

"HER HARUM-SCARUM HIGHNESS"—Complete Story Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN



THE SPITEFUL SISTERS

An incident from the
splendid long story of
Betty Barton and Co. in
this issue.

No. 765, Vol. 30.
Week ending
October 5th, 1935.
EVERY TUESDAY.

"MAUREN'S UNFINISHED DANCE"—Complete in This Issue

Betty Barton is Confronted by a Serious Problem. but, Resolute as Ever, She is Determined to Tackle it—Single-Handed



Betty Barton's LONE BATTLE

A Splendid Long
Story of Morcove
School

By
Marjorie Stanton

Bad News of Betty!

TR-R-RING, ring, ring!
Sharply the bell of the extension-telephone broke the silence of the headmistress' private room at Morcove School.

Miss Somerfield laid down her pen and took up the receiver to answer the call.

"Yes—speaking! Pardon—you are who?"

She listened, looking somewhat puzzled.

"Oh, I know Cliff-Edge Bungalow, of course! But I am afraid I haven't the pleasure of knowing you. Mrs. Vanderloo, you say? I see!"

Then, as a voice with a slightly foreign accent continued to speak over the line, Miss Somerfield became more than surprised. She was rapidly losing her usual dignified composure; was even becoming agitated.

"A girl of mine—a Morcove scholar—caught trespassing on your private property? A few minutes ago? But—it was almost dark then! All my scholars should have been here at the school nearly an hour ago!

"Has the girl given her name? What! Betty Barton? Never!"

But there could be no doubt about the culprit's name. It was being slowly repeated over the phone by the lady at Cliff-Edge.

"Very well," Miss Somerfield spoke again. "Will you keep the girl there and I will send across for her at once? Thank you. So sorry. I can't imagine how such a thing has happened!"

She replaced the receiver, then got up from her chair at the littered desk. Retaining a frown of anxiety, she went from her own room to seek the one which was exclusively Miss Merrick's. It was young Miss Merrick who was the adored mistress of that Form to which Betty Barton belonged.

The great schoolhouse, as Miss Somerfield hastened up a couple of flights of stairs to the first floor, was very quiet. To-day had been only the first day of the new term, and scholars had not worked during the afternoon. But there had had to be a settling down to work in real earnest after the lights came on.

Miss Merrick had one member of her Form with her when the headmistress entered. Form-mistress and scholar were having what was quite obviously a friendly little chat—for which reason Miss Somerfield felt all the more vexed at her need for interrupting.

"Well, Etta," she took notice of the one scholar, with a kindly smile. "Are you going on all right?"

"Yes, thank you, Miss Somerfield."

"I had Etta down to me for a talk," Miss Merrick remarked lightly, "as, of course, it was rather a surprise for her to be told to take on the Form captaincy, this morning, in place of Betty Barton."

"Quite right," the headmistress nodded. "And now, about Betty Barton. The latest is that I have been rung by a Mrs. Vanderloo—whichever she may be—at Cliff-Edge, to say that Betty has been caught trespassing there."

"Trespassing at Cliff-Edge?"

"Prowling about—after dark, too, if you please. I don't know what it means," frowned Miss Somerfield. "I only know that she should have been indoors an hour ago. It is positively disgraceful. Miss Merrick, you must go across to Cliff-Edge—"

"Oh, I will go at once, yes—"

"And bring Betty to me when you have got back with her. I shall have to deal with her very severely."

"It is incredible," exclaimed Miss Merrick, distressfully. "I took the usual step to assure myself that all girls were indoors only twenty minutes since, but as a matter of fact I missed seeing Betty. I felt sure, however, that I need not be anxious about her."

"At one time," the headmistress sadly commented, "I myself would have been just as confident. But I simply don't know what is the matter with Betty, this term, to cause her to make such a bad start."

Then Miss Somerfield was gone, and the Formmistress could turn to Etta, who looked rather upset by the conversation.

"Etta, we must leave anything else to another time. As Miss Somerfield says, it is hard to know what has come over Betty. I must get across to the bungalow at once."

So Etta Hargrove went away, making her way very slowly and thoughtfully upstairs to the Form quarters.

Etta was very fond of Betty Barton. She had not at all relished her sudden appointment to the captaincy, this morning—owing to a fortnight's suspension of Betty by the headmistress. Now she felt definitely unhappy on Betty's account. In disgrace again.

Tactfully the temporary captain decided not to go to Betty's own particular chums with the news of her being caught out of bounds. Etta had her own study now, as captain—one that Betty had made over to her during the day.

But to reach that study it was necessary to go by Study 12—the very one in which Betty & Co. consorted; and its door was whisked open just as Etta passed.

"Wondering where Betty is!" cried madcap Polly Linton, after nearly colliding with the temporary captain. "She's not with you, then, Etta?"

"No, Polly—"

"We thought that you and she might be with Miss Merrick—"

"I have been with Miss Merrick, but Betty was not there. I—I would just wait." Etta counselled, feeling quite sorry for Polly and her chums, because of the upset they were in for.

Any disgrace falling upon Betty was bound to react upon that girl's chums. Polly Linton, Paula Creel, Naomer Nakara, Madge Minden—they thought all the world of Betty. So did tall Pam Willoughby and sparkling Bunny Trevor, and quiet Judy Cardew, and that born artist, Tess Trelawney.

A big group of chums for a girl to have, and, of course, Study 12 was not the official abode for all of them. Polly turned back to the study to have only Paula, Naomer and Bunny to speak to. The rest were at work in neighbouring and smaller studies, but were certain to look in as soon as work was over.

"Met Etta; she seemed to know why Betty is absent, but didn't want to explain—I could tell!"

"Was Etta all right?" asked Naomer, sucking ink off a finger; and Polly glared at her.

"What do you mean; was Etta all right? Of course she was; she always is!"

"Yes, wather!"

"I only thought, perhaps—"

"You think about the work, kid," Polly carried on her usual mock censuring of Morocove's dusky scholar. "You haven't come back, this term, to idle about."

Saying this, the madcap dropped down into an easy-chair and became very much at ease.

"What ze diggings? What about you?" Naomer not unreasonably retorted.

"I'm different!" Polly said virtuously. "There is an understanding; I took so many prizes last term, I must give others a chance this time!"

"Ze prizes are not worth having eef you ask me! Zey never give you anything sensibubble! Why can't zey make eet picnic-baskets, and flasks, and china and glass? Bekas we could do with some fresh tumblers," said Naomer, getting up to go to the corner cupboard.

There was, for the colder nights at this time of year, a certain "winter-warmer" which Naomer substituted for the cooling soft drinks of summer. Its chief ingredient was clove cordial, but Naomer would add what she fondly imagined to be various secret compounds forming a "grand patent" formula of her own.

Polly, her work unfinished, had no objection to Naomer's going off for hot water and coming back to prepare a "hand-round." Bunny also was not averse to a few minutes' chatter. So this "demoralised" Paula, who "wefused" any longer to "gwapple with pewp." No time limit for the rest was fixed, and there were the four, still talking, when at last Pam and others drifted in.

The newcomers were surprised at not finding Betty in Study 12. The giving-up of her captain's study to Etta had meant her coming in to work in Study 12, which accommodated the five rightful tenants just comfortably.

"Means we haven't seen her since a little while after tea, doesn't it?" Pam remarked. "Perhaps she's been writing letters in the libe—simply to be out of our way."

"Hark! Here comes Betty—at last!" Polly cried rejoicingly. "I know her step!"

"Zen, here goes," shrilled Naomer, promptly mixing a glass of the "grand patent" for Betty's consumption, while the madcap whipped open the study-door. "Bekas, for anyone who has got ze hump, nuzzing like a—"

"You talk like a quack medicine-man in the market-place!" Polly scolded. "Betty," as that chum now came in, "we are very offended with you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bekas, you don't de-serve him, but here you are!" And Naomer offered the luke-warm drink. "Staying away from ze study so that I have only Polly and Bunny to ask how to spell words—sweendle, Betty!"

Betty laughed, accepting the drink and at least sipping it—or Naomer would have been greatly offended!

But, in spite of the laugh, there were chums of Betty's who sensed a fresh upset for her. This resulted in an impatient "Well?" from Polly.

"I suppose I must tell you," Betty smiled stoically. "It will be known, anyway, all over the school by assembly to-night. I have lost the captaincy—"

"For a fortnight, yes," Polly agreed. "We know that—"

"And now," continued Betty, with a smile of submission to the will of Fate, "I've been caught out of bounds this evening!"

The Denvers' Spite

THE walls of Study 12 rang with a howled:

"Wha-a-at!"

"Anything I say to you—don't tell others."

Betty pleaded calmly. "It would be no good. I have been having a rather strange time of it, the last two hours or so. It began just as it was getting dark. I was waiting about for Fay and Edna Denver. I expected them to be late, which would mean their using that secret means of theirs of slipping in and out. I'm pretty sure they were the cause of my getting blamed for being out of bounds last evening—"

"Yes, that's all right," Polly impatiently agreed. "But you don't mean to say you've actually been caught out of bounds this evening?"

"Oh, yes, I was out of bounds this time," Betty ruefully smiled. "You see, I did spot the Denver sisters, and they—I can't imagine why, but they went spying round Cliff-Edge bungalow. I had to follow them, if I was to catch them getting into the school later on. But suddenly they made off, and before I could follow I was stopped by somebody, in the bungalow-garden."

