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Another Dramatic Complete Story of Betty Barton and Her Friends!

WHEN MORCOVE WAS HOMELESS!



By MARJORIE STANTON.



Driven from their own school, forced to evacuate the temporary premises in which they had sought refuge! That is the plight of the Morcove schoolgirls in the following fine story, which will grip your interest from the very first line!

The Enemy Pays a Call.

"ATTEND to your work, Polly! No looking out of the window, please!"

The admonition came in Miss Redgrave's usual tone of great gentleness, along with a faint smile. And Polly Linton smiled back, as she obediently flopped down into her seat in class.

"Sorry, Miss Redgrave!"

"Sowwy, bai Jove!" Paula Creel simpered under her breath. "You look it, Polly, you wascal. How you can have finished your wovk already, bai Jove, beats me! Now I—"

"No talking, Paula, please!"

"Oh—er—pway excuse me!" was the very polite entreaty of aristocratic Paula. "I was, howevah, only wuminating aloud, Miss Wedgwave!"

Some of the other girls tittered at this. And Paula, sublimely unconscious of having said the fatuous thing, sighed gravely as she resumed the all-too-exasperating bit of classwork that was ending the morning's lessons.

Polly whispered behind a hand to Betty Barton.

"Betty, you should have seen—out of the window just then! They are here again!"

"They, Polly?"

"Those South American girls, the Lupinas. Dressed up to the nines, as usual, and—"

"No talking, Polly!"

"Sorry, Miss Redgrave! I was, howevah, only—what's the word—ruminating—ruminating aloud!"

This was too much for the class in general and its chummy mistress. Quite a peal of laughter went up, and as the class-room clock pointed to three minutes to twelve, the equally amused mistress did not think it worth while trying to restore order.

"Well, girls, you have worked hard this morn—worked very well, considering you are not at your rightful school, but only carrying on under such makeshift conditions. Put your books away now, and—"

"Oh, hooway!" was Paula's beaming outburst, whilst Naomer Nakara promptly shut her books.

"Ooo, yes, queek, queek, come on! Polly, what did I hear you say just then? The Lupina girls—"

"They've had the cheek to come here again!" Polly said aloud, whilst she boisterously cleared her own desk. "And I feel I'd like to go out and ask them how they dared! Let them stay at the schoolhouse that their horrid parents have turned us out of!"

Miss Redgrave was already departing, with a few books under her arm, so the girls had no need to put any restraint upon their speech now. A passionate exclamation came from Betty Barton as she jumped up to go off along with her chums.

"Jose and Zilla here again, are they? It can't be that they want to see us. We gave them such a warm reception when they were here last time."

"Yes, wather! Haw, haw, haw! Geals, they made a wather pweccipitate depawture that time, what? Accelewated, bai Jove, by our fowcible wemarks—yes, wather!"

"Whatever they have come about this time, they have come at the wrong moment!" Polly declared with a grim smile. "They should have timed their visit for when we were in class—not just leaving it! Who's coming, girls?"

Those who constituted the Study 12 coterie were already surging to the door. But a good many other girls, looking eager at the news that the Lupina girls were on the premises, also made a rush from the class-room. Amongst those who stayed behind, there was one girl who sang out derisively:

"Mind you do as the captain says! Bah, what a lot of silly sheep—aren't they, girls?"

The derisive speaker said this to those who were staying behind with her. It was obvious, from the looks of these girls, that they were

taking sides with the jeering one against Betty Barton and the rest.

"But I wonder why those Lupina girls have come?" Grace Garfield exclaimed moodily, addressing herself to the scoffer.

And is there any need to say that the scoffer was Cora Grandways?

"Well, in a jiffy, we'll go and see," grinned Cora, holding her handsome head very high with pride at having, at least, a small "following" of other girls. "We don't want to mix with Betty and the rest, do we?"

"It may be that Mr. Lupina has sent them with some letter—a sort of ultimatum to Miss Somerfield," conjectured Ella Elgood, another of the girls who had got tired of the stand the school was making against Manuel Lupina. "Let's hope so, anyhow; and let's hope, too, that Miss Somerfield gives way at last!"

"Yes, anything to end this," grumbled another malcontent. "I'm fed up!"

"So am I!" another agreed glumly. "It's out of the question for us to go on like this! Miss Somerfield—of course, one feels sorry for her. Still—"

"Why should we suffer when she could so easily save us? Exactly," Cora Grandways said fiercely.

"Thank goodness, you girls, at least, have come round to my way of thinking. From the very first I've seen the madness of trying to carry on a school in a rotten old house of this sort! We want our old school back, not to be kept here—"

"Worse than soldiers in barracks; far worse!" complained Grace. "No playing fields; the kitchen so old-fashioned and muddy that they can hardly serve us with a proper meal."

"And then look at this for a 'class-room!' grimaced Ella. "Oh, it's ridiculous—impossible! The others may say what they like about our wanting to give in; but—"

"There's a limit, yes!" nodded Cora. "Well, shall we come and find out what's happening now?"

From the makeshift class-room the malcontents emerged upon a hall that was much too small for the number of girls who were congregated there in a state of suppressed excitement. Most of them, as they murmured to one another, were watching a certain door that was closed—the door of the room which Miss Somerfield was using as her private study. Cora sidled up to a Fifth Form girl. It would have been no use her questioning a Fourth-Former, for none except her own small band of grumblers would speak to her now.

"Are the Lupinas in there?"

"Yes. We think they brought some letter from their father."

Cora only just saved herself from exclaiming "Good!" She dropped back a step to be amongst her fellow malcontents.

"I believe you guessed aright, Ella!" was the gleeful whisper. "It's an ultimatum, I should think. Perhaps Manuel Lupina means to—"

A sudden loud murmur of many voices—almost thunderous in its angry tone—put a sudden stop upon Cora's mischief-making tongue. The door of the private room had opened, and the South American sisters were revealed, with Miss Somerfield behind them.

"No, I decline to write an answer to your father!" she was saying spiritedly to the girls.

"He has been told before, with the approval of the school governors, that I must refuse to have any converse with him. As for the letter you

brought me—tell him it is torn to pieces and is in the wastepaper basket."

"We shall tell him all right!" was the insolent reply from Jose, the elder sister. "You like to insult us, do you? Very well, Senor Lupina will do what he threatened in the letter!"

"And what was that?" demanded a number of the Morcovians sharply, as the two sisters came mincing amongst them, noses in air. "What's the threat this time—tell us!"

"Yes, you'd better!" chorused others, looking angry. "Coming here with your father's hateful letters! It's you Lupinas who are so fond of insulting people!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, geals, heah let me get a woid with the—the wetches!" And Paula was to be seen quite strenuously pushing to the front of the throng. "Disgwaceful, that's what you are, you—"

"We do not speak with those who are below us!" Zilla announced, tossing her head. "If you had been sensible, then we might have stooped to be your friends, but—"

Yells of scorn went up from the maddened Morcovians.

