to talk to us, presently."

"If so, we must be careful what we say," the elder sister nervously realised. "We don't want to do anything that will help dad's rivals to smash him."

"Goodness, no!"

Edna, a few moments later, was going to speak of something which had just come into her shrewd head, but the waiter was setting down the tea. As soon as he had retired, she bent over the tea-table to startle her sister with the low-spoken words:

"Fay, I've been thinking—we reckoned that was an explosion last night—"

"But it wasn't. Everybody is saying it was simply a fall of cliff, like you often get round the coast."

"Oh, but how many people saw what we saw?" Edna scornfully retorted. "None! It must have been an explosion—a very peculiar one. And what I am wondering now—was it something to do with the Vanderloos?"

Fay stared.

"You must be batty, Edna!"

"But this rivalry between dad and the Vanderloos has to do with some new kind of high explosive—we know that," Edna argued on. "And here's one of the Vanderloos staying down here."

"Yes; but she is only a Mrs. Vanderloo. She wouldn't have anything to do with—"

"I suppose her husband could be here, too, couldn't he?" the cleverer sister snapped.

A minute after this, Mrs. Vanderloo came down in the lift again. She was still wearing outdoor things. It may have been pure chance, but she chose a tea-table within speaking distance of

Fay and Edna. The band was playing some delicate chamber music, and there was no loud buzz of talk.

"You have come down with your parents for a holiday?" Mrs. Vanderloo presently spoke across to the sisters, with an ingratiating smile.

They told her: Oh, no, they were at school at Morcove, and had merely called to make an inquiry about future accommodation, that was all!

"Ah, the school—a very fine and famous one; I am glad to have seen it," the lady chatted on. "I take my walk that way this afternoon, to go past the fallen cliff. What a sensation, last evening—eh?"

"Ye-yes, it was!"

"So your parents are coming to stay at the hotel shortly?"

"Er—we don't know," stammered Fay, and certainly there had been no talk of anything like that by Mr. and Mrs. Denver. "After all, the weather isn't likely to be too good later on."

The lady nodded and suffered the talk to lapse. Fay, stealing glances at her, felt her to be as fascinatingly lovely as a film-star. Mrs. Vanderloo had the most marvellous eyes, the brows as thin as the stroke of a pen.

She rather hurried over her tea, and then went away to write letters. Fay and Edna, being determined to get their money's worth, lingered over their tea, glorying in the luxury of the place—the sense of being "on their own."

At the same time there was some playing for safety in this hanging about. They did not want to be seen leaving the hotel, and so it seemed good policy to wait for the early twilight.

Now and then they exchanged grins over this their latest escapade. But there were periods when they sat reflective, on account of Mrs. Vanderloo. She had manifested a significant inquisitiveness just now!

Twilight was not a time for guests to be going out again, but suddenly Fay and Edna realised that Mrs. Vanderloo was off for another stroll. She dropped letters in the post-box and drifted out through the revolving doors.

"Then let's go now—and watch which way she goes," Edna excitedly whispered her sister. "Quick, Fay, get the bill and pay, and then—we'll keep an eye upon her!"

A Wrong That Must Be Righted!

BETTY came alone out of the schoolhouse just as Morcove's familiar bells were chiming a quarter to six.

She had slipped away from Polly and other good chums, not wanting them to spend such a dreary and perhaps useless time as she was going to experience out of doors during the early onset of the autumn evening.

Those friends of hers were so upset over the blow which had befallen her that she feared it was going to be difficult to prevent them from becoming too involved. But she would do her best to achieve that purpose, whilst doing her best also to find out to whom she owed that blow.

Some girl or other, it must have been, who had worn her—Betty's—shoes during a secret trip out of doors last night! That was the conclusion Betty had speedily reached. It could have been an accidental putting-on of the wrong shoes, but didn't it look as if there had been an intentional use of them?

"At any rate, the actual culprit has not come forward during the day to clear me, and so—that shows the sort of girl she must be," ran Betty's mind. "Not a girl who cares a scrap on my account."

