

"UNMASKED BY MAUREEN" —Grand COMPLETE Story Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN



**RECOVERED—
DESPITE THE
REBELS!**

A dramatic incident from
this week's grand long
holiday story of Betty
Barton and Co.

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EVERY TUESDAY.

Fine Stories of Morcove and Grangemoor Within

Summoned Home to Her Mother's Bedside, Judy Cardew Makes a Daring Dash Through Darkness and Danger

JUDY'S ORDEAL ON HOLIDAY



Danger Surrounds Her

WITH sinking heart, Judy Cardew stared at the scattered debris of the bridge, blown up during the night, its shattered supports almost covered by the river which buffeted them.

"What shall I do? Another bridge down, and no way of crossing the river!"

That bridge, she well knew, had been blown up by rebels in this troublous country of Turania, and her almost despairing cry echoed strangely in the loneliness around her.

Thick bunches of coarse grass dotted the slopes of the river banks, and at Judy's feet the river surged round the fallen masonry of the bridge, glinting in the early morning sunlight, while, to Judy's left, the rugged mountains of Turania flushed pink in the sunrise.

How far away Morcove School and term-time seemed to Judy as she stared hopelessly at the shattered bridge, knowing as she did that her mother was lying desperately ill in distant England, waiting her daughter's return. And here, in the midst of a country in the throes of revolution, Judy was being held prisoner against her will.

"Am I, though?" muttered Judy fiercely, clenching her hands. "I'm going to get to Suva Pesth, and it will take more than one broken bridge to stop me. Besides, when Elise Corbusci, who was set to guard Tess and myself, finds I have escaped, she'll give chase. I've simply got to get away from here before she finds me!"

It was only half an hour since the dawnlight had started to dispel the darkness of the summer night; a darkness which Judy herself had seen constantly stabbed as by lightning flashes. But she knew that each vivid flash had meant

An Exciting Holiday Story
of Betty Barton & Co.

BY MARJORIE STANTON

destruction somewhere, wrought by shell or bomb.

Not thunder, but the boom of high explosives had been responsible for the ugly sound coming to her ears so often during the last dark hours of the night, whilst she was hastening on—alone!

In a patch of woodland close by the rushing river birds were singing. The river itself dashed along, seeming to find it merry sport to surge about and over the fallen masonry of the blown-up bridge.

Now Judy went on again, going closer to what must have been such a pretty, old stone bridge, until that moment in the night when a charge of high explosive fetched it down.

She was wondering if the fallen masonry would not offer her a means of a hazardous crossing. Unless it did, she was likely to have to go miles out of her way. This bridge had carried across the river the road to Suva Pesth—a winding road traversing the floor of the wooded valley which ran between one range of mountains and another.

"Yes, I believe I can!" she decided, as the result of a first eager survey. "There's one nasty place, I can see—have to do a big jump there, and chance it, that's all! But the rest looks quite easy."

Not every girl would have formed such an opinion as that. Although some of the blocks of masonry had fallen so as to offer precarious

stepping-stones, their very blocking of the river caused a raging cataract.

Nor was it certain, as Judy realised, that the fallen pieces of stonework were securely at rest. A venturing on to one pile might cause it to slither away, throwing her off her balance into the roaring flood.

Yet, make the attempt she must, for in Suva Pesth she might find much-needed help, enabling her to get out of the country and so to England.

Suddenly, above the noise of the bubbling, surging current and the carolling of a thousand birds, she heard the unmistakable spluttering of a motor-cycle.

Eagerly she glanced round—for the sound meant much to her. Somebody at hand—on her side of the bank—riding a motor-cycle!

Judy had a joyful hope of being able to get a lift. Very likely it was somebody wanting to get Suva Pesth. The motor-cycle could never be got across just here; but a motor-cycle could traverse some alternative route in a very little while!

And here came the rider—a young man, over-alled and goggled, but not, she noticed, wearing a black sash! She was thankful not to see any black sash. As a member of the Black Sash Party, the revolutionaries, he would probably have turned out to be an amateur dispatch rider much too taken up with the fortunes of his side, at any rate, to bother with her.

She saw his expression change to one of annoyance as he sighted the blown-up bridge. Instantly he started to turn his roaring machine about, but Judy waved to him to stop.

"Please!" she shouted, racing towards him as he pulled up, keeping the engine running.

He switched off just as she got to him, and then pushed his goggles up to his forehead. Eyes that looked weary—after much night riding, perhaps—gave her a stare of surprise.

"Suva Pesth?" Judy asked eagerly. "Do you speak English? I am sorry, I don't know the language."

"A leedle, yess!"

"Oh, splendid! I belong to a party of school-girls who came to Turania on holiday. My chums are still at all at Klosters—you know it?"

"Ja! Yess—"

"The hunting-box, owned by a lady who married Mr. Somerfield—he's brother of our head-mistress. We were to be her guests. But this revolution started yesterday—"

"Ja, so!"

"The Black Sashes took over the hunting-box—commandeered it. We were told we must stay where we were, and that was all right, of course. But I found that a telegram had come for me from home."

Judy produced the telegram. She had brought it with her, reckoning that she might have to show it whilst seeking a means of getting on from Suva Pesth to England.

"You can read this? You see it says that my mother is dangerously ill at home, and I must return. I should think this telegram was the last to come to Klosters, before the wires were cut. Everything is upside down now, isn't it?"

"Ja, everything—very badt," the young man wearily sighed. "And so I have moosh to do, collecting news."

"Oh, you are a—?"

"Journalist, yess! I have been out all night. Now I have moosh news to gif my baber. I spik der English, because I vos in your gountry for a leedle while—"

"I'm so glad! You see how I am placed, don't you? If only I can get to Suva Pesth—"

"But you do no goodt there—you!"
"Oh, I think I will," Judy smiled. "I have my passport, and, anyway, there must be somebody there who can get me on to a train—or even send me home by air. The British Consul, or—"

"Vell, perhaps; but—"
"Are you going to Suva Pesth? If so, it might save me several hours—your giving me a lift? I could hang on behind, and would be ever so grateful for the lift."

Her heart gave a leap for joy as he nodded.
"Ja, you are welcome. I also have a mutter"—that was how he pronounced "mother." "But ve gannod cross here. Ach, I mud go pack und righd round over der pass."

"It's awfully decent of you to be willing to help me. I didn't mind having to walk, but this will be such a time-saver!"

And yet, as soon as she had seated herself, pillion-fashion, and was off and away with him, her spirits experienced a lapse.

The machine was bumping along over the very road which she had traversed, coming on foot from the opposite direction. Mile after mile, too, they sped along like this—having to go farther away from Suva Pesth to get to it!

To Judy, almost frantic with anxiety, there was the sense of being taken all the way back to Klosters.

She felt sure that at any rate he would not need to go more than half-way back to that village, before striking aside to seek that roundabout route which would include a mountain pass. Even so, for a while she almost regretted having begged the lift, although, at the time, it had seemed the best thing to do.

They got along so rapidly, however, that soon the uneasy feeling of having made a mistake quite passed off. The sturdy machine was "sticking" the rough road very well. This gave Judy confidence that they were not likely to come to grief whilst going over the mountain.

Once or twice they went bumping and bouncing past country folk. But there was never a glimpse of people who could be supposed to be taking any active part in the revolution. Always they were only scared-looking peasants who were on the road—sometimes as a family—and Judy guessed they were probably refugees.

Presently they sped past a signpost, and its chief arm, pointing exactly the opposite way to the one they were going, said in large letters: "SUVA PESTH."

That name and the Turanian equivalent for the mileage caused Judy a slight heart-sinking once again. She was so desperately eager to get to Suva Pesth, and yet she had had to let herself be brought all this way back again, so that she was now only four miles at most from her starting point in the night.

She cheered up again, and she saw they were approaching a tiny village—one that she had avoided in the night, by leaving the road and taking to some fields, lest the place should be in a thronged and excited state. Unless she was mistaken, the road going over the mountains started from this village.

Looking ahead over the young man's shoulder, she saw that the village street was in a most lively state now. To the inhabitants, all out of doors, had been added a great number of men and lads—Black Sashes!

Judy's knight-errant sounded a loud warning from the cycle hooter for clusters of gossipers to get out of the way. Then, as she could see, there

was sudden interest in herself and the cyclist as they came riding into the heart of the village, very slowly.

Then, all in an instant, an officious-looking man rushed to put himself in front of the motor-cycle, dramatically throwing up his hands as a signal to them to stop.

Some other men, with a self-important bearing, joined him in the middle of the village street, as he spoke to the checked journalist in a domineering tone.

"We must get off," the young man looked round to say to Judy presently. "They vant my machine."

"What!"
"They gommandeer it. I gannod refuse. Ach, bodder in he had not had der leeft, hein?"

In deepest dismay Judy got down from her precarious seat.

Even now the motor-cycle was being taken away from the journalist; or rather, he was having to follow it as one of the Black Sashes wheeled it towards the village inn.

He looked over a shoulder at her commiseratingly and suggested:

"You bedder come mit me, hein? I do my best for you."