"Betty!" gasped several of her horrified listeners. "Oh, what rotten luck!"

"But who stopped you?" clamoured Polly.

"A Mrs. Vanderloo—foreigner, I suppose. Very fair, tall, stylish—in fact, film-starry! She was furious with me. Refused to let me go, even when I gave my name. Made me go into the bungalow, and then she rang up Miss Somerfield and told all about me."

"Oh, shame!"

"I don't know," Betty's fair-mindedness made her demur. "After all, she had a perfect right, I suppose, to be annoyed. It was dark when she caught me, though I can't see why she needed to be in such a state of mind about it all."

"Did she know that others—Fay and Edna—had been prying?"

"No, and I didn't tell her. I saw at once it would be no use saying anything to her, or to Miss Somerfield, about Fay and Edna. They, of course, got indoors all right, after all. They'd only deny everything."

Polly ended a gloomy silence by starting to rage about the study.

"Ugh, dash!" she cried. "Foul luck! So now, Betty, the headmistress—"

"Oh, yes, she told me off all right! Etta's to keep the captaincy. And next time—I shall be expelled."

"Howwows, Betty dear! For goodness' sake don't let theah be any next time!"

"Not so sure," smiled the ex-captain grimly. "I may come to grief again—who knows?—before long. For I can tell you this: I mean to watch Fay and Edna more than ever, after to-night's business."

"So I should hope," Polly

applauded fiercely. "And it's up to us others to help you all we can. But why did they go spying at the bungalow? One could understand their visiting Cliff-Edge—if friends had rented the place for a little while. But—prying around!"

"Whom did you see at the bungalow, Betty?" asked Tess, "besides Mrs. Vanderloo? Is there a Mr. Vanderloo?"

"If there is, I didn't see him. A young lady came into the room for a minute, and Mrs. Vanderloo spoke to her in a language that was double-Dutch to me. But I picked up the young lady's name—Elsa."

"A daughter?" Pam hazarded.

"Seemed to me to be a wee-bit too old to be Mrs. Vanderloo's daughter. Mrs. Vanderloo herself is under forty. I fancy there was a young man about the place, but he didn't come into the room. It sounded as if he were at work in the garage."

After a pause Betty added:

"They seem to be a queer lot at the bungalow. I don't mean queer because they are foreigners. But 'Elsa' was as bad as Mrs. Vanderloo for being excited about my being caught trespassing."

"Foreigners do get excited," Judy quietly remarked.

"Another thing," Betty said—and paused.

"Well?"

"I noticed a faint smell of chemicals. It wasn't in the house so much, as round about, outside. I had begun to notice it when I was in the garden,



The sneering remarks of the Denver sisters, directed against Betty Barton, were suddenly cut short by a bombardment of shoes. Betty's chums had stood all they were going to stand from the spiteful sisters. Hastily, the Denvers sought refuge under the bedclothes.

behind the bungalow, watching Fay and Edna. Now I am wondering if the young man has turned the garage into a sort of laboratory. I noticed, as I came away with Miss Murrick, who had been sent to fetch me, that the car—a small one—was being kept in a shed, not the proper garage."

"Really?" Pam exclaimed, her brows rising. "Sounds odd to me!"

"He may be something in the chemistry line," Helen Craig observed, "and likes to carry on his work wherever he may be staying."

Polly exploded again.

"Anyhow, this is a nice beginning to the term for you, Betty—gosh!"

"Sweendle! Bekas, we can't even go on ze strike for you, to prove to Mess Somerfield zat there must have been a mistake!"

"Afraid you can't," laughed Betty, with a fond glance for her dusky friend. "I was there, right enough, worse luck. Not like last evening, when I never went out of the school grounds, and yet, this morning, I was accused of having broken bounds, with a lost shoe of mine to prove it."

"This," Polly muttered presently, when Betty had gone round to speak with Etta in the latter's study, "this has given half a dozen girls I could name just the chance they want to jeer at Betty."

And bedtime, that very night, showed that Polly was right.

Miss Somerfield, in her anger, had already posted a notice on the green-baize board, informing the school that Betty was now finally deprived of the captaincy, Etta's appointment to become permanent.

It seemed to Polly and other loyal chums that even the cheers for Etta, when she came up to the dormitory, were in their way a gibe at Betty. Etta fairly deserved the tribute, for she was a capable girl, but there were some derisive glances at the ex-captain whilst her successor was being acclaimed.

After lights-out, Fay and Edna began a bantering cross-talk which did not fail to draw encouraging titters and giggles from some of the other girls.

The whole tendency of the sisters' remarks was to suggest that Betty, having had rather an adventurous holiday, had come back to Morcove with a turned head. She was considered to have been caught out of bounds whilst "playing at private detective."

The new captain must have wanted to take drastic action to silence the teasing voices. But, like the very girl whom she had succeeded as captain, "reporting" was extremely distasteful to Etta. It was, in fact, the old, old position; if Fay and Edna and a few others liked to be obnoxious, they could!

Taking full advantage of this immunity, at last Edna began to tell a "bedtime" story that had a girl named Betty for its heroine, Fay interrupting as a child would, to ask questions.

"And so this girl—"

"Was she pretty?"

"Well, no, I can't say she was exactly pretty. But clever—oh, marvellous!" Edna improvised. "And so, one evening she made up her mind to solve the great mystery! So, putting on one of her shoes—"

"Why didn't she wear both shoes?" was Fay's mock babyish inquiry.

"Because, dear, she had lost the other shoe the previous evening!"

This, as Edna had guessed, fetched a laugh from a part of the audience. But Polly, never slow at taking the law into her own hands, had listened long enough.

"Talking of shoes," she said out loud in the dark, and hurled one in the direction of the sisters' beds.

"And here's another," said Bunny, having hastily supplied herself with a similar missile. Whizz—plop!

The idea caught on, and Fay and Edna found themselves under bombardment, with so many shots finding their mark that they were forced to shelter under their respective bedclothes.

Nobody thought any the less of the new captain for having done nothing. It was one of those cases where there could only be an airing of authority to no good purpose. Etta, however, was even then deciding upon a certain thing which she would do, as captain, to put a check upon the baiting of her predecessor.

There was in her mind, before she went to sleep that night, a mental note of the names of some half-dozen girls who had laughed loudest during the Denvers' "getting" at Betty. And next morning—what Etta did, in her own wise and quiet way, was to ask just those girls to come to tea with her, by and by.

They all accepted—were honoured! This was the new captain who had invited them, and the same weakness of character which had made them laugh so much at Fay and Edna's baiting of Betty, overnight, now caused them to take the bait offered by Etta.

Her idea was as fine as it was simple. During tea, she was going to put it nicely to these easily-led girls that it was a pity for them to spoil themselves, in the eyes of others, by helping Fay and Edna to hit Betty when she was down.

In that study which was the captain's own, Etta laid the table for tea before afternoon-school. It was a thing girls sometimes did, as it enabled intending "hostesses" to be as good as ready after school, instead of having to vanish for a last-minute rush-round.

Very dainty and attractive, too, Etta's table looked, when her preparations were ended. A vase of cut flowers for the centre she left, for the time being, standing on the window sill, so that they would keep fresher. Besides, she had to remove them from the table, so as to be able to cover all else that it held with some lengths of butter muslin, borrowed from the kitchen for the purpose.

Just like Etta, to do all this! So Betty was thinking, when she looked in at what was her old private study, just before two o'clock.

Etta had gone away, so Betty did not linger. She had merely called round from Study 12 to let her successor have a captaincy-book that it had been impossible to hand over with the rest, yesterday. Somehow, Betty had mislaid it, and it had since turned up in Study 12.

But, after putting down the book very carefully upon the table-edge, Betty simply had to stand for a moment, smiling admiringly. Splendid sort, Etta. She had done all this in advance for her little tea-party, and had done it all herself.

Nor was Betty without a shrewd idea as to why the new captain's guests were to be those known to have been asked.

Her slight sigh, as she came out of the study, gently closing the door behind her, was one of gratitude towards her successor:

"No girl could have made it nicer for me—"
And now, upstairs, Fay and Edna were the last, as usual, to respond to the bell's summons. They came out of their study with their customary laughs over what they had been talking about behind the closed door. It always pleased the sisters to be seen looking as if they had "some-

thing up their sleeves"; but at this moment they had the whole corridor to themselves.

"Half a sec.," Edna said, turning to go down the corridor, instead of along it to the stairs. "Etta's throwing a party after school, isn't she?"

"And we are not invited!" pouted Fay.

Then they both grinned. The motive for Etta's party was not unsuspected by the sisters, and at heart they felt annoyed. A captain who "threw her weight about" the sisters would never have minded. But Etta's way of relying more upon quiet influence—a wise policy of leading instead of driving—"too much like Betty, pooh!"

"Has she got everything ready? That's what I am wondering," Edna muttered her reason for having come this way. "Let's have a look!"

Nothing worse was in their minds, perhaps, than to get a sight of something which, doing credit to another girl, would offer an excuse for derisive comment. But, no sooner had they thrown open the door of Etta's study than a daring idea seized both sisters.