One of the Denver girls, then? Both of them, perhaps, out together after dark last night—again! For sheer ill-will, Fay and Edna had no equals in the Form. Nor could Betty forget that the sisters were in proud possession of some secret means of leaving the schoolhouse during forbidden times, and returning just as safely.

Now that she was suspended from the captaincy it might not be her particular duty to discover the Denver girls' secret, and so put a stop to their little game. But, as her suspicions had fastened upon those two girls in regard to that business of the shoe, Betty certainly had every reason for being as determined as she was—to watch Fay and Edna closely from now onwards.

They were away from the school now, she knew, and it was not going to surprise her if they had not returned by the latest official time for being indoors. Drove of girls were coming in now, after cycle-runs into Barcombe; Betty was encountering them as she herself sauntered down to the gateway.

The rush soon ended, except that a few inevitable stragglers came racing in almost at lighting-up-time. In the grey dusk Betty still remained out of doors, actuated by a growing belief that she really might be going to do herself a bit of good, by waiting about like this and keeping watch.

Fay and Edna were still out. Of that she was

certain. So it looked as if they were relying upon their secret means of slipping in after hours. Possible to glimpse them, when at last they did come sneaking up in the darkness?

Do that, and the results might be simply wonderful!

Suddenly, however, Betty saw two girls coming along the road on foot with a chance, yet, of getting indoors on time.

"That's the pair!" Betty was instantly convinced as she watched them from the shelter of the boundary hedge. "And so they won't need to make use of their secret way in, this evening. I can tell—by the way they are hurrying they reckon to be in time for the front door."

Was it a wonder if Betty experienced feelings of bitter disappointment? It was not that she had any ill-natured desire to get the sisters into a row. But she cherished, and was entitled to cherish, the desire to right herself, and it had come to this in her mind at last—she never would right herself unless she caught Fay and Edna in the act!

No doing that this evening—worse luck! With the sisters coming on to the main gateway, intending to go up the drive and so in at the front door, Betty could not help giving a grimace of disappointment. "Simply follow them in, that's all!"

(Continued on the next page.)

4 EACH

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Yet next minute all this sense of being cruelly balked was changing to hopeful excitement. Fay and Edna had not come in by the main gateway after all. They had turned back.

And Betty—she had even heard one sister say to the other, a hundred yards or so short of the gateway:

"Oh, look here, Fay, don't let's go in yet—let's go back and—try to find out more, shall we? Why not, when we know we can slip in, later on, by—"

"All right, then! Yes—let's!"

So now—what a sudden change in the prospect for Betty! The secret means of getting indoors was to be used by the sisters after all, before another hour was out, perhaps.

Keep track of them now, not lose sight of them for a moment, if only that could prove possible, and then—

"It will be a captain's sash, not a captain's shoe, that Miss Somerfield will be returning me!" was Betty's smiled thought.

She crawled through the easily negotiated privet hedge, emerging upon rough and gorsey ground forming part of the moorland.

Fay and Edna had turned off the road, to take advantage of the cover offered by the patches of dying bracken and masses of dark gorse. But Betty had them in view—was just able to keep them in sight in the deepening gloom as they scurried along, on a course which kept them parallel with the road to the town.

That the sisters were going all the way to the town, Betty could not believe. They were on foot, going back to some place from which they had only just come, and a return walk to the town was simply beyond them, physically. Going back somewhere to "try and find out more"—that was their idea, according to the whisper overheard.

"But where, then—and find out more about what?" Betty wondered.

Of a sudden she saw them leave the edge of the moor to go across the lonely highway and then fare on along the smoother turf on the other side. They had passed the Headland Hotel, which was showing many lighted windows, and seemed to be trending towards the lonely bungalow known as Cliff-Edge.

There were lights at the bungalow also, and Betty, as she kept after the sisters, wondered who were the tenants of that little residence at present. It was constantly changing hands, being let furnished for only short periods, usually.