"Thanks! I'm just as grateful to you as if this hadn't happened. Perhaps, when you tell them how I am placed—"

She got no further. There had come an arresting cry in a feminine voice—a cry addressed to her, and in English!

Stopping dead on the dusty roadway, she looked in the direction from which the cry had come, and then saw a young woman in the bright-coloured dress of the Turanian peasantry, rushing towards her.

Something in this young woman's wrought-up state had caused some of the gossiping idlers in the street to make way for her, whilst her denouncing shrieks and the accusing way she pointed at Judy created a general sensation.

And Judy knew her—

instantly!
"Why, it's Elise Corbusci," she realised with a throb of alarm. "That girl who had charge of Tess and me at the hunting-box at Klosters!"

All Hope Gone!

IN this first moment of the dramatic encounter, whilst Elise was still coming towards her with such a look of raging anger, Judy felt no more than slightly dismayed.

The Turanian girl had been an officious, bullying custodian, who might be expected to be furious at one of her charges having, so to speak, walked away in the night. It could not be called an escape, because the Morocco party had not been detained as prisoners.

Now, however, Elise came out with a word that gave the situation an uglier turn.

"Thief—thief—thief!"
Judy, instinctively drawing herself up, demanded as calmly as amazement would let her:

"What do you mean?"
"It is what you are—a thief!" stamped the handsome spitfire, whilst a crowd gathered round. "But I have caught you. Now you will come back with me to Klosters—"

"I shall not do anything of the sort," Judy flatly stated. "I had a perfect right to leave the hunting-box, and you know quite well—"

"Ah, you with your bold face and lying tongue!" Elise flared out again. "And you think, also, that it is going to help you that you are British—hein? You have a passport—oh, yes!"

She laughed wildly, throwing back her dark head. Then her flashing eyes met Judy's again.

"Where are the jewels of her highness—answer me that!"

"Mrs. Zora Somerfield?" cried Judy. She knew that it was customary to refer to that lady as "her highness," as she was a big landowner in the district. "Her jewels—?"

"That you take away from her apartment in the night—you thief!" Elise hissed on. "And I—I am accuse! Your friend, who was sleeping in that room with you; she say that I, I am the thief! Oh, yes, you wished to go back to England quick, and so you arrange it all with that friend—to take the jewels, because you have not the money—"



Elise Corbusci opened the hand she had withdrawn from Judy Cardew's pocket to reveal—a diamond necklace! The on-lookers stared aghast, certain now that Judy was, as Elise declared, a thief.

"Listen, Elise Corbusci—"

"No, I shall not listen!" Judy was shrieked at, and then the young virago began a vehement speech to the people flocking around.

When Elise's voice was at its fiercest, she suddenly pounced upon Judy and, gripping her by the arm, dived the free hand into the schoolgirl's pocket.

The hand was withdrawn almost immediately, and Elise held it out, palm upwards, to display what she had "found."

All the excited people who mobbed round were invited to feast their eyes upon a diamond necklace which lay revealed.

In vain Judy cried out, protesting that it was all a trick. She could not make herself understood, whereas Elise was all the time jabbering assertions in the native dialect, impressing the bystanders more and more.

Poor Judy. Not all her inborn courage and self-reliance could save her, now, from feeling an agonising despair. She was bound to realise that the position had taken a very bad turn.

What she might have accomplished as a British girl, in desperate need of getting home to a mother who was critically ill, and what she could hope to do now, with this charge hanging over her head, were two totally different matters.

"So!" Elise raged at her again, triumphantly dangling the necklace in the sunshine for a moment. "That is one of the jewels you stole. The rest we will find—when we search you at Klosters. Come—"

This time Elise used both hands to seize and overpower her victim, whilst several women pushed to the centre of the crowd to offer their assistance.

For a few moments Judy felt as if she were being torn to pieces, so violently was she hustled and dragged at. The babel of cries was deafening.

Then, utterly helpless in the grasp of Elise and at least two other young women, she was marched away. A great crowd followed as far as the end of the village street. After that, Judy had only the few girls and women, including Elise, as an excitable escort—taking her back to Klosters.

Back to last night's very starting point for that journey which a loving daughter's anxiety for an ailing mother had decreed!

No getting to Suva Pesth now, and so home to England—perhaps to be in time, after all! Vanished, now, was the hope of achieving that desperate objective.

The difficulties and dangers of the enforced journey; the state of strife in Turania itself, resulting in cut railway lines, blown-up bridges, communications of all sorts either stopped or chaotic—Judy had been ready to brave and overcome all these. But the malignity of Elise was something that had proved a more powerful deterrent than even the revolution itself.

That the general position in the country was as bad as a state of war, there were ample indications for Judy to heed, whilst being dragged along.

Her mind was in a whirl of thought mostly concerned with the appalling catastrophe which had overtaken her. Vaguely, however, she noticed various little parties of Black Sashes who appeared now as marchers on the road and now as batches skirmishing through the woods.

At last, with the dust of the road thick upon her shoes and stockings, Judy was taken round a bend in the valley road which gave her a sight of the hunting-box once again.

There it was, perched on the mountain-side—the

fine country residence belonging to Zora Somersfield, but now in the hands of the Black Sashes—commandered by that local leader who was Elise's father.

Judy could even see, from this distance, that home-made Union Jack which her companions in misfortune had hung out of one of the windows, on that side of the house where they were "interned."

Elise noticed the flag, and drew the attention of the other women to it, in a ribald way. Then she spoke to Judy in English:

"A pretty flag—oh, yes! But, like your passport—not much use to you now, hein? Ha, ha, ha! You will be a prisoner now—my prisoner! I shall keep you in a cellar until the revolution is over and the Black Sashes have set up the new Government in Suva Pesth. And then you will be tried—and sent to prison!"

She laughed again, cruelly.

Then, because Judy was not looking terrified, the crude-natured daughter of the tavern-keeper seized her by the shoulder and shook her viciously.

"How, then, you think that her highness will arrive to save you, do you? I shall tell you something about her highness," Elise chuckled. "She will never come to Klosters again—never! We have had news in the night, from Suva Pesth. A messenger gets through to my father, because my father is of importance—ja! There was fighting in the streets of Suva Pesth yesterday. Many civilians were killed—and she was one!"

Judy could endure in silence no longer.

"What lies you tell! They don't go down with me, so you might just as well hold your tongue!"

"You do not believe about her highness—although our messenger saw her, with his own eyes, lying there in the streets of Suva Pesth—dead! All r-r-right," Elise nodded and laughed. "Do not be anxious about her, then. After all, you have quite sufficient to keep you anxious—about that mother of yours, hein? Ha, ha, ha!"

Morcove Speaks Its Mind

TO that open window from which the home-made Union Jack was hanging came a merry-eyed girl—madcap Polly Linton, one of several "internees" who, this morning, were still regarding the revolution as a thrilling adventure rather than as anything at all frightening.

There was that in Polly's expression which meant a purely light-hearted inclination to take a look out of window just to see, so to speak, how the revolution was going on!

But now Polly, as she gazed out, became instantly and seriously startled.

"I say—come and look, quick!"

At first, the madcap was joined at the window by only three of her chums—Betty Barton, Madge Minden and Bunny Trevor. These girls had chanced to be in this upper room—busy with some bed-making, in fact—when Polly strayed to the window.

But the summoning cry had been heard by others who were in the kitchen just below. They came pounding up that steep flight of stairs which rose direct from the domestic regions of the hunting-box to this and other staff bed-rooms.

"Amazing!" gasped Betty, as she and the rest of them saw what had so startled Polly.

"It's Judy—yes! Our Judy—being marched back—"

"Goodness! Then she must have made off in the night, or as soon as it got light again!"

"And they have caught her again—dragged her back! That's Elise Corbusci who's got hold of her—"

"Yes, that hateful creature!" Helen Craig muttered. "But just look at Judy—oh, the state she's in!"

"Shame! Here, this is getting beyond a joke!" Betty exclaimed indignantly. "We don't know why Judy took it into her head to go off; but if she wanted to, she had a perfect right!"

"She may only have gone for a stroll—and that Corbusci girl made it an excuse to be nasty. We know what she is!" Polly said hotly.

"Yes, wather," came Paula Creel's sighing contribution to the flow of comment. "Faw too weady with her tongue, bai Jove!"

"But where's Tess?" wondered Pam Wilmoughby. "Why isn't she with Judy? They were supposed to be together, as a couple of hostages."

"It rather looks as if Judy went for a roam round, and Elise Corbusci saw her," Betty murmured. "Surely, if there'd been any idea about escaping, the two would have gone together."

"Anyhow—give Judy a cheer!" Polly proposed.

"We may not be seeing her again for a bit."

Judy was looking up to their window now, as she and her captor traversed the path from the gateway to the front porch. She was in a dusty, dishevelled state, as her chums had noticed. But it never entered their heads that there had been a possible desperate reason for her slipping away from the hunting-box.

Feeling sure that hers had been only a most innocent escapade, they deemed it quite fitting to give some loud cheers.

