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The RIVALRY of MORCOVE



Tells of Ethel Courtway, head girl of Morcove School, and of the mystery that surrounded herself and her adopted brother, Cyril Dudley.

By Marjorie Stanton

What the Mist Hid.

ETHEL COURTWAY spoke on the impulse of the moment. It was so fixed in her mind that no other meeting, but a pugilistic one could possibly take place between Cyril Dudley and Maurice Thorne, that to find them apparently in peaceful conference was a huge surprise.

The minute she had spoken, however, she realised she had too hastily jumped to conclusions. The electric torch was still directed on their faces, and Cyril's grim looks and Thorne's sowl denoted anything but friendly feelings towards one another. "Friends!" muttered Maurice Thorne, at length breaking the embarrassed silence.

"Friends! Not likely! Look here"—he paused for a fraction of a second, as if mentally framing his sentences before uttering them—"why ever should you think chaps in our different positions would be friends? Especially after what happened down at that Creamery place. Would you, for instance, be friendly with one of the kitchen maids at your school?"

Ethel glanced at Cyril. Her look said: "Shall I tell him that we two have known each other for years—shall I tell him that you are in every way as good as he?"

And his answer, judging by his attitude, she interpreted to be: "No—say nothing."

"Ah!" cried Thorne, placing his own construction on Ethel's silence. "You and I don't make chums of servants—of course we don't! This fellow is little better than a boot-boy. P'raps you mistook him for some friend of yours? Well, you see, he isn't. He's employed at our school under Tom Roberts, the ground man. He's just an odd job merchant."

"I—I understand," breathed Ethel. "He goes about doing odd things, for instance—teaching his betters manners?"

"That's a snack at me, eh?" asked Thorne. "Well, maybe I didn't behave quite nicely at the Creamery. Maybe he was right to catch me over the head with that sack—and maybe that's why I haven't reported him to the authorities. I don't want to be a chap out of a job, don't want anyone to dog their bread in the streets through me; and so, if he behaves properly in the future, the incident, as far as I am concerned, is closed."

Ethel felt horribly puzzled. There was something behind all this that she could not fathom. The opinion she had formed of Thorne's character was in total variance with the sentiments he had just uttered. She thought he would have jumped at the chance of getting Cyril dismissed.

"What he's doing here I can't say," resumed Thorne, in a tone that seemed to show added confidence. "I ran into him a minute or so before you turned up. Perhaps he followed me with the idea of dotting me another one, or perhaps he wanted to

apologise. It's a matter of complete indifference either way."

He shrugged his shoulders and moved, away a pace.

"I'll say good-evening," he added, raising his cap to Ethel. And with this he strolled off, whistling with all the signs of complete satisfaction.

Ethel followed him with her eyes, and noted the direction he took was towards where the old mill stood. The mill itself was no longer visible, for a damp mist had now drifted in from the sea, slowly obliterating everything in its course, and Maurice was soon swallowed up in the advancing vapour.

"What interest can the mill have for him?" she wondered, and, even as she turned to address Cyril, came a second thought: "Why was Cyril here?"

"He was right!" broke in Cyril in terse tones. "I did follow him!"

"Cyril, Cyril!" cried Ethel, and her feelings raised her voice a note so that the listening Stella Hawkes, crouching near at hand, heard every word. "Must this humiliation go on? Is this situation at Prior's the only one you can get? I don't know how I was able to keep my feelings in check—I don't know how you managed to stand it—when he talked to you like that?"

"It wanted a bit of standing," acknowledged Cyril. "But then, you see, Ethel, I'm getting rather used to standing things. I own I flared up down at the old Creamery place; but then, who wouldn't have done? don't mind what fellows of the type of Maurice Thorne say to me; but when they start on you it's another matter. For the moment Prior's School suits my plans. I want to be near you—"

"But, Cyril, what is the use of being near me when we mustn't speak? I am right, I suppose, in thinking that you don't want our friendship known?"

"Ethel, how can we have it known? You,

ETHEL COURTWAY is the head girl of Morcove School, and her friend is **CYRIL DUDLEY**, the adopted son of her father. To Ethel's amazement, Mr. Courtway accuses Cyril of dishonesty, and Cyril has to leave home just as Ethel returns to Morcove. In the train she meets **MAURICE THORNE**, and takes an instant dislike to him. Later, Maurice features in a dispute between the Morcove girls and the boys of "Friend School." Cyril Dudley is responsible for chastising Maurice. Ethel has been asked by her father to keep her eye on the old mill in the landscape that lies near Morcove, and, going there by night, to Ethel's supreme amazement, she finds Cyril and Maurice "hugs" together. What does this strange meeting portend?