They saw how carefully and tastefully the table had been laid for tea; how it was draped over now with protecting muslin. And, because it was a solitary object lying outside the muslin coverings, they saw that book which Betty had left upon a corner of the table, only a minute or two since.

The book was labelled, so that the sisters knew it at once for what it was. Fay walked forwards from the doorway and picked it up. Then, deliberately, she pulled off the muslin and flung the book down so that it crashed amongst the tea-things, and milk squirted everywhere.

"Oh, the milk-jug!" Edna said, in mock dismay, as it went over; but she was grinning hugely. "Fay," snatching up the book, "how could you be so-careless!"

With that word, Edna now shied the book right across the study, towards the window. It hit the vase of flowers, which fell over, spilling water and blooms upon the carpet.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Fay.

"That's a book of Betty's, you know!" grinned Edna.

And then, maliciously confident that Betty would be blamed for what they had done, the despicable pair fled.

Misunderstood!

FOR a single instant, after coming out of class with the rest of the Form at half-past three, Betty had a sense of relief at being no longer the captain.

She knew herself to be freer in regard to spare time than she had been when the leadership was



The tempting cakes and dainty china, which had been set out so carefully on the tea-table, were now tumbled together in chaos. "Surely you don't imagine I've done this!" ejaculated Betty, horrified by Etta's accusing manner.

hers. Here she was, this afternoon, able to dash off to the field with Polly and others, when nearly always there had been some little thing or other demanding immediate attention. So often it used to be the cry: "I'll be with you—presently!"

But it was for a moment, and a moment only, that Betty experienced this feeling of welcome release. Then came the thought—a stabbing one: "But you didn't merely resign. The captaincy was taken from you—"

Stoical as ever, she would not let her face fall as that thought came. Her chums, if they glanced at her then, saw her looking as cheerful as ever, going out to the field with them for some hockey practice.

There were not enough of them to make up a full team, but they were getting some useful practice at the "bully off" and other adroit features of the game, when suddenly Etta was seen to be walking out to them.

With no more than an apologetic gesture to the others, the new captain came straight to Betty.

"Could you come upstairs a moment, Betty?"

"Oh, right—ho!"

There was nothing in Etta's voice or looks to suggest anger. Betty, promptly going with her back to schoolhouse, thought her very quiet; but then Etta was rather given to long silences. As for why the hockey practice had had to be interrupted like this, Betty could imagine fifty different things about any of which her successor might have suddenly needed advice.

Upstairs, Etta sent her study door wide open as they reached it, and then Betty stood transfixed at what she could see.

"Etta!"

"Oh, but go in—"

"Etta, the table—"

"Yes," the new captain said, tight-lipped. "And so I thought I would fetch you up, just to say—not in front of others, but to your face, Betty—what I think of you now."

They had passed into the room. Etta, closing the door, turned to Betty, who was aghast.

"Where was the need," Etta demanded, with restrained anger, "to do a mean thing like this?"

"But—"

"It isn't as if I were some girl who had stooped to cheat you out of the captaincy. I never wanted the captaincy! It has been no pleasure to me to take over—"

"Etta, surely you don't imagine I've done this!" Betty gasped, gesturing towards the ruined tea-table.

Except that Etta had removed the muslin coverings the table was just as she had found it when she came upstairs, a few minutes since. The upset milk-jug was empty; all the afternoon, whilst the Form was in class, the milk itself had been soaking not only into the cloth, but into platters of cut bread-and-butter and cakes, most of which were upset.

Even some eatables, well removed from the jug, had received heavy splashes of milk, so that now they were in a soddened, ruined state.

Then there was the overturned vase, with the flowers bestrewn a carpet over which all the water had spread itself. Betty, who had seen the table just before two o'clock, was horrified at the ruin done.

Etta crossed over and picked up the book which had so obviously been hurled about the room.

"Just because I asked you a second time for this book—you went off into a temper."

"Etta, I did not! Oh—"

"Betty, it's no use," was the convinced retort, all the more wounding to Betty because it came so quietly. "I can quite believe you wish now that you hadn't given way. 'There's the book you have been making such a fuss about!' That's how you felt, when you brought it to this study—and shied it all amongst—"

"Nothing of the sort, Etta! I declare—"

"Oh, don't start to be a girl who—"

"Who what?" Betty fired up. "A liar? Look here, Etta Hargrove, just you be careful now! We have always got along all right together. I was thinking so only to-day, but—"

"But you are different this term from what you have ever been before." Etta caught her up, more in sorrow than anger. "You've changed, not only enough to do things that no captain should do; you can even turn nasty towards a girl who's never wanted to be captain, but has had to take on—"

"Oh, I shan't listen!" Betty cried. "I won't—it's best not to!" But, after turning to the door, she faced round again.

"You actually believe that I was so—so bitter that I let fly with that book—"

"Isn't it obvious?"

"Very well, then! But it's you who are doing the turning against me, not I against you!"

"I would never have turned against you, Betty. There is the tea-table as I found it just now. The girls I am expecting at any moment are girls who have inclined to twit you, hit you when you were down. I thought I'd do my best to get them to stop all that. For your sake I was going to do that, but you haven't given me the chance. You have—"

"Etta, this is unfair. It's cruel of you," Betty cried out wildly.

"No. I think I have every right. But now I have said it to you, I shall let it go at that. It was a burst of temper that won't occur again, I hope. As for the captaincy, whenever you can fairly expect to have it back, Betty, you are welcome to it. I don't want the captaincy. I only want to see you—your old self again."

Betty tried to answer this and could not. Her head was swimming; the dreadful shock seemed to have brought all the blood to her brain. She was feeling this scene with Etta as a far worse upset than the row with Miss Somerfield had been, last evening.

Perhaps Etta divined this, for there came a sudden forgiving:

"There, Betty, you are sorry now, I know, and so—"

"I am not sorry!" the ex-captain exclaimed passionately, and wrenched open the door to go out. "I've nothing to regret; there's nothing I'm ashamed about! And I don't care two hoots what you—"

She broke off there, biting her lip. Her abrupt check upon her tongue was chiefly due to her finding, as she went from the study, several girls in a startled, spellbound state outside it.

They were, as she instantly realised, some of the girls who had been asked to have tea with the new captain. Some of the very girls whose natures had made them ready to forget how they had once looked up to her; girls who had cheered her when she was captain, and then, when her downfall came about—"booh!"

She strode past them, went into Study 12, and banged the door.

Then she heard them excitedly talking to Etta, in that girl's study.

Betty sat down at the Study 12 table and supported her head between two clenched hands. After a few moments she shifted her hands so that they stopped her ears.

She had been forced to hear enough to know that those early comers to Etta's party were now ready to tell all Morcove: "What do you think! That Betty—guess what she's done, in a rage because she's lost the captaincy! You should see!" And so on.

Betty's chair tilted backwards sharply; she jumped up, seized with the impulse to go away from the study—go right out of bounds, to walk off her unhappy mood. In a few minutes Polly and her other friends would be coming in from the field. Were they to find her here, moping, must she tell them about Etta?

"They'll take my word for it—of course they will. That means they'll be furious with Etta—and Etta is their captain now—"

What Betty Saw

WHERE the brawling tide, sullen under the grey autumnal sky, sent wave after wave foaming along the shore, Betty sat down for a rest presently.

SCHOOLGIRLS
WEEKLY

Every Wednesday

There was nobody in sight of her; but this did not mean that she had no right to be here at this time. It was not that part of the shore which had been put out of bounds on account of the fall of cliff—that great sensation of the night before last. The total absence of other scholars was simply due to its being tea-time.

With a cast-up baulk of timber for her resting-place, Betty sat here in solitude, with the giant cliffs rising behind her to a height of two hundred feet and more, and the grey waters monotonously plunging and growling over the shingle.

"Fancy my being here—all alone like this!"

She said the words aloud to herself. The tremendous change in her position at the school was something so shocking for her to think about that she could not be silent. Alone, out on the seashore—and this was that most sociable of all times at Morcove, the tea-time hour! As captain, how hard it had been for her to get even a minute to herself! She used to laugh about the difficulty of it. Always in demand; as for going off anywhere without some, if not all, of her best chums—unthinkable!

That was what it had been then; but now—

She could imagine the talk that was going on about her now. Her position in the eyes of the Form had become such a despicable one, chums who still stood by her might expect to do so at heavy cost to themselves.

And this aspect of the matter—the annoyance and trouble ahead for Polly and the rest—it worried Betty more than all else. With her eyes dwelling upon the intruding waves, she was again realising how urgently necessary it was to vindicate herself. "If only for their sakes—"

Yet, how would she do it? What else was there to do but to concentrate upon Fay and Edna—be always on watch with the hope of finding out their secret means of slipping beyond bounds in forbidden hours? For that belief was unshakable in her, Betty's, mind. She owed her downfall, owed all the present unhappiness, to the sisters.

Again, then, this evening, those two must be looked for. If they proved to be absent at the time when all girls were due to be indoors—then she must watch out for their return.

On the other hand, if they were in their study at "lock-up" time, they must be watched to see whether, once again, there was to be a stealthy slipping out by that secret means of theirs. Catch them at their game, and then, for a certainty, all the rest would—

Hallo, though! And Betty, startled out of her reflective state, glanced to right and left along the shore in an inquiring way. At the same time she inhaled slowly.

A faint odour of chemicals—strong enough to be noticed in spite of the saltiness of the sea breeze! Just the same smell which she had noticed was hanging about in the air, outside Cliff-Edge bungalow, last evening. It was asserting itself down here now—on the seashore!

But in a moment or two she could infer a reason for this occurrence; strange though it was. The seashore cave in the cliff upon which Cliff-Edge was built—it was only a couple of hundred yards from where she was sitting.

That particular cave, as Betty knew, was a private one. It had been acquired by the owner of the bungalow and converted into a private lock-up boat-house. Anybody renting the bungalow furnished had, of course, the use of the cave as well. So it looked as if that young man associated with the present tenants of the bungalow was not merely devoting the garage to laboratory purposes.

He was also doing the same thing with the cave.

Was he there in the cave now?

Curiosity would never have become as strong in Betty as it did if there had not been the maddening recollection that Fay and Edna, by spying upon the bungalow people last evening, had let her in for being caught by Mrs. Vanderloo. Why had the Denvers spied like that? Why had Mrs. Vanderloo been so very angry, and even revengeful when she dropped upon Betty? Didn't it rather look as if Mrs. Vanderloo was particularly afraid of prying eyes? But why should she be?

They were puzzling questions which impelled Betty to rise from the baulk of timber, meaning to saunter a little way along the shore, passing the gated entrance to the private cave. She had a perfect right to do this. The foreshore was public property.

Then suddenly she checked to a standstill, greatly surprised by the sight of a small, petrol-driven boat coming in at great speed from the open sea.

The little open boat, as it nosed through the undulating waters, was heading for a part of the beach exactly in front of the cave-mouth. Betty, to her increased surprise, saw that the only person in the boat was a young woman.

Instantly she thought of the "Elsa" at the bungalow last evening. The whole thing began to be understandable. The young man was at work in the cave. The young woman—sister or wife, most likely—had taken the little motor-boat out for a jaunt, and now she was coming ashore, with him available to help in hauling the tiny craft to its berth in the cave.

But to make this guess at the simple explanation was not to mean, for Betty, an end to her interest in these people. She was fatefully interested in Fay and Edna; and those sisters, for some strange reason, were secretly interested in the bungalow people—and why? That question still remained!

She sauntered on again, so as to appear to be taking just a turn to and fro on the seashore. Without sending direct glances to the gated entrance to the cave, as she wandered past it, she was aware of a young man at that very instant setting one of the two lattice gates wide open.

He was a tall, fair-haired man of about thirty, with horn-rimmed glasses to enhance his studious looks. Over his ordinary lounge suit he wore a holland overall.

After walking on a little way, Betty turned round to retrace her steps. Then she noticed that the motor-boat had been put about, when a couple of hundred yards from the shore, and was cruising off again.

"Because I am here? I wonder!"

The young man, when Betty went by the cave again, was no longer in evidence. He must have retired to be out of sight to her. But the gate still stood open—only one gate, as Betty suddenly realised, and it set her thinking!

To draw in the boat, presently, both gates would require to be open. But one open gate would be sufficient if, for instance, something was to be taken out of the gate down to the boat, or landed from the boat to be taken to the cave.

Her mind was suddenly made up. She would go away now—let the woman in the boat see her as she made her way up the path to the top of the cliffs. It was a zigzag pathway very handily serving anyone living at the bungalow. Now that Morcove School had lost its own handy way down to the shore, owing to the recent fall of cliff, this path had become the nearest one for scholars to use.

Five minutes later, whilst making the toilsome

ascent, Betty could feel sure that she was being watched from the boat. It was still being kept lashing about, offshore.

Accordingly, Betty did the obvious thing—allowed the woman out there in the boat to see her complete the climb and even go away over the gorse turf of the cliff top. But Betty came back!

Taking great care not to let this manoeuvre of hers be seen by anyone at the bungalow—close by on the cliff top—she went on hands and knees, creeping to the crumbling edge of the beetling cliff.

There, with tussocky grass to screen her crouching form, she watched the motor-boat coming in again.

If there had not been the excitement of looking for what was to take place down there, she must have turned giddy. Her hands and head were close to the brink, and there was the sheer drop of a couple of hundred feet and more.

The motor-boat was brought to shore most quickly and skilfully. But its occupant, having nosed the frail craft into the shingle, made no movement suggesting disembarking.

She remained seated aft until the man, now wearing a fisherman's waders, came from the cave down to the water's edge, bearing a small, but heavy, burden. Betty could see him shuffling along in the awkward waders very carefully, as if greatly afraid of stumbling and so letting the burden fall.

Then, how very carefully he placed the object in the boat, as it rocked in the surf! The woman had risen and stepped forward to assist him. He, knee-deep in water, and she in the boat—between them they placed the heavy object amidships.

That done, she agilely regained her seat aft, where she had control of the motor. The young man helped the boat away with a stern-first thrust, and the engine, racing to life, did the rest. After some rapid backing, round swept the motor-boat, to go dashing off again—out to sea!

And there was Betty, who had seen all this from her watchpoint on the cliff top, thinking:

"Well—how strange!"

Stranger Than Ever !

GONE—right out of sight now, that tiny, yet powerfully driven, motor-boat.

She had been able to watch it, becoming more and more of a mere speck amongst the dark rolling waters, for fully five minutes. But it was quite lost to view now—and she knew that the young man was coming up the cliff-path, to return to the bungalow, most likely.

Betty crept away from the edge of the cliff and, soon finding it safe to do so, rose erect, to walk out between the clumps of gorse to the main road.

It was a road that could be alive, at times, with girls going to and from the town on their bicycles. But Betty, starting the mile walk back to the school, saw no one whom she knew. A car overtook her, and that was all. She saw it turn in at the entrance to the Headland Hotel, just as she was drawing level with the gateway.

She had already passed the turn-in for the bungalow, stealing a glance at the charming little marine-residence set well back from the road. But there had been nobody to glimpse.

Strange, that business just now with the motor-boat! What was it that the young man had put in the boat? Where on earth could the young woman be taking the tiny bit of cargo—out to



Tensely Betty watched from the cliff edge, keenly alert. Far below—

sea! Something to be got rid of, by dumping it in deep water—was that the idea?

"I could understand their landing something—a day's catch of fish, for instance!" Betty was saying to herself, whilst she retained a puzzled frown, when fresh bewilderment came.

With only a few more steps to go, to be level with the entrance to the Headland's private drive, she received a surprise that fairly took her breath away. A lady, walking with two young girls, came out by that wide gateway on to the road. Mrs. Vanderloo—chatting and laughing with Fay and Edna!

Was it a wonder if Betty felt, at this moment, that a feather could have knocked her down?

Here were the very pair of Morcovians who, last evening, had been spying upon the bungalow people, with whom Mrs. Vanderloo was connected, even if she was not the actual tenant of that dwelling.

And Fay and Edna were now on friendly terms with this foreign lady!

Before Betty could obtain a moment in which to rid her looks of the amazement which had seized her, she was having to face Mrs. Vanderloo and the sisters. The three had turned to go along the road—not in the direction of the school, but towards the bungalow.

Fay and Edna retained the smiles of two girls who had been enjoying a fine treat. But Mrs. Vanderloo, as she recognised Betty, became austere. She conferred a frigid glance, then looked away.

No sooner had Betty gone by them than she heard the lady say to the sisters:

"Perhaps you would like to say good-bye now and go to the school?"

"Oh, no; we'd much rather be with you!" Fay smirked. "Besides, we don't want to have to walk with that girl!"

Nasty thing to say, although true enough! The tone implied that she, Betty, was a schoolmate whom the sisters quite rightly scorned. Almost, it made her turn back to give Mrs. Vanderloo an eye-opener about Fay's and Edna's unsuspected

part in last night's affair; but Betty conquered that impulse, and for one very big reason.

It had flashed into her mind that the sisters had artfully ingratiated themselves with Mrs. Vanderloo, and as a result they were now being taken to spend a few pleasant minutes at the bungalow. The recent coming away from the hotel suggested that the audacious pair had managed to get themselves treated to tea there, by Mrs. Vanderloo!

Be that as it might, the important thing for Betty was that the sisters were out of bounds at present and likely to get back late.

Able to rely upon their secret means of getting indoors unseen, what more likely than that they would be in no hurry to part from Mrs. Vanderloo?

Betty glanced behind her, presently, and saw the two girls going with the lady along the path to the bungalow porch.

"Then it's practically certain—they will be late again this evening. They are being asked into the very place where I saw them spying last evening!"

But there could be no lying in wait for the Denver girls, out of bounds this time. Betty grimly realised if she gave Miss Somerfield the least cause for renewed anger, after last evening and the evening before, it would mean expulsion. There had been a solemn hint to that effect.

The best she could do—and yet it might not be such a poor best, after all—would be to get indoors at once, let herself be seen about the place, and then seek some look-out point in the school-house.

Many a window commanded a wide view of just that ground which she needed to keep under observation. If necessary, she would even go up to a flat part of the roof and watch from there. That could be done, and although it would mean a row if she were caught, it could never be said that she had been caught—out of bounds again!

So, twenty minutes later, she was with her

chums in Study 12, blithely accepting their blowing up for being absent from tea in that mis-called Abode of Harmony.

They had kept tea for her, and she made a belated meal, tactfully reticent about what had transpired during her lonely stroll. She had no intention of calling on her chums to help her, unless it proved absolutely necessary.

At a word from her, as she knew full well, they would all be eager to take part in trying to catch the Denver pair making use of their valuable secret; but it would mean spreading the risk over the whole chummy. She was not going to have that, and so, presently, she gave them all the slip again. Helping to clear up the tea-things enabled her to do this. She went away with a cloth that was due for the dirty-linen basket—and did not return.

It was the autumnal twilight now, out of doors; time for scholars to be coming in.

For a little while the schoolhouse, with lights springing up here and there, knew all the old familiar commotion caused by returning parties of girls from their runs into town; their pounding upstairs and their snatches of talk with others. Then followed the gradual quietening down for work, by lamplight in the studies; a deepening silence rendering some "practice" sounds from the music-room all the more noticeable.

Betty could tell; Madge and Pam were running through that thing of theirs, a composition for two pianos.

She was up in the Form dormitory, one of the windows of which promised to serve her purpose. From that window she could see all the way to the bungalow, and below a large area of the school grounds was mapped out to her. Betty was fairly confident that Fay and Edna, who had not yet come in, would at least approach the school on the side she had under observation. What they might do after a scramble through the privet-hedge remained to be seen—if only one could manage to see!

Suddenly, at any rate, she espied them in the misty half-light. Only a pair of eyes as vigilant as Betty's could have discerned them at such a distance—fully half a mile away, and leaving the open road to seek cover offered by the moorland lying beside it.

The chimes ding-dong'd, telling Betty that it had gone "lock-up" time. Now all outer doors would have been made fast for the night and ground-floor windows closed. At Morcove, a suspicious surveillance was not carried on by the mistresses. Girls were trusted to be all indoors on time, and, so far as Miss Merrick was concerned, there was no official roll-call.

The Form-mistress never failed to take a look round, shortly after lock-up; but this did not mean a fussy insistence upon every girl being discoverable by her. She would usually accept the word of others as to where an apparent absentee might be.



—a man stood knee-deep in the sullen grey waters near the shore, carefully lifting some strange object into a small motorboat. The woman stepped forward to assist him, lurching slightly as the little craft rocked in the surf.

But Fay and Edna were locked out now, and they must know that there were no girls who could give any word of honour, as it were, satisfying to Miss Merrick if she discovered them to be absent. The inference was that the wayward pair relied upon being able to slip indoors, easily, only a few minutes late. So they would be able to declare, when challenged upon the matter, that they had got back quite punctually. "Oh, we've been back ages, Miss Merrick!"

Strong-nerved though she was, Betty found herself a-tremble with excitement as she watched from that dormitory window, now glimpsing the sisters for a moment, only to lose them in the next. Upon what happened in the course of the next half-hour perhaps her, Betty's, entire future at the school depended. Something might come about, in the next few minutes, which would restore her in the eyes of the school, remove the cloud of disgrace from her.

The captaincy—she did not know that she wanted to have it back, even if it were offered to her again. It might not be a bad thing to let Etta Hargrove go on as captain, for the whole term. But, oh, how Betty longed to clear herself; longed to prove that justice had miscarried!

Rapidly the autumn evening darkened, so that her eyes watered with the strain of peering eagerly and steadily. Fay and Edna—where were they now?

She had had no sight of them in the last two minutes; there was so much cover to shield them. Was she not going to pick them up again? What if their secret means of slipping in meant their working round to the other side of the school grounds?

No! There they were—scrambling through the boundary-hedge on this side, just where she had expected.

So now—what to do, to be able to watch them during the actual getting indoors by the method known only to themselves?

Stay here at the dormitory window, or nip downstairs to watch and listen there—which?

After Dark!

THE heart of Betty Barton beat rapidly in this moment of perplexity. The Denvers were giving her a chance—such a chance as might never occur again! Now it all depended perhaps on what she herself did during the next minute or two. From this window she could see them still, and was likely to see them until they were close to the house-walls. But then—what? If she could not still see them then—how could she hope to find out just how they did the trick?

But, for good or ill, she decided to stay at the window up here. By quietly opening the lower sash, she could do a lot by putting her head over the sill.

At this vital moment lights flashed on in the dormitory. The window that she had been going to open became a square of dark glass, reflecting her face and utterly frustrating eyes that wanted to go on peering out. She saw her own reflected face showing a sudden fierce expression, because of the maddening interruption—this most unlucky intrusion of somebody else.

Involuntarily she turned round, and it was Etta who had entered. They looked at each other for a long moment in silence.

"Anything the matter, Betty? What are you doing up here, all by yourself?"

Betty parted her lips to answer, but decided not to speak after all. She was furious, without having any right to be so. This, and the thought

that she might yet do some good by hurrying away to some other part of the schoolhouse, caused her to walk quietly to the door.

She went by Etta, who turned slowly so as to look at her in a kind of regretful way. The new captain was in no officious mood—only full of a concern that was creditable to her. Realising as much, Betty felt all the more exasperated at having to hurry away, changing to a run as soon as she was outside the dormitory. "Etta will think—oh, she must just think what she likes, that's all!"

Was the chance clean gone now—utterly spoiled, although so unwittingly, by the new captain? If so—maddening!

The one thing to do, at any rate, was to continue down to the ground-floor. Lying in wait for Fay and Edna to show themselves, down there, was not likely to be nearly so effective as having them under observation in the open air would have been; but it was the best that could be done now.

So, next minute, Betty was at the ground-floor—a solitary scholar, tiptoeing here and there, eyes and ears all on the alert.

She could not have wished for better conditions. Scholars did, as a rule, leave the ground-floor as deserted as this, every evening in the winter term; but at present no mistress or servant chanced to be in evidence.

Dark class-rooms and empty passages and halls—these offered a silence that might yet enable Betty to pick up some faint sound caused by the stealthy entering of the sisters somewhere or other down here.

No such tell-tale sound came, however. In vain she lurked in one dim passage and then in some other place favourable for her purpose. She hated having to lie in wait like this; but the need was imperative.

At last—it may have been after ten minutes of such favourable conditions, or only five, but what seemed such a lengthy spell—waiting down here on the ground-floor was ended. Betty, keeping out of sight, knew that a parlourmaid had brought some letters to the post-box in the hall. Then Miss Somerfield herself, went by, to go upstairs.

Immediately after this, a girl came down to put a letter in the post-box. She went upstairs again, but others were likely to be running down with letters for the post.

Then suddenly Betty heard the voice of Miss Merrick, questioning the girl who had just posted a letter, now that they had met on a half-landing.

"I don't see Fay and Edna. Know where they are, Pat?"

"No, Miss Merrick!"

To Betty's great amazement, the very girls who were being inquired about answered even then. Fay and Edna—they were in a position to be able to call up to their Form-mistress from the foot of the stairs:

"You want us, Miss Merrick? We're here!"

They were there, in the front hall—had not only achieved a successful sneaking-in, but must have got rid of outdoor things, all without Betty's being any the wiser!

Baffled, beaten a second time! She recognised it as a complete defeat, and advanced from her last lurking-place into the well-lighted front-hall.

Fay and Edna were going upstairs, with Miss Merrick coming down to them. The artful pair looked round and down to Betty, and grinned.

"Is that the captain?" she heard Fay question

Edna.

"No," said Edna, "that's the captain that was!"

Then, laughing, they ran lightly up to the first-landing, where Miss Merrick confronted them. It was certain that the Form-mistress looked for signs of guilty fluster; it was equally certain that she detected none.

Fay and Edna, in fact, had done it again—with-out a single hitch!

Betty's Museum Discovery

BUT how—how were they able to do this thing? Betty, after retiring to be out of the way of anyone who might come to the front hall, stood racking her brains over that baffling problem.

The means of slipping in and out, employed by the Denvers, must represent a big advance on any method known to other girls. Most of those methods called for the assistance of someone willing to "stand by" indoors.

Many a time before now the catch of a classroom window had been slipped back by a confederate, to let some girl clamber in after a harmless escapade.

The outside iron stairway—that was another device requiring help. You had to have someone ready to work the push-bar to one of the doors opening on to that emergency staircase. But Fay and Edna could be out of bounds together, it seemed, and slip in together—unaided!

Presently Betty took a good look round the ground-floor, nobody being about to see her doing so. She could discover nothing that evidenced where and how exactly the sisters had managed to slip in so smartly.

It occurred to her to go to the coat-room and see if their outdoor things were on the respective pegs—and they were not!

That was something to have discovered, anyhow. It pointed to the Denver girls not having had time to dispose of their hats and coats properly after the secret slipping-in.

It also meant that in a little while they must come down from their study to recover the things and take them to the coat-room. So it was worth while, Betty felt, to lie in wait for the sisters again, down here.

Then, as she stood considering where best to station herself now—somewhere just off the hall—the museum occurred to her as being better than any of the watch-points she had used before. To one or other of those places anybody might come at any moment. But the museum—it was a room nobody ever had any need to visit after dark.

So to the dark doorway of the unlighted museum went Betty, and then—it gave her the thrill of a clue found at last, to observe a tiny damp smear upon the shiny oak floor, at the very threshold of that room.

It was as if someone with at least one damp shoe sole had gone in or out just recently.

She bent and examined the mark eagerly.

It certainly was caused by a girl's shoe, and when, in great hopefulness, she switched on the museum lights, she could see other faint imprints all along the floor, between one cabinet-lined wall and glass cases that were centrally placed.

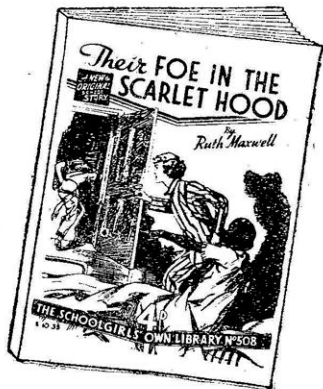
Leaving the lights on, she went the way the trail led her—to the far end of the long room. And there, instantly, her nostrils detected a faint perfume that suggested scented handkerchiefs or clothes.

(Continued on the next page.)

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY

OCTOBER NUMBERS

JUST OUT



No. 508.—THEIR FOE IN THE SCARLET HOOD. By Ruth Maxwell. A New and Original School Story, packed with dramatic situations.

No. 509.—VALERIE DREW—SCHOOLGIRL DETECTIVE. The famous girl detective versus a Secret Society at Priory School. By Adelle Ascott.

No. 510.—"TRY AGAIN, TOOTS!" Toots Ashton, the lass fra' Lancasheer, is the heroine of this grand stage and circus story. By Louise Carlton.

No. 511.—SYLVIA'S LOCKET OF FORTUNE. A grand mystery story, packed with thrilling and exciting moments. By Joan Inglesant.

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH

Was it here, then, that Fay and Edna had dumped their hats and coats? They were rare ones for using scent.

Betty glanced keenly about, wanting first to find the discarded coats and jackets; at the same time she was excitedly reasoning that the sisters' secret way in and out must be via this museum. Its windows—no; they were of a type rendering it impossible for anyone to "monkey" with them. "How on earth, then, do they contrive to do it?"

As Betty asked herself that, she had to break into smiles. For she found herself staring at a mummy-case, which lay in a slanting position, one end higher than the other, and the cover of which bore the usual painting of an Egyptian lady. Betty smiled because it was as if she addressed that question to the figure on the mummy-case, the face there returning a Sphinx-like smile.

Then: "Ah, I wonder!" Betty breathed, and stepped closer to the case. It was an exhibit which Miss Somerfield's explorer-brother had presented to the school. There was no mummy inside; but—was the case as empty, at this moment, as it should be?

She carefully lifted the lid away, and there, tumbled together inside the case, were the hats and coats of Fay and Edna Denver!

At that moment, in the study upstairs, Fay and Edna ended some excitable talk concerning activities since the close of afternoon school.

"I consider it was just wonderful luck for us," Fay wound up, "the friendliness Mrs. Vanderloo has shown."

"Yes," Edna grinned, "considering how badly we want to find out what the game is that they are up to, down here. And—we haven't been

caught using our secret way in and out of the school after all, Fay!"

"In spite of Betty Barton," was the derisive rejoinder. "But, Edna, we must go down and put our hats and coats in the right place for the night."

Tranquil conditions downstairs, recently so favourable to Betty, were to favour the sisters now. Unnoticed, they dodged into the museum. It was in darkness as they had expected to find it, and they were not going to switch on any of the electric lights.

There would be just sufficient light, straying in from the hall, to enable them to act quickly and successfully.

Together they came on tiptoe to where the mummy-case stood, at the far end of the room. Both girls were inclined to titter over the use to which they had put the exhibit.

Edna was to lift the ancient wooden lid aside, and then her sister would snatch the hats and coats from the case.

"Careful, Edna; it's awfully breakable, that lid!"

"Oh, I know that!"

Yet next moment Edna very nearly let the lid fall crash! to the ground.

As she lifted it aside, her eyes, like Fay's, had beheld a figure standing upright in the case, in an attitude of stiff attention.

The mummy-case was so associated in the minds of both girls with the long-dead past that for one moment of wild fright they felt that the figure was a spectral one.

Their horrified eyes were only slow at making it out, in the faint light.

Then came the realisation that it was a girl, just like one of them, in the case; a Morcove scholar—Betty Barton!

Her closed eyes opened and stared at them; a faint smile flickered at Betty's lips.

Edna agitatedly laid the lid aside and fled, and after her sped Fay.

Whether they had got their outdoor clothes or not—and they hadn't—they had got to get out of there, sharp! And . . . that was what they did!

When Betty came into Study 12 presently she was in a state of bottled-up laughter which amazed Polly and others.

"Like that, is it?" grimaced Polly. "Got the captaincy back—or what?"

"The joke is," Betty chuckled, "I have found out, as I said I would, the Denver girls' secret way of going in and out of the schoolhouse."

"You have!" gasped her listeners as with one voice. "Oh, splendid!"

"And so you have, actually, as good as got the captaincy back!"

"Not yet," Betty dissented. "I could go ahead now and reclaim it, only—one thing stalls me; something quite new!"

"It does?" Polly stared. "What's that, then?"

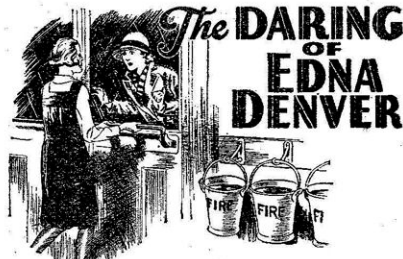
"Simply this. By showing up Fay and Edna to-night I would spoil my chance of finding out just why they have been so interested in the Vanderloo people. And I would very much like to do that, girls."

Betty sat down. She herself was composed, cheerful, whilst all her listeners were looking astounded.

"Those people at the bungalow," she resumed, in a graver tone, "Mrs. Vanderloo and the rest—they have begun to interest me now! I will tell you why."

And she ended by telling them—everything!

A Serious Mishap at Cliff-Edge Bungalow Provides the Denver Sisters with a Golden Opportunity—of which they make full use.



BY MARJORIE STANTON

Don't miss this splendid long story of the chums of Morcove School in next Tuesday's

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN

*It Seems That Dave Cardew Has Failed in his Efforts to Help Hetty Morland—
But it Takes a Lot to Down Dave*



Grangemoor to Guard Her

Unlucky for the Chums

"WHAT does it mean, you fellows? What is her idea—in coming up to the school like this!"

Jack Linton, as the uneasy words escaped him, was getting his three chums to walk on faster.

There was need for the brisker pace, if they were to catch Hetty Morland before she went in by the school's main gateway.

Her own step was a brisk one—and there was determination in it. What increased the alarm of all four boys was that she took no notice of those "Go back!" signs which they made, whilst hurrying to intercept her.

"Don't like the look of it," Jack said gruffly. "That's where it is with a girl; you never know what she'll take it into her head to do!"

"Rather looks as if she is 'off' with us!" Jimmy grimaced. "Doesn't want to speak to us!"

Jack, nodding to imply that he shared this unpleasant feeling, broke into a run. "We are going to speak to her, anyway!"

Nor did Hetty reach the gateway before all four juniors were able to line up in front of her, so that she might know that they questioned the wisdom, if not her right, of entering.

"Er—what's the idea then, Hetty?" Jack blurted, now that he and his pals had doffed their Grangemoor caps to her. "I mean—er—if it's to see the Head; had you better?"

"It is with the hope of seeing the headmaster that I have come up to the school," Hetty agitatedly answered. "Oh, and you musn't imagine that I am going to say anything that will make trouble for you boys—"

"Trouble for us be blowed," Jack exploded. "Only, it so happens that—that—well—er—"

"If you could leave it until to-morrow say?" Jimmy earnestly insinuated.

By Marjorie Stanton

"No! Sorry, but—"

"Hetty doesn't know what a terror the Head can be," Tubby hinted. "You explain, Jack—"

"Yes, there's that, you know, Hetty," Jack snatched at this suggestion. "The Head is difficult to handle. And if it's anybody calling with-out an appointment—"

"Especially about this time," Tom took up the running. "After tea—"

"Absolutely his most touchy time!" Jack grimly declared. "And Friday, too—Friday's the worst possible day for him!"

"Now, Saturday," Jimmy smiled, "Saturday is altogether different! Make it to-morrow, Hetty, and—"

"Oh, it's no use, I am not to be scared away by such talk," she laughed; and then she looked ready to cry. "No, I am not going to let another hour go by! I have waited ever since first thing this morning, and that is quite long enough!"

"Why," Jack took her up, "what happened first thing this morning then?"

"I was told things by Ralph Gayner that upset me terribly—on account of Dave Cardew," she said emotionally. "That horrid prefect told me how Dave has been expelled; how the poor lad was sent home in deep disgrace."

"By heck," Jack raged, grinding his heel in the storm-softened surface of the road, "why didn't we pitch Gayner in the river just now, chaps! But, Hetty—you're not to mind, not to take the slightest notice of what he said."

"Oh, I must! I made up my mind—"

"Listen, Hetty—and then you must go away;

you simply must!" Jack implored. "Dave is all right! He is not at home in disgrace."

"Oh, I know he isn't at home—but the disgrace is there just the same—and Gayner was quite entitled to say that it is all my doing! And so I am going to find the headmaster and explain—tell him things—"

"Oh, my godfathers," Jack groaned. "Now, now, Hetty—listen to reason. I know what you girls are; I've got a sister who is another for doing just what she shouldn't. Listen!"

"Please," Hetty gently cut him short, "instead of standing in my way like this, let me go on in to the school! If you only knew the things Gayner said to me! And I know why he spoke as he did—simply to frighten me, as he thought, into going right away, to hide myself like a coward!"

A note of passionate indignation came into her voice.

"He thinks I have no more spirit in me than that! He pointed out how I was to blame, reckoning that I would take his hint and vanish. He couldn't see that my sense of being to blame would lead me to doing exactly the opposite thing—coming forward and demanding to see the headmaster himself!"

"The point is, Hetty," Jimmy exclaimed, impressively, "Dave, if he knew, would be the very one to want you not to—"

A queer sound interrupted the speaker. It came as a kind of cough—from Tom—that was meant to interrupt. Simultaneously, Tubby gave one of his adonoidal snores, as if surprise had seized him, whilst Jack emitted a more conventional "H'm!"

Then Jimmy, wondering why the talk had been so abruptly closed, glanced about and, to his horror, realised that Grangemoor's distinguished headmaster was even then looking over the boundary-wall.

Above the craning neck, there was that austere face. The brows were twitching with the same anger which was causing the eyes to dilate; the mouth was set in a firm, thin line.

"I thought so!" the Head said, accusingly, at last; "I felt sure something like this was going on. Voices, I heard—"

"But, sir," Hetty blurted, "if you please—"

"No!" Her entreaty was flatly refused. "I think I am right? You are the young lady from Joab's? Exactly! And I find you talking to, of all boys belonging to my school—these! You must go away—"

The angry face bobbed down. Undoubtedly, the headmaster was now striding, on his side of the wall, to meet the Four as they got to the gateway.

Hetty started to keep step with them. "Oh, I must," she insisted. "He can't send me away like that!"

"But you must go!" all four of them counselled desperately. "Hetty, never mind now; leave it all until—"

"I cannot," she declared, so resolutely that they were reduced to silence.

But, a few moments later, the headmaster was proving how obdurate he could be. His roused state made him even order Hetty to be gone.

Hetty thereupon took a few retiring steps, which left the headmaster turning to vent his full fury upon all four chums.

By the look of undiminished resolve in Hetty's eyes, the chums could tell that she might not go away after all—only wait awhile! But even her temporary withdrawal was something for them to be thankful about.

"You boys will come with me to Mr. Challenor. Come on!" said the Head, starting to march them towards their own schoolhouse. "Upon my soul, I—I—"

He stopped to blow his nose, then marched on again.

"A nice thing! Nothing, nothing will ever make me believe that my annoyance is not warranted. I do not forget about Cardew; and you—you were that graceless lad's boon companions, as I well remember."

"As a matter of fact, sir, the young lady simply—"

"Silence, Linton! I don't care; I ought not to have found any of my boys standing about in idle talk with a girl who, I am very much afraid, had a most unsettling effect upon Cardew. You should have been at games. I ought to be able to come out and do a round of the school, for once—in one of my all-too-rare moments of leisure—and not be subjected to—Burrah-h-h!" he blew his nose again. "But as you are disinclined for games, possibly you will relish a punishment task? Burrah-h-h!"

Meantime, those fellows who had been inclined for games were at a pause on the field, beholding the Head as he marched the Four to Challenor's.

Then there were several boys just coming out of the schoolhouse as the Head reached it with his arrested four. He inquired sharply:

"Mr. Challenor—is he about?"

"Er, no sir! Mr. Challenor went out in his car."

"Ha! No matter, I myself will give you boys something with which you can occupy your time! We will go up," the Head decided, "to your study."

Behind his back, as he marched to the stairs, the Four exchanged glances of wild dismay. Dave hiding in the study upstairs—in the cupboard, of course; but still, would it be all right?

Jack opened the door of their study to let the Head enter first.

"But this," growled the great man of the school, with a look of increased displeasure, "is a very untidy study—a most untidy study! This is not," he roared, "at all what a study should be like! Nothing in its right place—nothing! The corners—lumbered up; look at them!"

He was walking about the study now, gesticulating.

"Why don't you keep things in better order than this! What's the good of your having a cupboard if you don't use it—"

"We do, sir!" Jack hastily asserted.

"But you don't!" the Head furiously dissented. "There are things lying about that might well go in the cupboard! You say you use the cupboard; what then do you use it for? Eh?" he glared at Tubby. "Did I hear you say—"

"Food, sir—yes, sir!"

"Food? Food?"

"No, sir!" Tubby corrected himself. "That is to say, sir—"

"Ha, so that is the purpose to which you put the cupboard, is it?" cried the Head, striding towards its closed door. "A private larder! A—W-w-what!" he gasped, having whipped the door open.

He recoiled, staring wildly.

"But here's a boy!" he shouted, finding his voice again. "Here's a—a—some young tramp. But no! Those clothes—a disguise! You young scamp, I know you! Dare to deny it, boy; you are—the one I expelled yesterday!"

"Cardew—that's right, sir," said Dave.

And the step that brought him out of the cupboard was as calm as his voice had been.

Under Lock and Key!

THE angry principal of Grangemoor was now conferring a fierce look upon Dave's four loyal pals, who were horrified at having witnessed him discovered hiding in the study's cupboard.

"These scholars have aided you; given you shelter in secret; fed you! But I will deal, first, exclusively with you, David Cardew! You came back like this—why?"

"It was very important that I should meet somebody."

"Meet somebody!" was the Head's angry cry. "Yes, and that somebody was—oh, I quite understand now! The girl from Joab's—the girl who—"

"No, sir."

"Tebah, don't tell me!" the Head shouted, after being so insistent about an explanation. "It is scandalous! Do you know, I have a very good mind to hand you over to the police? If an expelled boy won't go home when sent, but chooses to become a—an utter vagrant—a corrupting influence upon former schoolmates—"

"Oh, I say, sir!" Jack burst in, hotly. "I can't allow you to—"

"What! Silence, you! All four of you will stay in this study; you will not dare to pass that door, on pain of immediate expulsion, until your own house master comes to deal with you. As for you, Cardew; only one place for you until to-morrow morning, when you will go home again—under escort! I will send you home with two prefects to see that you really get there, this time. Gayner and another prefect shall take you home to-morrow. Meantime—the detention-room for you, my boy! Not another word, but come!"

Dave, who had been in possession of the vital packet of papers in the last hour or so, desperately longed now to get them out of his breast-pocket and pass them to Jack or one of the others. But—it was not to be done.

The headmaster was standing between Dave and his pals, waving him to go before him out of the study.

So, five minutes later, Grangemoor's expelled scholar of yesterday was under lock and key in the detention-room at Head's House, with the papers still upon him.

There were outside bars to the sash-window, for this place of detention belonged more properly to the past—those bad old days for boys and girls alike, at even some of the best schools.

As Dave realised, the headmaster would never have dreamed of making use of such a prison-like chamber, only he was at his wits' ends to know what else to do with such a difficult "case."

Dave stood at the barred

window, taking a peep through the bars. This being Head's House, the precincts were of a quiet and dignified character. No scholars played games anywhere close at hand. Velvet lawns, flowerbeds, flagged paths and some lovely old stone-walling—these were the surroundings of Head's House.

But some ornamental gates of iron scroll-work, offered communication between such a strictly private part and places like the games-field, the tennis-courts, and other favourite haunts of boys.

Most certainly there would have been swarms of fellows taking their look-through the closed iron-gates, since the detention-room window could be seen from there; but, as Dave guessed, the Head had sent out word that boys were to keep away.

It meant that Dave, from the barred window, had a narrow view beyond those iron gates which just took in a portion of the main drive leading up from the main entrance. And so, if—if a certain car, recognisable by him as being the one driven by Mr. Gordon, should turn up, it would not flash by unseen by him.

But would Ralph Gayner's guardian turn up, by chance, this evening—would he?

"These iron bars. Dave was thinking how soon he would prove what could be done with them, by him, if—if suddenly he should see that particular car purring towards Challenor's House.

The situation had become more critical than ever, for the reason that he now had the papers upon him again. The Head had talked, just now, of sending him home in the morning, under escort. There were to be two prefects—one of



The Headmaster of Grangemoor stepped sharply backwards, staring in utter amazement. Then his voice rose angrily. "A boy—a young tramp—hiding in the study cupboard!" Jack Linton and his chums looked on aghast. Would the Head recognise who the boy really was?

them Ralph Gayner! That fellow! And what if Percy Denver should be the other prefect picked upon? Gayner might, even be left to choose who should be the other "gauler," in which case he might choose Denver.

Dave could imagine how far he would travel with those two prefects before they set about him to see if he had the papers upon him.

But, if it took him half the night, he would contrive somehow to get rid of the papers, thus outwitting those two cads again. The detention-room itself must provide a hiding-place for the vital documents, if—if by the school's bedtime there had come no chance of producing them before the eyes of Gayner's guardian.

Not yet—not whilst the light out of doors lasted, was Dave going to turn away from this barred window, to cast about for a hiding-place for the papers. At any moment the car he longed to see might turn up—it *might* do so. And then—

Hark! A car coming now.

In his eagerness, Dave set his face closer than ever to the window-glass behind the bars. The upper sash was down a few inches, and so he had heard the whine of the arriving car as it turned in at the main gateway.

But in a moment or so Dave glimpsed the car, and it was only his house master's after all.

Dave was not one to give way easily to despair, but he was bound to realise that as soon as the evening light waned, there would be a big risk of Mr. Gordon's turning up after all—and Dave himself none the wiser. The school had many visitors who came by car.

Meantime, Mr. Challenor was back. "So, now, Jack and the others are being dealt with . . ."

Dave sighed to himself after murmuring that thought. How they had stood by him—those four pals of his! Many a time had they "jollied" him about his doing and risking so much for the sake of Hetty Morland. But at heart those good chums of his had been every bit as anxious as he that she, in the end, should find a better life than had been hers up till now.

Dave Undismayed

IT was after dark when a fine car drew up outside the door of Challenor's House.

Ralph Gayner and Percy Denver, alone together in the former's study, at once ended some conversation and rose from easy chairs.

Gayner stepped to the window and, holding a curtain aside, peered out.

"Yes, that's my guardian," he confirmed excitedly. "I can tell by the car."

"Good!" Denver grinned. "Then I'll beat it. Best of luck, old man. Get shot of him as soon as you can, and you'll be all right!"

There was a nod from Gayner implying that that was the idea; but he seemed to be too uneasy to make any vocal response. As his fellow-prefect went out, he could hear Mr. Gordon coming up the old stairway—unattended. "Oh, I know my way, thank you!" had been the cordial remark to the maid who had admitted him.

Gayner heaved for breath, and a hand went up to the crown of his head, where a pulse seemed to be beating. Dave Cardew, no farther off than Head's House; Hetty herself most likely hanging about outside—and here was his guardian.

"Ah, Ralph, there you are then! How are you, my boy!"

"Glad to see you, sir! I got your telegram, of course," the conscience-stricken senior said, with enforced blitheness. "But I had almost given you up."

"I was late in getting away from Exeter,

Ralph; and now—I mustn't stop long. It can only be a few minutes, my boy."

"Oh, shame," the prefect lied his regret. "Er—I was even hoping that perhaps you'd be staying the night in the district, so I could see you again in the morning."

"Not this time, Ralph," said his courtly guardian, sinking down into an offered armchair. "Oh, and there is really no purpose in the visit—except to look in, so to speak, in passing, and hear how you are getting on. I am not your father, Ralph, but I do feel a father's pride in thinking how well you have repaid all my interest in you, deserved the money I have lavished—"

"You—you have been awfully generous, sir, I know!"

"Yes, well, Ralph," and Mr. Gordon, resting his silvered head against the back of the armchair, regarded his protégé with reflective eyes. "I have had every reason to be generous, my boy. There is no one in the world belonging to me, actually. And you, Ralph—you know all about the claim you had upon me when you came into my lonely life; the only child of—"

"Er—yes, sir; I—I often think about all that."

Mr. Gordon, who had been going to light a pipe, suddenly let his hands fall idle as a musing fit took him.

"Ah," he murmured, with a far-away look in his eyes, "so do I, Ralph—often."

At that moment, in the detention-room of Head's House, Dave Cardew was desperately, frantically, trying to force one of the iron bars from the window.

He had wrenched off the leg of a small table as being something that might serve his urgent purpose. Now he was wielding the stout table-leg with all the strength of his well-built, athletic frame.

"Come out!" he gritted through clenched teeth, as he prised and jerked and levered.

One bar was loose in its lower socket and the next bar to it was bent. But freedom was not yet his—not nearly—and Mr. Gordon had turned up—might be staying for only a few minutes.

The car, just now—glimpsed for only an instant, and that in the darkness; but Dave, after all, had known it as the anxiously awaited car. Something about the headlamps—their position and their size.

Pausing now, to see what further progress he had made, Dave found the bar much looser. Determination was giving him the sense of having a giant's strength, and suddenly he decided to discard the wooden implement and try to do the rest Samson-like.

So, for a few moments, he had hold of the lower part of the loosened bar, wrenching and straining for all he was worth. The raised window-sash was inclined to slide downwards, most exasperatingly, the cord being broken. It dropped a few inches once more, and he flung it up so impatiently that the glass broke.

Then he renewed his attack upon the bar, and it once came at last, from its lower socket in the stonework.

He drew it right away, and what with this bar being removed and one next to it being bent, he had space that would let him through.

Quickly mounting to a kneeling position on the inner sill, he found that he could just manage to squeeze his way to freedom.

A final writhe and he was through, jumping down from the outer sill to start his dash to Challenor's House.

But he was only half-way to his own school-house when he had to traverse an asphalted courtyard that received the light from a porch-lamp. He watched that doorway anxiously as he dashed by it, knowing that anyone coming out would recognise him instantly by the old clothes he wore.

And at that very instant, as ill-luck would have it, the headmaster himself came out.

It may have been for a couple of moments that the great man of Grangemoor stood utterly astounded. But Dave was only just round a corner when he heard a voice bellowing:

"Hi, stop him! Stop him, one of you!"

Nor did that urgent appeal go unheard.

Even as Dave turned another corner he saw several boyish figures streaming excitedly from a doorway. Whipping about, he rushed in a different direction, only to find himself heading for another batch of shadowy shapes; so that it seemed to him whichever way he might run now, in the end, he must be caught.

"WELL, Ralph my boy, I think I will be off now."

"Must you go so soon, sir?"

"I must, Ralph. I wired that I would be home to-night, and it's a long run from here."

"I'll see you down to the door, sir."

"Do!" Mr. Gordon responded, with one of those affectionate smiles which, if he had only known it, were wasted upon his "ward."

"That was a strange commotion we heard just now, Ralph; but I must say this is wonderful orderliness and quietude for a schoolhouse," the visitor commented, as he and the prefect went downstairs. "A time, perhaps, for prep—eh?"

"That's right, sir," was the smooth response.

Gayner was finding it no effort, now, to be at ease. That "strange commotion," a few minutes since, had secretly scared him, for it had sounded to him as if it might have some connection with Dave Cardew. But if it had, then it had been a bit of fresh excitement which had passed off without affecting Challenor's House.

"Good-night then, my boy. I am sorry not to have seen your house master. You will explain how I was pressed for time, and remember me to him?"

"I will, sir, and good-night!" For once, there was a genuine heartiness in Gayner's voice. "Hope you have a safe journey."

He saw his guardian getting into the car. It was to be all right now Mr. Gordon was going—and Dave Cardew had not managed to meet him after all!

Slam went a door serving the driver's seat, and then a foot depressed the starter-stud, causing the high-powered engine to throb to life. Gayner stood between the car and the porch, letting Mr. Gordon have a last sight of a serene, smiling face.

Oh, but what luck it was, the prefect was exulting. He was sure that Dave had actually had the nerve to break out of the detention-room, away yonder in Head's House; but they had caught him—collared him and taken him back. Must have done so, for the commotion to have died down as it had.

Mr. Gordon, having settled himself comfortably at the wheel, waved and cried a final, "Bye, my boy!" and then he sent the car gliding smoothly away.

A fine, dry night—and no mist. A careful driver, he ran only slowly down to the main gateway, but he was promising himself an enjoyable forty-five-an-hour along the many miles of quiet highway which he had to cover.

"Sir!" A boyish voice spoke suddenly from

behind him—very gently, so as not to startle him too much at the wheel. "Don't look round, sir, until you have stopped."

"Eh, what?" gasped Mr. Gordon; and, having just passed out by the school's gateway, he drew to the side of the road and stopped the car.

"Bless my soul!"

Slowing round to see who was the unauthorised passenger he had on board, he was amazed to see a boy of school age, roughly dressed, but with a very attractive, refined face.

"But," cried Mr. Gordon, "who are you then?"

"Dave Cardew, sir—a Grangemoor scholar, really, but at present I am—not on the register."

"I—I don't understand."

"No, sir, you couldn't be expected to at present. But if you would be kind enough to get out, just here, and go into things with me, I'd be very grateful."

"Well, this is most unusual!"

But Dave, as he unlatched a door for himself, could feel sure that Mr. Gordon was going to alight. Already the gentleman was switching low the headlamps; and Dave, as he jumped out, felt inclined to laugh. In spite of that detention-room; in spite of that hue and cry just now—he had obtained his encounter with Mr. Gordon.

Even to serious-natured Dave, it seemed too funny for words the way he had dodged the pursuit at the last moment, by actually diving unseen into Mr. Gordon's own car, where it stood empty and waiting at the porch of Challenor's House.

It was taking Mr. Gordon a second or so to get down from his car, and Dave, whilst waiting, heard a hesitant footstep close behind him. He turned round, and there, to his great joy, was Hetty Morland.

MATTERS are rapidly approaching a climax in this enthralling story. No reader must miss the splendid concluding chapters which will appear in next Tuesday's **SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**, and which tell of Dave's final efforts on behalf of Hetty Morland.



DESIGN FOR
SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN
SECRET SOCIETY BADGE

Full instructions for making are
in your Editor's Chat—page 385.

The Society's Code—

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z