

FIVE Magnificent Stories Within

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

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EVERY TUESDAY.



**SCHEMERS BOTH—
and Tess Didn't Know It!**

A dramatic moment in this week's brilliant long complete Morcove story.

VIVID COMPLETE STORY OF MORCOVE SCHOOL INSIDE

TESS TRELAWNEY, the Artist of Morcove, Features in This Stirring Complete Story, the First of a New Series



The GIRL ARTIST'S ORDEAL

By Marjorie Stanton

CHAPTER 1.

A Good Friend to Morcove

"HALLO, Betty! Is that you!"
 "Oh, Lady Evelyn! But I didn't want you to know that I was here!"
 "Why ever not?"
 "Bothering you—"
 "My dear, just as if! You know very well that I'm always glad to see any Study 12 girls. Sometimes I almost wish I were a schoolgirl again. And I know one thing, if I were—I'd be at Morcove! In your Form, Betty, for choice!"

And youthful Lady Evelyn Knight, only daughter of the Earl and Countess of Lundy, conferred her adorable smile upon Morcove's most popular Form captain.

"Why I called at the castle this afternoon, Lady Evelyn—some of us were in the town, and we knew that Tess Trelawney might be glad to know, and leave the castle in time to bike back with us."

"I see! Yes, Tess is here; we shall find her quite lost in the task she has taken on, I'm sure. What a clever girl she is, Betty!"

"Oh, rather! As a painter—"
 "But what she has set herself to do is something quite out of the ordinary, isn't it? And yet she is getting on so splendidly, Betty; I simply marvel! Such patient, fine work, and really, you can't tell the original from her copy!"

"I'm so glad you're pleased," Betty sparkled. "We all felt sure that Tess would be as good as any expert."

"Had tea, dear? Can I give you a cup?"

"Oh, thanks, Lady Evelyn, but I was at the Creamery, you see, before I came on up to the castle. I left Polly Linton, and Madge, and Pam Willoughby there, with Judy Cardew and Naomer."

"The old happy crowd! Come this way, then, and we will find Tess. She is in the Muniment Room."

Barncombe Castle, to which Betty had been admitted by one of his lordship's liveried servants a few minutes since, was the country seat of the Lundy family—a mammoth place, crowning a low hill on the outskirts of quaint old Barncombe.

Parts of the castle had been modernised; and there the family lived in a quite homely fashion, considering the dignity of their position.

The remainder of the great and rambling structure was being preserved in much of its ancient state, and to be shown round the castle was to see how, many centuries ago, it had been planned for defence—a stronghold, looming above what was then a tiny Devon hamlet.

To a part of the building forming a connecting-link, as it were, between the modernised and the unchanged, Lady Evelyn conducted Betty Barton, for it was here that a certain stone-walled and tapestried chamber, of vast dimensions, had become the Muniment Room.

As the name implied, this was a room set apart for the custody of parchment deeds, charters, and ancient manuscripts, many of them of priceless value. Here were kept documents relating to the

Lundy family, dating back to the time of William the Conqueror.

But some of the most treasured contents of the Muniment Room were illuminated manuscripts, done by the monks of old; a collection rivalling any in the kingdom, outside the British Museum.

Lady Evelyn, halting with Betty in a dim passage, opened a massive oak door, and there in the great room which was then disclosed they saw Tess Trelawney, busy at a table.

She, the dark-haired, talented girl-artist of Betty's Form at Morcove, was as gravely occupied as one of those ancient monks would have been, centuries ago!

Seated at the table, she was using a fine pen at this moment; but some water colours were ready to hand, and also a bottle of gold paint.

She did not look round as Lady Evelyn and Betty advanced from the doorway.

"Going to stop now, Tess dear?" was her youthful ladyship's smiling suggestion. "Here is Betty—"

"What! Oh—you wanting me, then?"

The rather brusque reply was not to be taken as a sign of grumpiness. Tess had a charming disposition; but when she was at work—she was at work! At school, they called her "Temperamental Tess!"

"Only thought you might like to bibe back with us, Tess," said Betty, subduing her blithe voice. "Polly and the rest will be leaving Barncombe in about half an hour. We want to get in time for a bit of hockey proceer before dark."

Tess put down her mapping-pen and sat back from the fine work upon which she had been engaged. That work was nothing less difficult than the copying of a large sheet of ancient manuscript—all in Latin of the middle ages, with wonderful ornamentation in colours.

She drew two finger-tips across her eyes, causing the frown of concentration to vanish.

"Don't want to knock off yet, Betty!"

"Very well, dear—"

"Good of you to look in. I'd like to cycle back with you and the others. But I've only done seven lines this afternoon."

Betty laughed.

"Quite enough, I would say, Tess! I'd rather do five hundred lines of the sort Miss Merrick hands out, than one of those! And not to know in the least what all the Latin means!"

"Oh, that doesn't matter," Tess said cheerfully. "I find it more and more interesting, anyhow."

"This, Tess, has been a halfer at the school," Lady Evelyn gently interposed. "And you came along directly after dinner, to go at the task again—instead of getting some hockey. Why not knock off now, dear?"

"But, Lady Evelyn—"

"You're free, you know, to come again at any time."

Tess returned her eyes to the work in hand.

"I want to get it done," she murmured wistfully. "I feel it was a great honour, to be given the chance to try my hand at it, and so earn the fee which Lord Lundy said I could have. Although really, considering I'm still at school, and—"

"Tess, that's nonsense, as I've told you before," Lady Evelyn gaily protested. "Why shouldn't you be paid, just as if you were an expert, when obviously you are doing it as well as any expert would! I was only too glad to be able to put you forward to dad, so that it might be a little pocket money for you."

Lady Evelyn had known that Tess' people were not at all well-off.

"Oh, and by the way, Tess!" she rattled on. "If you would like to be paid something on account—"

"No!" Tess exclaimed, with more of that touchiness which was due to her artistic nature. "Thanks ever so, Lady Evelyn; you're a rupper!" came with sudden warmth. "But I must quite finish my job before I can know whether I can accept anything or not."

"My dear girl—"

"But, of course," Tess insisted flatly. "If my copy-work goes off towards the finish, or— Oh, anything may happen, and I can't expect to be paid if the thing, at the finish, isn't perfect."

"You're a very remarkable young person," Lady Evelyn stated, with something like a roguish wink for Betty, who grinned. "Goodness, I would have wanted my fee in advance! Any rate, Tess, you have another week from to-day—"

"I know," the enthusiast nodded. "I've not forgotten that there is a sort of time-limit—that Lord Lundy must have the copy by this day next week. And I've figured it out; allowing for times when I must be in school, and so on—"

"Then, I know what!" And her ladyship brought her hands together with a little clap. "We'll get the headmistress to give you a day off—there! After all, any girl can do lessons in class! Not that I could, when I was at school, so I'm wrong about that! But you know what I mean?"