(Now read on.)

head girl of Morcove, and I—a boot-boy, as he called me. It would never do!"

"Oh, I—I know what you mean; but I'm perfectly ready—"

"Do you think I don't know that? Rather! You'll greet me in front of both schools, even if I were carrying a sack of coals. You'd laugh at what people said and thought. You're that sort, Ethel. I quite see your side of the question; but there's my side as well. I've got to work hard to prove to your father that his suspicions are unjustified. I haven't got much to go upon, but the little there is lies round about Morcove. I want to stop at Morcove; but if my stopping here means unhappiness—means worry for you, as it certainly would if it were known we were acquainted—I'd quit to-morrow."

Ethel clasped her hands, and eagerly Stella Hawkes bent forward, straining her ears to hear more.

This exceeded Stella's highest expectations. This gave her the whip hand of the girl she was pleased to consider her rival. She trembled with excitement. What was that Ethel Courtway was saying. This mist seemed to destroy sound as it destroyed the sights of things.

But not all sound did it deaden. It did not obliterate that sudden cry which rose and faded in the distance. A terror-stricken cry—a cry laden with fear. Again; and then a silent interval, broken only by the drip, drip of the moisture falling from twig and branch—to be drowned once more as that cry yet again pierced the stillness.

Nearer now. Fearfully, Stella Hawkes peered forth. Vaguely could she see the shadowy figures of Ethel and her companion; both in an attitude of rigid attention—waiting, like Stella herself, in frozen expectation—for what?

A clattering sound of stumbling, hurried, panic-stricken footsteps took up the tale of the cry. Then the shadowy forms became augmented by a third, and the three took fantastic shapes and movements that brought them within a few paces of where Stella lay concealed.

She would have shrieked aloud had not her tongue cloven to the roof of her mouth. "What is it—don't struggle—what's frightened you, man?"

It was Ethel's friend speaking. And then, after an interval of whispering, came a voice, hoarse yet recognisable as belonging to Maurice Thorne.

"It stood out of the mist—a figure—all white. Just by the mill—I tell you I did see it—I could see right through it! Let me go—don't hold me—it followed me—it's coming this way! Oh, run—run!"

More whispering, and then a sudden scampering, and a vision of a flying figure darting so close to Stella that it was a

marvel she was not trampled on. She shrank back just in time to avoid Ethel and Cyril.

"All imagination!" she heard the latter declare. "It's possible to believe you can see all sorts of things in this mist. Which way has he gone, Ethel?"

"Towards Morcove, Cyril!"

"We may as well get there, too. You'll get locked out if we don't hurry, won't you?"

And then the frightened Stella heard them break into a run, and she realised that she was alone.

Alone—with the possibility any minute of seeing what that boy had seen!

Panic seized Stella, and her worked-up feelings relieved themselves in a faint shriek as she scrambled to her feet and set off in headlong flight. She did not care if these others did see her—that was a minor matter now.

Fate, however, decreed that neither Ethel, nor Cyril, nor Maurice Thorne should be aware of her presence. But they heard her shriek, and the sound seemed to give sinister point to the affair. Had Thorne, after all, seen—well, what he declared he had seen?

Maurice Thorne had no two opinions on the matter. With head bent, and with every

She hated having secrets from Cyril.

And then he, too, had his secrets. How was it, for instance, that this part of the globe contained a link in the chain of evidence to prove that her father's accusations were unjustified?

He had not told her that.

And in public they were to meet as strangers! It was hard—hard! And she wanted so much to help him, to sympathise; to befriend him!

These thoughts Ethel took with her down to the big dining-hall—there quickly to discover that other, and almost equally harassing matters, were waiting to claim her attention.

Morcove had apparently woke up in an extremely bellicose state of mind with regard to their new neighbours. The hum of conversation that reached Ethel's ears, as she sat at the top table with the rest of the seniors, was solely to do with "Prior's." The seniors themselves also partook liberally of this absorbing topic of fare, and all around her fuzzed suggestions for dealing with the interlopers, suggestions wise—and otherwise!

Of the thirty seniors, the most dominant voice was that belonging to Stella Hawkes.

"We must cut them dead—that's my ad-

vice at Prior's, aren't we?" she asked in a general sort of way, but with her glance fixed on Ethel. "Ah! I wonder!"

Ethel, who had been listening to all this in an abstracted sort of way, suddenly became aware of Stella's looks focussed upon her. The girl's words slowly penetrated, and they had the effect which Stella intended. Ethel's bright cheeks took a deeper hue.

