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TWO FINE COMPLETE TALES, TWO MAGNIFICENT SERIALS,
CROSS WORD PUZZLE, ETC., ETC.

The Schoolgirl's Own 2^d



**"TAKE YOUR LAST
LOOK AT MORCOVE!"**
A dramatic incident in this
week's long complete tale of
Betty Barton & Co.

A Long Complete Tale of the Most Popular Schoolgirls in the World.



THE MYSTERY-SHIP OF MORCOVE!

By MARJORIE STANTON.

Fate plays a strange trick on Betty Barton & Co., of Morcove School, and they find themselves involved in a great mystery—and an adventure!

Naomer's Little Slip.

"PAULA darling, have you seen Naomer?" Paula Linton asked the question as she came boisterously into Study 12 at Morcove School.

Study 12 was not Paula's study; but she was to be seen lolling in the best armchair with all the freedom of that great friendship which existed between her, the duffer of the Fourth Form, and Betty Barton and Polly Linton.

"Seen Naomer? What a question to ask, Polly deah!" And Paula roused up with an air of being sorely distressed. "When you know I spend my life twying to escape fwom that young wascal!"

"Oho!" chuckled Polly. "That sounds as if just recently you have been nearly caught in another rumpus!"

Paula got up as if to embark upon a grave explanation. But she sat down again—overcome.

"Yes, wather!" she sighed. "Five minutes ago. Wound in the study I share with those geals. Fearful wumpus!"

"Between Naomer and Dolores?"

"Would it be between Naomer and anyone else, Polly?"

"Well, never mind. Cheer up! This isn't telling me where Naomer is at the moment, and I want her."

"Sit down, Polly deah!" Paula drawled, languidly waving her chum to a chair.

Just then the door opened, and Betty Barton, the Form captain, came in.

"Then she is not here—Naomer?" commented Betty, seeing only Polly and Paula. "Well, the moment we do find her, girls, we must repeat that warning. If she lets her tongue run away with her—"

"Bai Jove, now I wealise what you are dwiving at, geals!" came from the depths of the armchair. "Naomer is—"

"Allo, present! I is here!" came the saucy cry from the girl in question as she suddenly slipped into the room. "Ooo, and I have something to tell you, yes! Just now I have ze quarrel with Dolores in my study. Well, I smack her face—"

"Well, look here—this is the point, Naomer darling!" Polly said impressively. "Betty and I want to warn you once again that you must not—"

"Must not give Dolores the smack on ze cheek?" Betty and Polly laughed.

"You must not, Naomer, let anything slip out

about—you know what!" said Betty. "People who get excited are the very ones to blurt out what they want to keep back."

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Twy, twy to contwol yourself!"

"I not try, no! I keep ze end up, yes! Always I shall! Ees it not what you teach me at Morcove? Well, then—"

"But you won't, Naomer, will you, let out a word to Dolores about how we listened-in the other night, and got a part of the wireless message from San Fernando that Madame Florissa was receiving? If you do—"

"You mean I must not spik about how you take down ze message in ze code, and when you work it out—"

"By means of the key to the code that Betty got hold of—"

"Yes, ezackly!" nodded Naomer. "The message, when you work him out, is in Spanish. You ask me to put him into ze English, and I do eet. And eet say—"

"Sh!"

With this sharp caution, Naomer subdued her voice.

"Eet say," she whispered dramatically, "there will be a green light at sea on ze firteen or ze first fine night after. Eet say also—"

"Yes, but don't keep on saying what it said, dear," Betty counselled, with a smile. "You want to forget it. Else you will blurt it out to Dolores, and then Dolores will rush and tell her mother, and then—"

"Then, Naomer, we shan't be able to follow up the mystery," said Polly softly. "For a mystery it is."

"Yes, wather!" murmured Paula. "It is such a sewious business that, weally, I wather fancy the time is wibe for us to tell the headmistress."

But Polly and Betty shook their heads.

"Not yet, Paula," said the Form captain. "We will act in this case as we have always acted in the past. It is always a mistake to run to anybody with a tale that you only half know."

"You mean, we wait until the firteen of ze month, and then see what happen?" Naomer whispered eagerly. "All right. And you need not fear I say a word!"

"So long as you don't blurt it out when—"

"Ah, bah, you kip on about it!" Naomer exclaimed at Polly. "Eet will be all right! Well, I go now—"

"Where?" Betty and Polly asked anxiously.

"Where is Dolores?"

"She go out," Naomer enlightened them; and the girls looked relieved.

"Being a half-holiday, I suppose Dolores has lost no time in putting on her things and going across to her mother's hungalow on the head-land," Polly remarked to Betty and Paula, whilst Naomer whisked out of the room.

"All the better—"

"Yes, wather!" Paula agreed heartily. "We are safe from anoath wampus for the present, geals. It is only two o'clock, and Dolores is certain to remain at the bungalow wight on until the evening."

But this gratified feeling would have changed to sudden alarm had those three girls known that Naomer, at this moment, was re-entering the study, which was also Dolores', to find that girl still in evidence.

"I thought you were to go out?" Naomer remarked distantly.

"Well, I go out in a meenit," was the curt reply. Dolores Florissa had rather the same foreign sort of broken English that was Naomer's. "But eef I go out, or eef I stay here, what is dat to you?"

"Oh, nothing!" shrugged Naomer, at the same time turning things about on the table in quest of a book. "Except—"

"Except what?"

"The less I see of you, ze better I like it, yes!"

"Do you want anoath quarrel?"

"I not mind!" Naomer shrugged again.

"Another quarrel, and I give you another smack on ze face. That is all."

"Perhaps I shall smack of your face next time!"

"Perhaps!"

They would have been at it again, the pair of them, for a certainty, only Dolores had one important reason for keeping her temper. She was dressed for going out, and she was a girl who, when dressed, was very proud of her appearance.

And indeed she had some excuse for being proud. She was very beautiful, in a foreign way, and her clothes were of the most expensive kind. Her mother, Madame Florissa, was known to be tremendously wealthy.

For the present, then, this high-stepping, haughty young thing felt it would be good enough to treat Naomer to a mere slighting look as she minced towards the study door.

Unfortunately, however, Naomer chose to answer the look by putting out her tongue-tip.

Dolores stood still. Her eyes glittered.

"You forget who I am, you monkey-face!"

"I forget who you are?" laughed Naomer. "Oh, no, no, you not let me forget! All ze day you walk about in front of me, like so!" And she imitated the other girl's swaggering air. "To remind me that your father is president of San Fernando at one time!"

"Silence!" Dolores commanded, stamping a foot. "You not know my father!"

"I not want to know him. I know your mother, dat is good enough. I know you. Bah, I know more than you theenk, perhaps," Naomer said rashly.

Then Dolores came back a step.

"How you mean, you know more than I theenk?" she asked quiveringly.

But now Naomer remembered that she had to be careful. She closed her lips and smiled and shook her head—the very thing, of course, to imply that she could say a lot if she chose to!