When next the Morcove chimes ding-donged through the murk of the autumn evening, Betty was in no mood to realise "Here am I—out of bounds as late as this!" For good or ill, she did not mean to go back to the school until the Denvers went back. And at present—

What on earth did it mean, that the sisters had now made a furtive entry upon land lying inside the garden fence of Cliff-Edge Bungalow? Betty, by peeping over the top of the fence, could see the two girls prowling about in a highly nervous manner, their cautious movements taking them nearer and nearer to some french windows which showed lamplight upon drawn curtains.

So it was here, then, they had returned, to "find out more." But more about WHAT?

There could be no guessing by Betty at even a likely answer to that question. The behaviour of Fay and Edna had now become extraordinarily mystifying.

It amounted to creeping close to that lamplit window, to stand there, trying to see into the

room if a chink in the blinds offered the chance, whilst obviously listening.

All in an instant, however, both spying girls went flitting away, as if they had taken fright. Unluckily for Betty's purpose, they darted round to the other side of the building, so that she ran the risk of losing them altogether. "After my staying out, too, as late as this!"

It was such an exasperating development that Betty promptly decided to go herself into the garden, slip by the centrally placed bungalow, and so bring the flitting pair into sight again.

There could be no better means of keeping track of them, and the idea of losing them was unbearable. They were going to use their secret way into the school presently—that was what was in Betty's mind, all the time.

She found the little wicket-gate in the fence on this side of the bungalow plot by which Fay and Edna had entered. Cautiously lifting the latch, she slipped into the large garden, finding a cinder-path to go along that was bordered with currant-bushes.

It was a path that would take her close to the back of the bungalow, but she decided to keep to it for most of its length at least. Then she could strike aside, to tread silently between some fruit-trees.

But, as she was realising, there was need for haste as well as caution. Even now, Fay and Edna might have got clear of the garden and be simply racing away. With a rush, Betty finished with the cinder-path, and she was taking quick steps through the little bit of orchard, when—

"Now, then, my girl—what's this!"

And she found herself being held in an arresting grip by the owner of that harsh, challenging voice—a woman, who had risen up amongst the trees, to pounce upon her.

"I—don't hold me like this, please! I—"

"But you have no right to be here!"

"No; well, I'm sorry. At any rate, I was doing no harm."

"That isn't good enough!" the woman said fiercely. She was expensively dressed and seemed to be quite a lady. But her mood was a very angry one.

"Stop struggling!" she hissed. "I am not going to let you go until I know more about this! Come into the bungalow—"

"No! I don't care to go in there—I don't see why I should!" Betty spiritedly protested. "Take your hands off me, please. I tell you, I was only—"

"Ah, you needn't tell me any lies! Do you belong to Morcove School?"

"Yes."

"And your name?"

"Betty Barton."

"Very well," the woman said, with undiminished ferocity. "You will come with me into the bungalow and wait whilst I ring up your headmistress!"

And Betty, knowing what this must mean for her, could only think:

"Now I'm properly in the soup! This is just about the very worst thing that could have happened!"

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

NEXT week's superb long story of Betty Barton & Co. is entitled: "Betty Barton's Lone Battle," by Marjorie Stanton. Order now your copy of SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN.

Dave Cardew Has Been Parted From His Best Friends, But He Can Still Rely On Their Loyal Help



Grangemoor to Guard Her

Dave's Danger

SHABBY and ill-fitting clothes, clumsy boots and no cap to his head—he might have been some rough but honest farm lad, this boy who was running swiftly along a stretch of the river bank. Some sportive lad who, instead of being about his master's business, had just been into mischief!

But the boy was Dave Cardew, expelled only yesterday from famous Grangemoor School. Sent home in dire disgrace, and back again, now, within a mile or so of Grangemoor School; but back—in secret.

Keenly he glanced this way and that, for he knew he had been seen by the very people he had wished to avoid, and now he was keen to get right away from them.

"Yes," he thought to himself, "pretty unlucky beginning to my first day in hiding in the district. It was all right to get that talk with Jack and my other pals; I wanted that! But Hetty Morland recognised me just now; I'm not sure that those two seniors didn't, either!"

This was followed by no light-hearted smile, a reckless:

"Oh, well, I gave them the slip, anyhow!"

Dave was not a pessimist, but he was not doing what he was for fun. It was not the escapade of a hare-brained lad—for him to have gone only part of the way home yesterday, and then to have returned, in disguise, "kipping" for the night in the old ruined mill.

So, as he picked his way along the river bank, to regain the tumble-down building which had become his hiding-place, he looked gravely reflective.

That Hetty, just now, had certainly recognised him was no great misfortune perhaps. Anyhow, it had been the only thing for him to do, when he realised that the poor girl was being worse than bullied again by her ruffianly uncle—to go to her help.

By Marjorie Stanton

"And if she recognised me, he didn't—that's a blessing," Dave's self-communings ran on. "The scream she gave, when she saw through my disguise—he took that to be her cry of fear because he was knocking her about, the brute! He went back to the cottage, too, much too quickly, when I turned up, to take any particular notice of me."

Ashamed—as usual! Ezra Joab had turned and slouched away at once, going into the cottage and slamming the door, savage with himself for having been caught bullying the niece who worked so hard to keep the place going.

But there had been those two prefects, suddenly showing themselves as having been attracted to the spot by the row between Hetty and her uncle. Ralph Gayner, one of them; the other—Percy Denver.

Dave sent his breath hissing through tightened lips. Of all fellows belonging to Grangemoor—those two!

Had they recognised him, in spite of the disguise? The pair had been no nearer to him than a hundred yards at most; but—

Again it was not pessimism, no habit of fearing the worst, which rendered Dave so uneasy. Pure common sense warned him that it was more than likely he had been recognised.

His disguise—he had little faith in its saving him from recognition at close quarters. He was shrewd enough to know that, by a hundred and one little things, anybody in disguise betrays the real personality—especially in a time of haste and excitement. The bearing, the gait, a glimpsed expression—little things like that.

The reedy bank described another sharp bend, round which he stepped quickly and quietly, and

One huge surprise he had already given them to-day. Now to treat them to—another!

Denver Leaves a Note!

"THAT'S it, I think!"

And Percy Denver, alone in his study in Challenor's House, hitched back his chair and rose from the table.

His chuckled comment had to do with a line or two of writing which he had been putting upon a half-sheet of paper—with a blunt pencil.

"What, ten past!" he exclaimed to himself, after a glance at his wrist-watch. "But that gives me five minutes, anyhow—before they all come out for break."

He, being a prefect, had not found it difficult to find an excuse for getting let-off from the first session of the morning's work. Most of the time he had been away from the school; it was only a few minutes since he had returned, coming up to his study to get busy with pencil and paper.

Now he sauntered away, to go a floor higher. Anyone encountering him would have reckoned the oily-haired prefect to be simply drifting about the schoolhouse, with his usual liking for being seen.

But Percy Denver, at this moment, happened to want not to be seen. He was glancing back cautiously as he went down the corridor serving the juniors' studies. Then, with significant swiftness, he went into one study, set the folded scrap of paper upon one of the blotting-pads, and came out again—looking just a little "jumpy."

The coast was still clear, however, and so he could start whistling as he returned downstairs. When he was almost back at his own study, he heard that sudden hurly-burly which meant the coming out for "break." And he chuckled:

"Just managed it nicely!"

Co-seniors of his were taking "break" as well as the juniors. In a few moments there were steps and voices in the "prefs' passage," as it was called. Then someone arrived at Denver's own door with a very hasty step, and came into the study with an eager, curious expression.

It was Ralph Gayner.

"Do any good?" he panted.

"Did you find him?"

"No; but that doesn't matter, really—"

"Doesn't matter?" Gayner stared. "You told me that if you could only find him hiding at the mill—where you thought he might be—"

"I know I did; and he wasn't there—no trace of him, either. But—don't you be so dashed nervy, Gayner," the other prefect grinned. "It's going to be all right, all the same."