"One minute!" cried Monica. "You are right, Stella; some of us do know one of them. In the train yesterday, Ethel and I had a travelling companion the boy who had got hit with the effect which Stella intended. His name is Maurice Thorne. Therefore, Ethel and I alone are able to put your plan into practice. Both of us will seek Maurice in the highways and byways of Morcove for the sole purpose of ignoring him."

Stella promptly arrived at the warpath. Monica usually was able to get her there under five minutes.

"I had some idea Ethel was acquainted with more than one!" she flashed out.

The suddenness of the statement for the moment deprived Ethel of speech. How on earth had Stella Hawkes found this out? Had she been present at the landslip last night? But no, for she recollected now that soon after her return Jane Possoms—the lanky, spectacled senior—had come to her study with a long, rambling account of how she and Stella had done strenuous, fatiguing work all the evening getting their dens in order.

Then Ethel was conscious of the curious glances directed at her from all quarters, and she was unpleasantly reminded that Stella would have to be answered.

"Your idea is not altogether wrong," she replied evenly. "I do happen to know one other at Prior's School."

Instantly Stella Hawkes was all smiles.

"Oh, Ethel dear!" she purred. "I really beg your pardon. I had no intention of poking my nose into your private affairs. I assure you I hadn't!"

And she gave a most eloquent gesture of regret. But even as she did so her eyes scanned the faces around, and what she saw there gave her intense satisfaction.

"Ethel really can't help it if one of her friends has the misfortune to go to Prior's," observed Jane Possoms. "I'm sure she's sure to be pitted than blamed."

"Monica," said Stella, her good temper quite restored, "let us have some more of your merry quips and mirth and anecdotes. You don't seem at all in your usual form this morning. You're quite dull, for you."

What reply Monica would have made to this airy remark will never be known, for at that moment the signal was given to rise from the tables, and Morcove adjourned to the quadrangle, there to wait the opening of class time.

The incident may be said to have closed; but both Ethel and Stella Hawkes were well aware of the seeds of mischief and distrust that had been sown during the last five minutes of breakfast.

Monica placed her arm round Ethel's waist.

"Tell me all about it!" she said affectionately. "Who is this friend of yours? Be careful—I may be jealous. We Trents brook no rivals. What a specimen that Hawke girl is! Come—tell me everything."

"Monica!" began Ethel. Then she came to a dead stop, and never had she felt so distressed. "Monica," she began again; "do you mind if we let the matter drop—at least for the present?"

"Eh!" ejaculated Monica in astonishment. "I'm sorry!" muttered Ethel.

"Why, of course, I'll let it drop," returned Monica slowly; and, as if to give added point to her remark, her arm released Ethel's waist. "I—I had no idea—er—that is, I might have known, as you hadn't told me, that—that you didn't want to let me. It's quite all right, Ethel. Don't look so worried. I'm not the least bit offended."



By this time they were only a few paces from Cyril. "Probably you'd like to give him something," whispered Dyke. "A shilling, for instance."

"I should like to do nothing of the kind!" returned Ethel fiercely.

limb rigid, he ploughed forward, running like one pursued.

Deeper and deeper rolled the mist across the landslip, covering the everything a cold, clammy shroud, hiding all the landmarks—and what else?

The Seeds of Discord.

ETHEL went to bed that night thinking of the old mill down by the landslip, and her first waking thought the next morning was solely concerned with the same matter.

A pretty bargain her father appeared to have made in buying the place and the land adjoining. That was amongst the first of the conclusions she came to, and then, hard on this, emerged the puzzling query: Why was Maurice Thorne so interested in this locality?

But his interest no doubt by now partook of the past tense. What a funk he had been in! And, terrifying though his experience may have been—what a poor figure he had cut!

This atmosphere of mystery and secrecy—how ungenial it all was to an open nature like Ethel's! Last night both she and Cyril had withheld things from each other; for Ethel, faithful to her promise to her father, had said nothing as to her reason for visiting the landslip.

vice," she said, with a quick glance in Ethel's direction to see if the head girl were listening. "Have nothing at all to do with this. Ignore them!"

"Capital notion," put in Monica Trent. "And I only hope they'll have the sense to understand that our averred looks are due to the contempt we have for them, and not to any feelings of bashfulness."

"Oh, please, someone laugh!" retorted Stella. "Our Monica is being funny! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thank you, Stella dear," said Monica, placidly sipping her tea. "Your kind applause encourages me to continue to lead the conversation with merry quip and anecdote. To return to your suggested policy concerning Prior's. There is one drawback to it—"

"Trust you to find one!" snapped Stella, preparing to go on the warpath.