"What you know?" Dolores asked, quivering with excitement.

"I not tell you—"

"I not go from here until you do tell me!"

"Ver' well; then you will stay a long time. All the half-holiday, yes!"

Next moment a very fury of passion broke loose in Dolores.

She was deathly pale, as if a terrible suspense of alarm had seized her. She suddenly caught hold of Naomer—a rather smaller girl—and shook her.

"Tell me, tell me—you shall tell me!" Dolores hissed furiously.

"No, I not tell you!"

"Bah! You shall tell me, you!" Dolores panted through her clenched teeth. "Eef not, I shake you to bits, yes!"

Naomer writhed to tear herself free. She also was in a blazing passion now.

"You let me go, queek, queek!"

"You shall tell me—come on!" panted back Dolores. She gave the struggling girl another furious shaking. "What you know? I command you to spik it out!"

"You command me—you! I am a queen!"

"Bah! Am I not the daughter of Senor Don Florissa, of San Fernando? I theenk you and your friends have played ze spy!" Dolores said wildly. "Come on, then, for I must know!"

"And I say I not tell you! No, no—ah, eef you hurt me!" Naomer said breathlessly, for Dolores looked like striking her with one hand, whilst gripping her with the other. "Let me go!"

"When you have told me! Queek, then—queek!"

"No!"

So Naomer answered, spirited girl that she was, and in another instant Dolores would surely have struck the girl queen across the face. But suddenly the door burst open, and several girls surged into the room.

"What's this! Dolores, stop!" Betty almost shouted. "Oh—"

"Bai Jove—"

"Dolores," Polly cried sternly, "you dare!"

Then the South American girl, drawing a deep breath as she controlled herself, let go of Naomer and stood away from her.

"What started the quarrel this time?" Betty asked, appeasing.

"Nothing," Naomer said, shaking herself to rights. "I only say I not tell her what I know, that is all!"

"What!" gasped Betty and Polly, turning with dismay to each other. "Oh—"

"My gwacious! The vevy thing, Naomer—"

"Yes!" Dolores broke in, holding herself very erect before the three girls. "As you say, the very thing to let me know that you—all you girls who are so friendly—you have been playing ze spy on me!"

"And why should we spy on you?" Polly retorted blandly.

Dolores, however, was not to be caught. She was the very soul of cunning. She gave one of her scornful shrugs.

"Why should you spy on me! For no reason that I know, except that you not like me, and you try to—try to make ze mischief against me! Oh, well"—and she shrugged again—"you can spy! You English—bah!"

And, snapping her fingers close to Betty's nose,

she strode from the room, closing the door behind her—slam!

Their Secret.

DOLORES swung off along the Fourth Form corridor in her insolently proud manner, and passed down through the schoolhouse out into the open air.

North Devon was having a bad spring this year. The girls were complaining of the bad weather that had made havoc of many sports fixtures.

Even so, Dolores found a good many other girls already off out-of-doors, those that were going any distance carrying mackintoshes over their arms.

From the school-gates Dolores took a carriage that soon left her quite alone. For she was bound for her mother's lonely bungalow, on one of the bold headlands about a mile from the school.

No need to say how Dolores scowled to herself as she fared along in the face of the wild west wind. She who hated all things British might be relied upon to hate its climate!

"Ah, how I am weary of all this, my mother!" she said to that lady, in Spanish, the moment they were together at the bungalow. "If only this were the thirteenth of the month!"

"Patience, Dolores!"

"Ah, yes," the girl exclaimed, with a softness of speech that did not make the words pleasant, "we who have been patient for so long, we must be always patient, no doubt!"

Madame Florissa looked at the daughter, as if sorry to hear her grumbling.

"How can you, my daughter," the handsome lady said sadly, "when you know all that is being done! Such a little while now, and then—at least, you will be away from this country that you so dislike."

"Dislike? I hate and detest it—I despise it!" Dolores said passionately. "At the school, because I am not of this country, they would make me feel I am nothing! Only I let them know that I am a great deal better than any one of them—even their trumpy queen from Africa—bah!"

"The daughter of Don Florissa, who in a little while will have all San Fernando under his rule again—if all goes well, Dolores."

"Yes, if!" grimaced the girl.

Her mother looked pained again.

"You are in a bad mood to-day, Dolores. Why is that? Do not come here to vex me, for I have sufficient to try me as it is. The wireless still does not work as it should do, and that is an annoyance. Every night now your father is coding messages to me. I just managed to get the message last night; but I dread another breakdown, and my having to use the school wireless again."

She asked anxiously:

"They have never found out at the school, Dolores, that you let me in that night to listen-in on their valve set?"

Dolores pouted her full red lips.

"No, the mistresses have found out nothing, if that is what you mean. But I am not so sure that—"

"That what?" exclaimed the mother, in sudden sharp alarm.

"Well, then," Dolores said, speaking softer than ever, "it is possible that some of the girls have suspected how you were in the school that night. Friends of Naomer Nakara, they know!"

"They know what?"

"I cannot find out," Dolores answered sullenly.

"But Naomer herself let out a few words that convinced me; there is something they know."

"About us?" Madame Florissa said excitedly. "You do not mean, my daughter, that—that perhaps they suspect the reason for my being here in this place? The cave—they do not suspect the use we are putting it to?"

"It is impossible, surely, that they know as much as that," the girl answered, shrugging. "But I do feel that they mistrust us—me, at the school, and you who are living in this lonely dwelling."

"Dolores," the mother gasped out, looking utterly panic-stricken, "but this is terrible! If it is like this, then—oh, how much more careful we must be!"



A SUSPICIOUS SECRET! "I would like to know what is in here," Tess Trelawney commented, weighing the bag in her hands. At that moment Madame Florissa came dashing into the cave. "How dare you?" she cried. "Put that bag down instantly!"

"I cannot be more careful than I have been, my mother!"

There was a pause, with Madame Florissa pacing to and fro, to and fro in a wrought-up way. The mother and daughter were alone together in the front sitting-room of the bungalow.

"Dolores, attend to me!" the mother suddenly exclaimed, in great agitation. "As you say, it is surely impossible that the girls at the school have guessed the secret. But the mere idea of their having found out enough to make them feel curious is alarming."

She spoke on in a tense undertone:

"Listen then, Dolores! After this, you must do all you can to find out how much they do know. Throw all the dust in their eyes that you can. And if that does not suffice, if—if they find out—"

"What then?"

"We must set a trap for them—yes!" madame

said, with a steely look in her eyes. "What, are we to have all our work undone by those girls! Rather than suffer such a bitter disaster, I will go to any lengths! Your father, Dolores, would approve. And so I say this—and I mean it!—the moment you have evidence that those girls know enough to be a menace to us, a trap must be laid!"

"Good, I shall enjoy that!" Dolores said. "If I could think that in the end those girls will be made to suffer—"

"And they may be—in the end!" muttered Madame Florissa, her eyes still glinting. "Even if it comes to taking them away with us in the boat, we are going to prevent their upsetting the plot! There will be room for them on board, no question about that."