"Hurrah! Bravo, Judy!" they dinned from the window. "Morcove for ever—hurrah!"

"Been having a look at the war?" Bunny cried down. "What's become of the Black Sash Army—do you know, Judy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bekas," shrilled that dusky imp, Naomer, "eef you ask me, I believe zey have got zew wind up!"

Elise glared up to the window now. Naomer's derisive allusion to the Black Sash Party, intended to exasperate the tavern-keeper's daughter, had achieved that effect. And all the girls at the window, as Elise looked up to them, promptly gave a loud:

"Booh!"

Madcap Polly reached a hand over the sill to impart a waving motion to the Union Jack.

"Britons never—never—will be—slaves!" she chanted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Another moment, however, and Elise had passed from view, taking Judy with her.

"Shame," Betty repeated then, turning away with others from the window. "Hard luck on Judy! She was smiling; but—"



"You maig demands on ME!" Bruno Corbusci spluttered furiously. But Betty faced him unflinchingly. She was not in the least afraid of the self-styled "Kommandant."

"I thought she looked awful," Madge exclaimed anxiously. "So pale; so worn out!"

"Yes! She's feeling upset—poor Judy. Let's hope that our cheers put a little heart into her again," Helen Craig said.

"But, what ze diggings—abominabubble!" yelled Naomer. "Eef Judy couldn't go for a walk without being chased and brought back! Bekas—"

"We'll make a row about it, that's all," Betty voiced her sudden decision. "It's not good enough! I am going to demand word with Bruno Corbusci—"

"Hear, hear!" Bunny Trevor applauded. "Elise and her father really must be made to understand; we are not prisoners of war!"

"Disgwaceful, yes, wather!"

"Come on down, then, all!"

This rallying cry from Betty resulted in just such a high-spirited surging away as so often happened in Study 12 at Morcove School.

Down the one steep flight of stairs the girls sped, eager to confront Bruno Corbusci and voice their complaints.

Marie Preska was here, busy at the stove. Marie's inability to find out what had become of her beloved mistress, whom she had not seen since before the Morcove girls arrived, was affecting her spirits.

Confident, however, that her faithful Josef, who had gone out to search for his mistress, would learn news of her, Marie devoted mind and energies alike to that part in the present emergency which Fate had allotted her, which was to see that the schoolgirl "internees" with whom she had been segregated did not go hungry!

Betty went across to her at the fireplace.

"Marie, we want to see Bruno Corbusci!"
 "My faith, what good can it do you to see that man?" the good woman exploded, and banged about with the poker as if she would like to be hanging it about his head. "Can he end this revolution for you?"

"I expect he is wishing he could end it, now," Bunny gurgled. "He and a lot more of them will be sorry they ever started it, I should think."
 "In that, there is much truth," Marie nodded. "Blind leaders of the blind! But see him if you wish it. As for me, I will show him what Marie Preska thinks of him and his rabble, if he comes one step beyond that doorway. Bruno Corbusci may have commandeered her highness' house. But this is MY kitchen!"

Then Marie fanned a heated face with a handkerchief and smiled. There were moments when even she could see that there was a touch of comedy in these British schoolgirls being involved in Turania's civil war.

She crossed to the door, unlocked and opened it, and called loudly and imperatively:

"Bruno Corbusci!"

A rumble of talk from some room opening off the front hall died down. Then the heavy step of the burly tavern-keeper brought him to where Betty was awaiting him, at the end of the kitchen passage.

"Look here, Mr. Corbusci—"

"Kommandant, please," he requested; and pride in the self-conferred title caused him to give his sweeping moustache a grand twirl.

"We'd like to know by what right your daughter is treating one of our chums like a prisoner," Betty spiritedly protested. "That wasn't the understanding, you know! It may have been fair for you to take Judy and Tess away from us, to be hostages; but—"

"Ach, I dink you forgerdt der respectt due to me—"

"That's beside the point!" Betty interrupted hotly. "You and your lot are not playing the game!"

"Respect!" Polly cried. "What about the respect due to us—as British subjects!"

"Hurrah!" Bunny led the rest in a big cheer. "Hoo-ray!"

"After what we saw from the window, just now," Betty resumed, "we think there had better be an end to this hostage business. Yesterday, we supposed that we must put up with it; but now—"

"Vot! You maig demands to ME!" Corbusci glared. "Are you madt?"

"We are very annoyed with you—annoyed and disgusted!"

"Bekas, eef you were to look after your own daughter," Naomer yelled, "and not bozzer about setting up new governments zat nobody wants"

"Hear, hear-r-r!" from Bunny and others. "Not," Bunny added, "that any new Government has been set up yet—has it, Herr Kommandant?"

"You had bedder behafe yourselves—"

"We have behaved, and that's our grievance," Betty contended; "you have not kept to the bargain. There was to be no ill-treatment of the

hostages, if we showed patience. But it is quite certain that one of the hostages has been bullied, and so now we warn you; either you let those two girls come back to us, or we shall make a row about your treatment of them when we get to—"

"BANG! A deafening explosion suddenly shook the house.

Whether it was a shell or a bomb which had created such a terrific concussion, it had occurred near enough to the hunting-box to make Bruno Corbusci jump with alarm. As for the girls, several of them gave a more or less serious:

"Ooo-oo-oo!"

"Yes, well," Pam smiled at the Kommandant — "was that one of yours, or one of theirs?"

"Zey better be careful!"

"Howwows, yes!" Paula palpitated. "Ow, geals, I—I pwesume they are in ignorance that we are heah! Oh, dear; oh, dear, haow extremely awkward, yes, wather!"

"Of course," Polly grimly remarked, looking Bruno Corbusci straight in the eyes, "if it's the other side, then they are probably going to shell this house, as being the local Kommandant's headquarters."

"So what about your shifting, Herr Kommandant?" Bunny politely suggested. "How about making your own tavern, in the next village, the local headquarters?"

Bruno Corbusci was wanting to appear calm. He pulled out a cheap cigar and lighted it. But Morcove noticed that the hand which held the flaming match was all of a tremble.

Suddenly they heard a soft "whoop-ing" overhead, and then—

Cr-r-ratter, BANG! came from some more high explosive, followed by a splitting crash as of a falling tree.

Judy's Fate

"JUST behind the house, that time!" Polly breathed. "So it is the other side—shelling!"

"A bit nearer, wasn't it?" Helen fancied.

"Near enough, anyway," Betty grimaced.

She had detected, and fully approved, an alarmist attitude intended to induce Corbusci and Co. to clear out. Then Morcove would have the hunting-box all to itself!

"You will be all ride, I dink," he said, with a good deal of uncertainty in his tone and look. "you fly der flag of your country, hein?"

"Oh, yes, our flag is still flying," Betty blandly responded. "We don't know about yours! Kommandant Corbusci, those two chums of ours must not be kept to your part of the house now that this shelling has started."

"No, bekas, zey are only aiming at your side of the house," Naomer artlessly asserted. "Zey can see our flag—he is such a whooper—and zey will not dare to fire close to him!"

Pam and one or two others had to turn away to hide smiles. Really, they felt inclined to pity the Kommandant; he looked so worried!

"You—you musd shoost keep your flag flying, kels."

"Oh, we shall do that, right enough," Betty said cheerfully. "But—I'm sorry, but your daughter's conduct has forced me to give you a sort of ultimatum. Unless you let our two chums come back to us within ten minutes, we shall take in our flag."

"Vot!"

"We are not inclined to let it protect us, unless it can also protect them!"

SCHOOLGIRLS
WEEKLY

Every Wednesday

"Budt—budt dat is very rash of you!" he agitatedly submitted. "Himmel, you must not lose der production of your flag! I—I do not wish you to haul him down—ach, no!"

"Then let Tess and Judy come back to us!" "I—I will dink about it," he stammered, championing a cigar that was already burst to bits. "Ach, yes, I vill—consider, dank you."

"Ten minutes," Betty repeated the time limit implacably.

He had bowed to her rather abjectedly as he backed away. She bowed in return! Then she closed the door upon him, locked it, and instantly came in for an admiring slap on the shoulders from Polly.

"You're the one, Betty!" "Lovely!" Bunny commented on the way Betty handled matters. "It will do the trick, you see!"

"If the others are as jumpy as he is—their 'leader'!" Pam rejoined scathingly. "I liked his anxiety on our account!"

"Ha, ha, ha—yes!" "Wasn't it obvious," Pam Willoughby smiled, "he's anxious for our flag to go on hanging outside the window as much for his own sake as for ours?"

"He's either a fool or a rogue," Helen Craig chuckled. "To talk as if the flag would only protect us, if they really shelled the house. As if the gunners could pick and choose between one side of the building and another!"

"But can't they?" Paula jerked dismayedly. "How can they when they're probably firing from miles away?" Polly rounded upon the beloved duffer. "From the other side of the mountains, perhaps!"

"Ow, gwacious! I didn't wealise—" "Well, you do now, let's hope!" "Sweendle!" Naomer complained. "Not fair! Bekas, zey can't see what they are aiming at!"