"You are right; my keenness is remarkable. The drawback is this. None of us, I believe, are acquainted with these boys. How, therefore, is one successfully to cut anybody one doesn't know?"

A faint titter went round the table at this.

Stella Hawkes advanced a step nearer the warpath.

"None of us are acquainted with anyone

And Monica, like the splendid girl she was, suddenly remembered a holiday experience she had not yet told Ethel, and forthwith gallantly struggled to combat the embarrassment with which the air had become charged.

Thus, in the sight of the whole school, the two held friendly communion together, as was their custom between brekker and class time. Yet round about them the seeds of mischief and mistrust had taken root—presently to bear their poisonous fruit.

The Rival Leaders.

IT was during the morning break that Ethel was summoned to attend the headmistress over at her quarters. She had been expecting the call, and promptly appeared before Miss Somerfield with that qualified feeling of pleasure which is all, even the kindest of headmistresses, can hope to extract from their schoolgirl visitors.

"Just one or two things I want to mention, Ethel," said Miss Somerfield. "Sit down, my dear. First, the question of bounds." She paused, and indicated a large scale map of the Morcove district. "I think our 'out of bounds' needs revising—not very drastic revision—still, here and there. For instance, I think that part of the landslip by the old mill is rather dangerous ground. I have drawn a red line along the road that skirts it. I would suggest south of that be out of bounds. What do you think?" Ethel's head fluttered. "Certainly after yesterday evening's experience, the decision seemed a wise one; but, on the other hand, if the place were put out of bounds how would she be able to carry out her father's commission?"

"For the whole school, Miss Somerfield?" she asked.

"No, only the lower and middle school." "Yes," said Ethel slowly, "I think it might be as well."

"I'm glad you agree, Ethel. These other places—"

And Miss Somerfield went over the map, pointing out extensions and restrictions until the whole matter was a personalty.

"Put a notice on the board about those alterations," she said. "Now, I come to the subject of our new neighbours—Prior's. I trust you and the others to see that good relationship is established between the two schools. Prior's bears a very high reputation. Mr. Broom, the headmaster, and his wife, are two very charming people. A certain rumour has come to my ears that Morcove is rather disposed to regard Prior's as rivals. Stop that sort of thing, Ethel. Your word carries great weight in the school. The girls take their cue from you, and I have never yet found occasion to question the lead you give them."

"I hope you never will, Miss Somerfield." "I'm certain I shan't. Here is a letter, Ethel, I want you to take over to Mr. Broom. It will give you an opportunity to see our new neighbours at their home—albeit, in the best place to judge character. Take it over now and deliver it personally to the headmaster. Yes, I think that's all. You had an enjoyable holiday? Good! So did I—but I'm glad to be back at the old school. A statement that I do not insist on your agreeing with."

And with her kind smile she dismissed Ethel.

Ethel was not at all adverse to the mile and a half walk to Prior's—certainly it was better than being cooped up in the senior classroom constructing Latin verse—and all too soon Prior's establishment came into sight. The drone of voices as she approached the main entrance told her that classes were still on, and, as she waited for the door to be opened in response to her ring, she looked eagerly about for signs of Cyril.

But Cyril, for the moment, was not to be seen.

A butler sort of person opened the door, and, on learning he was wanted, ushered her into the presence of a tall, white-haired, clean-shaven gentleman.

"I am very pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Courtway," said Mr.

Broom, with obvious sincerity. "The name of the Morcove girls stands very high in these parts, and you can trust Prior's to prove worthy neighbours. There was a time"—his eyes twinkled—"when boys' schools looked down on girls' schools, but that was in the dark ages. We know better now. One minute, whilst I read your headmistress' letter. Ah, yes, yes—a capital suggestion! And now tell me all about your school. I am deeply interested in it."

His kindly manner placed Ethel entirely at her ease, and she was soon enlarging on the glories of Morcove—a subject on which at times she could be very eloquent.

Then a bell started to clang; she got up to go, and it so happened that at that moment there was a tap at the door. In response to the headmaster's "Come in!" there appeared a tall, well-built fellow of about eighteen.

"Why, this is very opportune, Dyke," cried Mr. Broom. "Miss Courtway, this is Maxwell Dyke, the captain of the school. Dyke, this young lady is Morcove's head girl."

Dyke's fine eyes expressed respectful admiration as he shook hands. He was certainly very good-looking, Ethel decided, a fine type of the well-bred public school boy.

the part of knight errand boy, one might say."

