

Novel

COMMENCING THIS WEEK:

"HER TEASHOP IN JAPAN!"

AN ENTHRALLING SERIAL OF A BRITISH GIRL'S ADVENTURES ABOARD.

The Schoolgirl's Own 2^d



DEFYING THEIR FORM CAPTAIN!

An incident from this week's long complete tale of Morcove School.

A Splendid Long Complete Tale of the Chums of Morcove School.



THE FATE OF —A— SCHOOLGIRL!

By MARJORIE STANTON.

ZONIA MOORE, THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLGIRL, IS FEATURED IN THIS ENTHRALLING STORY, WHICH TELLS OF HER ADVENTURES WHILE HER MORCOVE CHUMS WERE SEARCHING THE COUNTRYSIDE FOR HER.

Their "Whip-Round."

"SO altogether, girls, we have collected twelve-and-sixpence!"

"Jolly good!"

"Yes, wather—"

"One can get a nice presentation-box of chocs for twelve-and-six!" said Polly, swinging her legs as she sat on the edge of the Study 12 table.

"A whipping box, I agree! Howevah, geals, I would propose to make it up to more of a wound sum."

"Hear, hear!" from several of the high-spirited girls who were crowding out the Fourth Form captain's study.

"If you will allow me," beamed Paula Creel, "to provide an extwa half-cwoyn—"

"And I will give anuzzer—how you call him—nuzzer two bob!" grinned Naomer. "Ooo, yes!"

Polly seized the ruler and hammered it upon the table.

"Nineteen-and-six, ladies! Any advance on nineteen shillings and—"

"Count on me for the odd sixpence!" laughed Madge Minden.

"Make it a guinea whilst you are about it," said Helen Craig.

"A guinea—that's grand!" And Polly now hopped down from the table-edge. "It's a jolly evening, and we can be out till half an hour after sunset. I vote we go into Barncombe straight away—"

"And buy the chocs," said Betty Barton.

"And pwesent them, geals, wight away to that gal at the circus. Yes, wather! She was a bwick, a weal hewoine, to save that other circus-wider's life as she did yesterday evening!"

There was a general uprising of girls who had been sitting about in the study. Some went off at once to get their outdoor things on. Paula Creel brought out her pocket vanity-glass and fiddled with her hair. And there is no need to say that she became all the happier to see herself looking "quite all wight!"

"Haw, haw, haw! Yes, wather!" simpered Paula, floating away to the door. "It will be doing the decent thing, geals, to show that circus

geal how we appweciated her gweat bwavery. I won't be one moment!"

"That means five minutes," said Polly promptly "And if you make it a minute longer, a ruffling for you!"

Paula went off, chuckling, but she and a few of the other girls were suddenly brought to a stop in the passage by a shouted word from Betty Barton.

"Girls, I've got another idea! Come back in a minute and I'll have something to show you."

"Right-ho!"

Then Betty, left alone in the study with her bosom chum, Polly Linton, darted to the table and sat down.

Snatching at a sheet of paper, she hastily scribbled out the draft of some screed that required careful composition. Then she raised her pretty head, and said to Polly:

"Here, yours is a better hand than mine, Polly darling. You take a sheet of foolscap, will you, and I'll sing out what I think we might say."

"Aha, I understand!" Polly said heartily; and next moment she was ready to let her chum start dictating:

"We, the undersigned members of the Fourth Form at Morcove School, North Devon, desire to put on record our keen appreciation of the bravery of Beth Jackson, in saving the life of a fellow-member of Sarkey's Circus."

Betty inquired after a while:

"Got that, dear?"

"Next, Betty?"

"As eye-witnesses of the aforesaid act of bravery, it is our opinion that Sybil Lemur would have lost her life in the ring if Beth Jackson had not rushed to her aid when the elephant was—"

"Was what, Polly? Can't say 'ramping around'?"

"Off his chump? No, that'll hardly do, either. 'Was running wild,'" suggested Polly, and she wrote accordingly.

Then she straightened up, and blotted the nicely written testimonial with an air of legitimate pride.

"Beautiful!" her chum Betty commented on the round writing. "Hallo, though! You have put 'undesigned' members! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have I? Oh, dear—" "And there are usually two p's in 'appreciation,' Polly dear."

"That's the worst of me," said Morcove's madcap ruefully. "I can write, but I can't spell! Now, you—"

"It's all right, dear," Betty laughed, quickly making the corrections. "Beth Jackson will be proud of this, anyway. No prouder than she should be, either!"

By ones and twos the other girls came trickling back to Study 12, and there was great delight at finding to what they were called upon to append their signatures.

"Me, too? Ooo!" Naomer said, doing a caper as she took the pen from Madge. "Eet must be a good sinnashur, yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Naomer sat down. As her little brown fist slowly traced the royal signature, so her tongue-tip went round and round in her open mouth. In the end, there was an effect upon the testimonial like a bluebottle having crawled out of an inkpot to dry himself on the paper.

Polly came across to see, whilst she snapped the elastic band of her hat under her plump chin.

"What do you call that?" "Anybodies can see," protested Naomer. "If I say, 'Naomer Nakara, Queen of Nakara, North Africa,'"

"Thought it might be a new kind of cross-word puzzle," said Polly. "Well, off we go!"

"Yes, wather! Haw, haw, haw! Geals, do I look all wight?"

Paula Creel received the assurance that she was in the usual just-so state, and accordingly she went off beaming, taking care not to get mixed up in the high-spirited scampering about that Polly and Naomer enjoyed during the run downstairs.

This happy mission upon which the girls were embarked, now that school was over for the day and they had had their tea, was the outcome of a resolve made overnight.

It was at the previous evening's performance at Sarkey's travelling circus that such a heroic deed had been performed by the girl Beth Jackson.

Beth Jackson! How little Betty & Co. suspected that the name was only an assumed one!

Little they dreamed that they had only to stand face to face with the heroine of the circus to recognise her instantly as the missing chum who was never out of their thoughts these days.

Zonia Moore—their Zonia! Where was she today? That was what they were constantly wondering. What did it all mean, that Zonia had gone away from Stormwood School so mysteriously, almost a fortnight ago, and had never been heard of since?

In this alone the chums of Morcove School had enough to make them feel there was cause for tragic grief. But the still deeper tragedy of the whole affair they did not know. This was, that Zonia all the time was so near to them, and yet so far!

And more than that, it was such a cruel plight in which she was, poor girl—hating to think of the anxiety her mysterious disappearance had caused, and yet forced to believe that no other right-minded girl, in the same distracting circumstances, could have done differently.

Fate, indeed, was using the poor girl strangely

these days. What else but a strange fate had brought Sarkey's Circus to Barncombe, of all places? And now, here were Betty and the rest cycling along from Morcove School, with the laudable intention of seeking out "Beth Jackson," and making her a present, as reward for that act of courage!

There was, of course, only one right shop in Barncombe at which the right box of chocolates could be bought. That shop—in the chums' opinion, anyhow—was the Barncombe Creamery.

Just as the town-hall clock was dinning out six o'clock on this sunny evening in late spring, a line of bicycles was formed at the kerb outside the shop, and in went the girls—a whole jolly party of them, including one spick-and-span scholar, who promptly looked at herself in one of the big mirrors, and fiddled her wind-ruffled hair to rights!