"Miss Somerfield will give Tess permission, not the least doubt!" Betty declared heartily.

"Oh, yes, Miss Somerfield can be easily got round!" cried Lady Evelyn, and she was going on to say something else, when the sound of approaching footsteps made her look, in surprise, towards the doorway.

A moment more, and one of the liveried menservants was at the threshold of the room. He stood in front of a lady and gentleman who, thus held up, peered past him into the room with all the hungry eagerness of sightseers.

"I beg your ladyship's pardon—"

"That's quite all right, Jenkyn. Did you wish—"

"A lady and gentleman here; I have been showing them round—"

"Oh, I understand. It isn't the day for visitors, but still—"

Lady Evelyn was excitably interrupted by the gentleman, who was inclined to push past the manservant whilst calling out in a distinctly Teutonic voice:

"It vos that we were in der distrikt, und so—I send in my cardt! My wife and I—der people tell us, ve must see der castle!"

"By all means—"

"Thank you, tank you, your Highness!" And a rather bald, round head bowed again and again above a toad-like body. "My wife—"

"How do you do?" Lady Evelyn bowed; and as the circumstances really called for nothing more than that, she plucked Betty gaily by the sleeve.

"Come away, then, Betty dear, and leave Tess—since she wishes—to carry on for a bit longer!"

"See you later, then, Tess!"

A half-attentive nod was the only response. Tess was taking up her mapping-pen again.

Lady Evelyn and Betty passed out, whilst the manservant brought the sightseers farther into the impressive chamber, announcing solemnly:

"This—is the Muniment Room."

"Ach, so!" said the German, looking about as if he were in a cathedral. "Colossal! Und 'vot," he asked, lowering his eyes, "is our young friendt doing here—hein?"

Tess heaved a sigh in secret. She was aware of his coming to look over her shoulder.

"Himmel!" came the guttural voice, a moment later. "You maig a copy—hein? Greta"—to his wife—"shoost look here!"

Tess had yet to face round, so she knew nothing of the man's startled expression. Nor was she aware of great excitement in his wife's eyes, as they now stared—first at the ancient manuscript, and then at the unfinished copy.

CHAPTER 2.

Who Are These People?

"AND you, fraulein, only a schoolgirl—ach!" Tess rose from her chair and turned round to speak.

"It's a manuscript, sir—fourteenth century."

Then the manservant stepped forward to speak. He had got to know that Tess, a frequent visitor lately, hated to be disturbed at her work.

"The young lady, sir, is copying a certain portion of the manuscript for his lordship. It has to be done by a certain day, and owing to her being at school—"

"Vot school?" asked the wife of the German sharply. But she was not wishing to appear sharp, treating Tess to a very dazzling smile.

The woman was younger than her husband by a good many years, and, like many a German "frau," had great claims to beauty. She was tall, fair, and charmingly dressed.

"Morcove School," Tess answered. "Quite a big one, about four miles from the town—almost on a headland, overlooking the sea."

"Breddy?" the woman asked, whilst her husband put on spectacles to study the ancient manuscript, as if it appealed to him.

"Oh, very pretty; in fact, grand scenery," Tess said. "Huge cliffs, you know, and a rocky shore, and all moorland inland."

"Ve stay at Sandton, my husband and I," the woman remarked amiably. "But, dere is no goodt hotel, and we would like more gomfort."

"There's a fine hotel near my school—the Headland—bang up-to-date. And, of course, Sandton isn't nearly so pretty; just a small seaside town, with a parade. But, if you will excuse me, I must push on with my job."

"Ja!" nodded the German, standing away from the table. "But der room!" gazing around again. "Ach, it vos a brison, one time? Tik vall—hein?"—to the Lundy retainer.

"That's right, sir," was the smiled answer. "Good safe deposit for all the valuable books and papers as here. The tapestries, sir—five hundred years old."

"Bud they are loffy!" said the lady, her husband strutting aside to inspect a show-case which held some of the priceless old books. He was, apparently, more interested in books than tapestries.

"Under that glass case, sir; the book upon the left—eight hundred years old. They say it is as rare as one at York Minster. And now, if you will follow me—"

The man who was showing them round sauntered back to the door by which they had entered; but very reluctant were the German and his wife to quit this room.

Tess sat perfectly still, waiting for them to be gone. She dare not make one stroke of her fine pen whilst they were here—to fidget her. Bother them! And yet she reflected, reluctantly, at any rate they were fond of old and lovely things, and so one could not wonder at their wanting to linger.

But finally the German came back to her, to jabber some parting remarks, and that really exasperated her.

"Vell, fraulein! I wish you goodt-day und der best progress! My name is Borgman—Ludwig Borgman, over here from Shermany. You baint?"

"Yes, sir, a bit."

"Ach, so!" implying that he had guessed as much. "Mit pleasure, I shall send you a leedle book on bainting, if I may haf der name und address vere to send him?"

"Oh, thank you, sir; Tess Trelawney, Morcove School, would find me."

"Thank you! Goodt-day, then, Fraulein Tess!"



"Wonderful, Tess!" Miss Merrick expressed her admiration of the girl artist's skill. "I only hope Lord Lundy will like them," Tess commented, knowing how much depended upon this great chance that had come her way.

Und now, Greta," as he toddled away to his wife, waiting over by the door, "we shall brocedd mit dis shentlemen!"

So at last Tess was left in peace again. She gave the sight-seers not another thought, and would never have imagined that they could be giving further thought to her. But they were. They had good reason for doing so!

Shown out, presently, at the great gateway at the top of Castle Hill, Ludwig Borgman and his wife at once started to talk about Tess. The conversation was all in German; but the name occurred over and over again.

Considering all the wonders of the castle which they had been shown, it was strange how they only talked of the Mument Room, and of the

schoolgirl whom they had found at work there, as they passed down into the town.

They were to go back to Sandton by motor-coach. One just come from the little seaside town was pulling up in front of Barncombe's Town Hall, when the Borgmans got to that parking-place.

Thinking it might be going to start back at once, they went towards it whilst it was setting down its passengers for Barncombe, two of whom were schoolgirls who jumped out in showing-off style.

It was like these two girls to do their best to attract attention. They were excessively pretty—and they knew it!

Moreover, vanity and waywardness gave them a delight in behaving as if they were done with the restraints of school life. Finding a very handsome lady and her husband looking at them in an amused way, both "bright young things" boldly smiled back.

"You also, perhaps—Morcove?" Frau Borgman then smiled ingratiatingly.

"That's right! Why?" It was Fay Denver—older than her sister Edna by only a year or so—who carelessly responded.

"Ach," chuckled Borgman, "ve haf shoost seen a friendt of yours, perhaps, at der castle; she baint, I tink; a sheniuss—ja!—mit der ben and bencil!"

"Oh, you mean Tess Trelawney!" said Fay, in a derisive tone. "Yes, she does go to the castle, at present, to do some silly old job of copying something or other."

"Und you?" beautiful Mrs. Borgman murmured in a rich voice; "you two girls are more for going about—hein? You enjoy yourselves?"

"Try to," grimaced Fay, shrugging. "Anyway, we've just been to Sandton and back."

"But Sandton is deadly," Edna complained; "no one there yet! No band—nothing!"

"Dod is so," Borgman agreed. "So vod about der hotel at Morcove? You tink we like it there?"

"Oh, the Headland's fine!" said both sisters. "We've often been there, when we've had relations staying."

The German turned to his stylish-looking wife. "Greta, ve gatch a later goach and go now to look at dot hotel—hein? Perhaps der young frauleins tell us der vay?"

"Supposing we hired a car," the woman suggested to the sisters. "Could we give you a lift, if you are going in that direction?"

Fay and Edna sparkled their eyes. Anything for a change, a thrill! That was their motto. The jaunt to Sandton and back had only whetted their appetite for more pleasure—any bit of fun that could be got.

"We could leave our bikes and come in to town for them some other time," Fay promptly, reflected aloud. "What say, Edna—shall we?"

"Yes, let's!" Edna was thinking of the palatial hotel, a mile short of Morcove School, and of the spree it would be if, at the end of the run in the hired car, they were asked to have a cup of tea in the lounge. The band would be playing; there would be a throng of well-dressed people—it might even be possible to get a dance!

"It's awfully nice of you to offer," Fay gushed. "Not at all," answered Mrs. Borgman, with her ravishing smile. "Pleasure!"

And that was how, an hour or so later, Tess Trelawney came in for a big surprise.

She was cycling back to the school, from Barncombe Castle, all by herself. Just as she skimmed by the drive-in to the Headland Hotel, it amazed her to see two Morcove girls coming away on foot

—Fay and Edna, cackling with merriment as if they had been having great fun.

Tess was no friend of theirs. The Denver girls were almost without friends at Morcove School. They followed a policy of brazen impudence towards their schoolmates, as being a lot of girls for whom they had no use. The pleasant round of school life made no appeal to their shallow, self-centred natures.

Especially did they deride the chums of Study 12, of whom Tess was one. So now they laughed all the louder as she went by on her machine, to give her to understand that they had been having a grand time, whilst she—Pooh! Fancy a girl spending a "halfer" copying some rotten old manuscript!

Tess ignored the detestable pair; but she rather wondered what had enticed them to visit the hotel. It was, of course, out of bounds to scholars. On the other hand, she knew that the daily tea-dance—open to non-residents—was an attraction which Fay and Edna were always hankering to enjoy.

In the soft, warm dusk with which the early spring day was ending, she slammed away her machine in the shed set apart for bicycles, then ran for the schoolhouse.

"Well, Tess!"

It was her Form-mistress, Miss Merrick, appearing before her in the front hall, with a pleasant, trustful smile.

"Only just in, Tess?"

"Yes, Miss Merrick. I'm not late?"

"No. I wasn't thinking about that, Tess. But you must have put in a very long spell at the castle! How are you getting on there?"

"Oh, not so bad, I hope. But I shall have a job, to finish in time."

"I must see if I can let you off from school, one afternoon. You deserve it, Tess. You don't bring home the work you've done, to the school?"

"Oh, no, Miss Merrick. I leave it in the Munitment Room—in a drawer of the table. The original, of course, the man comes and locks away for the night."

Miss Merrick nodded understandingly.

"But I do hope, Tess, it will be possible for you to bring the work to the school, for it to be shown round. We must see what can be done about that. Lord Lundy will surely not object."

Tess, by her expression just then, showed that she would object—most strongly! Never yet had she been known to enjoy having any work of hers looked at. It was not that she feared criticism. What she feared was praise!

She went to the coat-room, discarded her outdoor things, then went upstairs, the pleasant hubbub of this social hour in the studies becoming louder and louder as she mounted.

And the loliest study of all—judging by the babel going on there—was Study 12. Crowded out, as usual!

But Tess, knowing the mood she was in, would not go at once to that study, there to mingle with chums who were likely to greet her with cheers and then have so much to say to her.

She turned into the study which she shared with Madge Minden. It was deserted. And, as Tess closed the door upon the outer world, she sighed like one who is glad to be alone—glad of a chance to draw breath after hard work, and to be able to think.

Just a little weary Tess was feeling; a bit strained in the eyes, too, after such a long session of the work with that mapping pen—close work!

If she closed her eyes for a moment, after sinking down into an easy chair, she seemed to see the Latin letters upon the walls of her brain.

But in her mind's eye she could also see—a cheque signed by Lord Lundy, payable to her!

"PAY Miss Tess Trelawney—the Sum of Ten Guineas—"

Ten guineas! That was the fee which had been promised her—so generously promised, she felt. Ten guineas, if the work were done to his lordship's satisfaction, by the appointed time—

This day next week—it must be finished by then, or it would have been so much labour in vain! Quite likely Lord Lundy, with his usual goodness of heart, would want to pay her part of the fee, at any rate, if she "let him down" over the time-limit.

But how could she ever bring herself to accept part payment even, when she would know that her failure to get done in time had rendered the whole thing useless for his purpose.

Besides, part payment—a consolation award—that would be very different from TEN GUINEAS.

The full fee—what a fine sum it would be for her to have earned! And just at a time, too, when such a big sum as that could be—oh!—of such great help to her!

Strange, she was reflecting now, as she sat resting after hard work done, whilst others were enjoying half-holiday games, outings, rambles; strange that time should be the very essence of the whole business, for herself as well as for Lord Lundy!

He must have that finished copy of the ancient MS. by this day next week. And she—she must have his cheque a few days after that, at latest!

Ten guineas! Something else came as a vision in her dark mind as she lay back in the chair with her weary eyes closed. The vision of a small house in the country—her people's home—with an auctioneer's bills placarding the garden fence: "The usual HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE and EFFECTS. Several CHOICE PIECES—". And across the printed bills, with their lines of display type, a slip pasted slantwise:

"SALE THIS DAY!"

Tess Trelawney was five minutes longer, alone with her thoughts in that study; alone with the sorrow which she had kept secret from even her dearest chums. The more they loved her, the more need for not letting them know.

Then she got up from her easy chair, straightened herself and bravely banished all traces of anxiety and anguish from her looks. She went from the room, passing round to boisterous Study 12.

"Hooray!" the girls cheered her as she entered, smiling. "Come on, Tess—at last!" "You terror, Tess," cried madcap Polly Linton, perched on the table-edge, legs a-dangle. "When's



Tess burst into the Study. "What's the matter?" cried the chums, and Tess, as soon as she could get her breath, panted out: "Something terrible has happened at the castle!"

that job going to finish—taking up all your time?"

"Yes, Tess—"

"Oh, this day next week, I hope, girls." "Good job! Bekas," shrilled dusky Naomer Nakara, "cet is making you thin, Tess. What ze diggings, don't zey give you any tea at ze castle? You should ring for it!"

"They always bring me in a nice tea—"

"Zen what you should do, ring for refreshers, in between," Naomer counselled. "What ze diggings, eef it were me, I should touch ze bell and say: 'Waiter—'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here you are, any old how," Naomer said, coming to Tess after a dash to the corner cupboard. "What, you don't want him?"—as the girl artist smilingly shook her head at the huge slice of cake on a plate. "Zen I will have him, queek!"

And the laughter was all the louder when Naomer held up the slice of cake, to show what a big first bite at it she had taken!

CHAPTER 3.

"Who Cares!"

A VERY different type of laughter was Fay and Edna's, as they came kicking their heels down the corridor, to go to their study.

Slam! went their door, a few moments later, and then they flopped into easy chairs, to indulge in the giggling and bleating of comments.

"Oh, dear, what a scream, Edna—he, ho, he!"
 "Oh," panted the younger sister, fanning herself with a handkerchief, "talk about a lark—ha, ha, ha!"

"Vaider!" Fay mimicked the Borgman voice. "More hod vodder for my wife!"
 "Stop it, Fay: you'll make me die—ha, ha, ha!"

"Und dwo gream ices for der fraulein!" But wasn't it the funniest thing ever, Edna darling! The way they took such a fancy to us!"

"But Mrs. Borgman is nice—really charming. In fact, sort of fascinating—"

"Rather! She is my idea of what a lady should be. Did you notice, Edna, the lovely rings she wore?"

"They must be an awfully wealthy pair. I shouldn't wonder if they do take a private suite at the Headland, after all. But it won't be yet, from the way they talked—"

"No. They seem to have got that furnished place on their hands at Sandton for a week or two longer."

"Fancy Mrs. Borgman inviting us to their Sandton house," Edna continued, finishing with the merriment. "Shall we go, Fay?"

"Ra-ther! Why ever not? Another spree!" the elder sister exclaimed. "I expect it's a lovely place. But I can't remember a house of that name, along the front, can you? The 'Beacon'—"

"She said it was all by itself, a long way past the west end of the parade. We have never been as far as that, Fay. Anyway, next Saturday afternoon—we'll go!"

"I say, Edna, we might end by getting invited over to Germany! He must be in a big way over there. And she really did seem to take quite a liking to us."

Edna, lolling in her easy chair, nodded.

"Fact is, Fay, I suppose she is a bit lonely, knowing nobody over here. He's all right; but a bit of a bore."

For a minute the sisters sat lost in thought. Then Fay began to titter again. Edna, looking across at her, also burst out laughing.

"I'm thinking," Fay said, "how Miss Merrick was sort of lying in wait for us, just now. Well, Miss Merrick be blowed! She may have her suspicions that we don't stick about enough and mix with the other girls, but—"

"She can't make us like them," sneered Edna. "Let her try as much as she likes. Stuffy Morcove! So if we choose to do a run into Sandton on half-holidays—"

"AND call at the Beacon—"

"Yes, certainly!" nodded Edna, rising.

Then Fay got up from her chair and stretched. "But we won't say a word to anyone about the Borgmans, Edna," she suggested softly. "It would only get round."

"Oh, no," said the younger sister; and then, as Fay, after moving a step or two, stood to gaze at her reflection in a small hanging mirror: "I know what you're thinking! How Mrs. Borgman called you awfully pretty!"

"Well?" laughed Fay, seeing no reason why Mrs. Borgman should not have praised her to her face. "By the way, Edna, what was Mr. Borgman's word for Tess Trelawney? 'Shenius'!"

"Genius—pooh!" Edna sneered. "As if it's anything wonderful, simply to copy a lot of writing, even though it is in old Latin. Much too much fuss is being made about what Tess is doing."

"After all, she's being paid for it."

"Yes," scornfully. "It was all right for the Borgmans to mention Tess to us admiringly. They are nice, polite people! But the way the Form has been talking about Tess' work—it gets me," sighed Edna, "fed-up!"

"Same here."
 Whether the shallow pair liked it or not, there was to be more talk than ever about Tess' work, at the end of the week.

With the hearty approval of Lord Lundy, Tess was almost put under orders by Miss Somerfield to bring back to the school as much of the work as she had done, after her next spell at the castle.

By hurrying over her tea on the Friday afternoon, Tess was able to get to the castle in time for a couple of hours' further work, before the light went. So it was on that Friday evening that she returned to Morcove School with samples of her skilful copying.

She took the rolled-up sheets to Miss Merrick, in the latter's private room. It was lighting-up time, and this induced the remark from the Form-mistress:

"We will not do anything about putting the work on show now, Tess. They cannot be properly appreciated by artificial light. The school must see everything in the morning—such beautiful work as it is!"

Miss Merrick had the copies unrolled and spread all over her table in separate sheets, and she could not take her eyes off them, for the delight they gave her.

"Really, Tess, it is pretty wonderful. Every letter, every stroke of the pen, must have cost you great pains. And then, the ornamentation—the illuminated figures, and the gold painting! It must all mean a most faithful copy—hardly distinguishable from the original."

Tess looked uncomfortable.
 "I don't know," she mumbled. "I only hope that Lord Lundy will think it good enough."

"How much more have you to do, to finish, Tess?"

"Oh, heaps! I spoiled one sheet, this afternoon—"

"What!"
 "Found I was copying the wrong line—had missed one out altogether. So that meant tearing up the whole sheet—"

"Oh, Tess, how very trying! What a shame! Then do you want to go again to the castle tomorrow afternoon—Saturday?"

"I must!"
 "Games, Tess—exercise! But, there, it would be a shame to keep you here, so you can consider yourself free to go. As for what you have brought to the school—Miss Somerfield, I know, will want to have it on exhibition over the week-end. And now, run away, Tess, and don't do too much this evening. You look tired."

Tired—yes! That utter weariness was upon Tess, now, that had seemed to rush upon her in the dreadful moment when she realised—she must destroy a sheet and start all over again.

Really, she needed all Sunday, now, to get finished in time; and—it was no use, they would never allow her to go at the work on Sunday!

If only—if only she could have stayed on this Friday evening at the castle. Never mind if she had left off at last, her eyes half-blind with the strain; a night's rest would have put them to rights again.

But the custodian had come into the Muniment Room at the usual time, wanting to lock away the priceless original, and so she had had to pack up.

A little listless in her step, she went upstairs,

and was suddenly face to face with her study-mate, coming down alone.

Madge's affectionate smile came instantly. "Hallo, Tess darling, back again then! Where are the copies?"

"Oh—Miss Merrick has them," diffidently. "When are we going to see them, Tess?" "Oh—in the morning, I suppose. They're nothing, I mean, the girls won't find them at all interesting."

"They're your work, Tess! Now I'm going to the music-room. What are you doing?"

"I'll come along—I'd like to, Madge; to sit and hear you play."

"You're tired, Tess dear."

"I am, a bit."

So Madge gladly took Tess with her to the fine music-room, sensing her chum's desire for a restful, soothing half-hour.

This was Madge's special talent—music. She was by far the best pianiste in the Form—indeed, in the whole school. Like Tess, she never relished having a crowd round her; but it was going to be a pleasure now to have only her study-mate and best friend sitting quietly by.

With only the lights for the piano switched on, Madge played pieces from memory—simple melodies that could have only a soothing influence upon a chum whose nerves were possibly a bit strained.

And Tess, sitting a little way off from the piano, in the semi-darkness of the great room, felt this to be a very welcome respite from all the stress and strain.

The music flowed on, slowly and softly, and it instilled into the mind of Tess a renewed confidence—in her being able to finish in time, after all.

Much there was—ah, how much—that had to be accepted as tragically certain, in connection with affairs at home. There was an anguish which nothing could calm; things must happen, at home, which one could never have hoped to prevent. Even her dear father and mother, and her brother, were helpless to prevent the worst.

But at last, when the hour came for the selling up of the home, she, by her earned reward, could intervene to save one treasured possession, over which the auctioneer's hammer was hovering. A picture—

A family portrait, dear to her own mother; an old oil-painting of "Granny"—as a work of art, fine enough to fetch ten guineas at the auction. The auctioneer had put that price upon it, as being the best bid they were likely to get.

But to darling mother, the artistic value of the painting was nothing compared with its sentimental interest. Tess had heard mother say, if only they could be left with that at least— And the tears of heartbreak had come, even as that seemingly hopeless wish had been sighed.

Let all else go, as go it must, now that ruin had come upon the home; but that picture—if only it could be retained, then they all knew, it would make a home again of any place, however humble, which might be theirs in the future.

Ten guineas, the auctioneer had predicted, with the possibility of his having to knock down the portrait for a bit less than that. Much depended upon the weather on the day of the sale. The house was in the depths of the country, and bad weather would keep bidders away—especially dealers from afar.

Tess saw the old home again, in her mind's eyes, as she reclined in a low chair, listening to Madge's playing. The old house basking in hot summer sunshine; the tall trees behind, rustling their foliage as the summer breeze went by, the

meadows beside the house, and the cattle grazing

Suddenly Madge changed to what is perhaps the very tenderest melody of all. She knew Tess' love of home, although she did not know what total ruin, through no one's fault, had come upon that home lately.

She played a few bars of that immortal air, and then, feeling in the mood to do so, began to sing softly:

"Mid pleasures and palaces,
There's no place like home;
Be it e'er so humble,
There's no place like home!"

Tess jumped up from her chair. "Oh, Madge—don't, Madge; don't!" So music and singing alike ended—abruptly. Madge dropped her hands away from the keys and sat round on the music-stool, peering towards her chum in surprise.

"Why, Tess—"
"Sorry, Madge. But I— Oh, I don't know," poor Tess floundered. "Here, you go on with the sort of stuff you really enjoy playing— Beethoven, and all that! I—I must go up to the study."

"I'd like to come, too, dear—"
"No, please! I'm all right, Madge. I'm only—well, I had to tear up some of the work at the castle, this afternoon. And that has left me—a bit fed-up."

A gesture followed this, imploring Madge not to leave the piano, and so she remained there, although her eyes were upon Tess still, as that girl drifted away.

A word from her, Tess, and what loving sympathy she could have had from Madge, from all the rest of her chums!

But Tess would still have them know nothing, because she knew that knowledge of the calamity must inevitably upset them, as it had most certainly wrecked her own happiness.

CHAPTER 4.

Fair Face—False Heart

"H, I say, how splendid!"
"Wonderful!"
"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Geals, such wawk—"

"Gorjus! And three cheers for Tess, bekas— she is a chum of ours, don't forget!"

"She belongs to OUR Form," Betty Barton preferred to put it. "Belongs to Moreove—"

"Bravo, Tess! Where is she?" clamoured several of the girls who were mobbing in front of the sensational exhibition. "Tess Tre-lawney!" they bawled for her. "Tess!"

But no Tess appeared upon the scene, and after a few moments, some of the modest one's best chums laughed knowingly.

"Trust her to keep out of the way," chuckled Polly Linton.

"Extwaordinawy geal, yes, wather!"
"Bekas, eef I could draw like zat—"

"You stand away," Polly admonished the imp. "Before some juice from that orange squirts over the whole show."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was just after the rise from dinner, on Saturday. Whilst girls were at table, a trustworthy hand had been busy, drawing-pinning the various sheets of copied MS. to a green-baize board in the front hall.

That board was not the one used for school

notices; it was a much bigger one, reserved for any special display of scholars' work from time to time—maps and drawings and such like, deemed to be of exceptional merit.

Never yet, however, had there been such a display as this that had awaited the girls, when they came away from the dining-hall.

Many of the girls were feeling a kind of awe as they gazed. The numerous sheets looked so like those comprising a genuine ancient MS.; the sort of thing one only sees, as one only sees mummies, in museums!

"Wonder what all that Latin is about?" spoke out Biddy Loveland.

"Shall I read it?" Polly offered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go on, zen, Polly! But look sharp and get to ze eggsciting parts, bekas—we want to get out, for ze halfer!"

There was a sudden cry:

"Here's Tess!"

Then, from one and another of her bon companions came the mock-agrieved comment:

"Oh, Tess, off again already!"

For she was dressed for out of doors, and was in haste to reach the open air. Betty and others kept with her for part of the way to the cycle-sheds, telling her what they thought of the exhibits. Then they turned to scamper back to the schoolhouse, and encountered Fay and Edna.

Like Tess, the sisters had wasted not a moment since the rise from table. But how different was their motive for speeding away for the afternoon!

Five minutes later, they had Tess in sight as she pedalled along on her machine, riding hard for the town. But they did not catch her up.

Swiftly though they rode, having to catch a motor-coach leaving the town hall at two, Tess was ever the swifter. Tess, with this sunny afternoon before her, meaning a valuable spell of work in the Monument Room—hours of it!

Fay and Edna caught their coach, and before three they were on the parade at Sandton.

"We'd better look for the Borgmans' house at once, even if we don't call there immediately," Fay suggested. "It may be a good way out."

It was. From where the parade ended, at the western side of the little seaside town, they had to trudge a good mile before the Beacon came into view.

No inspiring walk was it, either, for the two girls. They had to keep to a very rough and little-used road, running along the top of a sedgy bank above the foreshore.

"No wonder the Borgmans feel like changing to the Headland Hotel at Morcove!" Edna grimaced. "They are right away from the town."

"And no neighbours!"

"No!"

The Beacon, now that it was in sight, was a lonesome dwelling of dispiriting appearance. There was something about the architecture that rendered it very different from an ordinary seaside residence, and most unattractive. The nearer they got to it, the less the sisters liked it.

"What a place for anybody to have built!" Edna grimaced.

She glanced back in the direction of the town, and saw no one coming along this ill-made sea road.

"It's lonely," she muttered. "What it must be after dark! How's the time now, Fay?"

"Oh, I think we might go along and call straight away."

"Come along, then."

The strange dwelling had its acre or two of private land, but no garden had ever been made.

Fay and Edna went in at a gap in some rough fencing, to go along a path of loose shingle. Some ornamental shrubs had been planted, long ago, but tamarisk had got the upper hand, turning the surround of private land into a jungle of greenery.

Altogether, the sisters felt prepared for a cheerless time—a wasted half-holiday, when they had looked forward to enjoying themselves in grand surroundings. After all, the Borgmans had money! So why on earth—this!

And then came the startling surprise of finding that the Beacon, inside, was more than comfortably furnished. A trim maid admitted them to an interior that was sensationally fascinating.

"If you'll wait," the girl in cap and apron said, having conducted the sisters to a boudoir-like apartment, "I'll let Mrs. Borgman know that you are here."

Left to themselves, they exchanged looks of wonderment.

"Well," Edna gasped, "I couldn't have believed it!"

"From the outside appearance—no!"

The room was most richly furnished. Knowing that the Borgmans were only renting the place, the sisters now inferred that the actual owner of the Beacon must have spent thousands upon the interior, to render it comfortable and also suitable for housing rare antiques, weird curiosities from the East, carpets from Persia, and much rare china.

A good fire was burning on the modern hearth, although out of doors the weather was quite warm. But the two girls could well understand that even so vast an expenditure had not rid the place of a certain gloominess, which made a fire all the year round very acceptable.

The air was heavy with the scent from a great jar of pot-pourri, and from a wall bracket a brass Buddha contemplated the sisters with a fixed stare that was slightly eerie.

Very softly the door opened, letting in Mrs. Borgman. She had on an afternoon frock of extraordinary prettiness, and her fair hair was beautifully coiffured.

"So you haf come!" she remarked, with that dazzling smile of hers. "I am so glad, for my husband is away to-day and I am lonely. You know, we haf not been here long enough to make friends. Do sid down, and we, will haf tea at vons."

Her foreign accent was not as strong as her husband's; his way of talking had been a "scream" to Fay and Edna, but they found Mrs. Borgman's broken English very fascinating.

The same maid brought in tea—a very lavish tea, for the Borgmans had the German love of pastries, pâte-fois sandwiches, and other rich eatables. The servant was evidently a local girl, and Fay and Edna noticed that the lady treated her very nicely.

"Und after to-day I shall not haf a servand," Mrs. Borgman smiled, starting to pour out. "We decide to go to that hotel at Morcove, und so I gif der notice, und she has got a new place at vons. No matter. I can always manage for myself and my husband. In our country, you know, every frau is a housewife, ja!"

"This is a wonderful place, Mrs. Borgman!" Fay exclaimed.

"Yes, we like id ven it vos offered us to rent. The owner has travelled much—a liddle mad, perhaps, hein? So many tings from all over der world!" She laughed. "Und der house idself—not so good, hein? No madder. Ve haf der sea at der front door. Now, you must eat well!"

In that dim light which the firelight saved from

being an oppressive gloom, jewellery she was wearing flashed brilliantly as she passed the girls their cups.

"Und der Fraulein Tess?" she inquired casually, taking a rich cake for herself. "Has she finished her work at der Castle, perhaps?"

"Not quite," Fay answered. "Tess has gone to the Castle again this afternoon."

"But she has done quite a lot now, and it's on show at the school," Edna chimed in, for the sake of saying something. "They pinned it up in the Front Hall, for all the school to see. Not that I can see much in it to make a fuss about. Nobody can read a word of the silly stuff."

Mrs. Borgman looked faintly amused.

"You prefer a modern novel—hein?"

"And the more modern the better," Fay laughed flippantly.

"My husband and I—ve know noddings about old manuscripts," the lady disclaimed. "Ve like seeing der Castle and der vonderful things they haf; but to know about antiques and old books



ees a beesiness of its own. My husband's beesiness is nod so."

"What is Mr. Borgman, then?" asked Edna inquisitively.

"He is vod you call a jeweller—"

"Oh! Does he deal in diamonds and all that?" cried Fay. "We have been admiring the beautiful jewels that you wear."

"Ha! Der new fashion in jewellery, vod dey call der marquissette," said Mrs. Borgman, fingering a pendant of the glittering, steel-like metal. "You like id?"

"I adore it!" said Edna, whilst her sister nodded to the same effect. "It does look so lovely by lamplight. I only wish I had something in marquissette to wear."

"All the rage, isn't it?" said Fay.

"Ja!" the lady nodded. "My husband do a

gread beesiness in id, shoost now. Perhaps, before you go, I find you both some leedle pieces to wear. Sambles. He vill not mind. He is ver' shenerous. He send the Fraulein Tess a leedle book on Ard, for her industry!"

"Tess is industrious enough," Edna laughed jealously. "But, of course, she is going to be paid for that work at the Castle. I wonder how she can take the money. I mean to say, such a come-down."

"Especially," sneered Fay, "as she has always talked Art for Art's sake! Oh, well! I'm hanged



As soon as Fay and Edna darted upstairs, Mrs. Borgman slipped into the hall. No one must know that she was under Morcove's roof—with a secret task to perform!

if I would put in an afternoon like that, working myself blind—for money!"

But Tess, after all, was not at work at the Castle just then.

Tess it was who, at this very moment, was riding back to Morcove School as fast as she could go, her face as white as death, a wild look in her eyes.

Whirr, whirr, whirr! On she raced along the road back to Morcove, her terrific pace mostly due to a half-frantic state of mind.

There was nothing she had to do at the school which called for such great haste; nothing she could do—except tell her chums what had happened at the Castle, to render her idle when she had looked forward to being so busy.

Betty and the rest would be in Study 12, she knew, after a game of hockey. It was an inter-Form match, this afternoon, but that would be all over, she calculated, by the time she got to the ground.

She was right. Even as she turned in at the school gateway, she could tell that the match had ended, for girls were flocking off the field.

Up the long drive she raced, and after slamming her machine into the bicycle-shed, hastened into the school house, and up to the study, where she guessed she would find all her intimate chums.

Betty, Polly, Madge—one's own study-mate, she!—and Pam and the rest; there they were, and somehow it was going to be a relief to tell them. Not that they could do anything; but, oh, one could not go on without the sympathy of such friends.

Utter calamity that it was, which had taken place; terrible for the Lundy family, and terrible for *oneself*.

CHAPTER 5.

The News Tess Brought

THE door of Study 12 was flung open with such violence that its occupants turned in amazement. Betty, Polly, Paula, Helen and Naomer were among those who were happily preparing a "celebration" tea, in honour of a great victory over the Fifth.

But now, as they saw who had come bursting so suddenly into the study, their looks changed to amazement and alarm.

"Why, Tess—"

"Back already?"

"What ze diggings—Tess!"

Tess Trelawney it was who had come in like that, panting from the exertion of her ride, her face deathly pale.

"Tess!" several of them gasped, in rising alarm, as she burst into the study. "What's the matter, then? You were to stay—"

"There was nothing to stay for—"

"What! How do you mean?"

"An awful thing has happened at the Castle," she panted on. "That old manuscript which I was copying—"

"Yes, yes?"

"It's vanished!"

"Wha-a-at!" was the general yell of incredulity. "Vanished? Never!"

"But it has! It's been stolen, stolen—must have been!" Tess stated wildly. "When I got to the Castle, I was taken to the Muniment Room by the attendant, who then went to get the MS. from where it was always kept. And it was gone!"

"Gosh!" Polly gaped. "But—but that's terrible! It was worth a pot of money, really, wasn't it?"

"Thousands and thousands," Tess nodded tragically. "And it's been stolen, I tell you—stolen! They can't make out how. There's a fine to-do at the Castle now, I can tell you. The custodian declares that he locked the MS. away after my last spell of work with it. I can bear out that he did."

"They don't suspect him?"

"Oh, no!"

"And you, Tess?" clamoured Betty. "You're not going to be in any bother over it?"

"No. It's nothing to do with me; but that," Tess said, heavy-heartedly, "doesn't make it much less awful for me."

"Nobody who knows the Lundy family can fail to feel awfully sorry for them over their loss," Betty said.

"And this has happened just at a time when Lord Lundy was going to do something about the MS., wasn't he?" Helen Craig ejaculated. "He had an urgent reason for wanting to get it copied? We've never been told why—"

"I don't know, either," Tess said, shaking her head. "I've only known that he urgently needed

the copy by a certain date—one day next week. And now—now I can't go on with the work. I shall never finish it now."

And never, therefore, receive the fee!

She was keeping silence about that; but it was an appalling feature of the robbery that was to the fore in her mind.

How could it fail to be, when there had been that motive of hers for wanting so desperately to earn the fee, in time? How could she fail to feel that, great as the loss was to Lord Lundy over the theft of the priceless MS, the loss to her of that promised fee was just as great.

Money that would have enabled her to save at least that one treasured relic of mother's, from the auctioneer's hammer—from being knocked down to a stranger—and that money would never be hers—now.

HE went down with her chums, and there on the green-baize board in the Front Hall were those specimens of the work she had been doing.

Betty and the rest stood to gaze at the copies again, their interest in them deepened by the sensational news of the theft. But Tess herself could not bear the sight of her own work now.

Every pinned-up sheet, that had cost her so much pains, was only a bitter mockery. An inward voice seemed to shriek in her mind: "All for nothing! You'll not get a penny now!"

And upon her inward ear there seemed to fall the voice of the auctioneer who was to have the selling up of everything at home. The day had come, and he had reached Lot So-and-so, posing his hammer as the picture was put on show to bidders.

"Going at five guineas—five pounds ten, thank you! Going at five pounds ten—going! Any advance on five pounds ten? Are you all done? At five pounds ten, going, going—" and a rap of the hammer—"GONE!"

NEWS of the theft at Barncombe Castle must have spread like wildfire all over the district.

Girls who came back from the town, by-and-by, said that the great sensation was on the lips of all in Barncombe itself.

Nor were Fay and Edna Denver in ignorance when they were on their way back to Morcov School, less than an hour before dusk.

They had heard the astounding news in Barncombe—and so had Mrs. Borgman!

For the German lady, after treating the sisters to a great time at the Beacon, had pleasantly offered to get them home from Sandton by car.

She had remarked that she would enjoy the ride herself, as far as the Headland Hotel, where she could find out more about future accommodation.

So, from Sandton Bay the sisters had enjoyed the luxury of a hired car as far as the hotel that was only a mile short of Morcov School.

In Barncombe, Mrs. Borgman had stopped the car, to purchase Fay and Edna a box of chocolates, and when she came away from the Creamery she was full of the news about the stolen MS.

Fay and Edna were rather amused about it all. That this should have happened just at a time when Tess Trelawney was obtaining such "kudos" over the copying was, to them, a scream!

So very funny, that Tess would not now be able to finish the job—and so she would not get her money, after all—ha, ha, ha! Serve her right for being so keen after the shekels!

But Mrs. Borgman professed to be rather sorry for Tess, and also for Lord Lundy.

"We must hope that der police soon gatch der

griminals," she remarked, at the end of the run in the car. "Remembering how my husband and I haf seen der original, and der copies made by der Fraulein Tess, I shall be most anxious to hear der latest news. I vonder—"

And her lovely eyes, as she paused, strayed in the direction of Morcove School. She had dismissed the car at the entrance to the drive-in to the hotel, alighting on the open road with Fay and Edna.

"I vonder if there will be some fresh news at der school ven you get in?" she resumed anxiously. "If I valk mit you to der school—you could find out perhaps?"

Fay and Edna looked at each other hesitantly. They did not want it to be known at the school that they had "taken up" with the Borgmans.

Mrs. Borgman must have read their minds instantly, for she laughed lightly.

"I quide understand, my dears! Vell, you shall say—if there is any surprise—dat I merely asked for der latest news, vilst out for a valk—hein?"

"Oh, that's good enough! Come on, Fay, and Mrs. Borgman can come with us, at that rate!" Edna exclaimed, rashly abandoning all scruples. "If Mrs. Borgman doesn't mind waiting down by the school gates—"

"Nod at all, my dears! But vould there be any real objection to my coming to der schoolhouse, shoost to vaid at der door whilst you inquire?"

"No, right-ho!" both girls assented.

They wanted to do all they could to keep in with Mrs. Borgman. She really had been a dear! This "halfer" was quite the jolliest they had obtained this term. It had been spiced with excitement, novelty. As for any questions as to how they came to be with her—easy to make up something!

So, presently, they had Mrs. Borgman in step with them as they approached the main entrance to the schoolhouse, and—nothing like a bit of cheek!—there was no one about, after all. Finding the evening light falling then, girls had come in from games a few minutes since, storming upstairs to the studies.

"If you will just wait a minute or two, then—"

"Thank you!"

But Mrs. Borgman did not wait, after all. Nor did she turn to walk away.

No one about!
She, too, had her daring—a thousand times greater daring than ever Fay and Edna vould possess, for all they were the most wayward, reckless, lawless girls in the school.

The German "lady" waited, very much on the alert, until she saw the sisters start to run upstairs. Then, on tip-toe, she entered the Front Hall.

In spite of the thief-like quickness and stealth with which she had to act, her eyes darted a glance at the specimens of Tess Trelawney's work, pinned to the green-baize board. One covetous glance it was, and then—

She flitted aside into a dim passage—found a roomy cupboard that offered a hiding-place for the time being—darted into it—and drew the door shut without a sound!

CHAPTER 6.

Under Morcove's Roof

LAUGHING over their own audacity at what they had been up to all the afternoon, Fay and Edna Denver got to Study 12, the door of which one of them threw open with provoking impoliteness.

"Er—Betty," Fay pertly spoke into the crowded

study, "any fresh news about the Barncombe Castle affair—the stolen MS.?"

"No—why?"
"We can ask, can't we?" snapped Edna, beside her sister in the doorway. "We heard about the robbery, in town; but that was an hour ago—"

"Well, there's nothing fresh, so far as we know."

"Oh, all right!"
Slam! Fay rudely banged the door, and then scampered with her sister up the corridor. Screaming their laughter, as they always did after treating the captain and her chums to studied insolence, they got back to the stairs and whirled down to the ground floor.

Then came a surprise that dashed the grin from either pretty face. Mrs. Borgman was not waiting where they had left her. She was nowhere to be seen!

"Gone away, then!" Fay inferred. "How funny, not to have waited after all! We weren't long about it, Edna!"

"No. But never mind—just as well, in fact," was the younger sister's careless answer. "Even though she is such a nice lady, I suppose some stupid fuss vould have been made. We know what Morcove is!"

"And we don't want her to be told that she mustn't encourage us," Fay rejoined. "I call her a jolly-good sort."

"So do I!"

But their fascinating acquaintance was still beneath Morcove's roof, in secret, when night had come.

Midnight, and she was still there—creeping out from her hiding-place at last, to do how strange a thing!

So that, the first girl to get downstairs, next morning, became agape with surprise, finding the green-baize board stripped of all Tess Trelawney's "exhibits."

Betty it was who, finding the sheets gone from the board, stood utterly astounded.

Servants, down before her, might have noticed the bareness of the green-baize board; if so, they had only concluded that the specimens had been taken down by Tess herself.

But Betty knew better than this, and suddenly she whipped about to go dashing upstairs again—to the dormitory, where she burst in upon all her Form mates with the sensational cry:

"Girls, girls, extraordinary thing! Tess dear—those samples of your work done at the Castle. They're gone from the board downstairs!"

"What!" the dormitory yelled. "Gone, Betty?"

"Every one of them—gone! And what do you think of that?" panted breathless Betty. "During the night they—they have vanished!"

"Gosh—"

"Bekas, what ze diggings!" Naomer yelled. "Who vould want to steal zem? Zey were not valuabubble, were they?"

"Of course they weren't!" Tess herself exclaimed curtly. "Oh, and it doesn't matter now if they have vanished, that I can see!"

"But, Tess—"

"If it's some girl's idea of a joke, to play a trick like that—I don't care," Tess shrugged and frowned.

Poor Tess! Far into the night she had lain awake, thinking of the cruel spot that had been put upon all her desperate endeavour.

"I—I don't want to hear about it, anyhow!"

"It's a shame, though!" cried Polly hotly, and others echoed her outburst. "A mean trick to play, if it has been only a trick. Look here,

though—have they been stolen, like the original MS. was stolen from the Castle?"

"Stolen? But if so—why, why?" half a dozen of the bewildered girls questioned blankly. "We can understand the original MS. being stolen. That was worth thousand of pounds! But Tess' copies—"

"They can't have been stolen!" Tess exclaimed. "They wouldn't be worth anything to anybody—how could they be?"

"Except," Helen Craig suggested, "to palm them off to collectors as originals?"

"Rubbish!" grimaced Tess. "I did the copies on ordinary drawing-paper. Collectors go by the paper or the parchment, to test the genuineness of ancient prints and manuscripts. No, it is simply some girl's stupid joke, that's all!"

"Must have been, at that rate," a good many of the girls began to conclude. "So who, then, was it?"

A general looking about for a likely culprit ended in Fay and Edna being stared at—hard! They had offered no comment, and now it was noticed that they were grinning feebly.

"Fay!" exclaimed Betty, "and you, Edna—" "Nothing of the sort!" flared out the elder sister fiercely. "We had nothing to do with it, so there!"

"Just as if!" Edna took up the denial passionately. "Course, you jump to the conclusion that it's us! You would!"

"And we can swear that we never touched the copies!" came Fay's stamped rejoinder.

Yet, within five minutes, those two girls were alone together in their study, looking at each other as if their hearts were leaping.

"Mrs. Borgman!" Fay whispered, with a note of horrible misgiving in her guarded voice. "I wonder!"

"She and her husband—come to think of it now, they seemed to be unusually interested in

Tess' work," Edna breathed. "And he was not in evidence yesterday—when the original MS. was missed from the Castle! Goodness, Fay—"

"Sh! Not so loud. I wonder, did they take up with us, as a means of—of doing it all? She came to the schoolhouse last evening—"

"And had gone, when we ran down to the front door again!"

"Or hadn't she gone?" quavered Fay, looking more aghast than ever. "Did she hide in the schoolhouse, then, and wait—until the middle of the night?"

An appalled silence endured between the guilty-minded sisters for a full minute. The more they pondered, the uglier everything looked—against the Borgmans.

Then suddenly Edna burst out laughing.

"How very funny, though—he, he, he!"

"But, Edna, if—"

"Oh, don't get windy! We're all right."

"What about the presents of jewellery which Mrs. Borgman gave us?"

"Keep them, of course! Fay, you do look so scared, about nothing—nothing!"

"It's all very well," whispered Fay huskily. "Take it that it is so—the Borgmans' doing. What had we better do now Edna?"

"Just one thing," was the tense response. "Take jolly good care that Study 12 doesn't find out!"

Fay nodded. To be reminded of Study 12 had meant a hunted look in her eyes.

"That's it," she agreed, under her breath. "We know what they are—Betty and Polly in particular. If they once get a suspicion—they'll never rest!"

And how well that conviction was ultimately borne out the future would show!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

Study 12's Great "Stunt"

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

NEXT TUESDAY'S brilliant long complete story of Morcove School tells how Betty Barton and Co. rally round Tess, in a loyal attempt to lighten the burden of sorrow and anxiety that weighs so heavily upon the youthful artist of the form.

Mystery and excitement, comedy and drama, crowd this fine story, which will grip you from first to last. It will appear under the title of:



COMPLETE

NEXT

TUESDAY

BY

MARJORIE

STANTON

STUDY 12 RALLIES ROUND