"The boy Thorne was very rude and insulting," said Ethel, with heightened colour. "He's of the unluckiest cub species," smiled Dyke.

"Besides, he comes of a get-rich-quick-at-any-price family. You know the sort. I can quite believe he was rude, but for all that, had he complained about being hit with a sack by our friend, yonder, I should have had to take Thorne's side. I can't have any of the school servants knocking the fellows about. Fortunately, Thorne let the matter drop, I suppose he was a bit ashamed of himself."

By this time they were only a few paces from Cyril, and, hearing their approach, he looked round. Seeing Ethel his hand flew to grasp the peak of his cap. Then, apparently recollecting the part he was playing, he touched his cap instead.

"Probably you'd like to give him something," whispered Dyke. "A shilling, for instance—"

"I should like to do nothing of the kind!" returned Ethel fiercely. "It would be insulting him."

"No, no," he hurried forward.

"No, do you really think it would?" said Dyke. "I doubt it. However, it's exactly



A little knot of the hounds were gathered together as if in doubt which way to go. "Surely the track is plain enough!" said Ethel. "I wonder why they're stopping." Betty Barton could throw no light on the matter.

There was perhaps a thought too much self-confidence, a hint of condescension, which in time would no doubt be toned down.

Mr. Broom, a keen judge of character, watched the two with intense interest.

"A couple of firm-willed young people," was his inward comment. "Maxwell will find he has met his match if ever their interests clash, and then it will be a bad day for Prior's and Morcove."

Please escort Miss Courtway to the gates, Dyke," he said aloud.

And so it fell out that the two leaders had an early opportunity of sampling each other's company.

Maxwell Dyke at once took charge of the conversation, supplying odd scraps of information about Prior's; but not evincing any great interest in Morcove. Then, as they passed by the portion of the ground that was being laid out for the headmaster's garden, Ethel saw Cyril busily engaged in forking over a bed.

"Ah!" remarked her companion. "That fellow over there reminds me that I owe you an apology on behalf of Prior's for what happened in the tea-shop yesterday. My young friend, Maurice Thorne, is a bit of an outsider, and that chap digging, from all accounts, very properly intervened. Played

as you wish. Ah, here's the jolly old gate, and I must say good-bye. If there's anything I can do to help your school, I do trust you'll let me know. I want Prior's and Morcove to be the very best of friends."

"I see no reason why they shouldn't be." "It's up to us two to see they are. Good-bye. I shall see you again—soon, I hope!"

He stood by the gate watching her lithe figure go down the road, until the turn hid her from view.

"Now, she's a fine girl!" he muttered, with a slight intake of breath.

He wheeled about and slowly retraced his footsteps, until he once more stood opposite where Cyril was working.

"Here—you!" he suddenly called out. Cyril looked up.

"You did that young lady some little service yesterday, I hear," said Dyke. "As a matter of fact I'm not supposed to know anything about it. However—here's a couple of bob."

The two coins fell at Cyril's feet, and then, in the space of a second—the coins were jingling at Dyke's feet.

Maxwell Dyke looked at them, and then looked at Cyril for some little while.

"Interesting!" he murmured aloud.

"How very interesting! I beg your pardon. I see, I made a mistake."
And with this rather cryptic utterance he strolled away.

The Trails That Crossed.

It is an oft-repeated saying—but none is less true—that the value of a thing is never realised until you lose it.

It certainly was so with the hand-lisp. Members of the lower and middle school visited the place perhaps once a term—if that—but now it was "out of bounds" everyone declared that it was their favourite ramble, and that to forbid them to go there was the limit in tyranny.

For a day the grumblers held forth on vague "rights" that were infringed by this order, and they were just on the point of simmering down when suddenly the pother broke out with renewed violence.

News came that the Prior boys had been seen freely wandering over the landside.

After that indignation meetings and deputations to Ethel were the order of the day.

"Really," she protested, "it's Miss Somerfield that you ought to tackle! It's her order, not mine."

"You tackle her, then," suggested the deputation.

"It's not a bit of use," returned Ethel firmly.

"But you seniors are allowed to go there?" "Ah!" cut in Monica Trent; "but we seniors are staid, middle-aged people, short of breath, and therefore never likely to visit the hand-lisp. The headmistress, knowing that, didn't think it necessary to include us. Please, do some of you use your brains."

Whereupon the deputation grew decidedly personal and declaimed their final arguments through the keyhole, as a result of being bundled into the passage and the study door locked in their faces.

The outcome of it all was a decided undercurrent of unrest at Morcove, and this, added to Ethel's other worries, did not seem to make life any too pleasant for the head girl.