As for Polly, and Betty, and the rest, they had no time to think about their looks. They gaily gathered in front of the counter.

"Something in the way of a gift-box?" the young lady behind the counter understood them to require. "About five sh—"

"A guinea, please!" "Oh!" And in a fluttered way the young lady got out a bunch of keys to open the show-case of very special chocolates.

"This is a pretty box, at seventeen-and-six? Or this, at a guinea? We have one here that is rather more expensive," talked on the young lady, reaching out a very precious box, of huge dimensions. "Twenty-five sh—"

"Haw, haw, haw! That's the one, what?" Paula came up just in time to exclaim delightedly. "Geals, I twust you will allow me to make up the twifling diffewence."

"We'll do it between us," proposed Betty, and there was a most hearty murmur of agreement.

"Thank you, miss; this box, please."

"Thank you! Can I send it, or—"

"Oh, no! We are taking it along at once."

"Ooo, yes, queek—queek—" "Howevah," beamed Paula, "after a wather twying cycle wide, geals, we might just pause for a little wefweshment, what? Do allow me, geals, to order ices all wound, in the woom upstairs, if you don't mind, don't you know!"

"Well," said Polly mirthfully, "I expect, Paula darling, you want to look at your hair in the mirror upstairs!"

"Yes, wather! That is to say, I'm all wight, what?"

"You are a dear, and I love you!" said Naomer. "Because you order ze ice-keam, and I love him, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" And they all went scampering up the steep stairs to the refreshment-room over the shop.

The first of them to enter that upper room stopped dead in surprise. A certain girl was there, alone, whom they knew quite well. She had just finished having one of the Creamery's famous ices and was getting up to leave.

"Miriam! Hallo, Miriam—" "Fancy meeting you, Miriam! We were half-inclined to look in at the bungalow," exclaimed Betty, "and let you and Mrs. Spenlow know. We girls—"

"Yes, wather! Mirwiam, do you want to see a box of chocolates that's the weal thing?" beamed Paula. "Bwing it along, Polly deah!"

Polly, entering last, laughingly displayed the intended gift for "Beth Jackson," and Miriam suddenly looked very excited.

"Is that for—for—"

"The geal at the circus, bai Jove! Haw, haw, haw! Yes, wather, Miwiam! We geals—"

"Would you care to come along with us to the circus to find Beth Jackson?" inquired Betty good-naturedly. "You must have admired her pluck last evening as much as—"

"Oh, thanks, I—I'd love to come; I really would," Miriam said flusteredly. "But I—Bother it! Do you know, I have just remembered—I ought to be at the station by now! There—there is a train—"

"Got to meet someone by it?" conjectured Polly. "Um! Then that stops you from coming with us. We are just going to have ices, and then—"

"Yes, wather! Sowwy, and all that, Miwiam! You would have enjoyed coming, what?"

"I would have loved to come, really!" was the vehement answer—so vehement that Betty and one or two others thought the girl's disappointed air was put on. But then, somehow they were always rather prone to doubt Miriam Loveless's good faith, without knowing why!

They were, in fact, by no means drawn towards her, although they made a point of being pleasant, if only because she was the protégée of Mrs. Spenlow. That lady and her husband were dears!

"Ta-ta, for I simply must fly!" jerked out Miriam; and in a flash she was gone, almost tumbling down the dingy stairs in her haste to get to the railway-station?

Not a Bit of it!

Outside the shop, up the High Street Miriam tore, and kept straight on along it, instead of turning aside to go to the railway-station. The circus-meadow was her objective; nor was it a wonder that she sped on as if her very existence depended upon her saving every possible moment.

Those Morcove girls—they were going to blunder in upon the circus-folk, seeking out the very girl who would prove to be Zonia, and no other! And if they did that—

"But I can beat them—I've just time!" Miriam was panting to herself as she flew along wildly. "They will be a few minutes over the ices—bound to hang about in talk. So, thank goodness, there is just a chance I'll do it!"

Warned in Time.

BUXOM Mrs. Sarkey, in the gaudy caravan that she shared with her more or less worthy husband—but Mr. Joe Sarkey was not here just at present—took another thick round of toast upon her plate, and buttered it liberally.

It was an ample tea that the showman's wife was making—an all the heartier one, because it was a good half-hour behind the usual time.

Moreover, Mrs. Sarkey could feel that she had good excuse for showing such an appetite. There had been a lot to do to-day. Before, during, and since the afternoon performance she had been kept busy.

"Ah, dear," exclaimed Mrs. Sarkey to herself, as she spread her knife across the slice of toast, "and another show this evening! I do declare, it don't give one a moment to get a bite!"

Yet the good lady got a very good bite just then. The half-slice of toast that had gone to her mouth was going back to the plate with a very considerable piece taken out of it, when—

Tap, tap, tap! came someone's knuckles against the narrow door of the van. Tap, tap, tap! And then—before Mrs. Sarkey could treat herself to the dignity of voicing a tart "Come in, you!" the door flew open.

"Mrs. Sarkey, you must excuse me, but—but—"

"Good gracious, and who are you, my gel? 'Ere, what do you mean by a-coming bursting in—"

"I had to! I— Not a moment to lose!" was the gasping excuse Miriam Loveless made, as she agitatedly closed the door behind her. "Mrs. Sarkey, you don't know me—"

"That I don't! And yet you—"

"I am the daughter of the—the people who have been—paying you to hold your tongue—about"—Miriam heaved for breath; she was really exhausted with so much hard running—"about Zonia Moore," she finished gaspingly.

The showman's wife, already on her large feet, snatched up a handkerchief and agitatedly wiped some buttery smears from her lips. Then she gazed aghast at Miriam with eyes that had watered as she bolted the big mouthful of toast.



WHEN EXPOSURE THREATENED!

"Mrs. Sarkey!" gasped Miriam breathlessly. "Some Morcove girls are coming here to make a presentation to Zonia Moore. They must not meet her!" "My gracious!" cried the woman. "They must not discover where Zonia is!"

"You—you're their daughter! Well, what—how—anyway, what's brought you rushing here, girl, like a blessed lunatic?"

"It's like this," panted Miriam, subduing her excited voice guiltily. "Some schoolgirls are on the way here to make a present to Zonia Moore, for her bravery last night. Mrs. Sarkey, you know they must not meet her! If they do—"

"My gracious, if they do!" gasped the woman. "But—"

"You and Mr. Sarkey will get into a row, as well as my parents," Miriam had the daring to remind the showman's wife. "You have been a party to the—the plot, haven't you?"

"Don't you give me your impudence!" exclaimed Mrs. Sarkey. "Plot, indeed!"

But at heart she knew that it was exactly as this girl was saying. It was the truth, however

unpleasant! And so the showman's wife suddenly abandoned the desperate pretence at indignation, and confessed her alarm by exclaiming:

"Coming here—them schoolgirls?"
"Oh, don't waste time talking!" implored Miriam wildly. "Do something—quick—quick! Before those girls turn up!"

"Yes, I must, that's certain," nodded Mrs. Sarkey, in growing alarm. "But, what kin I do? I know! Zonia—Beth, as she is called here—she must be too unwell to see 'em!"

"That's no use," fumed Miriam, striking her hands together. "They will expect their visit to be welcomed, even if she is unwell! They'll think it ought to do her good. And if you refuse to let any of them see her, they'll only smell a rat!"