"Of course they can't!" Polly agreed grimly. "It's all done by—well, I don't know exactly how it's done! But they sort of get you taped—distance and all that—work it all out from maps. Wonderful how they find the range; get bang on the mark—"

"Now, Polly," Betty laughed, "stop it!" "Ye-yes, wather!" Paula pleaded, sitting down and sighing. "Theah is no need to be fivulous, geals. Pewsionally, I am not a bit afwaid—oh, no. I would wegawd any more shellfire as a bit of a thwilt. You geals find that hawd to believe, do you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "As a matter of fact," Betty said, thinking it time to stop this "jollyng" of Paula; "I expect those two shells were only a couple of strays." "A mere gesture," Bunny sparkled. "Just to let Corbusci & Co. know what the other side could do if it liked!"

At this instant there was another bang! It was a very minor one—merely Marie's dropping the poker. But Paula was not the only Morcovian to make a startled movement.

"So there will be two more for dinner? Good!" Marie broke out at last. "If only it could be three more!"

"You mean—your husband?" Madge sympathetically inferred.

"I do not mean my Josef—no!" Marie said, slamming a heavy stew pan on to the stove. "I mean my mistress! My faith, what a life; what a world it has become! When a lady is only as far off as Suva Pesth, and yet she cannot get back to her own home! When a mere Corbusci—a tavern-keeper—can promote himself to be a Kommandant!"

"All I hope," Bunny said, "when he comes to write his experiences, he puts us girls in it. I'll buy a copy—even if his portrait is on the cover, medals and all!"

Another laugh started; and then came a tap-tap-tap at the locked door, causing a change to loud chattering.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip—" "Bekas—gorjus!" Naomer capered and clapped. "Eet has done ze trick, hooray! Here zey are already—Judy and Tess!"

Betty flashed to the door and turned back the key, her chums crowding close in a state of great jubilation.

But the opening door only let in Tess Trelawney, and there was that in her looks which struck to silence those who had intended to give louder cheers than ever.

"Why, Tess—what's the matter? And where's Judy?"

Betty, closing and re-locking the door after Tess had entered, ended the sudden dramatic stillness by voicing the questions.

"They wouldn't let her come back with me—" "Wouldn't—let her?"

"And wouldn't let me be with her either; as I wanted to be. Elise Corbusci has got her now—down in some cellar."

"What!" "Judy is being treated as a prisoner now."

"Never!" gasped several of the indignant listeners. "Oh!"

"Disgwaceful, bai Jove!" "We shan't allow it," Betty instantly declared.

"Bruno Corbusci must keep to the terms! Why is a difference being made about Judy?"

"Judy went away in the night—" "In the night!"

"Yes. She waited until I was asleep, so as to go away without me. She didn't want me to run the risks that going with her might mean. She meant to get to Suva Pesth, and then on to England somehow."

The listeners gaped astoundedly. "But why? What's happened?" demanded Betty.

"It is terrible for poor Judy," Tess continued distressfully. "When we all got here, yesterday—we didn't know it at the time, because of all the upset—there was a telegram waiting for Judy. She saw it on the hall table when she and I were taken away from you others."

"Telegram—from somebody at home?" Betty jerked.

"Yes. It was from the housekeeper at Prior's Wold. It said that Judy's mother was dangerously ill and she must leave for England at once."

There was an appalled silence in the crowded kitchen. Marie gave a lift and fall of the hands.

"So, of course," Tess resumed, "Judy became mad to get away to Suva Pesth. She felt sure she could get on from there somehow—"

"Poor Judy," Madge exclaimed sympathetically. "Oh, how awful for her!"

"Yes!" Betty nodded. "Dreadful!"

"Then, in the night, I felt sure that she'd fallen asleep, and I was relieved. I dropped off at last. When I woke up it was daylight, and she'd been gone several hours."

"Only to be fetched back again!" Polly suddenly raged out. "By that Corbusci girl—the wretch! And why—why? How dare that girl—"

"Ah, but listen," Tess struck in. "In the night Elise Corbusci saw a chance to loot Mrs. Somerfield's jewel case. Now it's her cunning story that Judy took the jewels—to help her to get

home. Elise pitched that story to her father, and—

"And so Judy's been fetched back!" Betty gasped. "Put under arrest, as it were—"

"This is the limit," Polly fumed, sweeping a hand across her forehead. "Judy locked away in a cellar now—when she should be on her way home to her mother!"

"But we'll manage," Betty said briskly. "First, we've got to get hold of Judy. Then we must get her off again, at least two of us going with her. The rest must stick it here for several good reasons. It will lead the local Black Sashes to think Judy is with us all the time. Another thing, we want if possible to recover those jewels. They are worth thousands of pounds, it's a cert. We want to be here, anyhow, in case Mrs. Somerfield turns up. For we needn't believe that about her having been killed. Another reason for some of us staying on—we don't want to desert Marie!"

"Hark!"

Madge it was who, during some ensuing discussion, had suddenly picked up a significant sound from the outer air. The unmistakable whine of a 'plane.

They would all have rushed upstairs to look for the machine in the sunny sky; but now came a commotion in the house which sounded very much like sudden panic amongst the Black Sashes.

The girls held themselves still, listening.

To a great outburst of excitable cries was added the noisy clumping of feet as Corbusci and his companions rushed to get clear of the building.

A few moments, and Morcove could tell that the revolutionaries were all outside—running this way and that to put themselves as far as possible from the building over which the 'plane was going to pass.

The whining roar of the machine, flying low, was ominously louder.

"A bomber?" Betty whispered. "That's why they've bolted like that, anyhow—they fear the house is going to be bombed."

"Has Elise bolted away, with her father and the others?" Polly wondered. "Oh, anyhow—let's go and find Judy!"

Betty nodded and moved to the door. The aeroplane seemed to be roaring now directly above the house.

Unlocking the door, Betty opened it. Beyond the doorway there was the deserted passage, leading away to parts of the house just as deserted—silent! The very silence out there seemed to make the noise of the 'plane grow to a deafening roar.

"Coming, girls?"

"Yes—yes, Betty!"

To a girl, they were ready! And there was Marie, who had been standing with clasped hands and closed eyes, as if murmuring a prayer—she also was eager now to put this moment, full of deadly possibilities though it was, to good use.

Corbusci and his men, being armed, could have everything their own way—when they were here. But they had rushed away, in fear of the house being bombed, and this was Morcove's chance!

The girls surged along the kitchen passage and turned into another, at end of which, Marie had whispered there, there was a door serving some cellar steps.

This door, when they got to it, was standing open. The musty air of wine cellars assailed their nostrils as they started to descend.

The 'plane seemed to have circled about and to be coming back again.

And then, suddenly—all in an instant—it was like the end of the world to them all.
BURROOM—CRASH!

A bomb—hitting the house somewhere; that one shattering, earth-shaking explosion, followed by a rattle and banging of falling masonry and splitting timber; and then—a deathly stillness!

Morcove Does the Trick!

"WHEW!"
"Ow, my gug-gug-gwacious! Ow, geals—"

"Oh, shut up, Paula!"

"We're all right, aren't we?"

"Listen! Coming back to drop another, is it?"

"Ow—"

"Oh, shut up, Paula!"

Such were a few of the first quaverings of girlish voices, down there in the semi-darkness of the cellar steps, where the chums had, as it were, been struck all of a heap by the terrible explosion.

"Yes, well," Pam suddenly laughed; "best place we could have been, I suppose! Anyway, we are all right."

"So now—"

And Betty, as she said that, resumed the descent. The noise of the 'plane was becoming fainter and fainter.

"He's gone!"

"And he can jolly well keep going, bekas—any more of eet," Naomer squeaked, "and I shan't be able to eat my dinner! Lucky zing, he didn't hit ze kitchen!"

"Judy!" voiced Betty. "You there, Judy?"

"Yes!" a faint voice answered. "I'm here—locked in!"

From the foot of the cellar stairs a narrow passage ran, lighted by a grating. It was not one big cellar, down here, but a series of underground chambers, all served by the passage.

Suddenly, in the gloom, those who were to the fore in the advance saw a figure postured in a very drawn-up, at-bay manner, at the other end of the passage. The grating was there as high as ten feet from the brick-floor, and it let down a ghostly light upon the figure.

Elise!

For Betty and others to see and recognise the Turanian girl was for all of them to rush at her.

She resisted; but they were too many for her and easily overpowered her. Then, whilst some held her, others jolly set Judy free from the cellar in which she had been locked away.

Less than ten seconds did it require to do all this. With loud cheers, rescued Judy was escorted upstairs and so back to the Morcove quarters, Elise herself having been slammed into the cellar to enjoy a taste of what she had given her victim.

Betty had seen no reason why the Turanian girl should not have the key turned upon her. If her father and the others came back, Elise would promptly be released; if not, she could be let out later on by Morcove.

Soon enough, the danger having passed off for the time being, Corbusci and the rest came trickling back. Some part of the building must have been completely demolished by the bomb; but the hunting-box still offered, as Morcove realised, fine accommodation for all these men.