"Then tell me," the guilty-minded one implored, dropping down into an easy chair, "tell me something that means a bit of hope for me still!"

"Will it mean fresh hope for you, Gayner, if I get hold of those papers, even now?"

"Hope—if you do that? You know—I've told you before," Gayner said, his eyes burning. "It will mean I shall be saved, saved! But how can you manage to get the papers after all? When you don't know where to lay hands on the fellow himself!"

Denver smiled proudly.

"You're no good, Gayner—up against a chap like young Cardew! But I—Pity you didn't get me to help you before this! I am not the one to be beaten by Cardew, or any other young blighter of a junior! I shall hand you those papers, Gayner, soon after five this evening—"

"You will! Denver—"

"Yep!"

And Denver's boastful nod implied that that was how he did things—according to plan!

At this moment, light-hearted Jack Linton emerged, tousle-headed, from a bit of a scrum taking place at the foot of the stairs.

There were fellows who wanted him and his three study-mates to come out to the field for "break"; but Jack was wishful for one of those little conferences with Messrs. Jimmy Cherrol, Tom Trevor and Tubby Bloot, such as had taken place so often of late.

"Come on, chaps!" Jack vociferated, having effected his own escape from the mix-up. "After school, you fellows!" he promised all the unfortunate ones.

On this understanding, Jimmy and Tom and Tubby Bloot were promptly allowed to dash off upstairs in the wake of Jack.



The water descended over the head of the unlucky Denver in a cascade, and from him to Gayner below. Jack Linton & Co. roared with laughter. They knew quite well that the prefects had come here in the hope of waylaying Dave Cardew.

"Shut that door, Tubby," Jack requested in a conspiratorial tone on reaching the study. Then the piece of paper on the table caught his eye, and he unfolded and read it curiously, his face lighting with excitement as he grasped its purport. Gosh, man, what do you think? Dave's been here!"

"What! Get out!"

"All right, then—look at this!" And a half-sheet of paper, that a minute since had been a folded-up note, was held out for the others to scrutinize. Their eyes, as they read the pencilled words, goggled.

"Well, I'm hanged! What will the chap do next! But there," Tubby suddenly chortled; "we know what Dave is—capable of anything! Good chap, Dave!"

"That's the message he has been here to leave for us, whilst we've been in school!" Jack said in a thrilled way. "Bring papers to me at old mill after tea!" Boys, that looks as if—"

"It does that," Jimmy elatedly agreed. "Big development coming! Maybe the grand finish-up—"

"Last round in the great fight," Jack exulted.

"Worth a squash, to know it," Tubby smiled his delight. "We'll make it a nice sugary one, with straws."

And he gravitated to the corner cupboard.

"Well," Jack chuckled, "Dave has asked for the papers, and he shall have them—rather! After tea I'll get them from their fresh hiding-place, and then we'll go along down to the old mill and—Eh?" he broke off in a dropped-jawed manner.

For a voice—emanating from the corner cupboard just as Tubby opened the door—had said calmly:

"You won't!"

Never in his life had fat Tubby looked more like a dying pig of the toyshop kind. He swayed away from the cupboard, losing all his normal blown-up appearance. Loss of breath, due to staggering surprise, had deflated him.

"By heck!" Jack now gasped. "So—you're there, are you, Dave?"

"Sh!" Jimmy gestured, and flew to the door to make it fast by wedging a chair under the knob. "Whew!" he breathed, turning round to resume his amazed staring at Dave.

Put in Their Place

"S TAYING to lunch, Dave, is that it?" Tom Trevor jested. "Well, why not? After all, your meals were paid for up to the end of term. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up," said Jack; but he grinned. "Yes, this is very funny, though—it is, boys! But you've given Tubby a terrible shock, Dave. Look at him!"

"That pencilled note you found on your blotter just now," Dave said, smiling his grave smile. "I didn't write that, you know."

"You didn't!"

"Denver wrote it, imitating my hand. Why, I was in the cupboard when he came into the study to leave the note," Dave calmly added. "I was peeping out through a chink and saw him."