"Even though there is already one prisoner!" Dolores rejoined, with a cruel sort of smile. "My mother, I wonder how that prisoner is enjoying the voyage?"

"Ah, I wonder!" the mother answered, with the same sort of malignant smile. "The poor Carlotta! When you complain about your present style of life, Dolores, ask yourself how you would like to change places with Carlotta!"

"That girl!" muttered Dolores, with intense hatred in her looks. "I was at school with her in San Fernando, and we were no friends—no! How I long to see her, a helpless captive on board our vessel, and— But my mother, look! Here comes Marcilla, running to tell us that something has happened, surely!"

The girl had broken off in a startled way, and now, as Madame Florissa glanced out of the window and saw the old woman servant running rapidly towards the bungalow, she took fresh alarm.

"What now?" was the angry exclamation with which the lady ran out to the porch to meet Marcilla. "Well—well?" she questioned impatiently, as the woman reached the house in an utterly breathless state. "Well, Marcilla?"

"Oh, my lady," panted the woman in Spanish, "it is a calamity!"

"What is? Don't stand there!"

"But I have run every step of the way up from the shore!" gasped out Marcilla, with a hand to her heart. "The cave—it is a calamity for us! The gates that we have always kept fastened—"

"Well, what? They are open? Impossible!"

"They are smashed open!" was Marcilla's dramatic answer. "Since you were down there this morning, there has been a very rough sea, a high tide—"

"Yes, I know. The tide was reaching to the entrance to the cave when I came away."

"The waves have floated in some bits of drift-wood—oh, an enormous piece, from a ship," Marcilla explained, holding her hands wide apart. "The block of wood must have been dashed against the gates again and again, and so they broke their fastenings!"

"Gracious!" was the English equivalent of Madame Florissa's ejaculation of dismay. "Dolores, come quickly! We must see to this!"

"All right, mother!"

And next moment the pair of them were speeding towards a wicket-gate that would let them out on to the open grassland of the headland. There was a way down to the shore through a deep ravine hard by the bungalow, and for this the mother and daughter sped as fast as they could go.

"The gates smashed!" lamented Madame Florissa, in a tone of utter dismay. "The cave left open for anyone to wander into!"

"And it is a half-holiday at the school," Dolores remembered, no less dismayedly. "There will be some of the girls roaming along the shore, it is certain!"

"Ah, a calamity indeed!" panted the mother, still rushing as fast as possible down the ravine path to the shore. "When that cave holds—you know, Dolores!"

"English gold!"

"Bullion—yes!" muttered the wife of Senor Don Florissa. "A quarter of a million of money in that cave, and it is open, Marcilla says! It is free for anyone to wander into! Oh, Dolores, faster—faster! And supposing Marcilla had not found out!"

"We may be in time," answered Dolores. "But we cannot be too quick, when we know what those girls are for finding out things!"

Caught in the Cave.

"H—ALLO, what has happened here?"

"Good gracious, Tess—"

"Quite a smash, isn't it, Madge?"

Tess Treilawney and Madge Minden gave voice to their sudden surprise as they stood abruptly halted outside one of the caverns that abounded along the shores of Morcove.

Their eyes saw a state of things greatly changed from when they were last this way. The cave in front of them was the one that they knew to be private, as it was part of the bungalow owner's property. Gates had been put up when the cave was converted into a boathouse, and now those gates were not merely wide open, but smashed apart.

"Phew!" whistled Tess. "How will Madame Florissa like this? You see what has happened, Madge? At high tide, an hour or so ago, that huge balk of timber must have been floated in this way!"

"And the waves dashed it so violently against the locked gates that something had to go," nodded Madge. "What's more, the sea has been running into the cave for once, Tess!"

"No mistake about that," agreed the girl artist of the Fourth Form. "Madge, I think, before I settle down to do my bit of sketching, we had better do something about this."

So saying, Tess stepped past the battered-in gates and had the arching walls of the gloomy cavern to right and left of her.

Madge followed, with the same innocent intention that was her chum's. They would not have dreamed of flouting the privacy of the cave, only it was apparent that this wrecking of the gates had happened just recently, and they naturally wanted to take one glance around inside before going off to report the matter to Madame Florissa.

"We can tell her that the boat is still all right, anyhow," Tess remarked, her voice sounding very hollow in the gloomy cavern. "The high tide reached it, but did not float it off its planks. I say, though"—with a sudden astounded stare—"just look, Madge!"

Madge Minden was not a girl to get easily excited. She was the placid one in the Study 12 coterie. But she would have been a peculiar girl indeed not to look quite as amazed as her chum, whose right hand was pointing excitedly to the sandy floor of the cave.

To and fro the turmoil of foamy waters must

have surged during the last high tide, with the result that the sand had been washed this way and that. And now, to the girls' amazement, they saw that something had been exposed to view which had surely been buried in the sand hitherto.

"Strange—most extraordinary!" exclaimed Tess, peering closer, for the cavern was very dark, the day being so gloomy. "It is a bag of something, Madge. But what?"

"Come away, dear," advised that girl, regaining her composure. "We must not interfere. We will go up to the bungalow, and—"

"Yes, Madge, but do think a moment! Why on earth should madame, or anyone else, bury things in the sand in this cave? You are not forgetting there has been a lot of mystery about the mother of Dolores Florissa! I say, I am going to—"

"Oh, Tess, be careful what you do! After all, perhaps it is only a bag of sand or stones, once used for ballasting the pleasure boat."

"Why shouldn't I see?" Tess protested, not unreasonably. "Here goes, anyhow!"

And next instant she had handed her strapped-up sketching materials to Madge to hold, and was stooping to lift the mysterious bag right out of the sand.

"It isn't ballast, Madge! Surely not, because it feels like—like metal done up in canvas!"

"A lot of old iron, then—same thing, dear!"

"No, Madge! Look, this isn't a bit of common sacking. See how carefully it has been sewn up at the end! Heavy stuff inside, whatever it is!" Tess commented, weighing it in her two hands. "And I would just like to know what—"

Abruptly she broke off there, and almost dropped the weighty bag, as someone came dashing into the cave, seething with excitement.

It was Madame Florissa! And behind that lady was her daughter.

"You—how dare you!" madame blazed out, and she made a rush at Tess as if to strike her. "Oh, the impudence! Put that down—put it down, this instant!"

"Pardon me," said Tess, obediently setting down the strange bag, "but you have no right to be angry."

"What! Not angry?"

"No. We found the gates smashed in after the high tide, and we were coming to let you know. Before doing so—"

"Ah, a lie, all of it!" stormed Madame Florissa furiously. "You have been prying. You are always prying! It is as my daughter tells me—you girls interfere! Be gone this instant, you hear me!"

"All right," Tess could not help answering rather cheekily. "But if you were—if you were like other people, surely you would not see any need to make a fuss!"

She added rather disgustedly, as she and Madge both turned to withdraw from the cave:

"The people who had the bungalow originally were always on good terms with us Morcovians. But you—you don't seem to like us."

"I do not wish you to trespass!"

"Oh, it is worse than that; you don't like us to come within a mile of the cave!" Madge now spoke up, with a dignified calmness. "The other day you would have had us turned back when we were simply wandering along the shore."

"As we have every right to do!" added Tess.

By now Madame Florissa was biting a lip, in regret at the agitation she had betrayed. Not for

the first time since she came to the bungalow, she suddenly became all sweet smiles.

"There, I am very sorry I lose my temper!" she apologised, with a bland gesture. "I come here in alarm, because my servant has told me about the gates. I ask you to forgive me my anger, will you?"

"If you will believe that we did not come in here to pry," Tess answered coolly. "I was certainly wondering what could be in that bag. It had been buried in the sand, and when it caught my eye—"

"Oh, the bag! That is nothing—nothing!" And madame burst out laughing. "It is—how you call it in your language?—for to make the boat not capsizes!"

"Ballast?"

"Yes, yes, so! Ballast, yes!" the lady declared, with the most vehement nods—too vehement for Tess and Madge. However, they were not going to appear sceptical. Without another word, they made a polite departure, conscious of being watched by the mother and daughter.

Nor did Dolores or her mother take their eyes off the two girls until the latter had passed out of sight.

Then, with a sweep of the hand across her forehead, Madame Florissa spoke tensely:

"What could be worse, Dolores? Those two girls in here, and the sea had even uncovered one of the bags of bullion! This bag—that girl had it in her hands!"

She whispered on, with unabated anxiety:

"Did they believe what I told them, I wonder? Dolores, I begin to feel that all will go wrong, simply because of those girls at the school! Imagine, if they had found out that this was gold—solid gold!"

"But what can we do?" Dolores questioned helplessly.

"Do?" Her mother dropped the canvas-bound block of bullion gold to the soft ground. "One thing we must do at once is to make the cave secure again. Dolores, run—run back to the bungalow and bring tools; bring a padlock and chain—anything!"

Waiting and Watching.

IN a flash Dolores was off and away. Tess and Madge saw her, whilst they themselves were continuing along the shore. Up the steep, zig-zag path in the combe the South American girl hurried, and by the time she came back the two other girls were finding seats for themselves amongst the boulders on the shore.

Tess and Madge still felt there had been good excuse for entering the cave just now; but they would not have dreamed of trying to spy, even though matters were so very mysterious.

In her own quick way, Tess was soon covering her sketch-block with a very true impression of the seashore on this threatening afternoon. The work absorbed her, and Madge could always remain lost in thought, and for a little while it was very quiet for the pair of them.

Then suddenly there was a tell-tale: "Coo-ee, girls!" and they saw Betty and Polly sauntering towards them along the shore from the direction of the school.

The newcomers had to go by the cave, and, of course, they were surprised to see what was going on there. But they did not pause to give inquisitive stares.



IF THEY BUT KNEW! The girls at the window gazed out to where they could see the white-painted vessel looking entrancingly beautiful amidst the blue of the sea. "How lovely!" said Polly. "It must be a millionaire's yacht!"

"Queer business at the cave, isn't there?" Polly said to Tess and Madge, when all four girls had come together amongst the rocks.

Then Tess and Madge related their recent experience, and Betty and Polly listened in round-eyed amazement.

"And madame was angry, was she?" questioned Betty, at the finish.

"Angry!" Tess rinsed a brush and wiped it dry, now that her sketch was finished. "She looked as if she could slaughter us both!"

"But, my word, just fancy!" Polly said astoundedly. "A bag of something that had been buried in the sand!"

"You remember, girls," Betty remarked gravely, "we guessed that something was being stored there. They have used a wire rope for lowering things down the face of the cliff from the bungalow. You and I, Polly, saw a shovel that was very shiny after being used for digging in the sand. But what, then, are they hiding? What can it be?"

"Give it up!" grimaced Polly. "Only, doesn't it look as if our own duffer of a Paula was pretty right for once? She suggested smuggling. Well—"

"Smuggling it is, of a kind; but not the ordinary smuggling of goods, to cheat the customs, surely!" Betty exclaimed.

"Why should madame be doing that?" agreed Madge. "She is very rich—no question about that."

"Then what is the game?" Polly burst out desperately. "What can it be that is being stored in that cave, awaiting the arrival of a ship on

the thirteenth of this month? Whose ship is it? Girls, we must—oh, we must find out! I think we have a right to do so!"

"So do I," nodded Betty. "If all is fair and square, then why such secrecy? It must be an unlawful thing they are doing."

"Only, we don't know enough to prove it!" deplored Tess, shutting up her paint-box.

"At present—no," said Betty. "But wait till the thirteenth, and then—"

"Then what?" was Polly's rather despondent rejoinder. "The ship will come close to the coast at night, it is certain. They will send a boat ashore under cover of darkness, and we shall be in bed!"

"Oh, no," smiled Betty. "When the vessel is close in enough it is going to show a green light. We shall be out of bed, watching for that green light. When we see it—well, there is such a thing as slipping along to tell Miss Redgrave at last."

"Yes, it will be time to do that then," Polly agreed, with an emphatic nod. "And perhaps—oh"—with a soft clap of the hands—"perhaps we shall be allowed to dress and go out with a proper escort. Spiffing!"

"Meantime, it is a question of waiting for the appointed night," said Betty. "The night of the thirteenth—and a green light at sea!"

But cruelly disappointed were Betty & Co. to be when the fateful night had come.

The thirteenth of the month—at last; at last it was here, after what had been a further week of raging impatience for the mystified girls. Calm and clear was the night, so that they had every hope of seeing the green light as they watched, turn by turn, from the dormitory window.

A thing that went to prove that this particular night was one of vital interest to the Florissas was the fact that Dolores Florissa had asked permission to sleep at the bungalow.

She had brought a written request from her mother, and, of course, permission had been readily granted. When Betty & Co. heard about this they knew what to think.

The girls carried on the night-long watch without the least difficulty. Two by two, six of the Study 12 coterie had turns at keeping the lookout.

No sooner were the girls in general asleep than Betty and Polly were at one of the windows—watching! Right on until midnight they kept up the anxious vigil, and not a light did they see.

Their relief came at twelve o'clock, when Madge and Tess took a turn. And at two in the morning those girls were whispering disappointedly to two others who were just coming "on duty":

"Nothing!"

Helen Craig and Paula Creel, they watched just as eagerly until four in the morning. Nothing still! And now it was getting light, and the all-night vigil could only be abandoned, with this bitterly disappointing result—nothing!

Dejectedly Helen and Paula returned to their beds, and were soon fast asleep. Needless to say, they had not roused up any of their fellow-watchers to make only such a disappointing report. Getting-up time would be quite soon enough for Betty and the other three to be told that from two in the morning until four there had still been—nothing!

So the last two watchers slept soundly, and would have been perhaps the very last to rouse up to the sound of the first bell; but suddenly

they were awakened in a more startling manner. In the self-same instant Helen and Paula each received a rousing shake of the shoulder. They opened their eyes, and in the broad light of early morning, with the dormitory still very quiet, Helen found Betty at the bedside, whilst Polly was bending over Paula.

"Get up, quick, Helen—quick!" Betty urged in a thrilling whisper. "The boat is in!"

"What!"

"Sh! Ten minutes yet before first bell," the Form captain whispered on. "So we won't wake the dormitory. But come along and see for yourself!"

"Bai Jove!" Paula was exclaiming softly at this instant, as she heard the same sort of talk from Polly. "This is bettah, bai Jove! But why was there no gween light?"

"Most likely they only got in sight of land at daylight," whispered Polly, "and so the green light business is a wash-out. It must be the boat—she is standing in so close now!"

Polly darted back to the window. A moment more, and someone came hurrying into the dormitory in a dressing-gown and slippers. It was Madge. She had run downstairs to get some field-glasses from her study.

Silently she joined Tess and the four other girls at a window that looked out to sea. The sun was up, and its brilliant rays made a white-painted vessel, some four miles out, look entrancingly beautiful amidst the blue of the sea.

Polly's turn came with the glasses, and as she gazed through them she exclaimed admiringly:

"How lovely! It looks like a millionaire's yacht!"

"An ocean-going steam yacht, yes," murmured Betty, who had already had a peep through the lenses. "She is not moving, is she?"

"No, anchored, surely," Polly answered excitedly. "Now, girls—now!"

"Bai Jove, yes, wather! At last——"

"To-night, ch?" Tess whispered. "They were too late to do anything in the night that is just past. But——"

"To-night, if the weather is right," nodded Betty.

"And it will be right; it is going to be lovely weather now," Polly predicted with joyful confidence.

They all had another turn apiece with the glasses. Then they turned away from the window, to start dressing. The first bell was ringing.

"Oh, dear, how awful it is going to be, having to wait all day for another night to come!" Polly lamented, with a vexed laugh. "They will do nothing by daylight, that is certain!"

But she was wrong there. Much was to be done—everything, in fact—before another night had come, and Betty & Co. would have been in school, missing it all, if——

Ah, if only fate had served them differently!

At Last.

THE last thing Betty & Co. did before going into school that morning was to run and get another look at the mystery vessel that had anchored off Morcove.

Still there! And there it would remain, they felt positive, throughout the day.

Dolores did not turn up for morning school. The Study 12 chums would have been very astonished if she had put in an appearance. But

Miss Redgrave was surprised, and even became a little uneasy as the morning wore on.

At "break," when a rush for out of doors was taking place, the morning being such a perfect one, the youthful mistress called Betty to her.

"Here, Betty dear, I know you won't mind," Miss Redgrave began, with all her usual niceness. "I am wondering whether Dolores Florissa is unwell, that she has not come back after her stay at the bungalow. You might run across and find out, will you, and if you are back in time for dinner, that will do."

Betty could have capered with delight.

"I shall love the jaunt," she declared gaily. "I—I suppose I can't—well, you know, Miss Redgave!—take——"

"Take half the Form along with you—I know, yes!" laughed the ever-indulgent mistress. "You may take two or three others, Betty dear, but no more, mind!"

"Polly——"

"And Paula, if you like, and Naomer!" approved Miss Redgrave. "A nice four, Betty, and please don't ask me to make it more!"

Betty scampered off to collect her three chums, and no sooner had the classes settled down again than the four overjoyed girls came rather stealthily downstairs and slipped forth into the open air.

"It is just a grand bit of luck our being sent to inquire about Dolores," Betty exclaimed heartily, as they stepped along briskly. "With that vessel now anchored within sight of the bungalow, we



THEIR FUTURE PRISON! Madame Florissa and Dolores stood at the foot of the accommodation-ladder and jeered at their helpless captives. "Pleased to see you," Dolores sneered, while her mother laughed spitefully. "Come on board!" she commanded.

can't have too many chances of keeping an eye on the Florissa pair."

"Dolores won't come back with us—mark my words!" Polly predicted, convincingly.

"And perhaps—perhaps she not come back any more!" Naomer exclaimed. "Oh, well, eef she go away in ze boat, we not break our hearts, no!"

"I wonder if that will be the end of it?" Betty said musingly.

"Well, come on!" beamed Polly, setting the pace a little faster in her usual impetuous way.

So for the next few minutes they saved their breath for rapid walking. Not another word was passed until they were out on the breezy clifflands, with the sea breaking into view in one wide sweep from east to west. Then—how their hearts leapt, and what excited gasps of surprise they emitted as they saw a small launch heading towards the shore. For that launch, they could instantly guess, had just put off from the vessel!

"Phew!" whistled Polly. "I say——"
"Landing by daylight, after all!" Betty said excitedly. "The launch is heading straight for this part of the coast—making direct for the cave!"

"Queek then—queek!" Naomer exclaimed, doing one of her excitable capers. "We creep down to the shore and watch!"

"Yes!" came from Betty unhesitatingly. "We would be doing wrong not to keep a look-out now. We'll turn back to go down the school's usual way to the shore, and then——"
"Come on!"

That was Polly, as she did a right-about-turn and strode away. After a moment she broke into a run. The others did the same.

"Miss Redgrave gave us permission to be out until dinner-time," Betty remarked, when at last they were hurrying down a zig-zag path to the beach. "If it still seems necessary to watch when we ought to be going back, one of us must run to the school and let Miss Redgrave know."

The others were in complete agreement with this, and not a word more was said about it. Instead, there came excited comments on the progress that the launch had made, now that the girls, by emerging upon the shore, could see it again.

With all the terrific speed that modern motor-launches can command, this one was cleaving its way through the waters in a direct line for the cave. The tide was high, and the four girls guessed that this had been a great inducement for the daylight landing on a strange and rocky coast.

"My goodness, we must be careful!" Polly suddenly exclaimed, stopping dead. "Supposing we are seen by the people in the boat?"

"You are right, Polly," Betty agreed uneasily. "Perhaps someone in the launch has a pair of binoculars."

"Bai Jove! Geals——"

"Careful, then!" Polly said tensely. "We mustn't be seen after this!"

And they went on with extreme caution.

Sometimes it was possible for them to crawl on all fours along the sand, with banks of seaweed screening them on the seaward side. At other times they had to snake over the damp sand, trusting to the numerous small boulders for shelter.

Then, to their great relief, the moment came when they could rush on fearlessly. For a great cliff was jutting out right ahead of them, and it hid from their gaze that part of the sea that held the launch.

And only just round the corner formed by that projecting wall of rock was Madame Florissa's private cave!

"Splendid!" chuckled Polly. "We are all right now!"

Betty met her chum's eyes, and grinned. As for Naomer, she was patting her hands together without making a sound.

"We soon know now, what eet all mean!" exclaimed the dusky one. "That Dolores and her mother—ah, bah! I always theenk them what-you-call-it? Fishy!"

"Sh!" cautioned Betty at that moment.

One behind another they came to the extremity of the projecting cliff, whence they would be able to peep round into the adjacent bay, with the cave that had been used as a store-place for—what?

The chums would never have guessed!

Polly it was who took first peep.

One cautious glance she took, and then stepped back sharply. Betty asked excitedly:

"Well?"

"It's all right; the boat is running in to the shore now. Only two people in it—a man and a woman. Madame Florissa and her daughter are waiting for them——"

"Bai Jove!"

"Outside the cave," Polly whispered on. "The old servant is there, too."

"Phew!" breathed Betty. "Then perhaps they are off now. Let me have a look."

She got upon all fours and crawled a yard or so, then stopped. Almost with her chin in the sand she peered at a scene that was as picturesque as it was dramatic. The gigantic cliff that walled in the bay, the cave as dark as the mouth of a railway tunnel, and there on the open beach in front of the cave Madame Florissa and Dolores eagerly awaiting the boat!

Face to Face.

IN the next few moments all four schoolgirls were prone upon the sand, gazing with their eyes close to the ground. Slowly now the beautiful launch rode in upon the creaming waves.

Safely the launch was run aground at last, and its occupants came ashore, caring nothing, it seemed, at having to jump down into the shallow water and wade knee-deep to dry land.

There was just a moment whilst these mysterious arrivals from a foreign part exchanged greetings with the tenant of the cliff bungalow and her daughter. Some voluble talk went on, and then suddenly Madame Florissa took them all into the cave.

Polly instantly whispered:

"Now's our chance! We can get nearer than this. Shall we?"

Her chums made answer by rising erect and sprinting towards a mound of rock that was only a dozen paces short of the cave, and this shelter was reached in safety. Listening intently, they heard whispering sounds coming from the cave.

"The place acts like a loud-speaker," was Betty's whispered comment. "If only we all knew Spanish! Naomer, perhaps you can pick up what is being said!"

But that girl, after raising her head to listen with still greater intensity, had to own herself baffled.

"I not quite near enough, bother eet!"

"Then—come on, nearer still, and chance what happens!" was Polly's rash proposal. "The talk may tell us everything."

Even the always cautious Betty felt that it was worth chancing. Possibly madame and her friends from abroad had a great deal to talk about, and there would be a lengthy parley all in Spanish, but

Naomer would be able to follow every word if only she was near enough.

Throwing all hesitation to the winds, the four of them suddenly made the bold dash from cover. They were quite in the open after that, and if any of the foreigners had come away from the cave a confrontation would have been inevitable.

But luck—or it seemed like luck to the eager schoolgirls—pure luck, was with them. There they were, all at once, huddling close in against the base of the cliff, their presence still unsuspected. In the cave the talk was being continued in a very voluble manner. Intently Betty, Polly, and Paula gazed at Naomer as the latter listened, but again she shook her head in despair.

"I not near enough even now, bother eet!"

"Then we are beaten!" sighed Betty. "Another step and we would be inside the cave. Hardly possible, is it, when—well, what, Naomer?"

For that girl was suddenly gesturing excitedly.

"Let me leesten more," she whispered. "Yes, yes, they go in further—"

"Bai Jove!"

"The voices are certainly dying away," Polly said, all of a tremble with excitement. "Oh, if we could venture—hide somewhere—"

"Ooo, yes, queek, queek!" clamoured Naomer, and she pulled Betty imploringly by the arm. "We must—we must!"

"Half a sec.!"

That was Betty as she moved forward a single step and ventured a peep into the cave. Back she drew sharply, and the others saw a jubilant look in her eyes.

"Girls, the boat that belongs to the owner of the bungalow has a tarpaulin over it. We can surely hide in the boat, and then—"

"Ooo, yes, queek—"

"Wather, bai Jove! I'm weedy, geals!"

"And I!" was Polly's needless rejoinder—for already she was down on all fours to start crawling round into the dim cavern.

It was a bold venture to be making, but every moment the girls were feeling more and more encouraged to take their chance. Even if Naomer was not enabled to hear what was being said what the foreigners were keeping to the farthest limit of the cave, she would surely hear something when they came back.

And what a splendid hiding-place the tarpaulin-covered boat offered! Could they have wished for a better one? The sheet was spread over the rowing-boat and draped it all round. If only—oh, if only such a splendid bit of cover could be reached before the foreigners came back!

Hark, though! At this very moment the hollow murmur of voices was growing louder, as if the party of foreigners were even now sauntering back to the mouth of the cave.

Was there time, then? Could the girls succeed in their purpose, when a few moments would perhaps see Madame Florissa and the rest emerging from the cavern's winding extremity?

With a dashing air Betty darted close to the fore end of the covered boat, dived under the tarpaulin, and hauled herself over the gunwale. Polly was doing the same at the self-same instant. Violently the black sheet was puffed about by Naomer and Paula as they also came struggling after the first two girls.

How they did it without making sufficient commotion to be heard they never could say afterwards. But there they were huddled low down together on board the broad-beamed little craft with the tarpaulin completely covering them—

smothering them, or so Paula felt. There was not much breathing space in that cramped position!

Nor had they made more than a few cautious movements, so as to dispose themselves more comfortably, when they realised that the boat was by no means unladen. They were crouching down upon small boxes and small canvas bags, and when Betty tried to shift one of the latter very quietly to make room for a knee, she found she could not lift it, placed as she was. It was too heavy.

Suddenly the hidden girls nudged one another in a "Do you hear?" manner. For the voices came from just outside the covered boat, Madame Florissa's predominating.

All in Spanish, of course, and feverishly the British girls wondered what it was about. Naomer must be taking it all in now. What would she have to tell them as soon as the chance came?

Surely at this moment the secret of the whole mysterious affair was being given away by Dolores' mother!

But just as suddenly again the talk gave place to action. As all four girls could tell, madame had made some suggestion which was being promptly carried out. Keeping mute and still in the boat, Betty & Co. distinctly heard the sound of digging in the coarse sand.

Then someone breathed hard as if lifting a great weight. It was the man who had come ashore from the vessel in the motor-launch, for a man's voice answered when Madame Florissa asked him could he manage?

The girls heard him go staggering off with his load, whatever that might be. Then some more digging followed, but all at once Madame Florissa made a remark that threw Naomer, who understood directly she overheard it, into a state of alarm.

Betty, Polly, and Paula sensed their chum's sudden wild alarm as she touched them excitedly in the groping darkness of the covered boat. What did it mean, then? What was going to happen now?

The next moment gave the answer.

One end of the heavy tarpaulin was lifted a few inches, and the hidden girls, with bright light suddenly striking in upon them, saw the face of Madame Florissa just above the boat's gunwale.