"Friends—you! We wouldn't have you—"

"Bai Jove, wather not! Not at any pwice, do you heah? Geals—geals, these sisters weally are the limit."

"Turn them out!" was Polly's heated cry. "They shan't keep on coming here, to upset Miss Somerfield like this! Turn them out!"

"Yes, come on!" was the cry from all sides, and next moment Jose and Zilla found themselves jostled by the Morcovians, all seething with righteous anger.

The wonder was that the offensive South Americans got out of the makeshift schoolhouse without being roughly handled. To girls like Betty and her chums it had been an infuriating sight to see Miss Somerfield so upset once more.

Perhaps, too, the Lupina pair quite expected to be in a very dishevelled state by the time they reached the road. They were forgetting that the Morcovians had too fine a sense of fair play to set upon them in a crowd. With such a hostile mob around them, they went pale with fear as they hurried into the open air, and instead of answering all the angry cries they took care to keep tight lips.

Not until they saw a chance of bolting did they get over this fright. Then, however, realising that it was but a short run to the roadway, and that the scholars evidently did not mean to harm them, they flung up their heads again as proudly as ever. Scornfully Zilla said to her sister:

"We will not come here again, Jose—ever!"

"You had better not!" was the prompt warning from a dozen of the angered scholars. "And if you are not out of sight in two ticks—"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove—"

"Stand clear, girls—this will help them on their way perhaps!" Polly sang out, rushing up with a primed garden syringe, which she had dashed in quest of only a few moments ago. "Now then—hurry!"

With the word, Polly levelled the syringe and pushed home the piston, and loud were the peals of laughter as the Lupina girls received that "passing shower" upon their fine clothes and hats!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, queek, queek, some more, Polly—some

more!" clamoured Naomer, doing a caper of delight. "Do it again, Polly!"

But, ere it would have been possible for Polly to run back for a refill, Jose and Lupina were fairly on the run. Away they pelted, and mad enough they must have felt at the undignified figures they were cutting, the laugh being all on the side of the Morcovians. And Morcove did laugh, too!

What, however, had been the exact nature of the insulting letter which had brought the offensive pair to Sawnton House? That was the question which soon changed the girls' laughter to anxious murmuring. Now that Jose and Zilla had fled, the girls trooped back into the make-shift schoolhouse, and soon a big crowd was gathered outside Miss Somerfield's private room.

One of the scholars stepped forward at last and tapped. It was Ethel Courtway, the head girl.

"Miss Somerfield!" she entreated, raising her voice above the excited chatter. "If we could be told—"

She did not need to say more. The door opened, and again the headmistress stood revealed—their own dear Miss Somerfield; the same beloved principal as in the old days at Morcove itself, and yet—

Ah, how rapidly she was changing outwardly, under the strain and stress of her position! Her tresses seemed to grow a little whiter every day, and the comely face a little more ravaged with anxiety and grief.

The excited murmurings ceased. Morcove's scholars were stricken to a sudden sad silence as they saw their headmistress standing thus before them all, her eyes red with recent weeping!

If Only They Could Hold Out Still!

"GIRLS, I suppose you wish to be told—" "Yes, yes, Miss Somerfield! Oh, please!"

"Very well, then," the sorrowful lady resumed, after that earnest chorus had died away. "The latest example of Manuel Lupina's heartlessness is this. He has sent me word this morning that unless you all return to Morcove School within a week, under some new headmistress—"

"No, no—never!" some of the girls began to protest, in all their ardent love for her; and although she held up a hand for silence, she was too overcome for a moment to proceed.

At last:

"Unless that demand of his is met, girls, he declares he will—ah, it is too awful to have to tell you! He will at once dismantle the school, cut up the playing fields, and generally make it impossible for us ever to return to Morcove!"

"Well, then, we shall stay here!" Polly burst out, and Paula chimed in with a beaming:

"Yes, wather! Geals—"

"Ah, I know—you have given me to understand so clearly!" Miss Somerfield exclaimed in a tone of great anguish. "The school as a whole would rather endure any hardships than have me submit. But you are aware that at least some scholars are discontented."

"Shame! Shame on them!" Betty led off, and first her chums took up the cry, and then many girls of other Forms.

"Shame, whoever they are!"

"Yet I myself do not feel entitled to blame them," sighed Miss Somerfield. "Conditions have been, indeed, truly awful, here at Sawnton House. Not an hour passes but that something seems to

transpire to deepen my conviction that you should go back to Morcove, no matter what the cost to myself. And so—"

"No, Miss Somerfield! Oh, please—"

"Girls, what I say now cannot be altered. I have wavered up to now, I know. I would not have been human had I been unmoved by the appeals you loyal girls have made. But things have come to such a pass that I can no longer hesitate. I must go. I shall be gone—"

"No, no!"

"Yes, yes!" she insisted with sublime com-



AN OMINOUS SIGN! "My word, look, girls!" Polly exclaimed, pointing, and her chums halted in dismay. In the brickwork of the wall of Sawnton House was a large and dangerous-looking crack!

posure. "Within three days from now I shall be gone. I would not say so to those Lupina girls. But to you I am bound to say it. There is no help for it. The price must be paid."

There were girls crowding there who were longing to voice half-tearful cries of entreaty; but they saw that Miss Somerfield's distress was likely to be increased by any demonstration of love and loyalty. And so they kept silent.

"I cannot doubt that Manuel Lupina, in his thirst for revenge, will carry out this latest threat," the headmistress wound up sadly. "The school buildings are nothing to him—and yet they are his, to do as he likes with. He will find a savage delight in wrecking them, and then— Oh, my dear girls, I cannot bear the thought of it! No, you must go back! As for me—"

Her voice broke. With a drooping head she half-turned away, and as she slowly stepped from

the hushed throng, they heard her tearfully murmur:

"I must go!"

A moment more and she was back in her private room and the door had closed. So profoundly stirred were the girls that it was a second or two before their tongues were let loose. Even then the girlish voices were all subdued. In heavy-hearted fashion the gathering began to disperse in twos and threes, and many an eye was blurred with tears.

All that these girls had endured of late, rather than see Manuel Lupina triumph in his cruel vendetta against Miss Somerfield, was lost!

If only—oh, if only they could have prevailed upon Miss Somerfield to hold out still! But now her mind was heroically made up, and they could only admire her all the more for having formed that inflexible decision.

Because they were ready to suffer for her dear sake, she was all the more determined to suffer for theirs!

Suddenly, when most of the sad at heart girls had drifted away, one voice was heard, joking and laughing about it all.

Next second—smack! sounded somebody's hand across someone else's cheek.

"Now laugh about that!" panted Polly Linton, standing strung-up in front of Cora Grandways, after giving that ribald girl such a well-deserved slap. "You heartless, hateful cat!"

Cora was standing back a step, a hand laid on her smarting cheek. She neither spoke nor moved—for a moment. Then, with a hissed word of rage, she simply leapt at Polly.

"Oh, get away!" Polly said scornfully, and, with an adroitness that more than equalled Cora's blind fury, she sent that girl spinning.

Grace Garfield and two or three others drew towards Cora as she stood half-stupefied by the giddy thrust she had received. As for Polly, she had her chums round her instantly, walking her away.

Paula looked serious.

"Bai Jove, Polly deah, but that was wather wough, you know! I thought that something weally sewious was going to happen. But I don't know that you didn't do wight, deah. It weally was time that someone stopped that geal's winning!"

"When—when shall we be rid of her?" sighed Madge, as they made for the open air. "Would those weakling girls, Grace Garfield and the rest, ever have gone against the headmistress if Cora had not egged them on?"

The others did not answer, except with heavy sighs. To talk about Cora was only to get more maddened than ever. It was something to ameliorate, not add to, the heartache and despair that Betty & Co. were feeling at the moment.

Miss Somerfield was going to leave them! No use hoping any longer that she could be prevailed upon to stop. Three days—only three more days, and then she would be gone!

Sauntering around outside the shabby walls of Sawnton House, with no playing field to resort to, only showed how absolutely devoted to the headmistress these girls were, in that they felt utterly unconsoled by the prospect of a return to Morcove School.

There, over yonder at dear old Morcove, was everything which the heart of a schoolgirl could desire. And here—

Well, what else was Sawnton House but a mere old-fashioned mansion, never intended to house a lot of schoolgirls?

"I don't care, though!" Polly exclaimed passionately. "If the place were twice as ramshackle, I, for one, would rather be here than—Hallo! Phoe-ew!" was her sudden whistle of surprise. "My word—look girls, look!"

They all abruptly halted on a flagged pathway close to the west side of the house. It was towards the main wall of the house that Polly's outflung hand was pointing—pointing to a large and dangerous-looking crack in the brickwork.

Paula gasped with dismay:

"My gwacious, geals! Oh, help! Why—"

"I say, that's serious, isn't it?" Helen Craig breathed gravely. "Such a big crack—and it was not there yesterday."

"No, it has only just come, and that's what makes it so serious," agreed Betty, frowning. "The house must be falling to pieces—sinking at the foundations!"

"Dweadful—dweadful!" lamented Paula, sadly shaking her pretty head. "At this wate, geals, we couldn't have possibly gone on much longer heah, bai Jove! What?"

"Bother it!" sighed Tess Trelawney. "Just when we could have done with something to make things look more promising, this happens."

"Yes," grimaced Polly. "No luck about this house, that's certain. Are we to let Miss Somerfield know, in case no one else has yet told her?"

"We had better do that, certainly," Betty said regretfully. "But, oh, what a cruel shame it is!"

Miss Somerfield's arrival on the spot brought others. By the time the dinner gong went, not a girl in the school but had stood agape at the sight of that ominous fracture in the main wall. As with Betty & Co., so with other girls who had hoped against hope that the makeshift life would continue, here was something which sent the spirits lower still!

Sawnton House was unsafe!

To the malecontents, of course, this latest development was a splendid excuse for claiming that they were only right in opposing any idea of the school remaining in such quarters. They came to the dinner-tables with unshamed looks, talking loudly to one another in "What-else-could-you-expect!" tones.

Grace Garfield even rounded upon Polly, as they were all sitting down.

"Now, who is right and who is wrong?" Grace exclaimed indignantly. For she had not altogether relished being looked upon as disloyal in the spirited stand which the school in general was making. "Do you say we ought to stay on now, Polly Linton?"

"Until the roof falls in—yes!" was that girl's cool answer. "I would, anyhow."

"Pah, I've no patience!" shrugged Grace, angrily sitting down. "Did you hear that, Cora? Some of these girls are crazy!"

Cora grinned. She could afford to, knowing just how much of the trials and troubles at Sawnton House had been brought about by her mischief-working hand.

That dangerous crack in the wall—she dare not sneer about it to her fellow malecontents, but she was going to find much joy in openly telling the Tapina girls at the first possible moment.

Is the Old House Doomed?

"TEA!" cried Polly, whisking into the make-shift study towards five o'clock that afternoon with something of her usual gaiety.

"And it may as well be a good tea—"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove—"

"Since it may be the last!" Polly finished with a rueful grin. "The last at Sawnton House, that is to say."

"Oh, let's hope not!" pleaded Betty, getting out the white cloth. "Are things as black as that, Polly?"

"Bai Jove," Paula's simper interposed, "they are pretty evilical, what? That architect who has been out from Barncombe—his pewopt, they say, is not vewy cheerful!"

"Anything but," said Polly, briskly joining with Betty, Helen, and Madge in the table-laying. "At any moment the whole place may fall about our ears!"

"Wha-a-at!" yelled Paula, falling back in her easy-chair. "Hownows!"

"Like a pack of cards," Polly added, with a wink to the others that the fatuous one did not see. "Without a moment's warning—"

"Polly deah—"

"Crash! will fall the roof—"

"Polly, dwop it!"

"Drop the roof? No need to, Paula darling. It's going to drop of its own accord. Ha, ha, ha! And I jolly well don't care if I am here, either! I say, never give in and never give up!"

"Pwecisely, Polly deah. I quite agwee. At the same time—" And Paula looked at the ceiling. "Dweadful—dweadful!" she lamented. "I suppose, geals, it would wather hurt, what?"

"If the roof fell in? It would—rather!" grinned Polly. "But we are going to have tea first, anyhow."

"Thanks—thanks. It—it would be advisable," Paula said, still watching the ceiling. "Tea first, yes, wather!"

"Tea first," and Polly slammed out the bread platter, "sudden death afterwards. That's the idea. Milk, someone! Butter!"

"Polly deah," pleaded Paula, nervously sitting in the best easy-chair. "Don't speak too loudly, what? It may bring down the woof, you know. I should be vewy sowwy, Polly, if you pwecipitated the catastwophe by cweating a wumble with your voice. In mountainous distwicts, where theah are avalanches—"

"Is this a lecture?" Polly asked, meekly sitting down to hear the rest. "Go on, dear."

"Haow you can be so fwivolous, Polly when—when—Hark, the wending of timbers!"

And Paula dived for under the table.

"Ha, ha, ha!" all the other chums exploded.

"That's right, Paula; take cover!"

"You geals may laugh—"

"Thank you for your kind permission!" chuckled Polly, standing at the table to cut bread-and-butter. "Really, Paula, are you so stupid? Come out—"

"But that noise just then!"

"I merely made the table creak, dear."

"Bai Jove!" was Paula's relieved comment, whilst she started to crawl from under the table.

"I weally thought—Healp! What's that? Geals, healp, I'm stwuck dead!"

"Sorry," Polly laughed, picking up the round top of a loaf which she had dropped on to the fatuous one's head. "You do so get in the way."

"Vewy weal, if you won't be sewious," Paula

remarked gravely, getting upon her feet. "But I have a stwong pwesentiment, geals, that we are in gweater pewil than we wealise. Is the tea weady?"

"There we are!" Betty said, starting to pour it out. "If only the house were as strong as the tea—"

"My woofd, yes, wather! Haw, haw, haw!" Paula began to simper, as a cup was passed to her. "Nevah mind, it's tea, that's the gweat blessing. I am so thirsty, geals. This twying life, this pewpetual—Oh, look out!"

And once again Paula dived under the table.

"What's the matter now?" blandly inquired Polly, whilst the others simply held their sides as they laughed. "Paula, behave!"

"Wong? My chair wocked violently; the woom swam," Paula explained dolefully, coming out from her refuge again. "I weally thought the woof had dwopped in that time!"

"No, dear," Helen said sweetly. "Only Naomer taking her seat next to yours."

At this instant the door opened, and Tess Trelawney came in, along with Dolly Delane, to make up the usual study tea-party.

"Pway pwocceed to your seats quietly, you geals," warned Paula, gingerly resuming her own chair. "You wealise, I twust, we are in gweat pewil. The woof—"

"Oh, get on with your tea, duffer!" scoffed Polly. "You won't be able to drink it at all if you keep chattering."

This bit of sage advice, taken quite seriously by Paula, made her very gingerly take up her cup once more. She set her lips to it and sighed joyously.

"Ah, so wefweshing, yes, wather! Betty deah, I weally must congwatulate you on this stwong bwew. It—"

"Hark!" gasped Polly, and Paula's teacup clattered down.

"Weal, what?"

"False alarm," grinned the inveterate teaser. "As a matter of fact—Have some cake, Paula?"

"Thanks, I will."

"As a matter of fact," rattled on Polly, with another wink to imply that she was "kidding" the duffer, "if the house is to fall down it will fall in the night."

"W-w-what?" palpitated Paula, putting down her portion of cake. "Fall—in the night? Good gwacious!"

"But then; how nice," argued Polly, taking a big mouthful of bread-and-butter, "for it to happen when we are all asleep. Naomer darling, wouldn't you much prefer—"

There was a sudden check upon Polly's fippancies.

Plop! fell something heavily, right in the midst of the tea-table. A slab of plaster from the ceiling!

Up jumped the girls, after setting down their cups with a hasty clatter. With chairs pushed back, they were all gazing up at the old, discoloured ceiling, when—crash, plop, crash!—down came another huge chunk of the plaster, smashing to pieces all over the tea-table.

After one horrified look, Paula gave a yell and dived under the table.

As for the others, they stood agape, half in fear and half-amused.

"Goodness, that's done it!" came from Polly at



IN THE GRIP OF DECAY! With chairs pushed back the Morcove chums gazed anxiously towards the ceiling when, crash plop, crash! down came another huge chunk of plaster, smashing to pieces all over the tea-table!

last. "I thought it was only a joke about the house being so groggy; but—"

Crash! hurtled down another sheet of thick plaster. And they all skipped back another step.

"Geals—geals!" Paula squealed plaintively from under the table. "Is it all right?"

"No, it's all wrong."

"Howwows! Dweadful—dweadful! I hope you don't think I'm afraid," the fatuous one added, venturing a peep from her cover. "I am only taking the pwecaution to—"

Crash!

"Oh!"

Paula bobbed back like a scared rabbit into its burrow.

Then Polly laughed outright, and the mirth became infectious.

"Ha, ha, ha!" they all went off, eyeing the ruined tea-table. "Paula, do come and look!"

"Thanks—thanks, but—er—pwesently, geals—pwesently!"

Nor did Paula creep forth and rise erect until there had been such an interval as had enabled the girls to clear up most of the chaos made by the fallen plaster.

Whilst the clearing up was in progress, Naomer suddenly came out with an awed "Ooo, look!" Hers had been the first eyes to observe a zigzag crack in one of the study walls.

Paula turned pale again. And even her chums were rather less amused and a good deal more dismayed, realising that one side of the old house must be actually subsiding.

They fetched Miss Redgrave to the study, and

when she beheld the state of things a look of great anxiety overspread her face.

"Be careful, girls—"

"Yes, wather; that's what I say!" Paula burst out. "It would be so wash not to take weasonable pwecautions! Miss Wedgware, ought we geals to do any pwep this evening?"

"In here—certainly not," was the emphatic answer. "Oh, girls, how it is going to grieve me to have to report this to Miss Somerfield. Keep out of the room for the present."

With that she hurried away, working through quite a crowd which had formed outside the ruinous study.

Hastily the youthful mistress sought Miss Somerfield in the latter's private room. The distressing news was soon told, drawing from the headmistress the agitated remark:

"If only we were on the telephone! That surveyor who was here this afternoon should be called in again. How can I feel that the place is safe for another night? Someone must fetch him—take a message as quickly as possible."

She paused in her pacing to and fro to address an urgent question to the youthful mistress.

"Whom shall I send, Ruth? Our car is away on other business. There are plenty of bicycles, of course, but it is a hard ride into Barncombe."

"Let me go," Miss Redgrave herself offered promptly. "Only it occurs to me—one girl has a motor-cycle."

"Ah, yes! Cora Grandways!" the headmistress exclaimed. "I have often regretted that Cora's father would insist upon the girl having that machine at school. But now—it is urgent, and we will make use of the bicycle. Will you find Cora, please?"

Even as Miss Redgrave went from the room the headmistress sat down to dash off a note to the surveyor. Just as she was gumming up the envelope a very demure Cora tapped at the door and then entered.

"You want me, Miss Somerfield?"

"Yes, Cora. Here, this note," the headmistress said, crossing over to hand it quickly to the girl. "You have a motor-cycle, Cora; run into Barncombe with this, there's a good girl!"

"Very well, Miss Somerfield. I know what it's about, and that it is urgent. So I'll not lose a moment."

"Ah, but don't run any risks by fast driving!" was Miss Somerfield's parting cry to the double-faced girl at the door. "Take care of yourself, Cora!"

The demure and obedient look which Cora showed as she hastened away had quite an emotional effect upon the headmistress. Sighing softly after she was alone in the room, with the door closed, she murmured slowly:

"Cora—and even she seemed to be sorry for me just then; she seemed to be so glad at being called upon to help me. If I could believe that, after all, she has real good in her. Is it so, I wonder? And yet—"

The thought was there. Cora Grandways was one of the girls who were openly complaining.

Miss Somerfield sat down. Resting an elbow upon one arm-rest of the chair, she leant her head against the hand, and thus remained for a long while—thinking, thinking.

"My school—my scholars!" she suddenly moaned to herself. "And I must leave them—so soon!"

The tears gathered along her lashes and then overflowed. Her thoughts were sad, but saddest

of all, was the thought that some, at least, of her scholars should be minding so little, even though she must be gone from them soon—and gone, alas! for ever.

Such a Spree—for Cora!

"NOW look in upon the Lupina girls again!"

That was Cora Grandways' elated thought as she got astride her motor-cycle and sped off along the rough road that led past the old school to quaint Barncombe town.

Luck! She was having nothing but the best of luck. Just fancy being picked for this sudden, urgent errand to Barncombe, when she had been longing for an excuse to get away from Sawnton House now that tea was over.

At the rate Cora drove the notorious "outfit," she was soon at the handsome gates which bore Manuel Lupina's insulting notice-board—"For Sale!" No other girl except Cora could have gone past that board and up the drive to the school porch with feelings of friendship towards the Lupinas. Even Grace Garfield and the other malcontents would have scorned to do a thing like that.

But it was the old, old story where Cora was concerned. Since girls like Betty & Co. were so desperately anxious to make a firm stand against the Lupinas, Cora, of course, must be on the side of those unscrupulous wretches!

This evening the crafty girl took care not to give any blare upon the motor-horn as she drove up to the Morcove porch. Once before she had done that, with the result that her presence in the enemy camp had become known to Miss Redgrave and some of the girls, who chanced to be passing in the road. Quietly Cora now pulled up, and yet her coming was already known to the Lupina girls. Before she had time to touch the bell the porch-door was whipped open by Zilla, whilst next second Jose appeared.

"We saw you from the windows—come in!" was Zilla's welcoming cry. "Oh, this is very nice! We were just wishing for someone to talk to."

"How did you manage it?" asked Jose, contenting herself with a very friendly smile for Cora, whilst Zilla impulsively kissed the traitress scholar.

"Aha, it's the greatest possible joke!" chuckled Cora, in the free and easy tone she had come to assume when with these girls. "The rotten old place over yonder is simply falling about their ears. I've been sent with a letter—urgent!—to fetch the surveyor out again."

"What can he do?" scoffed Jose; and Cora gave her wide grin.

"Nothing, of course. This afternoon he was out at Sawnton House, inspecting. A rumour got round that he had condemned the property, but that was an exaggeration. All the same, things are looking serious."

"Then they are looking well for us!" exulted Zilla. "How nice of you to bring such good news, Cora. Will you come and sit down? We have some lovely chocolates, or if you prefer the cigarette—yes?"

"I don't mind!" laughed Cora, going with the two grandly dressed girls to a sitting-room. "I ought not to stay, you know."

"Then, of course, you will!" was Zilla's laughing rejoinder. "We do like you so much, Cora, and you must not forget; some day you are going to spend a holiday with us in London."

"As a reward," murmured Jose impressively. "That is a promise, you remember."

Cora sat down in free and easy fashion, and whilst Zilla brought across a big box of delicious chocolates, Jose approached with the silver cigarette casket. In a few moments, Cora had a huge cream chocolate in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

"School would be all right," she commented with a grin, "if one were allowed to do this sort of thing. Are your parents at home, you girls?"

Even as the question was put the door slowly opened, and the wife of Manuel Lupina glided into the room. Cora hurriedly put aside her cigarette and stood up, wishing now that she was anywhere but here. She liked to be friendly with the girls, without having anything to do with the mother or father.

"Ah, Cora Grandways, this is a pleasure, yes!" the South American woman exclaimed, her rather fat face all smiles. "It means you have news, I hope—good news for us?"

"Mother, she says that Sawnton House is falling down!" cried Zilla gaily. "Cora has been sent to fetch some silly architect—bah! As if he could do any good!"

"I can feel no pity for those who are at Sawnton House," the woman remarked, suddenly frowning. "Whatever happens, Miss Somerfield will be to blame. The school could have been back here at Morcove if my husband's terms had been accepted. You are aware of that?"

"Yes, Mrs. Lupina. And there are several girls now who think Miss Somerfield has been selfish in hesitating so long."



A MIDNIGHT ALARM! The door was flung open and Miss Redgrave, a flaming candle in her hand, came into the dormitory. "Girls, you must get up and dress at once," she said with agitation. "We dare not stay in the house another hour!"

"From what I hear, she will hesitate no more!" muttered Manuel Lupina's wife fiercely. "She will have to give up her valuable post as head-mistress; and so, after all, my husband will have had his revenge!"

She said it without the least shame, and Cora realised that there was something in the nature of these foreigners that made it seem perfectly right to harbour vindictive feelings.

"It will be a great joy to us," the woman resumed calmly, taking a seat, "to have satisfaction at last. One way or another, my husband had to be avenged upon the Somerfield family. If he could have struck at the brother he would have done so. But Jack Somerfield is at the other end of the world."

"He always is roaming in foreign parts," put in Cora. "He lives for adventure."

"So? Well, he will be sorry, perhaps, when he returns to this country to find how his sister has had to pay the penalty for his own evil. How do you think Miss Somerfield will like having to give up her proud position, Cora Grandways? Not much, eh?"

"She is bound to be very sick indeed. In a way, I feel sorry for her."

"Ah, no, you must not say that!" demurred Zilla, sitting down beside Cora to put an arm about her. "You are one of us—yes?"

"Do not expect too much of the girl, Zilla, my child," the mother murmured discreetly. "She is not one of us—no. It is simply that she does not take well to school life. Ah, I can understand!"

The fact that Mrs. Lupina had so accurately fathomed Cora's discontented, rebellious nature did not make the girl like her any better. Now that the mother was here, Cora was anxious to get away, and suddenly she made the crafty suggestion:

"My sidecar will take two passengers comfortably, Mrs. Lupina. Could your daughters come with me for a run into Barncombe?"

In a few moments it was settled, with such delight had both girls hailed the proposal. They ran up to get their things on, whilst Cora went out to get the "outfit" ready for driving away.

"If we are seen by anyone belonging to Sawnton House," she remarked lightly, as the sisters fitted themselves into the roomy sidecar, "I can easily say I was merely giving you a lift."

So easily could she say it, although it would be a falsehood! Well might Betty & Co. sigh amongst themselves that the day might come when Cora Grandways would no longer be the bane and disgrace of the school!

Away they rode, Cora daringly setting the pace right from the start. Mile after mile along the old familiar road to Barncombe they sped, the engine sometimes roaring at such a high speed that the girls had to shout if they wanted to exchange remarks.

"Cora, in the silly old town there is at least a cinema," Zilla sang out towards the journey's end. "Must you turn back?"

"Oh, no! I can always have engine trouble!"

The sisters laughed at that.

"All right, then," grinned Zilla. "We go to the cinema!"

Cora set them down outside the placarded picture-house, then drove on alone to the surveyor's office. It was closed, and the office hours, painted on the door, told her that she had just missed him before he went for the day.

"Is it Mr. Marcross you want?" some woman

who was cleaning down the stairs asked the schoolgirl. "I'm afraid you won't get him now. He lives at Exeter, and comes out by car three days a week."

"Then what's his address at Exeter?"

The woman could not say, but she thought that "Mr. Marcross, Exeter," would find him.

"Oh, all right, I'll post this on to him; he'll get it first thing in the morning," Cora said, displaying the note.

Had she chosen to give her shrewd mind properly to the errand she was upon, she would certainly have thought of phoning to Exeter. But she was thinking more of the Lupina girls and the cinema show than of the errand she was upon. It sufficed, for her, to take the letter to the town post-office, readdress and stamp it, and shoot it into the box.

"That's that!" she commented to herself carelessly. "And now I'm free to do as I like!"

So, having driven her outfit round to the cycle store that was attached to the picture-house, she got a ticket for one of the best seats and went inside.

As she came groping in the darkness to where the Lupina girls were sitting, they received her with delighted whispers. She sat down between the two of them, and experienced all the old vain pleasure in feeling how they snuggled against her. Their demonstrative affection was just to her liking.

Zilla's delicate fingers rustled open a carton of chocolates, and Cora was soon nibbling another delicious confection, whilst the picture flickered upon the screen, more or less delighting the very thin audience. The errant schoolgirl and her South American cronies sat through an American play, and a humorous film; then they had had more than enough.

"Bah, it is so silly," was Zilla's comment all at once. "We will go, yes?"

"High time, too!" was Cora's rather dismayed thought, as she came out with her cronies to find the deep dusk almost giving place to dark night. Only now was she suddenly remembering that she had no carbide for her lamps!

"If we get away sharp, I can get you to Morocco before it's quite dark," she said, taking care not to appear as concerned as she felt. "But the rest of the way for me will be a bit risky."

"You must not take the risk," Jose said with a smile that had a special meaning in it. "You had better get as far as Morocco, and then—"

"Stay the night with us—yes, splendid!" Zilla took her sister up elatedly. "We shall love it! Cora, you will do that, yes?"

"But—Oh, I'll see! I—How am I to let them know I'm stopped half-way home to Sawnton House? I must let them know."

"That is easy," smiled Jose. "We shall send a servant on foot with a message. It will do the servant good," she added in a tone that hinted that the Lupina servants were so many slaves!

The longing to stay with the sisters for the night took a strong hold upon Cora. Anything for variety, change, sensation! That was her creed always. Driving home with them along the fast-darkening road, she fiercely resolved that she would do this thing, and both the consequences!

"After all, I have a good excuse," she said to herself. "Miss Somerfield sent me off in a hurry, so she ought not to complain that I started away without carbide for the lamps. Oh, it'll be all right!"

Half an hour later she was sitting down to an evening meal with the Lupina girls. The father and mother had already dined, and Cora was to see nothing of them now. The meal over, she and the South American girls sought a sitting-room where they would be alone together, and there they spent an hour or two just as they pleased. Sweets were daintily nibbled; cigarettes were smoked; the talk was of the mutual-admiration kind.

"Hark!" Zilla exclaimed suddenly, starting up. "I think I hear that servant of ours returning from Sawnton House. Shall we see what he has to report?"

They went from the room and found the man making for the kitchen, there to get a belated supper after the tiring tramp he had been forced to undertake.

"How then, Lorenzo—did you speak with the headmistress at Sawnton House?" Jose asked haughtily.

"That is so," the native servant answered very gravely. "I was taken to a lady, and I gave the message."

"And she was not pleased, perhaps?" Zilla suggested with her malicious smile. "What did she say, Lorenzo?"

He shrugged.

"It was but little that she did say, *senorita*," he answered. "Yet could I see indeed that she was most sad. 'It cannot be helped,' were her words, that was all."

The sisters turned to each other to give a laugh, whilst Cora feebly grinned. Now they knew that no attempt was to be made to fetch her back to Sawnton House to-night.

"Come, then," Zilla exclaimed, winding an arm about Cora's waist. "Come, Jose my dearest. But not to bed yet. Oh, no, no!"

Nor was it until an hour later that Cora was escorted by the girls she had secretly allied herself with to the room they were giving her for the night. She found that it was none other than Miss Redgrave's former bed-room. Somehow it gave her a malicious satisfaction to be occupying this room when its rightful owner was in such makeshift quarters over at Sawnton House.

Jose and Zilla were bad hands at going to bed. Time after time Cora thought she had seen the last of them, only to find them wandering into her room again in varying stages of undress. But at long last she was alone in bed, with the door closed for the night, her thin figure clad in the exquisite night-clothes that Jose had lent her.

By that time the wind was rising all along the rugged coast of North Devon. It began to bellow and boom around the great schoolhouse of which Morcove's scholars had been so cruelly dispossessed, and soon the very walls seemed to shake in the blast.

What of the infirm walls of Sawnton House, then, on such a night as this!

Cora, snugly curled up in bed, was not going to fall a prey to anxiety. She was all right, anyhow. As for the others, the worst they would come in for was a sleepless night due to panicky alarm. It was not to be imagined that Sawnton House would come tumbling down like a house of cards.

So at last she fell asleep, and slept so soundly as to be oblivious of the louder howlings and boomings of the risen gale as it came raging in from the wide Atlantic to wreak havoc where it could.

The Muster at Midnight.

"Oh, dear, I can't sleep!"
"Neither can I. Is that you, Polly?"
"Yes, Betty. What a windy night!"

"One of those autumn gales we've so often known at Morcove, Polly. They used to be bad enough at the old school, but—"

"Just what I'm thinking, Betty. This house is so shaly."

A lapse in the sudden talk made some deep sighs all the more audible. They came from the occupant of some other bed in this dark room that was one of the Sawnton House makeshift dormitories.

Then there was a groan from the same quarter. "Ah, deah! Dweadful, dweadful! Wheeah am I, bai Jove?"

"At Sawnton House, Paula darling!"
"Who's that treating it as a joke?" wailed Paula, heaving over in her bed. "I was dweaming that Sawnton House was a weck—a wum!"

"And dreams sometimes come true," laughed Polly softly. "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if—Hark!"

"Ow, what's happening now?" groaned Paula, drawing up the bedclothes to her chin. "That sound—"

"Only a chimney-pot falling, dear."
"Only, bai Jove! Howwows, what a night! Can't we have a light, geals?"

"It might wake the others," said Betty. "They seem to be sleeping through it beautifully."

"Some geals can sleep through anything," sighed Paula. "I am not like that. I'm different. My highly stwing tempewament, I pwesume. Mind you, geals, I'm not afraid—no. But—er—oh! There goes the whole chimney, surely!"

And indeed it sounded like it.
As the hurtling crash sounded overhead, followed by a loud cascade of brick and mortar over the slates to the ground below, Betty and Polly laughed. But they were laughs that had a certain note of uneasiness in them.

"What was that?" Helen Craig asked loudly, yet half-sleepily, as she suddenly roused up. "Anyone awake?"

Answers from all parts of the room proved that now the whole batch of Fourth-Formers were awakened. Every tongue was going, and yet the babble of nervous talk could not over-ride the shriek of the wind.

Louder and louder it seemed to howl and boom, whilst now and then a hurtling crash or a rending cr-rack! of disjointed timbers told of some further havoc wrought upon the derelict building.

Then suddenly the door opened and someone hurried in, candle in hand.

It was Miss Redgrave, and the flaring candle showed her face to be pale with alarm.

"Girls, you must get up and dress at once," she said in great agitation. "It is an order from the headmistress. We dare not stay in the house another hour!"

"Goodness—"
"Howwows! Miss Wedgwave, do you mean to say—"

"I do not wish to scare you," the youthful mistress went on in calmer tones, "but whilst such a gale is raging Miss Somerfield feels that it is running too great a risk for you to stay. Dress quickly, then, and get downstairs, girls."

She left them the candle and hurried away, having need to dress herself for out of doors.

"Oh, deah!" groaned Paula, sorrowfully throwing back the bedclothes. "A wetweat at mid-

night, bai Jove! And where—where next shall we find ourselves, geals?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I can't help laughing!" went off madcap Polly. "Of all the strange things that have happened to us at different times—"

"Stwange, bai Jove! I call it downwight twagic!" sighed the elegant one, bringing her pretty feet to the floor. "It's going to be dwaight, too."

"It will be draughtier still out of doors," said Helen. "How the wind does blow!"

They could hear it all the time they were scrambling into their day clothes—now a swishing sound, and then a sudden wavering shriek, with the old sashes rattling and rumbling, and timbers everywhere in the house giving sharp creaks.

In addition, the girls could hear others in neighbouring dormitories talking excitedly as they, too, got themselves dressed with all possible speed. More and more Betty & Co. realised what a dramatic and unique experience the school was undergoing at this midnight hour.

This sudden alarm; word gone forth that the ill-fated building must be evacuated without a moment's loss of time; and as to what was to become of them now, who could say?

Miss Redgrave came back fully dressed and carrying a small lantern.

"Girls, bring as much portable luggage as you can conveniently carry," she bade them briskly. "We are to muster outside the house. Wrap yourselves up well."

Setting down the lantern, she again departed, needing a moment in which to put together such things as she intended to take away. Nor did the girls again see her in the makeshift dormitory, for they themselves were soon trooping downstairs.

The scene outside the house was one they would never forget.

There in the darkness and the howling wind the whole school was gathering for this midnight muster. Numerous lanterns had been lit. In the dancing, wavering light which they shed all the hastily dressed scholars began to form into line.

Not a girl but held some bit of luggage. Attaché-cases had been hurriedly crammed, bundles had been rolled up and tucked under arms. Amidst the noise of the raging wind came many shouts, and now and then a laugh. But it was always an excitable sort of laugh. No one now could treat this midnight stampede as a joke.

"Did you hear the joints of the staircase starting as we came down?" Tess remarked to some of the chums she was in line with. "If the house does last out to-night I shall be surprised."

"It's strange," muttered Betty. "A house can be old and ramshackle without being in danger of collapsing. But Sawnton House seems to have gone all at once. That crack in the main wall—"

"Something must have happened just lately to the foundations," asserted Helen. "But why it should have happened just when we were quartered in the place is a mystery."

"Oh, dear!" wailed Paula from close by in the lantern-lit darkness. "I packed my best frock in tissue-paper, and the wretched thing is dropping out!"

"Bother frocks!" said Polly. "I've got a wedge of cake—something to share round if we have to fend for ourselves for a bit."

"Give me more woom, anyhow, pway," appealed Paula dismally. "I don't want my hatbox crushed, geals. I—"

"Hark!" a dozen of them voiced in the self-same instant. "Oh, look out! Stand back!"

"Howwows—healp!"

For now it seemed as if indeed Sawnton House was falling in ruins to the ground.

One terrific blast of wind fiercer than ever had given the infirm building such a buffet that some of the very masonry had fractured away at the eaves.

Brickwork, iron guttering, slates, and riven timbers all landed with an appalling crash upon stone-paved pathway.

Suddenly the scared-faced girls saw Miss Somerfield come out by the front door of the doomed house. Like the captain of a sinking ship, she had been the last to leave. Here and there in the lantern light the rest of the teaching staff could be glimpsed. The domestics were also mustered in the open.

A stranger thing never could have happened, indeed, than this midnight abandonment of the imperilled mansion. If anything, it seemed to be even more thrilling than an escape from fire, because the conditions were so unique.

Above all, there was the bewildering sense of having nowhere to turn for shelter.

As a rule, those who are driven from a burning building are quickly taken in by compassionate neighbours. But this was Sawnton House that was in a sort of death agony, and round the doomed building lay miles of wild country. The nearest abode was Morcove School itself, and were the girls to make a midnight march thither?

How could they, when it would seem to be such an abject capitulation to Manuel Lupina? And even if they did swallow their pride and go there to beg shelter, was it likely that he would admit them now?

These were the thoughts distressing all the girls as they obeyed the calmly given orders to keep in line and number off.

Miss Redgrave had a sudden throb of alarm as she found that the Fourth Form line did not total properly. They were one girl short. Then she remembered that Cora Grandways was sleeping at Morcove School to-night, and she breathed freely again.

At the same time, it sent a pang of pain darting through her breast to be reminded of where Cora Grandways was. Missing all the hardship and alarm of this imperative exodus from the unsafe building, sleeping in comfort—yes, under the self-same roof that sheltered those who had brought this cruel suffering upon the school. And was Cora with the Lupinas to-night only because she had been unable to get home for lack of lamps after dark?

Miss Redgrave had her doubts—the very gravest doubts.

"If the muster is quite complete," Miss Somerfield suddenly called loudly but calmly—"is it complete?"

"Quite—quite in order," was the heartening answer from one Form-mistress and another.

"Then, girls, I am forced to ask you to make an orderly march from here, and you must trust that I and my assistants will find you safe shelter ere long. It is asking a great deal of you, but—"

"Morcove for ever!" went up the spirited cry from dozens of girls. "Hurrah!" the courageous cheer sounded above the thunderous bellowing of the gale. "Up, Morcove!"

By the light of the lantern that she held, Miss Somerfield was seen quickly to look towards her colleagues. It was as if she was tempted to

exclaim ardently: "Aren't they just too splendid—our girls?"

"By the right, then," came her calm order a moment later, and with all the precision of drill-time in the yard at Morcove School the scholars turned in their ranks.

"In your usual sections, girls—march!" the next order came promptly.

And away they went—tramp, tramp, tramp, a very army of them in the deep darkness of this wild night. The Sixth Form led, the other Forms trailed after, the domestics brought up the rear.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Away from the house that no one dared spend another moment in, driven forth into the wild night. Where they would next find rest and shelter none could hazard a guess.

"To the left!" Miss Somerfield called back to the strange, midnight procession which she herself was leading.

"Then we shall be on the road that goes past

Down, but not Beaten.

"CORAGRANDWAYS, wake up! Cora—"

"Hallo? What—who—"

"Ah, you forget where you are," Zilla Lupina laughed softly at the traitress schoolgirl who had slept the night at Morcove school-house. "This is Zilla speaking, and—"

"Oh, Zilla—yes!" Cora exclaimed, and her bed coverings rustled as she sharply sat up. "What's wrong, then?"

"There is nothing wrong with us—oh, no, no!" the younger Lupina girl spoke softly in the darkness. "But it must be all wrong with those who were at Sawnton House. They have had to leave at dead of night, Cora. They are marching this way now."

With a loud gasp Cora scrambled out of bed and felt about for the dressing-gown which she had been loaned.

"That is right, dress and come with me and Jose," Zilla approved, setting down the candle



MORCOVE'S WARNING! The Lupina sisters proudly flung up their heads. "We will not come here again, ever," Zilla said to Jose as they walked away. "You had better not," came the prompt warning from the angry Morcovians. "We don't want girls of your sort here!"

Morcove's gates," Polly commented, as she marched with Betty and the rest. "Thank goodness it is not daytime, for the Lupinas to see us!"

"Yes, wather!" sighed Paula, shifting one of the numerous bits of light luggage she was burdened with. "Bad enough as it is, geals, what?"

"But it might be worse, far worse," was Betty's stout-hearted response. "We might be beaten, but we are not beaten yet."

"Hurrah, no!" Polly felt impelled to sing out blithely.

The cheer was taken up, in no mere spirit of levity either. Miss Somerfield heard it from all along the line, and how could she fail to be greatly comforted in that heart of hers that was so troubled?

For better than ever now she knew that for every scholar who had fallen away from her lately there were a dozen who would gladly endure any hardship for her sake.

which she had brought to Cora's bed-room. "Waste no time, for we mean to go out and see them all as they wander past the gates."

"But—"

"You hear how the wind blows," Zilla continued, as she drew away to the door. "I woke up and went to look from the window. So I see all at once the light of lanterns. I open my window and look out, and I hear sounds that tell me who they are."

"My school—wandering about in the night!" was Cora's excited exclamation. "Then it must mean that Sawnton House is—"

"Who knows?" Zilla struck in with a strug and a smile. "Perhaps there is no more Sawnton House. And how nice that will be—for us!"

She padded away, leaving Cora to hurry into her day clothes. A couple of minutes and the traitress schoolgirl was with the South American sisters, creeping down through the old familiar school-house.

The elder Lupinas were sleeping through all the rumble and roaring of the gale. Nor were any of the native servants, if they were awake, inclined to leave their quarters. Alone together the three girls passed down to the front door and so out into the rough night.

"There—look!" Zilla instantly exclaimed, pointing dramatically.

Through one of the distant boundary hedges could be glimpsed, still farther off in the darkness, the glimmer of bobbing lanterns. Their fitful gleams showed where the now homeless scholars were tramping along the night-shrouded country road. Tramping—whither?

"Coming here, are they, to ask to be taken in out of pity?" Jose Lupina muttered tensely. "I wonder?"

"Ah, yes," responded her sister fiercely. "If only they will do that! What a triumph for us it will be!"

"Surely they must be going to do that," Cora muttered, peering away to the glimmering lights as she and the South American girls hastened down the drive. "Otherwise, what are they going to do?"

Jose Lupina laughed softly.

"It is what they must do," she exulted.

Now the homeless army of girls was quite close to the gates. Cora and the South American sisters turned off the broad drive to seek cover against a big old elm. In another minute they expected to see the gates being opened, and Miss Somerfield herself leading her troop of scholars up to the old schoolhouse to own that she and they were beaten!

"I am thinking of our father and mother, Zilla," muttered Jose Lupina. "How glad they will be! Never was there a greater joy for them than this; to see—— But what now?" she broke off,

as moving lights glimmered outside the closed gates. "Zilla!"

"Ah!" that girl raged, stamping a foot. "They are not coming in after all!"

And so it proved.

Let the tempest rage how it might; let the girls be ever so weary, there was to be no asking pity of Manuel Lupina and his wife.

Quietly, stoically past the gates of Morcove School tramped the homeless scholars. Cora and her two companions, standing there to gaze and listen, saw the lights swinging by and heard the measured tread of many weary feet. Then the lights were gone, and the only sound in the deep darkness was the shrilling of the gale.

Jose spoke at last in an enraged voice.

"Is their spirit not broken yet, then? Ah, well; it cannot be long to wait now!"

"It is a pity," Cora exclaimed, sharing their disappointment to the full. "I have done all I could, anyhow."

So indeed she had. And little did she dream that in bringing about this forced flight from the makeshift schoolhouse, she herself had done the very thing to give Morcove's scholars their own dear school again.

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

But how can the girls of Morcove go back to their old school when Mr. Lupina is still in possession? How can this midnight evacuation prove to be a good thing for Morcove? You may well ask that question, girls, and having asked it, you will be anxious to know the answer. That you will get next week in the magnificent new story of this series, which is entitled: "Polly Linton's Discovery." Don't forget that in this number you will also be presented with a magnificent stand-up photograph of H.R.H. the Duchess of York.



COOKERY HINTS

DAINTY WHITE ICED CAKES.

At yesterday's cookery lesson, Miss Grill gave us a special lesson on making and icing small cakes.

May and I found this knowledge very useful when Joan, a girl friend, came along and asked us to help her prepare for her tiny sister's birthday party.

Young children are always very delighted with small cakes decorated with their individual name, so for some of the cakes this scheme of decoration was decided upon.

How to Make White Icing.

The cakes had been made the day before—spongy cakes—so they were cold, and ready for icing. The tops were a little "lumpy," so we first levelled them and then turned them upside down, using the flat underneath side of the cake as the decorated top. Of course, we cut enough uneven surface away so that the cakes stood quite firmly when turned upside down.

When May fetched the icing sugar from the cupboard we found that it was lumpy, so, before it could be used for icing, the lumps were crushed with the rolling-pin and the sugar rubbed through a fine sieve.

We used two ounces of icing sugar, the white of one egg and a few drops of lemon-juice—the last

ingredient adding a specially white appearance to the icing.

The sugar was put in a basin and sufficient white of egg added to make a stiff paste. We stirred it with a wooden spoon, taking turns with the work and adding the lemon-juice a few drops at a time.

When the icing was ready for use it was quite stiff, and we kept the basin covered with a damp cloth to prevent the icing from becoming too dry.

An Improvised Icing Tube.

Joan didn't possess a proper icing set, but May and I quickly made small funnels out of grease-proof paper, being careful to secure the edges of the paper firmly so that the funnels maintained their shape. These paper substitutes were quite as effective as the real articles.

We first spread the tops of the cakes with icing, and smoothed it with a knife, allowing the icing to set—about half an hour. Then a spoonful of icing was placed in each funnel, the top secured, a small opening made at the bottom of the funnel and the icing squeezed through on to the tops of the cakes, the funnel being held in the right hand, and the left used for squeezing the ice through.

We found it quite easy to make various decorations at the edge—dots, thin lines, crosses and other simple designs—the centre of the cake being filled with a child's name.

Before commencing to decorate the cakes, we practised icing on a plate, afterwards scraping the icing up and returning it to the basin.

DOLLY HOPE.