"Well, I don't know!" was Mrs. Sarkey's distracted cry. "It's true, only last evening the girls were sent away, disappointed. If we keep on at that game—Bother it, I say! I wish to goodness Mr. Sarkey and I had never had nothing to do with the business! 'Armless though it's bin—"

"Listen to me! I tell you there is not a moment to lose!" Miriam struck up desperately. "Can't you find some errand for Zonia to go upon at once? Think of some excuse for sending her—oh, anywhere, so long as you get her off this instant!"

It was the terrified girl's great relief to see the woman's fat face light up as if a brilliant idea had flashed upon her. Mrs. Sarkey did not seem inclined to explain, and Miriam burst out eagerly:

"You've thought of a way, have you?"

"Ay! Never you mind. You sheer off, my girl—sharp, now, hadn't you better? For if those schoolgels find you here—"

"Yes, I have been thinking of that. All right—I've done my part!" Miriam said tensely, whilst she turned to let herself out of the poky van. "Do your best, Mrs. Sarkey! You know my people will make it up to you!"

"Don't talk to me about your people!" snapped the showman's wife, waving the girl away. "I'm fed-up, I am!"

And it was a frowning moment that she spent before going to the door and putting out her head. Miriam was already slipping away. Mrs. Sarkey looked in the opposite direction, and called sharply:

"Sal! 'Ere, you Sal, you go and tell Beth Jackson to get her walking things on, immediately! I want her here in my van, in a minute! Quick, now!"

This order given, Mrs. Sarkey moved back to the middle of the van, and hastily reached down a packet of stationery from a bracket on the wall.

With a preliminary suck to the lead of a bit of pencil, she began to write some note or other. What with being so agitated, and a slow writer at the best of times, the woman had all she could do to have the note ready, brief though it was, by the time "Beth" came running up the few steps and into the van.

"Ah, there you are!" Mrs. Sarkey greeted Zonia, not unkindly. "Well, now, look here, my dear! You're to take this to a 'ouse called Brook-bridge, off the road what leads from here to Morcove. Know it?"

"I know that road. I have often—"

"Then you'll easy find the 'ouse. For it's down a winding lane that turns off the road where a 'ystack is." Mrs. Sarkey said quickly, handing over the note. "And mind this, Beth—you be careful not to run into any o' them there scholards that would rekernise you if they met you!"

Zonia nodded in a flabbergasted manner.

"I—I was just thinking, Mrs. Sarkey. It is

rather risky, my going anywhere in the direction of Morcove. You may be sure I don't want to run into any of the Morcove girls—placed as I am," the poor, duped girl finished sadly.

"Well, you've just got to go, dearie, because that's an important message, and you're to wait for an answer, see?"

"Then I am not to worry, if I am not back in time for the perf—"

"You're to go at once, Beth! All the more reason, because, for all you know, some o' them former friends o' yourn will be coming into the circus-meadow any minute now," Mrs. Sarkey discreetly hinted. "Cut along, then, and be careful! Here, afore you go—"

And suddenly the woman stooped and bestowed a kiss upon the girl.

Zonia was hardly surprised. She had found Mrs. Sarkey always kind and affectionate. It would have staggered her very much to know that both the showman and his wife had been in the pay, all along, of the very people who claimed her as their daughter!

A party to the cruel conspiracy Mrs. Sarkey undoubtedly was; but that had not prevented her from forming a liking for the duped girl. And now there was more than a sudden touch of compunction to account for that kiss. As Zonia hurried away, the showman's wife knew full well that it might be many a day before she saw the girl again.

It was still only a few minutes since Miriam had rushed in with the warning that the Morcovians were to be expected. If only they had turned up now—now, whilst Zonia was delaying just a moment to look in upon the circus-rider with whom she shared one of the sleeping-vans!

"Sybil dear," Zonia said, after nipping up the few back steps to enter the tiny caravan, "I have to run an errand for Mrs. Sarkey."

"An errand, Zonia—where?"

The van-door was already closed, affording the two girls absolute privacy, or Sybil Lemur would never have used that name—Zonia!

"Oh, it's some house that I've got to find, just off the Morcove road," Zonia answered lightly. "I'll be as quick as I can, Sybil, because—well, I want to get back to you."

"Ah, Zonia!" was the elder circus-girl's tender response, and her dark eyes seemed to grow very liquid, whilst she put out a hand and pressed the other's. "And you are the girl I was so bitter against, and so jealous of—wicked creature that I must have been!"

"We were never going to talk about that again, Sybil!"

"How generously you have forgiven, and mean to forget!" was the other's emotional exclamation.

"But I—I can never forget! If you had never saved my life last evening, I would have gone on being the same hateful girl towards you! And all the time you stood in such need of friendship!"

"Well, I have that friendship now, Sybil!"

"You have!" the circus-queen said, with passionate fervour. "Once again, Zonia dear, if ever I can help you—oh, I will—I will! You have told me your sad story, and I don't wonder that you ran away from the school. I wish I could help you—"

"This does help me, Sybil, to have your friendship and pity," Zonia murmured, her keen eyes ashine. "I must go, dear. I do hope I'll be back before the evening show commences."

"But, wait a second, Zonia. Somehow I—I hate to let you go," the elder girl said agitatedly. "I suppose it is only because I have grown so fond of you. Must you hurry?"

The tender entreaty induced Zonia to linger; and now—if only the chums had come along! Ah, the pity of it that still they were not here!

And yet, how were they to know that a single moment might make all the difference between a dramatic meeting with the missing girl of Stormwood and their never, never seeing her again?

Sybil, looking all so beautiful, as usual, in her wild, dark way, drew the one she had grown to love closely to her, and kissed her. Only because she had grown so fond of Zonia—so she imagined. But the hour would come, perhaps, when she would remember how loath she had been to let Zonia go, and she would realise that there must have been some presentiment that this was a parting—it might be for ever!

"Very well, dear, since you must!" the circus-queen said, with a sudden loving smile, at last. "Try to be back in time to dress with me for the show!"

"I will, Sybil! Good-bye!"

Zonia opened the van-door, and ran down the few steps on to the grass. With a cautious look around—for she had always to be careful lest she should suddenly catch sight of one of her own old school-chums—she ran off.

As she hurried away from the circus-meadow, a certain girl who was loitering around, on watch, heaved a great sigh of relief.

It was Miriam Loveless.

"Thank goodness, Mrs. Sarkey has managed to bundle her off out of the way! I only wish to goodness the girl could never come back!" was Miriam's savage thought.

Then she, too, made haste to get away from the vicinity of the circus-ground—and just as well for her sake that she did!

Sixty seconds later, Betty Barton and her chums came strolling up. And they were just sixty seconds—too late!

"Some day it may be——"

"NEED we bother the showman or his wife?" Betty suddenly questioned, as she and her chums light-heartedly came into the circus-meadow. "I expect they are pretty busy always."

"There's the van that we know Beth Jackson lives in—let's go straight to it!" urged Polly.

"Ooo, yes, quèek—quèek! I so eager to see zo circus-girl!"

Naomer, as she said this, was delightedly holding the gift-box of chocolates under one arm. Her chums had known how it would please her to be allowed to be the one to offer the gift when the time came.