The amenities of the place were such as no other house in the district could offer; and, naturally, the revolutionaries were eager to "do themselves well"—whilst they had the chance.

But it was only by a renewed rumble of voices

that Morcove knew when the house had filled up again. The girls had not looked out of the windows to see the men come back.

Presently Corbusci came to the locked kitchen door, with Elise, demanding that Judy should be given up. Morcove's spirited refusal resulted in the Turanian girl urging her father to have the door smashed open; but he must have been afraid to go to such extremes, even to please his daughter. The chums could hear Elise grumbling at him, when at last they both withdrew.

But the Black Sash leader's reluctance to resort to violence did not mean that the trumped-up charge against Judy, in regard to the jewels, was to be dropped.

It was perfectly clear to all the girls that Bruno Corbusci must, for his daughter's sake, keep that charge alive. And this meant that the very greatest secrecy must be observed, in getting Judy off and away again upon the urgent journey to England.

If by any mischance it became known that Judy had set off once more, there would be a widespread hue-and-cry. Only by keeping Judy in the country and getting her publicly condemned as the culprit, could Elise hope to clear herself. For her, Elise, to have to be under any suspicion



in her time of trial. But her chums could imagine how, in reality, she was agonised by the tormenting delay, the cruel frustration of her purpose that had already occurred. And their hearts ached for her. Nearly four-and-twenty hours ago since she had received the urgent message: "Come home at once!" And she was still not yet even started.

No wonder they were with her in thinking that there must be no waiting for nightfall. Only let her and her chosen companions get away at once, and—why, by nightfall they might, with any luck, be at the frontier. And once over the frontier, the rest should be easy!

But how to get them away from the hunting-box in broad daylight—unseen? It had got to be done—but how?

"Makes you almost wish that bomber would come back," Polly sighed, ending a general silence due to brain-racking. "Then the Black Sashes might take to the cellars!"



Keeping perfectly quiet, Betty and Polly watched Elise at her strange task. They were certain she was burying the stolen jewellery and they meant to verify their suspicions the moment Elise had gone.

"A scare for them—yes, that's what we want," Betty nodded. "And so— Oh, look here, only thing to do, girls—we must manage to make a scare, that's all!"

"I'm not wanting to be funny," said Bunny. "How about an imitation bomb-sort-of-thing?" Polly brought her hands together with a little clap.

"I have it! Here, some of you—let's find our way to the roof!"

HALF an hour later it was just as if another shell had come over, hitting the hunting-box but failing to explode.

There was no thunderous explosion; but an initial CRASH! in the region of the roof was followed by a prolonged rumbling and booming of falling masonry.

Those who were in the kitchen had been anxiously awaiting such a sound—one that meant joy to them.

of having used the revolution as a chance for looting would be a most serious thing.

Hard-pressed Morcove, aware of all this, planned accordingly and planned well.

There was Pam's astute suggestion—"carried unan."—that Judy and her companions should not make for Suva Pesh, but should go in an exactly opposite direction—to get to the frontier between Turania and the neighbouring state of Rouvackia.

Conditions in Suva Pesh were likely to have become much worse to-day. On the other hand, once across the frontier the girls would be in a country unaffected by the revolution.

Pam and Helen were picked to escort Judy, and then it was decided that there could be no waiting for a chance to turn up for the three to slip away in broad daylight. Somehow or other, Morcove had got to devise an opportunity.

Bravely Judy was doing her best to appear

Not so the Black Sashes. To them, as Morcove had hoped would be the case, it meant another fit of panic. Fearing that a "dud" shell would be followed by more shells that would function properly, Corbusci and Co. dashed down to the cellars.

"Quick, then—now's your chance!" Betty turned to say to Judy, Pam and Helen. "Off you go!"

Those three were ready. They were supplied with some frugal rations, and had each a stout stick to help them to the frontier. Good-byes were hastily said, and then the trio clambered out by the kitchen window.

Stooping, they crept away, one behind another, keeping close to the house wall.

When that protection ended, they could be seen by anxious watchers at the window nipping to the shelter afforded by the back of some outbuildings.

From there, they gained cover in a shrubbery which finally mingled with mammoth forest trees.

"Done! And now those who were at the kitchen window could breathe freely again.

No outcry had come, to tell the watchers that their three fleeing chums had been seen. The clever ruse had succeeded.

Unhelped by any bit of luck, but simply by careful planning, Morcove had achieved its object.

"They should be all right now," Betty said triumphantly. "Judy must be feeling heaps better already."

Polly, Bunny and Tess—these three came stealthily down the stairs, to rejoin their chums in the kitchen.

Instantly they saw that Judy and her fellow-adventurers had gone, and this meant smiles of supreme delight.

"Did you hear a noise, just now?" Bunny blandly asked.

"Noise!" tittered Betty and others.

"Bekas, eef zat wasn't a real shell—"

"Not a bad imitation, eh?" Polly proudly submitted. "You should have been there—great fun! That real shell had left a whole chimney stack ready to come down in the next wind. So we three girls had only to give it a push, and there you were!"

"Yes," Betty nodded and laughed. "And there were Corbusci and Co.—adjourning, pronto, to the cellars! Another conference in the drawing-room interrupted—poor dears!"

"They are coming back now—hark!" smiled Madge.

"But Judy and her companions are not!" was Betty's happy rejoinder. "They are getting, every moment now, farther upon their way!"

"And something," Polly added ecstatically—"something seems to tell me that this time they will get right through!"

A Queer Homecoming

NIGHT had come again to strife-riven Turania.

At the hunting-box of Klosters, two of the "interned" Morcove girls were taking the hour between eleven and midnight as their spell of "duty"—on watch.

Betty was stationed at that upper window from which all day the Union Jack had hung. Polly was below, in the kitchen, on the alert for any hint of danger from those Black Sashes who were occupying the main part of the house.

The rest of the girls were asleep, as was Mario Preska. Soundly they were sleeping, too, after a day that had been exciting enough.

No actual fighting had taken place in the immediate neighbourhood of Klosters; but there had been ample signs that the revolution was by no means collapsing.

To-night, again, there were gun-flashes in the sky, and in the last few minutes Betty had heard a repetition of sounds which, on and off during the last twelve hours, had forced her and her chums to believe that armed parties were at least on the march in the valley, if not moving into position for a skirmish.

No more shells had come over, nor had the whine of a "bomber" or reconnoitring plane come out of the sky. And although this was a thing for Morcove to be thankful about, it had also meant that Corbusci and Co. had felt encouraged to retain such luxurious "headquarters" as the hunting-box meant.

To the two girls taking sentry duty at this time, it seemed as if the revolutionaries who had "commandeered" the hunting-box were snatching some sleep. Not one of their voices could be heard; not a sound came suggesting that anyone was astir. Up till an hour after dark there had been a certain amount of coming and going; after that—silence.

Betty and Polly did not feel that any trouble was likely to arise during the night. It had been decided to keep watch throughout the night, simply as a precaution.

Betty realised that her position, at this upper window, was the less boring one. She had the nightbound valley to look out upon, the starlight enabling her to distinguish features of the marvellous expanse of scenery. Also, those gun-flashes and the attendant rumble of artillery fire interested her.

Pity! she was constantly thinking. A worse than silly business, this internal warfare. Without attempting to form any opinion as to the rights and wrongs in the case, she realised full well that immediate harm was being done, to achieve no ultimate benefit. Simply a waste of human life, treasure, everything—war.

Suddenly she became more on the alert—startled out of her reflective state by a sound from close at hand.

Unless she was greatly mistaken, an outer door of the hunting-box had been softly opened, and now someone was stealing out into the grounds.

After warily peering for a few moments, Betty became convinced that she was not going to be able to glimpse the midnight prowler from this window. Whoever it was had closed an outer door at the back of the building.

But perhaps the kitchen window would serve a useful purpose, as this at least looked on to part of the ground lying behind the house.

Betty effected a noiseless descent to the kitchen, and there was Polly—over by the window, watching eagerly, whilst taking good care not to be seen from outside.

"It's Elise!" So the madcap excitedly whispered to Betty the moment they were together at the window of the unlighted kitchen.

"I don't know what she's up to," Polly whispered on. "But I saw her sneaking away—to the shrubbery. She was doing her best not to make a sound."

"Hasn't found out that Judy got away?" Betty suggested uneasily. "Going after her? Oh, but what does it matter, when they've been gone twelve hours now!"

"Betty—how about those jewels?" Polly breathed. "You get me? Has this something to do with them?"

"You mean— Come on, then," the excited whisper was returned. "A moment, though! Mustn't leave the place unguarded. We'll wake two of the others."

Another minute and the outer door serving the kitchen regions was being silently unbolted and unlocked, to let Betty and Polly creep forth. They had left Madge and Tess on guard in the kitchen.

If Elise Corbusci meant to dispose of the jewels, Betty and Polly were determined to know something about it. After all, the jewels belonged to Zora Somerfield, their hostess.