However, she was not one to be easily cast down, and she went about her duties, turning a blind eye on the frowning looks, and pretending to be deaf to the ominous mutterings. She knew that at heart all the girls were fond of her, and agreed with Monica that the advent of Prior's was the direct cause of the school's irritability.

"Saturday's paper chase will give them something else to think about," said Monica hopefully. "I only hope it's a fine afternoon."

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The weather was all that could be desired until Friday evening. Then it started to rain. It poured all through the night, and Saturday morning came with the fall still going strong. However, about noon it gradually cleared, and by the time the school assembled for the paper chase the sun was out and the clouds dispersed.

This was something to be thankful for, but the girls shook their heads as they glanced at the sodden turf. It promised to be fearfully heavy going, and if the hares made a good run it meant that those in first-rate condition would be able to stay the course.

Ethel was one of the hares, but, according to custom, the other was chosen from amongst the junior ranks. Ethel had selected Betty Barton, of the Fourth. Anyone else of Ethel's speed would have meant a hopeless chance for the hounds; but, with Betty's restraining pace, matters were levelled up.

Ethel and Betty, with their bags of finely-chopped paper, were greeted with loud cheers when they set off through the school gates, and at a steady trot the two disappeared round a bend in the road and made straight for the woods. Getting out to a track that spanned a small stream, they laid their first trail. Then they did a smart spin as it was to make the most of their few minutes' grace, and by the time the hounds started they were plunged deep in the closely-covered forest and shrubs.

Here the going was easier; but shortly they came to a long stretch of clay, which the heavy rain of the previous night had converted into a veritable morass.

However, they struggled through it somehow, comforted by the thought that the hounds would have the same difficulty, and then struck off at right angles in the direction of the hills.

"We can slow up, Betty," said Ethel, after a while. "We'll take a breather, and see if there are any signs of the hounds."

"Righto!" answered Betty, glad of a moment's rest.

The place where they halted was a fairly high piece of ground, commanding a good view of the surrounding country. Close at hand were some furze bushes, and creeping behind these Ethel and Betty looked back to see if they could spot the hounds.

But they could not see them. "I don't think it likely they've got through the wood yet," said Ethel, "but through the wood suddenly she caught sight of a figure breaking out between the trees. Then another, and then one more.

"I say!" ejaculated Betty. "They are putting on the pace!"

Off went Ethel and Betty as hard as they could pelt, until they reached a stream, which was just narrow enough at places for anyone to jump across.

But not to-day! Owing to the rain it was swollen to twice its usual breadth.

Ethel and Betty gazed at it in dismay.

"Both!" muttered Ethel. "This means we shall have to follow the stream until we come to Perkins' farm and go over the bridge there. If the hounds keep up a good pace they'll be certain to see us in the distance. There's not a bit of cover for the next mile."

"Then can't we lay a false trail?" suggested Betty.

"No time for that. We must make a dash for it. We may just reach the farm before they come up here."

The best chance the hares have in a paper chase is to keep well in cover. Once the hounds see them they are entitled to abandon the trail and run by sight.

This is a great advantage to the pursuers, as Ethel well knew; so, sprinkling the paper as they ran, she and Betty flew beside the stream.

Unfortunately it was very wet and slippery, and they did not do the distance half so quickly as they would have done if the ground had been dry. Yet, for all that, their time was very good, but looking back as they drew up by the old farm, they caught a glimpse of some of the hounds in the distance.

"Quick, Betty, over the bridge!" cried Ethel. "They've seen us!"

Either way they went the ground ascended, so it was Hobson's choice. They chose the easiest-looking path, and scrambled up for all they were worth. Arriving at the summit they once more looked back.

A knot of the hounds were gathered together, as if in doubt which way to go.

"Surely the track is plain enough," said Ethel. "I wonder why they're stopping."

Betty Barton could throw no light on the matter.

There being no immediate hurry, they continued to watch.

Others of the hounds straggled up to join the group. Some sort of argument seemed to be going on.

Suddenly some white-clad figures came on the scene, and they, too, halted. Each minute brought more of them, until the numbers assembled down there assumed crowd proportions.

"I do believe those white figures are the Prior boys!"

"Yes," returned Ethel after a pause. "You're right, they are! Don't you see what's happened, Betty? They also are holding a paper chase, and our trails have crossed. One hound saw the two trails, and didn't know which path to take. This is very awkward!"

She bit her lip with vexation, and continued to watch with much inward anxiety. Some intuition told her that trouble might very likely arise out of this.

"Now," said the headmistress, "Pretty quickly the attitude of the assembly plainly depicted a divergence of opinion—argument—heated retorts, and other unpleasant happenings.