"I don't see Beth," Polly remarked, rather anxiously, as they hurried across to the caravan, the door of which was open to the early evening sunshine. "I do hope she is somewhere about the place!"

"She must be. That older girl is there, anyhow," Betty said hopefully. "We'll ask her."

It was Sybil, of course, whom they had discerned inside the little caravan. Now, Sybil became obviously startled as she saw them approaching. With a quick step she came to the open doorway, and stood looking down upon them with an agitation for which Betty & Co. thought they could account.

They were not forgetting that this was the girl whose life Beth Jackson had saved.

"Good-evening!" Betty began brightly. "Is Beth Jackson about, please?"

"Beth? No, she—she's away for a bit," Sybil was sorry to have to tell the girls. "I can't say exactly how long she will be away."

She saw the schoolgirls' faces fall, and yet, from what Zonia had told her, she knew that it would be deemed the unfriendly thing to tell the scholars that "Beth" and Zonia were one and the same girl. Pledged as she was to keep poor Zonia's distracting secret, she was bound to go all against her inclination and get rid of these girls as soon as possible!

"Bother!" muttered Polly glumly. "Bad luck again!"

"Cwuel luck, bai Jove!" deplored Paula. "We twied last evening to get a word with the geal

"You mean, after she saved my life?" Sybil exclaimed, going rather pale in the face. "Ah, Beth was—she was feeling very upset, then. She——"

"Yes, of course," nodded Madge affably. "We were not surprised we had to go away without seeing her. But now——"

"What a shame it is, for her sake!" sighed Betty Barton.

"I so sorry," came Naomer's plaintive cry. "I so want Beth Jackson to have ze chocolate!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! And then, don't you know," Paula said beamingly to Sybil, "we hoped to have the pleasure of pwsenting a slight testimonial, what? It's all written out beautifully! Geals——"

"The fact is," Betty hastened to say—for Sybil Lemur was showing a keen interest, but some bewilderment—"that is what has brought us here. We girls felt we simply must show our admiration for Beth's bravery. It was so fine of her!"

"Fine?" echoed Sybil, her passionate nature instantly displaying itself. "I have no word for it! I can only tell you that what she did for me last evening changed me from a hateful, jealous wretch into a girl who will admire and love her, and be her friend, as long as life lasts!"

"Bai Jove——"

"Bravo!" Polly could not help applauding heartily.

"Then Beth has found a far better reward for her bravery than we girls could ever have hoped to make her!" was Betty's earnest comment. "Sybil Lemur, this does make us awfully happy!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove——"

"It would be a joy to me to tell you how I have changed," the circus-queen exclaimed, with great feeling, "only I am so ashamed that I have been an unkind, bitter enemy in the past. I'll never forgive myself, never!"

"Beth has forgiven you?" guessed Madge; and Sybil said quickly, with great emotion:

"I see you know what her generous nature is! Yes, she has forgiven me freely. We are happy together, now, in this van that we share. I will be her true friend—depend upon that! And if ever—if ever——"

She paused, looking very ill at ease, and the chums gazed in surprise, failing to understand this sudden embarrassment.

"If ever what, Sybil?" Betty asked at last.

"Ah, I don't know how to say it. If ever—well, if ever it seems to me that she needs help which you alone can give—and perhaps it may be so some day; I can't explain—I—I would like to feel that I may get in touch with you girls at Morcove. May I—may I do that? Tell me!"

"Wather, bai Jove! Why——"

"It's just what we would wish you to do!" cried Polly.

"A letter to Betty Barton—our captain," said Madge, indicating the girl in question—"that will always do the trick."



A FATEFUL MEETING! As Zonia saw the woman who opened the door, she recoiled with a gasp of dismay. For the woman was none other than Mrs. Jarvis—the woman who had claimed to be her mother! What did this mean?

"Thank you!" Sybil said, with a fervour that impressed them. "Then I will remember! Betty Barton, Morcove School, North Devon. I'm sorry you—you can't wait about now. The show commences soon, and—and—"

"We quite understand," said Betty. "We—"

"But, ze chocolates!" broke out Naomer pathetically. "Ohé, we not able to give them to ze girl who was so brave. Are we to take ze chocolate back and eat him ourselves? Ah, bah, no!"

Her chums laughed at that, and even Sybil lost her sad and serious air for a moment.

"If you will leave everything to me," the circus-queen said, "I promise you solemnly Beth shall be given, the things, along with all your kind messages."

Instantly Naomer made a rush at Sybil, who had descended the van-steps and was standing with the scholars on the trampled grass.

"You geve her ze chocolate, and you geve her my love!"

"Bat Jove, wather! And mine, pway—"

"And mine—and mine!" chimed in the others.

"And say, won't you, we are so sorry we have missed her! We still hope to see her before the circus leaves the district."

"When do you go?" asked Betty anxiously.

"To-morrow we shall be gone," the circus-queen answered solemnly. "After the performance this evening the tents are taken down. By midnight we should be on the road!"

There was a heavy pause. The hearts of the schoolgirls had fallen. They stood and gazed around, changing the orderly and bright scene that was before them into the one that the meadow would present at midnight. The entire circus packed up and moving out again, to take the open road once more! Horses plodding on in the darkness with their lumbering wagons and caravans; and Beth—that girl, the one they had learned to admire so greatly, although they had never had word with her as Beth—she would be lying fast asleep in her little home on wheels.

Fast asleep, whilst the straggling procession fared on and on through the night, leaving Barncombe and Morcove far behind!

"Ah, well," Betty suddenly sighed, with a lift and a fall of the shoulders, "it can't be helped, I suppose."

"It is such a pity, though," deplored Polly.

"Most wegwettable," said Paula. "She is a bwave geal, that Beth—a weal bwick!"

"We can only hope," repeated Madge softly, "that somehow, somewhere, we meet her again at last!"

But, would they?

Ah, how great were the odds against it!

No Fighting Against Fate.

ZONIA, when she had set off upon the strange errand that Mrs. Sarkey had found for her, took the greatest care in getting out of the quaint old Devonshire town.

It seemed to her that the showman's wife had done a very risky thing in getting her to go on a journey that would take her almost half-way to Morcove. She could only suppose that Mrs. Sarkey did not appreciate how the main road from Morcove to Barncombe was usually alive with Morcovians at this season of the year, and on such sunny evenings!

It was a risk that Zonia herself appreciated, and good care she was taking to keep off that road.

Over green meadows, well out of sight of the highway, and across rough ground that was the heathery margin of that selfsame moorland where, long ago, she had lived the gipsy-life—cautiously she hurried on, all eagerness to get the message delivered and to get back to Sybil.

And all the time she was wondering what it could be about—this note that Mrs. Sarkey had bidden her deliver at the lonely house called Brookbridge.

How came the showman's wife to know the tenants of Brookbridge, whoever they might be?

The only answer to that question was that perhaps Sarkey's Circus had previously visited Barncombe, and so Mrs. Sarkey had some old acquaintance at Brookbridge which she wished to revive.

It was when the mystified girl was feeling she ought to be getting in sight of the lonely dwelling at last that she heard a faint tr-r-ring from the highway that she was avoiding.

That sound! Some Morcove girl or other, for a certainty, skimming by on her cycle! Betty herself, perhaps!