Polly, who had seen the way Elise went, led on tiptoe across to the outbuildings, going behind these to work on towards the shrubbery. Betty groped after her chum, close enough to observe any checking gesture as soon as it might be given.

So they reached the shrubbery and were then at a loss—until, suddenly, the very faintest sound

gave them the whereabouts of Elise. It was a sound like the jab of a spade into the soil.

She seemed to be only a few yards from where they lurked.

Only once did that telltale sound come. After that, Elise must have worked away with the spade even more cautiously.

Their eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, Betty and Polly felt confident of being able to creep on again, getting a little nearer. It was a winding grass path amongst the ornamental shrubs and specimen trees along which they had come, and this could be traversed without a sound.

Nor was there much doubt that Elise had come this way, because the path could take her well amongst the trees without her having to risk the snapping of twigs underfoot.

Suddenly Polly checked her companion with a

(Continued on the next page.)

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN. No. 761. Vol. 30.
Week ending September 7th, 1935.

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YOU will already have guessed if you have studied page 218 what must be the first thing for me to talk about this week.

Once again it is "ANNUAL" time, and here they are, the four best and most popular Books for Girls.

Pride of place must be given to "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL," price six shillings, for all who read this paper look upon that as their very own Annual. Gorgeous long stories of Morcove and Grangemoor, delightful articles about Morcove, and a Morcove play. These are only a few of the fascinating contents, about which I shall have more to say another week.

Then there is the "SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL," which, this year, costs only three shillings and sixpence. This Annual features, in particular, that merry band of schoolgirls, Barbara Redfern & Co., of Cliff House School, and, despite its reduced price is, in many ways, better than ever.

"THE GOLDEN ANNUAL FOR GIRLS" contains a feast of good stories by your favourite authors, and is beautifully illustrated throughout. This also costs three-and-sixpence.

Finally, there is "THE POPULAR BOOK OF GIRLS' STORIES," in which you will meet once again old favourites from the realms of schoolgirl fiction. At half-a-crown there is no better value to be had.

From time to time, I shall tell you more about these splendid volumes, all of which are certain to delight you and make you very proud and happy to possess them.

Why not ask your newsagent for particulars of

the Christmas Club scheme, which makes it easy for you to purchase these lovely books out of pocket-money?

Last year these splendid ANNUALS sold out very quickly, and sometimes it proves impossible to reprint them, so make sure of yours by ordering early, won't you?

A "Morcove Club" Notion.

Surprising how this Club or Society idea in connection with "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN" increases in popularity by leaps and bounds. Here are some extracts from a letter received only this morning from a reader who signs herself "Madge's Fan" and lives at Louth, Lincolnshire.

"Now I must tell you about our Club," she says. "It is composed of all nineteen members of our Form IVb, and we call ourselves the 'Morcove Club,' because we are all ardent Morcove fans. Recently we had a popularity contest to find out which really was our favourite character. We gave 3 marks for a first, 2 for a second, 1 for a third, each writing 1, 2, 3 on slips of paper—"

The actual order of popularity voted for by this particular club was as follows: Madge Minden, Polly Linton, Pam Willoughby, Betty Barton, Naomer, Paula, Judy, Bunny, Tess, Helen.

I really should be tremendously interested if other clubs, societies, or groups of readers would try out this experiment and let me know the result.

The members of my Louth reader's club also voted on their favourite Grangemoor character, and Jack Linton and Dave Cardew tied for top place, you'll be interested to know.

Get busy, then, all you society members and Clubs and be sure to let me know what happens.

Just a few lines regarding next week's programme. The long Morcove holiday story bears the thrilling title of:

"MORCOVE AND THE ROYAL REFUGEE,"

By Marjorie Stanton,

and I scarcely think I need say more than that about it. The title speaks for itself, doesn't it?

Then there are five COMPLETE stories of Maureen Martin, entitled "Maureen's Carnival Capture," and of that certain laughter-raiser, Dodo Wren. Also long instalments of Muriel Holden's great thrill-and-mystery story, and, of course, "Grangemoor to Guard Her."

So, until next Tuesday, dear readers, every good wish from

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

P.S.—Have you learnt the Secret Code off by heart yet?

A Midnight Visitor to Grangemoor Causes Serious Trouble for Dave



Grangemoor to Guard Her

A Word With Dave

THE headmaster of Grangemoor School paced up and down his study, then stopped to glare angrily at Jack Linton, Jimmy Cherrol, Tom Trevor, and Tubby Bloot, of the Fourth Form of that school.

"So David Cardew, the particular chum of you four boys, has chosen to steal away from the school again, eh?" he roared.

None of the four juniors spoke.

"Did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, sir," the four answered at once.

"Well, knowing all four of you as the boon companions of Cardew, I cannot believe that he has been into mischief again this evening—again, I said—without your knowing something of what he is doing!"

Still there was silence from Jack Linton & Co.

The news that Dave Cardew had absented himself from his dormitory had come to the Great Hall at Grangemoor at the very moment when Dave's chums had been brought before the school to receive a public caning.

It had temporarily saved Jack and his friends from their caning, but they were not thinking so much about that now as about Dave.

Dave had had permission to lie down in the dormitory because he had said he had felt unwell. The chums had helped him to leave the dormitory, because Dave had had a very urgent reason to wish to see Hetty Morland—the girl he was protecting from her brutal guardian, Ezra Joab. Dave had thought he would be able to return before he was missed.

It was sheer bad luck that had caused the Head to send the prefect, Denver, to make sure that Dave was still in the dormitory. But now that Dave's absence was known, neither Jack nor Dave's other three chums were going to say one word that would make Dave's case worse.

BY MARJORIE STANTON

"Where is Cardew?"

The Head barked the question in his sternest manner, and as the juniors did not answer, but merely shuffled uneasily, he turned to Jack.

"You, Linton. You know where he is. Tell me at once! I will not be defied!"

"Sorry, sir, but—"

"You were up for a public caning; my punishment will not stop at that unless you speak," the Head declared.

"I'm sorry, sir—" began Jack again, and the Head turned from him.

"You, Trevor!"

"I haven't seen Cardew, sir," Tom Trevor truthfully answered, "since he went away to ask matron if he might go up early."

"And you, Bloot? Wake up, Bloot! Don't snore, boy!"

He whose ample proportions had earned him the nickname of Tubby had been making rather adenoïdal noises—as usual when the situation was critical.

"Er—"

"Don't say 'Er'! That's no answer—'Er'!"

"Er—"

"Robert Bloot!"

"I was trying to think, sir—"

"Boy, the truth is what I want, not some plausible evasion resulting from—"

"The truth is, sir, I haven't seen Cardew, either, sir, since Linton and Trevor saw him."

"Then why couldn't you say so at once? What about you, Cherrol?"

"I saw Cardew in the dormitory, a little while before assembly, sir," Jimmy stated with equal truth. "I went up on purpose to see him."

But Jimmy did not deem it necessary to add that he had gone up to the dormitory, temporarily to take Dave's place in the bed—an artful piece of personation that was to enable Dave to slip away and get out of bounds.

"Ha!" said the Head. "So you at least saw Cardew in the dormitory? And was he, then, in bed?"

If there had been time for Jimmy to answer this question, he would have been compelled to say, truthfully: "No!" And what that would have resulted in, in the way of a brow-beating cross-examination, can be imagined.

But at this critical moment the door opened and Mr. Challenor, the housemaster, hurried in, delightedly announcing:

"It's all right, sir!"

"What!"

"There is nothing in it at all, about Cardew. My wife, it seems, simply told him to go to a bed-room where he would be all to himself. He is in the one he was given the other night, when he turned up after enduring such a—"

"I see! That accounts, then, for his not being in the dormitory when one of your prefects went up to look?"

"That's it!" laughed "Old Tony," the quite young housemaster, whose adorable wife, before her marriage, had been a Form-mistress at Morcove. "My wife says that she thought he would be better away from the dormitory again to-night. Cardew is not a boy to make a fuss about nothing, so his going to the matron—"

"Oh, quite right—perfectly right!" the Head nodded. "So there it is, then, and these boys—for I must deal with Cardew, when I deal with them—they had better go off to their beds."

"Run along," said Mr. Challenor, with something of admiration for them in his dismissing smile. They and Dave, recently, had been figuring in a shocking light to the Head; but, somehow, Mr. Challenor's faith in them still survived.

"Gosh, chaps," Jack chuckled, as soon as the four of them were outside the sanctum, "what do you think of that for a bit of luck?"

"Sheer act of Providence," said Jimmy.

"It's Old Tony's wife," Tom breathed ardently. "She saved the situation—before her life she did!"

"Yes, good sort, Mrs. Challenor," said Tubby, popping a chocolate into his mouth. "One of the best! Like to thank her."

"Well, we needn't go straight up to the dormi-," Jack gaily pursued. "Say, let's see if we can't look in on old Dave, just to wish him nighty-night!"

Accordingly, when they got to Challenor's House, the four made for a certain upstairs passage serving that spare room to which Dave had been ordered the other night.