Ethel rose to her feet.

"Come, Betty," she said; "I'm wanted down there."

And she began to scramble down the hill. Ethel was right—she was wanted. Long before she reached the group angry voices came to her ears, and when she arrived on the outskirts of the crowd and pushed her way through it, the crisis was at hand.

"Morcove!" she cried. "All of you get on to the bridge."

"Why?" rapped out Stella Hawkes. "Are you going to give way to them, Ethel Courtway? It was just as much their fault as the trails crossed as ours."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Morcove fiercely.

"Is Maxwell Dyke here?" asked Ethel, turning to the boys.

"No, he isn't," replied one of them. "He's one of the hares. But, I say, we didn't start the argument. It would have been quite all right if it hadn't been for that red-haired girl checking us. Oh, yes, you did."

"Nothing of the sort!" retorted Stella Hawkes. "It was you!"

"I! Why, I never said a word until—" "Ah, yes, until you lost your temper besides your trail. Then you lost your manners, and—"

"Silence!" cut in Ethel, and Stella subsided into mumbles and mutterings.

"Now," continued Ethel, turning to the assembled Prior's, "our trail is where I came down, so yours must be the other one. I think you had better carry on and leave us."

"Oh, yes, certainly! Still, she"—indicating Stella—"did start all the bother. We had no choice but to run."

And Prior's continued on their way, leaving Ethel face to face with a sullen and mutinous-looking Morcove.

Whose Hand?

"I do wish I had turned out this afternoon!" said Monica Trent.

"Ah!" returned Ethel dejectedly.

"Indeed, I wish you had, too. There were at least a dozen of the upper school present, and not one seems to have tried to check Stella Hawkes. A bad business, Monica."

"Horrible!"

For a few moments Ethel and Monica Trent

trod the road in silence. Some four hours had elapsed since Morcove and Prior's had faced each other, and the more Ethel thought about the ugly incident the less she liked it. Yes, it was indeed a pity that Monica had not been present.

Ethel and her friend had spent the time since tea down in the village as a sort of patrol, to prevent any further breach of the peace. The Morcove girls, however, for the most part, had remained in the school, and Prior's were in undisputed possession of the Creameries.

But Ethel had another object in view. She had hoped to see Maxwell Dyke and confer with him over what had happened. Maxwell was nowhere to be seen. Was he, Ethel wondered, keeping out of the way deliberately? Very likely.

"You'll have to speak seriously to Stella," said Monica presently.

"I've already done so. But what are you to do with a girl who has a hasty temper like she has? It always runs away with her—she has no control over it. And then there's another difficulty. The school seems to consider that in this particular case Stella was justified in behaving as she did. They say Prior's started the quarrel."

"Probably six of one and half a dozen of the other," observed Monica.

At that they relapsed into silence. Was it imagination, wondered Ethel, or was there some subtle change in Monica's manner? In place of the wholehearted enthusiasm with which she was wont to discuss things, there was now a hint of critical detachment—or Ethel fancied so.

Fancy! Yes, it must be that. All this worry and anxiety was making her morbid. Yet the silence between these two remained unbroken, and even when they arrived at the school, Monica did not appear conversationally inclined.

"The girls seem to be home-loving birds to-night," remarked Ethel, as the clack of

tongues reached their eyes from common-room and study.

"I'd like to know what they've been up to," said Monica.

"Well, what should they be up to?"

"Mischief—and probably against you, Frankly, I think you're in for a strong time, Ethel."

"I'm afraid I am," sighed Ethel. "Still, I expect it'll blow over."

"Blow over or blow up! Look here, I think you'd better order me to take a little stroll about the place."

Ethel agreed that it did seem advisable, and Monica started on her "stroll" forthwith.

Ethel mounted the stairs until she reached her corridor. Slowly she walked to her room, deep in thought. From below ascended a faint melody of voices; but up here all was quiet.

Quiet, yes—and a trifle lonely. Ethel glanced at the rows of study doors. All closed. Well, there was nothing much in that; they seldom were open at this hour.

Yet somehow, to-night they seemed more than usually closed—aggressively shut, as if the occupants desired no callers.

Fancy—again nothing but absurd fancy. And equally absurd was the suspicion of a doubt that flashed through her mind that if she were to knock on one of those doors she would not be welcome.

Even if the school were rather sore against her concerning her manner of intervening between Morcove and Prior's—well, it would all simmer down by to-morrow.

Half consoled by this thought she entered her room, struck a match and lit the lamp. For a moment or so she stood regarding the surroundings. Suddenly she took a quick step towards the mantelpiece and snatched down one of the many photographs that were there.

The one she held was of Cyril Dudley,

"I wished I'd remembered to put this away before," she thought.

She gazed wistfully at the portrait.

"I must hide you, as I have to hide my friendship," she muttered bitterly. "Where? The lock-up drawer in the dressing-table—yes, that's safest."

After putting it away she stood in front of the glass, gazing into it with unseeing eyes. Mechanically she put up her hands to take off her hat, and then, of a sudden, the mirror began to play strange tricks.

The door of the room! It could just be seen behind her. The door—seemed to be slowly opening! Ethel's eyes grew wide in astonishment. Fascinated, she gazed, and then a hand appeared and quietly placed some papers on the bookcase close to the opening.

Ethel wheeled round and darted at the door.

She was just too late. It closed with a snap, and the key was turned in the lock.

Locked in!

"Oh!" muttered Ethel furiously. "Somebody shall suffer for this!"

Then she picked up the papers that had been left. They consisted of four large foolscap sheets, written in purple ink, and on page one in large letters appeared a title:

"The Morcove Mirror."

"Somebody's started a school magazine!" She smiled. The authoress of it wished to remain unknown. That was why she ran away and locked—

Suddenly the heading of an article caught her eye. It ran:

"The Truth About Our Head Girl!" And underneath, in smaller writing: "And her friend at Prior's."

No wonder that Ethel stands aghast at what she has seen! Whose hand has been responsible for this action against her? Whose brain has conceived this plot? See next week's dramatic instalment in THE GIRLS' FAVOURITE.

SHOULD MEN AND GIRLS WORK TOGETHER?



HERE ARE TWO ARTICLES FOR AND AGAINST THIS QUESTION.

BY A GIRL TYPIST.

BY A DEPARTMENTAL MANAGERESS.

I HAVE a question of great importance to put to readers of THE GIRLS' FAVOURITE.

It is a question that my friends and I have discussed in all its various aspects, and we can only come to one conclusion.

The question is: Naturally we wanted to know the answer to it as men?

And the decision we have unanimously arrived at is this: They should not!

I am one of fifteen girls employed in a big office in the City, and we are all typists.

Ever since I can remember we have shared the same room, a room quite apart from another large room occupied by the male clerks.

We very rarely came in contact with the men, although I must say that on the rare occasions when the needs of business took me into their quarters I always found them polite and eager to help.

But the other day our chief flung a bombshell in our midst. Our room was to be taken over by another section of the staff, and we girls were told to move into the large room occupied by the male staff!

Naturally we wanted to know the reason, and it was only by a lucky chance that I discovered what it was.

At a public dance one evening, I ran across the manageress, and in a burst of confidence she told me why we girls had been put with the men.

"You've only yourselves to blame," she said. "When you had a room to yourselves you wasted far too much time in gossiping and titillating yourselves in front of the mirror. This got to the ears of the chief, and now you see the result!"

Now, I wonder why it is that men think that when girls work together they waste time!

I am sure that they waste no more time than men, who work together. We, the victims of a too-optious employer, resent very much being made to work side by side with the male members of the staff, and I think they resent the change as much as we do.

Men and girls in business are much better apart. At any rate, that is our opinion. What is yours?

I HAVE read with a great deal of interest and no little amusement the article by one of the girl members of the staff on the question of should men and girls work together.

As a matter of fact, I know that the chief had been contemplating making the change for a long time, for there is not the slightest doubt that when girls work together in one room there is bound to be a certain amount of slackness.

The writer of the article seems to imagine that the change was made solely on account of herself and her companions.

It may console her to know that the male clerks were just as much responsible, for men gossip just as much as the fair sex.

By placing all the men together in one room it was found that the progress of business was hindered by too much cigarette smoking, and gossip of a purely masculine nature.

The idea of making the girls work side by side with the men was a brain-wave.

Men do not care to slack in front of a girl. There was always a keen rivalry between the sexes in business, and this competitive spirit is increased by bringing them into closer contact with each other.

The men feel it is up to them to do their best in order to put the girls in the shade. Masculine self-respect does not permit of slackness in front of a girl. They like to prove their superiority over the fair sex, and in their attempt to prove their superiority they put forth their best efforts.

As for the girls, they feel it is incumbent upon them to prove that they can work just as well if not better than the men. So they endeavour to "keep their end up" and work accordingly.

The system of placing men and girls side by side in offices encourages individual effort.

I have visited many offices where men and girls work together, and in each case I have found that the system works perfectly satisfactorily.