Carried Away.

"DOLORES! Oh, gracious!" was the English equivalent of what Madame Florissa cried out loudly, as she peered into the boat.

"See! See who is here!"

"How then, my mother?"

"The girls—four of those girls from the school—hiding here in the boat!" was Madame Florissa's panicky cry. "Stop them—quick, help me! Marcilla—this way, quick! Keep them in!"

For already Betty and her three chums had struggled up, intending to push their arms and heads clear of the tarpaulin and then make a desperate attempt to drop over the sides of the boat and make off.

Too late!

Around that boat in a flash four persons were gathered. There was Madame Florissa and her daughter; there was Marcilla, the servant, and there was the unknown woman who had come ashore from the vessel. These four—they held down the tarpaulin with all their weight and strength, and in vain did the schoolgirls in that cramped position struggle to escape.

"A knife—where's a knife?" panted Betty. "If only we had a knife! We must get out—oh, this is awful! If only we could slash an opening in the sheet!"

But there was no knife—not even a penknife amongst the four of them!

Again they pushed and heaved, trying to overcome the strength of those who were holding the heavy tarpaulin in place. In vain!

It even became Betty and Polly's dismaying belief that madame and her companions were managing to lash the tarpaulin to the boat's sides. And that this was so a sudden breathless cry from Naomer proved. She had heard what was being said in Spanish, and she panted at her British chums:

"They are tying it down! They not mean to let us go!"

"My gwacious! But, geals, we must get away! Gwreat goodness——"

"Let us out there, let us out!" shouted Polly. "Phew, how hot I am! Help!"

Then Madame Florissa answered back in English: "You will be hotter still, you girls, before you have finished the journey you go upon!"

"Aha, yes!" came Dolores' exultant laughter, and the girls heard her clapping her hands. "All ze better that you haf now to come in the ship! Now I shall haf my revenge upon you all!"

"Go with them in the ship!" gasped Betty. "Oh——"

"Yes, in ze ship for San Fernando, you see?" jeered Dolores. "How you like that, eh? You, Naomer—you!"

"Ah, bah, you not dare! I am a queen——"

"A queen, pooh! Mother, do you hear that blackface girl? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us out!" demanded Betty, with passionate calmness.

"No!" answered madame sternly, cruelly. "You know too much!"

"We know this—for I hear you say it in Spanish, and I understand every word!" shrieked poor little Naomer. "You have gold in this cave—gold that is to pay for a revolution in San Fernando! You are——"

"Don't say it, Naomer," Betty whispered agitatedly. "The less they think we know, the better. Oh, why did you say that, dear?"

But it was done now, and a low laugh came from Madame Florissa.

"Just so!" she muttered in English. "You know too much, as I have said. Now, therefore, you will not return to your school——"

"You wretches! Help, help!" Polly shouted in an exasperated manner. "Come on, girls—try again!"

Once more they pushed and struggled, only exhausting themselves in the effort, and even running the risk of hurting one another. Whilst the excited cries and counter cries had been going up, those outside the boat had made the sheet quite fast all round.

The girls, as they swept feeling hands against the sheet that covered them, could feel how tightly it was strained and roped.

"My gwacious!" Paula sighed exhaustedly. "Geals, what are we going to do? I mean to say——"

"You are going on a voyage with me, my friends!" Dolores sang out mockingly. "A pleasant voyage—oh, yes, ha, ha! You shall have ze happy time! My mother, she knows how I love you!"

Naomer was going to answer back in a passion of fury, but Betty checked her gently.

"Let's keep calm," pleaded the Form captain. "It is all right. They will never dare to do what they threaten. As soon as we are missed——"

"You will not be missed—not until the vessel

has had time to get far away from here," madame called in to them. "I shall see to that. Ah, Fernandez," she went on, and they know then that the man belonging to the vessel had come back into the cave.

"My word, we are in for it now!" Polly said lugubriously. "Naomer, darling, what is that wretch of a woman saying to the Fernandez person?"

"She explain to him how we are caught, and must go in ze ship. He say all right," Naomer enlightened her companions in misfortune. "We are to be taken out to ze ship like this."

"You mean—oh, my goodness!" was Betty's excusable gasp of dismay. "They'll run this boat out of the cave and tow it behind the launch!"

"Geals, this is dweadful! I say, you know," palpitated poor Paula. "I've got no luggage either!"

"Cheer up, darling!" Polly said, with restored composure. "They can't hurt us, anyhow. Oh, won't there be a row about it, too, when it is known!"

"Yes, wather! That, howevah, does not relieve the pvesent distwessing situation, what? Geals, I nevah was so wuffed and angwy! I—— Hallo, gwreat goodness, what are they doing now?"

"Running us and the boat out of the cave, apparently," Betty answered ruefully, as the sheeted craft began to rock and jolt over the greased launching-boards.

She dropped her voice to a whisper. "Is it really possible that we are to be taken away, girls? Madame Florissa spoke as if her mind was quite made up."

"I suppose it would spoil whatever plans there are if we got back to the school with the news," whispered back Polly. "So there is to be a revolution in San Fernando——"

"To make ze father of Dolores president again, yes!" Naomer spoke in a subdued, but fierce tone. "They had to come to England to get gold, a lot of gold, to pay bribes."

"H'm" came from Betty. "So that is the game, is it! No wonder there has been all this secrecy. It is against the law, we know, to take a lot of gold out of this country. Look out, though! Hold tight, girls!"

"Yes, wather! My gwacious, we are afloat!"

With a short and sharp rush, the keel grinding over the shingle, out into the surf the foreigners had run the boat. And when did a craft of any sort ever hold stranger cargo?

Four schoolgirls, one of them a royal scholar, packed together under cover of the tarpaulin, whilst it was their own conviction now that the bags and boxes upon which they sprawled contained so much bullion gold!

Violently the boat rocked this way and that amidst the surf, and the noise of the breaking waves quite overwhelmed any talk that was going on between the foreigners.

Nor was it going to be any use if the girls shouted again and again for help. They knew, only too well they knew, that not a cry of theirs would ever be heard. The heavy sheet that tented them, the surge of the waters, it all combined to leave the schoolgirl captives utterly at the mercy of their captors.

"In for it now!" Polly had said gloomily, and indeed they were in for whatever fate the crafty plotters might choose to decree for them.

For a while the boat continued to toss about in a way that told the all-unseeing girls that it was still in the surf, then suddenly it steadied a little.

At the same instant they became aware of the drone of the engines of the motor-launch, and so they realised that now their own boat was being towed out to sea.

Their feelings, how can one describe them? Helpless captives, being spirited away like this from the school that was like home to them all, spirited away from friends and loved ones, and how the whole astounding adventure would end who could say?

Suddenly the others heard Naomer weeping wildly. Their eyes were getting accustomed to the darkness under the tarpaulin, and Polly, who was nearest to the unstrung girl, leant closer and wound an arm about the quivering shoulders.

"Hush, darling, hush! Don't cry! We shall not come to any harm."

"I theenk how I am a queen in my own country, and yet that Dolores can laugh at me now as much as she like! Ohé, ohé!" Naomer

The launch's motors had been stopped.

Then the boat that held the girl captives bumped against something, and they guessed that they were alongside the big ocean-going vessel that had been the mystery ship of Morcove.

Sure enough, in another minute the tarpaulin was unslashed. And one end of it was turned back, and the brilliant sunshine dazzled the girls' eyes.

What they saw, as soon as they could see around clearly, was enough to make their hearts sink heavier than ever.

Their boat was moored to an accommodation-ladder that had been let down at the steamer's side, and there at the foot of the accommodation-ladder stood Madame Florissa and Dolores.

"Pleased to see you!" the daughter jeered at the helpless captives. "I am so happy to know you will be my mother's guests."

Madame Florissa laughed, and the laugh was an



THE DISCOVERY! The tarpaulin was lifted, and the Morcove girls saw Madame Florissa peering down at them. "Dolores!" the woman cried out loudly. "See who is here! Quick, help me! They must be kept here now!"

sobbed distractedly. "Now I know why I always feel I detest her!"

"They are crafty, cruel people, but they had better beware!" Betty said fiercely. "They will get into trouble with our Government over this. What an impudent thing they are doing!"

"Yes, wather!" faltered Paula, in between her gasps for breath, as the boat skimmed up and down over the waves. "Disgwaceful pwoceeding, bai Jove! I don't want to go to San Fernando. Who would? I want to remain at home, Heapl! Dwp it, d'you heah?" she began to yell, then gave herself up to dismal groaning, as the boat bounded up and down with greater violence than ever.

It was evidently being towed out to the vessel very rapidly. All the time the whirr of the launch seemed to be saying, "Faster, faster!" How long this went on the girls could never have said, but perhaps it was just over half an hour when suddenly there was silence, except for the wash of the waves.

indication of the liberty she would give Dolores to be as spiteful as she liked with the girls.

"Get up and come on board!" she commanded the four of them sternly. "You cannot very well refuse, can you?"

The taunt was received in silence. Already the chums had looked towards the land, only to see some very distant cliffs. Morcove itself was out of sight, for they had been brought round to the seaward side of the vessel, and the steamer's own huge bulk was between the girls and the school from which they had been torn.

"At once—come!" insisted Madame Florissa, with a stamp of the foot. "You are our prisoners, and whether you come to harm or not depends upon whether you obey or are rash enough to resist. Come!"

The hapless girls were standing up now. Pallid and tight-lipped with indignation, they met one another's eyes.

"The captain of the Form must be first!" twitted Dolores. "We do not recognise queens in

our country! You—bah!" she jeered again at poor little Naomer. "You wait, my fine queen!"

Naomer's face was a study in suppressed indignation just then. Her eyes, whilst they were still wet with tears, had fire in them. Her lips were pursed together; her teeth were clenched. A prolonged look of bitter scorn she gave Dolores, whilst Betty resignedly went first on to the ship's ladder. Then, with a shrug that proclaimed a pride which nothing would ever subdue, the royal scholar of Morcove herself stepped off the dancing pleasure-boat that had been laid up in the cave.

Madame Florissa offered a steadying hand, but it was scornfully refused.

"Do not touch me!" hissed Naomer. "You will be sorry for zis!"

Madame went pale with anger at the defiant words. Frowning, she passed Naomer along, and there was deep silence—even Dolores hushed her jeering voice—whilst all four captives mounted the ladder step by step to the vessel's deck.

No One Need Worry.

ROUND about two o'clock that afternoon, a note was brought in to the headmistress of Morcove School, as she sat alone in her private room.

After reading the missive, she touched a bell, and then asked the maid who replied to the summons to fetch Miss Redgrave.

"Oh, Ruth," said Miss Somerfield, directly that youthful mistress appeared, "here is a note from Madame Florissa, over at the bungalow! It is to say that friends of hers, who have come to England on their own ocean-going yacht, have dropped anchor off Morcove."

"Then that must be the beautiful vessel so many of us have noticed."

"Yes, there she lies." The headmistress nodded, turning to the window. "Quite a good way out,

isn't she? But what concerns us is that four of our girls have been given the treat of being taken on board by Madame Florissa and her friends."

Miss Redgrave's brows went up.

"Oh, I see! That accounts for Betty and the others not being back by now. I sent them across to inquire after Dolores."

"So I understand!" Miss Somerfield exclaimed, returning her gaze to the letter. "The girls got to the bungalow just as a launch was coming in, and so Madame Florissa thought she would give them a treat. It is all expressed rather quaintly, but the note makes everything quite all right. You won't be anxious."

"Not a scrap, if you are not."

"Oh, I am perfectly satisfied!" said the headmistress, laying down the note upon her desk. "Madame Florissa's own daughter is a scholar of ours. We know they are reliable people."

"And it will be a real treat for Betty and her chums, won't it?" smiled the equally deceived Miss Redgrave, preparing to withdraw, for it was time to start the afternoon classes. "What time do you think they will be back?"

"Oh, not until this evening!" was the unworried answer Miss Somerfield returned. "Madame says in the note that the girls and her daughter may even be given the pleasure of a short trip to sea."

Miss Redgrave nodded and went out, and as she passed one big window in the hall she looked towards the sea. The yacht was still there in the distance, riding peacefully at anchor.

Just as she turned away, she happened to notice someone, a woman, hurrying down the school drive.

It was Marcilla, the servant of Madame Florissa, hurrying away after delivering the deceptive note. Marcilla was old, but she was active. Rapidly she sped along as soon as she was clear of the school gates, and less than half an hour later she was down on the shore, in front of the cave.

The launch was waiting there—for her, and only for her. No sooner was she on board than it went purring back towards the great steam-yacht. The latter's steam capstan was noisily hauling in the cable as Marcilla set foot on the landing-ladder.

At the top of the steps, Madame Florissa was awaiting her faithful old servant.

"You gave the note, Marcilla?"

"I would not have returned had I failed."

Madame Florissa smiled in a gratified manner, and turned to address some remark, in Spanish, to Dolores, who instantly went below deck. Meantime, the anchor-chain came in with its steady "Clank, clank, clank!" It was an ominous sound for the schoolgirl prisoners to hear when they were led forth, a minute later, to where Madame Florissa was standing.

"Now you may take your last look at the coast of Morcove!" that imperious woman said, holding herself erect. "Your last look, did I say? And perhaps it will be if—"

She paused impressively, keeping her flashing eyes upon the girls, and then finished, with a cruel smile:

"If the revolution fails!"

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Fate has played a strange trick upon Betty & Co., and, as you can imagine, there are many adventures now in store for them. Tell your friends about the new series of complete tales of Betty & Co.'s adventures which begins with next week's fine story. It is entitled "The Morcove Girls at Sea!"

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