They did this with the suitably decorous air of visitors to a sick friend in hospital; but Mrs. Challenor, chancing to encounter them, refused to believe in their virtuous looks, their artful solemnity.

"Shouldn't you boys be in bed by now? What are you doing here?" she asked with twinkling eyes.

"It isn't our fault, Mrs. Challenor, that we have been kept up," Jack said. "The Head invited us to his study for—a few words, yes. But what's this about Dave Cardew? Is he very ill?"

"Ill! Oh, you boys are the limit," she laughed. "You know very well that Dave is perfectly well!"

"We feared he might have been found—wandering," grinned Tom.

"And I don't mind telling you," rippled the former Morcove mistress; "I did find him coming back to the dormitory, during assembly—after he had been out of bounds! I shall not say why I ordered him to go to a different room for the night—at once!"

"Mrs. Challenor, you are a sport!" was one of many adoring remarks to which she found herself being treated, greatly to her amusement. "It was jolly good of you, Mrs. Challenor! If you hadn't—"

"Oh, that will do! Now be off; and don't expect me to do as much for you another time, mind! I don't know why I do these things for you boys, except that— Oh, well, it doesn't matter."

"And so we may—mayn't we?" Jack suggested, when at last they came to a standstill. "But may we just go in and say good-night to Dave?" he asked.

"No! Well—but don't hang about, then! You'll never get to bed to-night, going on like this!"

And she discreetly flitted away, leaving the four irrespressible to proceed to Dave's room, upon the door of which they knocked solemnly before entering.

"Come in! What the—"

"How are you, Dave?" Jack asked with mock gravity, leading in the advance to the bedside. "In much pain now?"

"Oh, get to blazes out of this!" Dave laughed. "It's not the time for—"

"It's all right; we've got permish! As if," said Tom, "we would ever do anything without permission!"

"How did you get on, Dave?" whispered Jimmy eagerly.

"Have a choc, Dave?" asked Tubby.

"Look here," Dave protested, "you chaps had much better get away to the dormi. I—"

"We were thinking of having a little supper in the study, before turning in," Jack remarked engagingly. "Care to join us, old son? No need to dress; just an informal gathering—"

"And then you can tell us," chipped in Tom, "how you got on. Did you get down to Job's all right? Did you get your talk with Hetty Morland?"

"I did."

"Good! And how," Jack genially inquired, "was Uncle Ezra? Didn't see him, perhaps? Ah, pity! But I suppose you know, you son-of-a-gun, that whilst you were away, gallivanting about like that, we chaps were being called out to be caned?"

"No, I was back by then," Dave smiled. "But only just. Even as it was, Mrs. Challenor met me—"

"My dear fellow, as if we don't know! And let me say it quite seriously, Dave; you owe Mrs. Challenor a box of chocolates. Tubby can pay for them; but you—you must be the one to present them! Eh?" Jack turned to Jimmy, who had coughed warningly.

In the doorway stood Mr. Challenor.

"Why don't you boys get along to your dormitory?"

"Going, sir!"

"Don't let me have to speak again!"

"No, sir! 'Night, Dave; hope you'll be quite O.K. in the morning"—which, of course, was not to say that he was not "O.K." even then.

"Night, sir!"

So out they went, and did at last mount to the dormitory, where an after-lights-out gathering

of fellow juniors received them with guarded but none the less hearty cheers.

It appeared that somebody was throwing a party, the jollity of which had been considerably heightened by the escape of such popular fellows as Messrs. Linton & Co. from that public caning.

The four were welcomed to the feast in a better-late-than-never spirit. And there was only one regret—that Dave was not there also!

The Midnight Visitor

BUT Dave, although by no means an unsociable spirit, would far rather have been where he was, had he been given the choice.

He could lie awake, all by himself, giving his mind to the case of Hetty Morland. The next step—to get in touch with Ralph Gayner's guardian!

Nothing had transpired to shake Dave's belief, arrived at a few days ago, that the papers relating to Hetty needed only to be shown to Mr. Gordon, and that gentleman would become excitably interested in them.

The old chain of reasoning still held good. Mr. Gordon had had the bringing up of Ralph Gayner from early boyhood. Ralph Gayner had certainly been associated with Hetty in those far-off days. So it did look as if Mr. Gordon, for the same reason that he had become Gayner's adopted father, should also have been interested in Hetty during the intervening years.

"At any rate," Dave thought on, "Mr. Gordon is the right one to be consulted, even if he has never heard of Hetty before."

How, then, to get hold of Mr. Gordon's address?

Gayner quite possibly was going about with a letter in his pocket from his "guardian." But poking into another fellow's pockets was not a course that recommended itself to Dave!

Suddenly he realised how simple a matter it should be to get hold of the address. Mr. Gordon must be on the registers of the school, like any other parent or guardian. Fees, the usual reports, copies of the school magazine, and all those invitations usually sent out to parents or guardians—Mr. Gordon would have all these.

From this, it was a sudden leap of Dave's mind to the thought that downstairs in the hall, at this very moment, were envelopes addressed to all parents and guardians.

He had noticed them, placed there in a stack, ready to receive each a printed circular which had not come as soon as expected from the printers. Every scholar in the school, just before the last midday dismissal, had been given an envelope

on which to write his parents' or guardians' full name and address, as the case might be.

By this means, as is done at most big schools, all envelope-addressing in connection with circularising the boys' parents was achieved with a minimum of trouble.

Dave threw back the bedclothes and came foot to floor in the room where he had been put all by himself for the night.

He saw no harm in going downstairs at once to run through those envelopes and pick out the one which Gayner had addressed—to Mr. Gordon. No harm; on the other hand, just as well not to put off this little matter until the morning! One never knew. The circulars might have turned up and the envelopes be gone with them into the post, before one got a chance during the before-breaker rush.

In dressing-gown and slippers, along to the main stairs, and so down to the front hall he made his way.

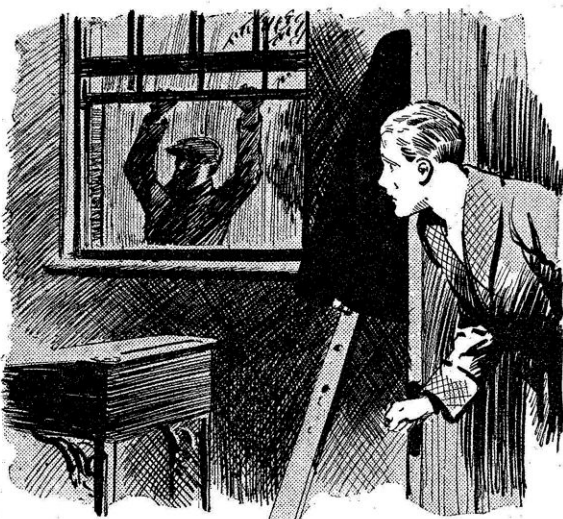
Silent himself, he was abroad in a house which had become perfectly silent after the general retirement to bed.

He found the stack of addressed envelopes where they had been put by, already stamped, and some moonlight shining in at the hall window was strong enough for him to be able to glance them through.

Presently he could cease flicking over the envelopes, for he had come to the one he wanted. In Gayner's handwriting was written:

R. H. Gordon, Esq.,
Yewleigh Manor,
Yewleigh,
Somerset.

Dave looked hard at the address, to memorise



Dave thrilled as he saw what was happening. A man was cautiously raising the lower window with the obvious intention of entering the school. And Dave recognised him as Hetty Morland's uncle, Ezra Joab!

it, then replaced all the envelopes just as he had found them. Another moment and he would have been turning back on tiptoe to the stairs; but there came a faint sound which he at once associated with a class-room window.

Someone knocking back a fastening, wanting to get in by way of a raised sash? That was what the sound had suggested. But who could it be at this time of night? Some fellow or other—a senior, perhaps, now back from some secret escapade?

Swiftly Dave tiptoed towards that class-room from which the suspicious noise had come. The door was slightly ajar. Even as he neared it, he could see that the windows were, like those of the hall, letting in the moonlight.

Then, as he took his first peep round the edge of the door, he thrilled all over.

A man was raising one of the lower sashes very slowly, so as to guard against any sudden screech from the grooves.

Like a thief in the night, the man was entering Challenor's House; and Dave knew him—

instantly. Hetty's uncle, Ezra Joab!
"After those papers of hers—that's his game," was Dave's immediate guess. "He knows that I've still got them, and here he has come—to try and find them!"

With his usual quickness of mind, Dave knew at once what he must do.

There must be a prompt scaring of Ezra Joab, causing him to flee the place.

The scoundrel was probably in a bad state of nerves, so it should be easy enough to stampele him, without making sufficient noise to rouse the schoolhouse.

But now, as Dave started to retreat towards the stairs, intending the scaring sounds to reach Joab from a floor above, he was rather horrified by hearing a faint rustling, as of someone else creeping down.

Instead of drawing off to the stairs, Dave nipped in a quite different direction—darted into another class-room and there stood with his back to the wall, close to the hinged side of the door. If the door came open presently, its swinging round would serve to conceal him from anyone only sending an inquiring look into the class-room.