It was a thought that almost brought the tears to Zonia's eyes. Once again, all the anguish of her difficult life came upon her. It suddenly maddened her to realise anew how cruelly fate had played with her, a mere schoolgirl.

Cruellest of all, it seemed to her, that her hidden life should have to be lived, for the present, in this very district—one of which she knew every inch; one that was endeared to her by so many happy associations; one that held Morcove School, and Stormwood, and all her own old chums!

If only—oh, if only life could have gone on undisturbed by such dramatic, agonising happenings, such as with which it had been her sad fate to have to contend lately!

But there, it was no use repining. The thing was to take comfort in the thought once again, there had been no choice for her but to do what she had done.

Impossible were the conditions under which she might have remained at school! The couple who had claimed her—ah, how she hoped that she might never see them again! It was not because she was lacking in natural feeling—just the contrary. It was because she had such tender ideas of all that loving parents should be—worthy of the respect and love one would find joy in showing—that her whole soul revolted from the idea of making her life with people such as they undoubtedly were. They even had no shame in owning that they lived by their roguery!

With thoughts like these oppressing her, the girl, whose destiny was such a strange one, made a sudden pause to make sure of her bearings. It was a relief to her to see, at a distance, the haystack of which Mrs. Sarkey had spoken, close by the distant roadway.

"Then that must be the house itself—that one down there," Zonia decided gladly. "I can see no other, and don't remember any other round about this lonely spot."

Lonely! Whoever lived at Brookbridge must find it lonely enough indeed.

The ramshackle old house was a good way down a narrow lane that seemed never to know any traffic. The steep banks on either side of the lane seemed to drip moisture, and Zonia remembered that not far off was a little streamlet—hence, no doubt, the name "Brookbridge."

It was an evening to make any place look attractive, and yet Zonia, as she turned out of the lane to go up a rough path to the porch, felt oppressed by a vague dislike of the quaint old house.

Somehow she sensed that it was not properly tenanted. There were certainly no signs of any pride being taken in its front garden. The latter was fast becoming a jungle of weeds, with some tall, herbaceous stuff still fighting for a living.

Then the rather nervous girl got to the trellised porch, and this happened to be on the sunless side, so that even as she knocked upon the door a sort of shuddering thrill went through her.

She felt her heart beating whilst her hand fumbled out the note, to have it ready for the person whose step could now be heard in the dingy passage.

Next moment the time-worn door was dragged open with a jarring noise, and a woman stood revealed.

At sight of the girl, this woman gave a violent start of alarm. As for Zonia, she recoiled with a shuddering gasp of utter dismay—sheer panic.

For the woman was—oh, merciful goodness!—the very one who claimed to be "mother"!

If poor Zonia's chaotic brain was functioning at all at that moment, it could only have been forming the wild, wondering question: What did it mean? How was it possible?

The woman pulled herself together, and spoke hoarsely:

"What, you, Zonia?"

"Mother! But—oh, I didn't expect this! I—I would never have come if I had known! You—"

"Why have you come?" the woman jerked out in great alarm. "What's that in your hand—a note? For me, is it?"

She snatched at it before Zonia could answer,

and, by so doing, came close to the terrified girl. And now, how could she turn and rush away, Zonia was asking herself despairingly? Too late! She should have dashed off the very instant she set eyes on who was here. And yet—was it a wonder that utter amazement had held one spell-bound?

"Come indoors, Zonia!"

"No, mother. Please—oh, I don't want—"

"Do as you're told! Get in there!"

With the word, the woman, who was a mere impostor in claiming the title of "mother," seized hold of Zonia, and started to bundle her into the house.

The poor girl began to struggle, then desisted. No—no, she could not resist! She must remember that this was one of her own parents. Unhappy girl that she was to know no better ones!

In a trembling, unstrung state—ready to burst into tears of crazy despair—she found herself standing in the dim hall, whilst the door was hastily slammed shut. Click! went a key in the lock—awful sound for Zonia to hear. Still more awful was the look she had to meet in the eyes of—"mother"!

"Now, let's see what all the trouble is about," came angrily, as a finger ripped open the envelope of the note. "Mrs. Sarkey sent you with this!"

"Yes—mother. And I don't understand! How does she come to know you? Why has she—"

"Quiet, whilst I read this!"

Then the crafty mother of Miriam-Loveless gave her frowning eyes to the note.

Its contents were not calculated to appease her



THAT PORTRAIT AGAIN! Miriam broke off in the middle of a sentence, and stared at a picture on the wall which had caught her attention. It was a portrait of Zonia—the same portrait that had been exhibited at Barncombe!

anger. In the ill-written message, Mrs. Sarkey had bluntly said that she was sending Zonia along with it, and would Mrs. Jarvis—the name by which the showman and his wife knew Mrs. Loveless—please see after the girl? For, said Mrs. Sarkey, they couldn't be bothered any more with her, never mind what money might be dangled before their eyes.

Mrs. Loveless crushed up the note savagely as she finished reading, and glared at poor Zonia.

"So that's where you've been all this time, is it? Going about the country with a travelling circus! When you ran away from school—"

"Yes, I sought shelter in one of the vans. And Mrs. Sarkey was kind to me. She had pity on me—"

"Oh, indeed!" The crafty woman could not help giving a jeering laugh, although she did not want Zonia to guess that the circus couple had really been paid to "have pity" on her.

"Well, I can tell you this, my girl," Mrs. Loveless spoke on, affecting great indignation. "You have exhausted the pity those people have had for you. And that's why you have been sent along this evening—back to me, your own mother, don't forget it!"

"I want to know how Mrs. Sarkey knew that you are my mother, and that you were living here?" Zonia exclaimed desperately. "I can't understand! There is something in this—"

"Bah! You want your ears boxed for your impudence," blustered Mrs. Loveless. "Your father and I have not been staying on in this district without keeping our eyes open. We spotted you at the circus—"

"Yet just now you spoke as if you hadn't known what had become of me!"

"Hold your tongue! I was not meaning, just now, that we didn't know where you were. I let out at you, as you deserve, for having had the sauce to run away to avoid me and your father.

We've known for three days that you were with the circus," Mrs. Loveless rushed on deceitfully. "And we let Mrs. Sarkey know that as soon as you seemed to be sick of the life—as soon as you'd learnt a lesson—she was to send you home to us!"

All this was plausible enough, and Zonia's only answer was:

"I was not sick of the life—at least, I didn't want to come back—"

"Then the Sarkeys have got sick of you—same thing! You are under my roof now, my girl, and here you stay! Your father will be in presently. Take care to show him proper respect, or else—"

"Respect!" Zonia cried out, remembering the rascality in the man's eyes; and suddenly she burst into tears.

"Oh, let me go—let me go away again! I don't want—"

"Stop that snivelling!"

"I can't bear to be with you both—I can't!" was Zonia's agonised cry, whilst she turned to the wall and sobbed her heart out. "I would be a proper daughter to you if I could. But there is something—I can't—I can't!"

"Maybe there's such a thing as teaching!" jeered the merciless woman. "I can tell you this—there's the law! You run away again, my girl, from your own parents that have proved their right to you by the papers you were shown! The police will lock you up! Stop crying like that, and come with me!"

Zonia dropped shaking hands from her tear-wet cheeks, and stood gazing shrinkingly at the owner of that bullying voice. She felt she wanted to scream; there was a sense of being in awful peril, as well as in such a tragic plight.

"You'll come upstairs, and there you'll stay for the present!" her supposed mother went on harshly. "Just you try running away, or any other tricks, and see what you'll get! Go on, up with you!"

Zonia obeyed, reserving for the moment the spirited warning that she was ready to voice. As had been the case once before, it agonised her to think of herself as starting a sheer conflict—a trial of strength between herself and her own mother!

So, with the tears still flowing fast, she resignedly climbed some dingy stairs to the first landing. Mrs. Loveless, following closely, signed to her to go higher still—for this had been a farmhouse at one time, and there was an attic or so on the floor above.

Into one of these attics—tiny-windowed, and with one side of the room taking the slope of the roof—Zonia found herself a few moments later, along with her supposed mother. There was scarcely any furniture, and Mrs. Loveless said, curtly,

"I'll have to fetch up a few more things for you. The whole house isn't half-furnished—we couldn't afford to rent it if it was anything of a place. You've got poor parents, Zonia, just remember!"

She paused a while.

"And now, before I leave you," the woman wound up, backing to quit the room, "remember this, too, Zonia! The more you kick against making your life with me and your father, the more we shall force the Bartons to pay us to let you go back to them! So, if you are all against letting them pay us anything—"

"And I am against it, as much as ever!" Zonia exclaimed passionately. "It would be a wicked swindle, a cruel abuse of their kindness!"

"All right, my girl! Then it's up to you," sneered the woman, "to put up with us, and the life we ask you to lead!"

She was on the point of withdrawing, when Zonia burst out spiritedly:

"I make no promise! If I feel that it's best for me to run away again, I shall do so!"

"You do, that's all!" was the threatening retort. "If that's your mood, my girl, then—Hark! Someone knocking below! Just keep quiet, Zonia, or you'll get it from me by and by."

So saying, Mrs. Loveless sharply backed out of the attic, and drew the door shut, and the key turned in the lock—snap!

Then, feeling sure that Zonia could do nothing for herself for the present, however desperate she might feel, the woman hurried downstairs to answer the knock at the door.

And there, in the trellised porch, stood another girl—Mrs. Loveless's own daughter right enough, this time—the girl, Miriam Loveless!

Booked for Morocco.

THAT night Miriam felt free from all worry when she was going to bed in her beautiful little room at Cliffedge Bungalow.

From the very depths of dejection she had risen to the highest state of jubilation. It was all right! Mother had got hold of Zonia, and was going to take good care that the girl played them no tricks!

This was what Miriam had found out, of course, by calling at Brookbridge on her way home that evening. Now she felt she could do a joy-dance round the bed-room, things were going so well.

Trust mother and father to keep a good hold on Zonia, and keep her from ever standing face to face with Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow! For it was as much to the future interests of mother and father

as it was to Miriam's own that the Spenlows should never trace their long-lost daughter.

Miriam loitered over her undressing. She was in the mood to admire herself a good deal in the glass, and fancy herself as already grown up—such a grand young lady, with all the Spenlows' wealth to keep her beautifully dressed, and to give her, oh, such a glorious life!

There was just one part about it all at present that she did not like.

Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow had decided to send her to Morcove School!

Indeed, arrangements had already been made, and to-morrow morning Miriam was under orders to be off to school at half-past eight!

"Yes," she suddenly scowled to herself, whilst she went on with her undressing, "school again, when I thought I was going to manage to do without any more beastly lessons! And Morcove, of all schools!"

Then suddenly she cheered up again.

Never mind, she would manage to have a jolly good time at Morcove! After all, she was only to be a day girl, so she would not be bound by rules that applied to boarders. And, of course, she could stay away whenever she liked—only a case of getting round Mrs. Spenlow!

From this, it was a quick stage to thinking that it would be great fun, carrying on in high and mighty fashion at the school. Those girls—she would show them!

"How many of them have ever done a thing like this, I wonder?" she grinned, getting out a cigarette-case, about which Mrs. Spenlow knew nothing. "They want me to show them a thing or two! Me—Miriam Loveless! The girl who is going to inherit all the Spenlows' money some day! And as for that Zonia—bah!"

Slipping a cigarette between her lips, she lit it at the candle, and puffed away, smiling at her own daring.

Her bed-room window was wide open, and the night breeze would keep the room clear of smoke, so she had no fear of the reek of tobacco reaching Mrs. Spenlow's nostrils. Mr. Spenlow was up in town on business, which made conditions all the easier for Miriam.

She was in her silk pyjamas by the time the cigarette was three-parts finished. Standing at the open casement, she took a few more whiffs, then pitched the end out of the window.

Far off in the moonlight could be glimpsed a portion of the great schoolhouse of Morcove. There were no lighted windows that Miriam could see, and she thought disgustedly:

"All in bed by now, and fast asleep, I suppose. Never mind, I shall be a day girl—aha! Won't they envy me, too! Wish I could find a few girls at the school ready to be up to any lark. Then I could make up my own giddy set!"

And so, at last, she went to bed, and closed her eyes in sounder sleep than a girl so false-hearted ever deserved to enjoy.

Long past midnight, however, she was awakened by a most unusual commotion for that lonely part.

Suddenly she was wide awake and lifting her head from the pillow to hear a steady rumbling of numerous vehicles along the main road that came within a few hundred yards of the bungalow.

What did it mean?

In a flash she realised. The circus!

On the road again was Sarkey's Stupendous Circus. Once again dark night was finding the straggling procession wending its way across the

countryside, to draw delighted audiences in this town or that, many miles away.

So then, thought Miriam, even if Zonia had not been torn from the life of the circus in such a sudden, dramatic manner, after this there would have been very little risk of her being seen about in places where the Morcove girls were likely to come face to face with her.

"But she is even safer out of the way, where she is to-night!" the heartless daughter of heartless parents meditated exultantly. "Mother has told me what she will do, if the girl is ever any trouble. And I know what mother is—where money is concerned!"

Gradually the steady rumble of the vans and wagons died away in the distance. Miriam slept again. The girls of Morcove School were sleeping. Sybil Lemur, in the jolting caravan that held no Zonia to-night—and why Zonia was gone needed a better explanation, it seemed to the circus-rider, than the one Mrs. Sarkey had offered—even Sybil was sleeping now.

But as for Zonia herself—was she asleep, poor girl, all alone as she was in that wretched attic of the lonely old farmhouse?

Sleep! How could she know a moment's sleep to-night, when Fate had served her all so cruelly once again?

Miriam Makes a "Friend."

WITH her mind made up that she would not allow herself to be treated like the rest of the girls, Miriam sauntered up to the porch of Morcove School next morning with a very grand air.

A good many scholars were on hand to witness her first appearance as an enrolled member of the school. However, before any of those who knew her could run to give her a well-meant greeting, Miriam found Miss Redgrave meeting her in the porch.

"Good-morning, Miriam?" the popular Fourth Form mistress said genially. "The headmistress has just been saying you need not report to her until twelve o'clock. She would rather I gave a few minutes, before morning classes begin, to making you feel at home."

"That's quite all right!" Miriam said disdainfully. "I am no stranger to school, you know."

Miss Redgrave did not fail to sense the new girl's intention to be haughtily insolent. It seemed a pity, however, to start by calling Miriam to order. After all, a week or two amongst the other girls might be expected to take the non-sense out of her.

"I have been thinking what study I can put you in, Miriam. It is rather a puzzle, because—"

"Study? I don't want any study!" the day girl exclaimed sharply. "I shall be off home every day as soon as—"

"It is Mrs. Spenlow's own particular request, Miriam, that you should be treated exactly as a boarder, with the mere difference that you go home to sleep. That is to say, you will do preparation at the school, and dine at midday with us, and—"

"That is not the sort of arrangement I expected!" protested Miriam impudently.

"That is the arrangement, anyhow," the youthful mistress rejoined blandly. "So come with me upstairs, Miriam. I propose to put you in a study occupied by two of the very nicest girls in our Form. Madge Minden and Tess Trelawney are the two. You have met them, I think?"

"Bother them!" was what Miriam said—to

herself—as she sulkily accompanied Miss Redgrave upstairs.

It was that time of hurry-scurry in the school, just before first assembly, and the two had to move aside constantly on the stairs or landing to avoid being run down, as it were, by some high-spirited scholar who was simply hurling herself downstairs.

Miss Redgrave always treated these skirmishes as welcome evidence of the happy spirit prevailing in the school. Miriam, who wanted to be grown up before her time, curled a lip in scorn. No, these were not the sort of girls to smoke on the quiet, and long to go to a dance every night, and a matinee every afternoon! Bah, how sickening it was! But she would be a law unto herself right enough.

"There, Miriam," said Miss Redgrave good-humouredly, as she threw open a study door, "isn't this a nice study for you? And you already know these two girls, so you will soon feel quite at home."

Madge and Tess had kept about in the study since breakfast, having been told that it was proposed to put the day girl in with them. In common with Betty Barton and others, the couple had never taken to Miriam. But they were too sporting to be lacking in cordiality.

"We have cleared our things up from over there, so as to make room for you," Madge said in her quiet, well-bred tone after Miss Redgrave had gone. "Do you think you'll be able to manage at that end of the table?"

"It's not very nice," Miriam had no hesitation in declaring, with proud disgust. "I don't mean my being stuck in with you, but my having to be treated as a boarder! I thought—"

And there she broke off abruptly, her mouth remaining wide open as she stared at one of the many examples of Tess's clever work with the brush and palette that adorned the walls.

A portrait of Zonia! "The" portrait—the same one that had been exhibited recently at the Barncombe Art Show!

It was a surprise both startling and irritating to Miriam.

In a flash her mind went back to the fateful day that had seen the very beginning of all the desperate scheming to keep Zonia Moore out of the Spenlows' lives.

"You know who that is, of course?" Madge smiled. As for Tess, if only because her work seemed to be coming up for discussion, she quietly decamped.

"That is the same picture, Miriam," Madge continued, "that so took the fancy of Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow when it was exhibited. It—"

"Oh, yes, I know all about that! By the way," Miriam asked, with studied carelessness, "you have still no news of Zonia Moore?"

"None. It is awfully sad and worrying. We girls would give anything to know what has become of her. And isn't it strange, Miriam," Madge wound up, intending to be off now, "how keenly interested in that girl Zonia your people, the Spenlows, are? After seeing that picture at the show, it was just as if they had recognised someone they knew!"

"Yes, well, she—the girl has an interesting face," Miriam said adroitly.

"A very beautiful face, with that touch of the gipsy in her raven-black hair and dark eyes," murmured Madge, taking a wistful look at the picture as she opened the door to depart. "Poor Zonia! One way and another, what a strange life hers has been!"

She added, with a parting smile, ignoring Miriam's sulky air:

"Well, I will leave you to it!" and went out.

Then Miriam Loveless could do nothing but stand still, to stare at the beautiful portrait with eyes full of hate.

It maddened her to think that every time she came into this study, there the portrait would be. Zonia's face, gazing out of the canvas; a living likeness, and in the eyes such an expression as Miriam was never going to see without a twinge of her guilty conscience!

If—if it had not been for all the successes that had attended the desperate plotting and scheming, where would the living subject of that portrait have been to-day?

Where else, but along with loving parents who, from the first little clue that the canvas itself had given them, would surely have found their long-lost daughter in this one-time gipsy girl!

But there was more than the irritating thought that Zonia's lifelike image was always to be waiting to meet one's eyes in this study.

Suddenly Miriam went whiter than ever in her handsome face, as she realised that the Spenlows would certainly come to the school to see the study she had been given, and so they would see the portrait again. It would be there, to keep them in mind of the girl whose features were so intriguing.

"It must not be there!" Miriam suddenly resolved fiercely, standing with hands clenched in front of the picture. "It must go, if I myself have to destroy it! Somehow or other, I must—Bother! Is that bell ringing for assembly? I suppose so, and I'll have to go down!"

With a stamping step she crossed to the door and wrenched it open. Then guilty conscience made her pause and look back again at the appealing picture.

Those sad dark eyes—how they seemed to gaze accusingly! Bother the picture! It would have to be destroyed for ever somehow. Impossible to let it remain in existence! Hadn't it done enough mischief already?

"Hallo! Morning! You're Miriam Loveless, aren't you?"

Here was a voice, all at once, that was to Miriam's liking; a voice with not so much precious refinement in it. She whipped her gaze from the portrait, to turn and look at the girl who had halted to greet her on the way past the study door.

"Morning!" said Morocco's new day girl. "Yes, I'm Miriam Loveless. I don't think I've ever met you before?"

"No, you haven't, for the very simple reason," grinned the other girl, "that I don't mix with the ones you have been acquainted with so far. I have heard all about you, though. I'm Cora Grandways!"

This was brought out with the same sort of vicious pride in which Miriam herself liked to indulge. She had no hesitation in grinning back at the grinning Cora. Instinctively, each seemed to know the other's character. Each was thinking: "Here's the sort for me!"

"I have often seen you, anyhow," said Miriam. "You ride that motor-bike like mad along the Barncombe Road? That's my idea of fun; not—"

"Not piffing tennis, eh, and hockey in the winter?" sniggered Cora. "I say, have you got to swot in a study, like a boarder? I thought that you, as a day girl—"

"It's sickening!" grimaced Miriam. "Still, who cares? Rules can be made. They can also be broken. I mean to have an easy time—do as I like, anyhow."

"Until you get pulled up by our wonderful Form captain!" was Cora's chuckling rejoinder. "You have sampled Betty Barton, of course? And all her set? Hardly your sort, I imagine?"

"My sort! I was only saying to myself overnight, there didn't look like being one girl I could chum with. But you—you really do seem all right."

"The chum for me," Cora said, holding herself up to impress the new girl with her tall, slim figure and general air of grandeur, "is a girl who says 'Hang discipline!'"

"Just what I always say!" Miriam laughed delightedly. "Your people have heaps of money, I take it?"

"Oh, heaps! If ever I want to have a spree, money is never lacking."

"I am so glad!" commented Miriam. "It's

"I'm game!" grinned Miriam. "You have a nerve, I can see!"

To reach the Grandways sisters' study they had to go round a corner at this far end of the long corridor. As Cora threw wide the door, Miriam saw a rather younger girl just on the point of coming away to go downstairs.

"My sister Judy," Cora threw out; and Miriam divined at once that no love was lost between the two. There was about Judith Grandways an air of nervous tension, hinting at the bullied life with which she had to put up from her very domineering sister.

Judith vanished, after giving a nod in passing to Miriam, who now flounced down into the easy-chair to which she had been waved. Cora slammed shut the door, and chuckled.

"There we are! I can easily make excuses, so don't be afraid!"

"Oh, I am not afraid!" Miriam said, lolling back. "I like this room; it's nice and out of the way. Ever get a cigarette on the quiet here?"



JUST TOO LATE! "Good-evening," began Betty as Sybil came to the door of the caravan. "Is Beth Jackson about, please?" "No, she is away," answered Sybil. "I can't say how long she will be." She noticed that the schoolgirls' faces fell at her words.

rotten to be surrounded with girls who are strictly allowed. I'm a sort of adopted daughter of the Spentlows—you know that, of course. They've piles of money. Don't make much show with it, worse luck; still—the money's there!"

"We ought to get on together, you and I!"

"Don't you think we shall?"

"I'm sure we shall. I say, I do like that pearl necklace you are wearing," Cora said. "Mine's real pearls, too. Some girls have the most awful imitations."

"May I see that wrist-watch?" Miriam sweetly returned. "How lovely! Platinum, isn't it?"

"Yes; costs more than gold. Some girls only have—"

"I know; it's just awful to see the things they wear. But there, if their parents have to look twice at every shilling, what can you expect?" sneered Miriam. "That bell—"

"First lessons," grimaced Cora. "Look here, though, don't go down yet. Come and see my study. We'll go in to class late, together, and let the Form see that we've chummed up, you and I!"

"I have smoked in here before now," Cora boasted, with her wide grin. "And I've often thought what fun a set of really sporty girls could have, with this for their snuggery."

There was a pause. Cora had now sat down with more abandon than elegance. She and Miriam looked across at each other, and felt very pleased. They were silently taking stock of each other's good clothes. Cora's were perhaps the costlier stockings; but Miriam had shoes just a shade smarter.

The two girls wore "a pair," that was certain. The only difference was that Cora had very rich parents, who delighted in the flashiness of her always handsome appearance, whilst Miriam was quite a disappointment to the Spentlows, nowadays, because she was not turning out as they had hoped.

Suddenly, when the pair had been talking together again for five minutes, they heard someone coming round the passage corner.

Then the door opened, and a girl looked into the room. It was Betty Barton.

"Oh, Miriam, I thought I heard you in here talking! I have been sent up to look for you. Cora, you ought not to be hanging about up here, either. Miss Redgrave—"

"That for Miss Redgrave!" Cora sprang up to say, snapping her fingers. "Run away, teacher's favourite—ha, ha, ha!"

Betty kept her temper, in spite of the abominable insult it was to call her by that odious name. "You would try to be funny, of course, in front of a new girl, Cora Gr—"

"And you—you would make haste, of course, to show off your precious authority!" snapped Cora.

"Do I ever look in here unless I am compelled?" was Betty's prompt retort. "Miriam, you'll come along down with me?"

"I never hurry myself for anyone!" was the insolent remark, with which Miriam shamelessly declared herself to be on the side of Cora Grandways. "I'll come—when I want to!"

Betty frowned now. She was the last girl in the world to show off as captain of the Form. But she had to back up the authority of the mistress.

"I'd not take that line here, if I were you, Miriam. It won't answer. Now, don't make it awkward for me and bad for yourself. I'm not going back to repeat what you said. Be fair, then, and do as you are asked!"

"By the Form captain, don't forget!" Cora tittered; and she swept Betty a mocking bow. "Oh, run away and play! I'll answer for Miriam!"

Then, to see Betty still standing there made the Grandways girl suddenly fly into a passion of malice.

"Clear out, when I tell you!" Cora fairly hissed, and she rushed at Betty to bundle her from the room; but that girl stood like a rock and calmly sent her vixenish enemy spinning.

"What! Did you see that, Miriam?" Cora hissed incitingly. "She thinks she is entitled to stay around until you go! You are in custody—ha, ha, ha! Come on, out with her—the two of us together!"

Next second the new girl, who had only been

half an hour in the school, was actually uniting with Cora to pitch Betty out.

Two on to one! Needless to say, the Form captain's most strenuous resistance could count for little when the odds were like that.

Out of the room she was bundled, in a fashion as unceremonious and humiliating for her as Cora and her kindred spirit could make it. Betty, in fact, was simply hurled into the passage, and then the door was closed upon her with a loud, defiant slam!

"Ha, ha, ha!" she heard both girls shrilling, rather hysterically, as she picked herself up and shook herself to rights. "Who cares for the captain?"

Betty was deathly pale—not from the humiliation of the incident, but with the distress of mind it caused her, to know what a sinister alliance this was. One that could only mean trouble for the Form as a whole.

"That Miriam!" she exclaimed disgustedly, as she walked away. "None of us ever have cared for her. And now—"

She could not help heaving a bitter sigh.

"Pity, it seems to me, that she has come to Morcove! To think that whilst a girl of that stamp is having so much done for her, she doesn't seem to appreciate it a bit. How different from Zonia!" was Betty's sudden emotional murmur. "Zonia did all she could to be a credit to her school, and those who were bringing her up. Which only makes it so much sadder to-day she is no longer at school, but is—where, I wonder? Where?"

Ah, where indeed?

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

How different, indeed, is Miriam from Zonia! And to think that, through the plotting of Miriam and her parents, Zonia, who ought now to be experiencing the joys of a mother's love, is a virtual prisoner in the hands of her enemies! You must not miss next week's splendid complete tale, which is entitled: "When Morcove Was Amazed!"



Camp Gadgets.

CAMPING-TIME will soon be with us once more. Those who have never before experienced the joys and delights of sleeping in the heart of the country or the seaside, of breathing the purest air, and of seeing Nature at her very best, will find that they have many things to learn if they would obtain the fullest enjoyment out of their holiday.

Even old campers forget how wet the grass can become in the hot summer-time. There is always dew and damp about. You quickly find it out if you lay stockings and boots or other articles of clothing all night on the grass itself.

One of the most useful gadgets I know of for drying things during camp can be made by any Guide at a cost of a few pence. It is a sort of camp clothes-horse. You need two broomsticks, half a dozen brass dresser-hooks, and three straight canes.

With a sharp knife, whittle off the end of each

broomstick, so that the pointed end can be thrust easily and tightly into the earth. Screw three dresser-hooks, at intervals of six or eight inches from each other, in each broomstick.

When you've fixed this gadget up in camp, you lay the canes across upon the hooks. Choose a sunny and windy spot, of course. On this camp clothes-horse, stockings, towels, and, indeed, anything wet, can be hung out to dry. It takes up such small space that it is well worth the trouble of making and carrying with you on your camping holiday.

A Few Camp Tips.

IF you would remain good friends with the farmer or the owner of the land on which you are holding your summer camp, remember these little things.

Don't leave waste-paper lying about. If the wind carries it into a green field, it can spoil a beautiful scene. Farmers and Nature lovers are annoyed at the sight of scraps of paper just as much as they are at seeing empty milk-tins, jam-jars, bottles, and similar articles strewn about a camping-ground.

Don't climb trees unless you are given special permission. Wild flowers look prettier growing in the hedgerows than they do stuck in a ginger-beer bottle.