Suddenly Jack sat down, guffawing. He could not stop laughing. He roared with laughter, rolled about, and banged dust out of the armchair with his slapping hands.

"Oh, dear!" he bleated, wiping his eyes at last. "Ha, ha, ha! Because, don't you see—But of course you do! It means we can just about turn the tables on Denver and Gayner—for, obviously, they are working together now."

"Make it a final settling up with them," Tom grinned.

"That's the idea, boys! The Die Hards will be there!"

"I shan't," Dave smiled. "Now I am here in Challenor's, I don't go away in a hurry. You know the one thing I am desperate to bring off now—a meeting with Gayner's guardian, Mr. Gordon. So I am staying on—"

"And welcome—welcome as the flowers in May," Jack said blithely. "Pray be seated, Sir David! Tubby, a soft drink for Sir David; and will you, Tubby, see that the Blue Room is made ready, should our guest require to stay the night?"

"It may come to my sleeping in the cupboard—hope you don't mind?" Dave pointed out.

Dave's staunch pals, between them, did wonders for him in the catering line. Separate excursions to the school's tuck-shop resulted in a re-stocking of the private larder on lavish lines.

So there was Dave, secretly lodged and boarded in Challenor's House, with the cupboard to lie low in when his chums were necessarily absent, and with all of them to mingle with when they were free to look in upon him.

Never in their young lives had they had a greater joke to enjoy. The comedy of the situation was one they could not get over. Dave himself was vastly amused by it; as for Jack and Tom, their roars of laughter at those times when all five were happily together in the study, with the door made fast, were violent enough to bring down the ceiling.

Challenor's, in general, may have wondered; if it did, it had to go on wondering! Jack Linton and Co. were not great favourites in the House without having many fellows of whom they were very fond. But they simply dare not allow anyone, however trustworthy, to share the secret.

Four o'clock that afternoon found Grangemoor's expelled scholar having tea with his study-mates, just as if that expulsion had never taken place.

After tea, Jack fetched the fateful packet of papers from their latest hiding-place and placed the documents in Dave's keeping once again.

Then the four set off for the old mill, leaving Dave quite comfortable in his "cubby-hole."

No sooner were Jack and the three others in the open air than they were aware of being watched in their going-off by Gayner and Denver.

Much too cute to do any obvious looking about, the chums yet contrived to send furtive glances towards a row of windows serving the seniors' studies. At one of those windows they saw the two prefects for an instant—and next instant those two faces were gone!

"Good!" Jack commented under his breath. "Let's take it quietly until we are outside the gates. Then we must sprint, boys. Those bouncers are already leaving, thinking to get there before us."

Yet it was Jack who, when the main gateway had been left a hundred yards or so behind, put a sudden check upon rapid progress by exclaiming:

"Here, just a mo', boys, whilst I look over the wall!"

"Oh, you don't want to do that!" Jimmy fumed.

"Yes, I do!"

It then appeared that Jack had a double motive for halting just there, to look over the high stone wall. He not only drew himself up, to peep over into the school grounds; after letting himself down again, he pushed up what was a slab of loose coping, and found something underneath it, the sight of which caused him to frown disappointedly.

"Dash! Chaps, here's the note that I wrote for Hetty Morland to have—and she has never come to get it. That's rotten," he frowned on. "It means that she is all in the dark still about lots of things."

"Put it back, in case she may look along this evening, after dark," Jimmy suggested.

"No, too risky now," Jack decided. "I'll keep it by me for the present."

The note went into a breast-pocket, and then he and his valiant comrades started a steady trot which was only to end when they had reached the ruined mill on the river.

No one was there to see the four as they dodged into the tumble-down building. This part of the river was not easily got at, and so far as Grangemoor was concerned it much preferred "Joab's," with its opportunities for refreshments and punting.

Joyfully aware of having got here in advance of the two prefects, Jack and his pals by no means contented themselves with simply waiting.

Swiftly and cautiously they prepared to give Gayner and Denver a hot reception—if a reception may be called hot that was to include some sousing of water over unsuspecting heads.

Rubbish heaps and debris inside the mill supplied a couple of old buckets, and these Jack and Tom carried up—brimful—to the loft. Successfully passed through the final trap-door, the buckets of water were soused over some straw.

Then refills were obtained from the sluices below, and finally two full buckets were placed ready to hand on the loft floor, close to the tempting open trap-door.

Not a moment too soon were these final preparations completed. The juniors had no sooner begun to wait in the loft, having nothing further to do, than they heard significant sounds from below.

Gayner and Denver had arrived!

"**C**AREFUL, Denver; not so much row!" "Oh, it's all right—your nerves again! The young blighters are up aloft—bound to be."

Even as Percy Denver gave this confident opinion, he could invite the other prefect to pay heed to whispering voices coming down from an upper story of the dismantled mill.

With a finger raised, Denver grinned at Gayner.

"Just as I guessed," Denver chuckled softly. "Those four chaps thought it best to make for the top of the building—safest part of it, of course, for doing any waiting. Well, we won't keep 'em waiting—for Dave, he, he, he!—much longer. Come on up, Gayner."

But he and Gayner were to find out, soon enough, that the four juniors up there in the loft were feeling anything but "trapped."

Certainly, whilst the two prefects were mounting by rickety flights of wooden steps to the floor immediately below the loft, they heard the most excitable whisperings, suggesting that the juniors knew the prefects were there and felt dismayed. But when Denver was actually heaving himself up through the open trap-door, with Gayner standing ready to follow—then came the surprise.

In the loft, Jack and his comrades had artfully waited until Denver was head and shoulders through the opening in the floor. They allowed him to obtain a startling sight of them, and then—

Swoooosh! Slush—swoosh! went both buckets of water, to the accompaniment of a great roar of laughter.

These six gallons of water, soused over Denver's head, waterfalled down him on to Gayner before the latter had time to jump out of the way.

In spite of the juniors' shouted laughter, one wild, spluttering yell from Denver was clearly audible as he dropped away—and fell upon Gayner.

Knocked off his balance, Gayner fell a-sprawl on the floor below, and Denver was so sopped and blinded by the sousing that he rolled about on top of him.

Then, before there had been time for either prefect to rise, quantities of sopping straw plopped down upon them. As fast as one junior cast his armful of wet straw down through the trap-door, another junior was ready to send his lot the same way, so that the writhing seniors became hidden by the ever-increasing cascade.

And that heaving mound of straw—it served the juniors splendidly, a few moments later, as a soft mattress on which to alight, one after another, by jumping down through the trap-door's opening.

That Gayner and Denver must have been further discommoded by being still underneath when this jumping-down took place did not matter to the victorious four. If anything, it entitled them to cheer all the louder as they dashed on down to ground level and so, splitting with laughter, started to make off whilst the going, so to say, was good.

"Oh, dear—ha, ha, ha!" Jack was still inclined to bleat, even when he and his chums had left the mill a mile behind. "How very funny! Sort of thing Polly would have liked to see!"

"Shame Dave wasn't there," Tubby smilingly deplored. "He has suffered such a lot at the hands of Gayner and Denver."

"Yes, but now—look!" Jimmy exclaimed in a tone which warned his hearers that matters were turning, once again, from gay to grave. "See who is there, boys—as if meaning to call at the school?"

"Eh, what?" Jack jerked, all mirthfulness promptly failing him. "By heck, though—what?"

For, like the others, he had needed only to take one look at a certain figure, just in sight and trending towards the school's gateway, to know it instantly.

"It's Hetty Morland!" Jack gasped. "It's Hetty, and what on earth she means by this—I'd like to know!"

HERE is a development Jack Linton and Co. never for a moment expected. They fear that Hetty may unwittingly spoil everything if she sees the Headmaster of Grangemoor, as she obviously intends to do. Further splendid chapters of this fine story will appear in next Tuesday's **SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**, which you should order now from your newsagent.

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