A moment or two like this, however, and then Dave heard sounds which told him there had been a sudden, dramatic encounter between Joab and the prowler from upstairs.

Voices—tense whisperings!

And Dave thrilled again as he realised that it was Ralph Gayner who had come face to face with Joab.

Although the prefect had appeared to be on good terms with Hetty's uncle, it was already obvious that no secret understanding between the two had accounted for this midnight meeting.

Gayner, judging by his fierce whisperings, was in a terrible state of mind lest Joab should be discovered in the schoolhouse.

"It's madness, Joab, coming here!" Dave heard Gayner whisper. "You had better clear out before anything happens. I saw you from my cubicle window, and somebody else may have seen you—"

"Go on with you," Joab fiercely whispered back. "Of course you'd like to put the wind up me. But—"

"What do you want, anyhow?" asked Gayner. "You know very well what I want," Joab curtly checked him. "And I know that you are not the one to get them for me—them papers of my niece's what that boy Cardew is guarding

for her! You'd stick to 'em if you got hold of 'em; destroy 'em, helike—you would!"

"Joab, I—I don't understand what you mean by that," Gayner huskily whispered. "You—you surprise me, Joab! I thought we were working together—"

"Oh; and so we can be, mister; there can be terms arranged to suit us both, quite nicely—aye," Dave heard the other's rasping voice make answer. "Only I got to have the papers, not you. My advice, you get off now, back to your bed, and leave me—"

"I've tried to find where he keeps the papers, and I can't!" Gayner ejaculated hoarsely. "Is it likely you will find them, then? You'll only go and get yourself caught. Think of numbers sleeping in this schoolhouse—"

"Oh, aye; but I never woke up nobody afore—"

"What!"

"Tisn't the first time I've been in this school at night. Did you think it was?" Joab gruffly whispered. "Who was it, do you think, kept that boy shut away in the mill all that time, seeing as he didn't come to no real hurt, either, if it wasn't me? And why did I do that, if it wasn't on account of them papers?"

"Listen!" Gayner implored frantically. "Only go away now, Joab, and I swear to you I will—"

"Nothing doing."

"Then, if you won't go, Joab, I shall raise an alarm!" the prefect threatened wildly. "I can easily say that there was a burglar—"

Dave heard no more whispering, for sudden scuffling sounds told him that Gayner, rather than stand aside to let the ruffian carry out his purpose, had even now grappled with him.

For a few moments there was only a dull commotion resulting from the sudden set-to just outside the doorway of the other class-room. Joab, always ready with his fists, had only needed to feel the first restraining touch of the prefect's hands to start hitting out wildly.

Realising that Gayner was certain to be getting the worst of it in a fight which he must be wishing he had never started, Dave threw open the door of the room which had sheltered him, meaning to disclose himself now.

At that instant the prefect, whether he still wanted to do so or not, sent up a breathless cry:

"Help, help! I can't—manage him! Help!"

Dave could see them both, battling together, dimly discernible in their locked-together state, in the moonlight.

But he was still a few yards short of the pair, in his rush to intervene, when Gayner went down like a ninepin. Smack to the passage-floor he dropped, whilst Joab, instantly recovering himself, whipped about and darted into the class-room, where that window was open.

Forced to Keep Silent

DAVE did not go in pursuit.

A half-insensible moaning came from the prefect, who writhed painfully, then lifted himself upon an elbow, and clapped a hand across one eye.

"Is that where he landed you one?" Dave asked, not unfeelingly. "Here, let me help you up—"

shall I?"

With his undamaged eye, Gayner now saw who was here, bending over him; and suddenly he seemed to have all his wits about him again.

Gesturing wildly to Dave to stand away, the prefect struggled to his feet again.

"Right!" he panted at Dave. "You wait, that's all!"

The words held a deadly meaning which Dave did not fail to grasp; but he remained calm. It was like him not to speak again, but to go to one of the switches and click on lights.

Challener's House had roused up now. Already the recent cry for help was resulting in a general flocking downstairs.

Prefects, juniors, the Housemaster himself—all were hurrying down. Jack Linton and his chums were amongst the first.

To their mingled surprise and horror they saw Dave being pointed at denouncingly by—Ralph Gayner!

The two were in the hall—in full view of the Housemaster and others who had come hurrying down.

"Gosh," Jack gasped, "look at Gayner's left eye!"

"Gayner!" Mr. Challener cried out in a shocked way. "What—what does it mean, then? You two haven't been fighting, surely!"

"Cardew, sir—he's been more than I could deal with!" the prefect panted. "I mean I tried to—cope with him, but he was almost too much for me. I think he went off his head, sir—because I had caught him in the act!"

Behind the Housemaster, as he stood dumfounded at the foot of the stairs, were boys stricken to silence by what they had heard Gayner assert. The whole flight of stairs was packed with boys, all agape with amazement.

"Caught Cardew in the act of what, Gayner?"

"Slipping out, I suppose, sir! Anyway, he—"

"But Cardew is in his dressing-gown and slippers!"

"I know; but there he was, anyhow—on the point of getting out by a class-room window when I turned up. I—You—If you go and look, sir, you'll find a window there unfastened."

Dave's best chums were nudging one another excitedly. They could tell he was going to offer nothing in answer to Gayner's sensational statement.

"Cardew, what have you to say?"

"Nothing, sir."

"But—" Mr. Challener gasped. "So there really was a fight, then? That black eye of yours, Gayner—Stop laughing behind me!" the Housemaster shouted round upon some suddenly tittering juniors. "Do you mean to tell me, Gayner, that Cardew hit you like that?"

"Yes, sir."

At this instant a patter of running feet sounded just outside the schoolhouse.

"This has brought the headmaster across," Mr. Challener gloomily commented. "Now back to bed, all you boys."

R-r-ring, ring, RING! the doorbell interrupted, and there came also the voice of the headmaster, demanding furiously:

"Open! Admit me!"

Mr. Challener quickly crossed over and let in one who was such a caricature of Grangemoor's austere principal that some of the lingering boys on the staircase at once went off into guffaws.

They saw the Head as a breathless, agitated figure in a large-patterned dressing-gown, the tasselled cords of which trailed the ground.

"Silence!" roared Authority at its angriest. "Mr. Challener, what does this disturbance mean? I could hear it over in my house! It was as if—Good heavens!" now that Gayner with his black eye had come in for notice. "Who—who is this, Mr. Challener?"

"This is Gayner, sir. He says—" The Housemaster dropped his voice to a tactful murmur, speaking as softly as this for perhaps a minute without being interrupted. Then:

"Cardew!" the Head broke out. "Come here, boy! I have just been told that you struck Gayner. What have you to say for yourself?"

Dave Cardew shrugged.

"Simply, sir, that Gayner is not speaking the truth!"

The Head gasped.

"Indeed, then what is the truth?"

"That a man tried to get into the school. Gayner had an argument with him and they came to blows. That's how Gayner's eye got hurt. I haven't touched him, sir!"

Dave ended his explanation there. He had deliberately refrained from mentioning the all-important fact that he knew the man—knew him to be Ezra Joab. And Dave's silence on that point was due not to any desire to help Joab, but because he felt certain that a revelation of the man's identity could only cause more trouble for Hetty Morland!

In amazed silence the Head listened.

"A man in the school? Gayner had an argument with him?" He swung round to the prefect with a questioning look.

But Gayner was already shaking his head, while assuming a look of blankest amazement.

"I don't know what he's talking about, sir. He's either imagined it—or his mind's been affected by what happened to him the other evening!"

That was a clever thrust, that last remark of Gayner's, but the Head waved a hand dissentingly.

"Cardew's mind is functioning quite well, I think," he said grimly. "Too well, in fact. I don't believe a word of his absurd story, not a word. His conduct is merely in keeping with his recent behaviour. Cardew will be expelled!"

In the crowd, the dispersal of which was no longer being attempted, Dave's four best chums felt their blood running cold.

Dave faced the Head boldly.

"You would have been sent down ere this, Cardew," the Head continued, "only I refrained on account of your widowed mother's absence from home. Now, I cannot help it that she will be still away when you get home. Go home you must—in the morning. You hear me, boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"You go home, then, Cardew—expelled—never to return! I have had more than enough with you of late, Cardew. I will not stand for any more of your disgraceful conduct; your utterly outrageous goings-on! In the morning—by the first possible train—home you go! Meantime—Mr. Challener!"

"Sir?"

"He cannot remain in your House. I will not think of it! Obviously, it is all nonsense, his having needed special facilities for resting! Let all your boys go back to bed now. And let one of them come down again with Cardew's clothes. He is to come across with me, to my House."

"Linton," Mr. Challoevoiced, "sharp now! Run and get Cardew's clothes!"

It seems at the moment that this drastic punishment must put a stop to all Dave's efforts to help Hetty Morland. But it wouldn't be Dave not to find some way of carrying on with his self-imposed task. Be sure to read the gripping chapters of this popular story in next Tuesday's SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN.