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"WHEN A GIRL IS LOYAL"

INSIDE

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THE GIRLS' FAVOURITE



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2^D

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The RIVAL'S of MORCOVE



Ethel Courtney, in her attempt to unravel the mystery of the old mill, meets with some thrilling adventures.

By Marjorie Stanton

Plots and Counter Plots.

WHICH? Ethel Courtney only remained in doubt a second, for, with a deft movement, unnoticed by anyone save herself, "Herald" slightly lifted his mask and disclosed the features of Cyril!

"No need for you to unmask, Ethel," he said in a low tone. "I had an intuition directly I spotted you!"

"That's what the other 'Cyril' said," returned Ethel in an agitated whisper. "That fellow dressed as a cavalier!"

"You mean Maxwell Dyke?"

Ethel gave a startled little ejaculation. The mean trick that had been played on her was all horribly plain now. Dyke had impersonated Cyril so as to pry into her affairs. He had pretended to do the very thing that Cyril had done. Yes, that was evident! But fate had decreed that the plot should be nicely foiled.

"What's been happening, Ethel?"

"Dyke pretended to be you! He quite took me in. Fortunately, there has been no opportunity to talk much. Oh, Cyril, how thankful I am I've found it all out in time! What's to be done?"

"Done!" muttered Cyril. "I'd like to have five minutes alone with him—the mean sneak! Oh, it's Dyke right enough. The fellows had me up to help them dress, so I know who each one is. The chap in the powdered wig and the eighteenth century costume is Maurice Thorne. Who's he dancing with?"

"Stella Hawkes!"

"The red-haired girl who you told me hates you? Dancing with Thorne is she? Well—?" He paused, and then went on in an abstracted sort of way for a few sentences.

"Yes, yes, when they'd all gone the idea came to me that I might as well join the giddy throng for an hour or so. An extra guest wouldn't be noticed in the crowd. There were a lot of costumes over, and so— Look here, Ethel—quick, listen, the dance will be over in a minute. Tell Dyke that you want him—that is, me—to go to the mill at once. Understand the idea? Tell him it's important. Two to one he'll jump at the chance to find—"

The final bars of the orchestra faded away, and Cyril conducted Ethel to a seat. They exchanged a swift look of understanding, and with a bow, Cyril, mingling with the throng, disappeared from Ethel's view. A minute later a swift glance in her direction showed the cavalier hovering by her chair.

"Now," thought Cyril, "will he rise to the bait?"

With tense interest he watched Ethel and Dyke talking; watched them get up to dance; watched them as they flitted in and out of the revolving couples.

"It's a wretched night," ruminated Cyril. "Half sleet—half drizzle—but if he's really

keen, that ought not to stop him. Pretending to be me he can't very well refuse Ethel's request. Wonder if he'll go by himself or take Maurice with him. Hallo, Maurice is still dancing with the Hawkes girl—a bit queer, that."

Cyril strolled in an apparently aimless sort of way in the direction of one of the doors; but no sooner had he reached it than he dived swiftly into the passage and hurried up a small flight of stairs. At the top he crossed to a room on the left, which he knew communicated with the apartment where Prior's had dressed, and, going inside, he took up a position well screened from view, and awaited developments.

The minutes ticked by unbroken by any sound until all at once the door of the apartment next to where he stood creaked, and the pair of rapid footsteps reached his ears. Then followed voices.

"Everything's come off splendidly!"—it was Dyke speaking. "And I believe at last we've got to score off this chap Dudley. Ethel, too; she hasn't the slightest doubt that I'm her friend. Quick, tumble into your things, for the sooner we get to the mill the sooner we're back. We've got over two hours, so that gives us heaps of time. They don't unmask until eleven. Ready? Lace your boots when we get outside. Pull up the window. Ugh!—what a night!"

Cyril heard the window open and a scramble. Then once more silence.

He indulged in a huge inward chuckle. Never was there a better example of the biter being bitten. And now, the coast being clear of their disturbing presence, he could go downstairs and enjoy himself with an easy mind.

As he descended his thoughts turned to Stella Hawkes. Her part in the little drama puzzled him. Why this elaborate piece of deception—Maurice pretending to be Dyke, and all the rest of it?

The explanation of this small mystery need only detain us a moment. Dyke, having

learned through Stella the means of identifying Ethel, he thereupon arranged that Maurice Thorne should impersonate himself and keep Stella engaged whilst he devoted all his attention to Ethel.

It would, he knew, be quite easy to take in Stella, but Ethel was another matter. Stella was a trifle slow-witted; Ethel was as sharp as a needle. On the other hand, Dyke flattered himself, he was immeasurably superior to the clumsy, uncouth Maurice Thorne. Therefore, the one to play the part of Cyril Dudley, he decided, should be himself.

Truly, a noble scheme—though now promising to have a decidedly ignoble conclusion.

"Ethel!" whispered Cyril, when he stood once more by her side. "The plot's worked!"

"He said he was delighted to go," laughed Ethel. "I hinted at the possibility of his meeting someone, but that he wasn't to wait more than ten minutes. He was so eager that he could hardly finish the dance."

"Ah!" muttered Cyril. "Well, both he and Thorne are now trudging through the mire while we two can fox-trot, one-step, and waltz to our heart's content. My word, the luck's going our way now. But first, you'd be doing for a coffee—and a talk. Outside is a refreshment room. Come!"

Just as they turned to go they nearly collided with Stella Hawkes, who came flouncing round the corner.

Stella was on the war path, for reasons that can be easily guessed. She pulled up abruptly on seeing Ethel. She had no idea of Cyril's real identity, but, naturally, she took him for one of her own, and this being so, she spoke her mind in no uncertain fashion.

"I don't know what you think, Ethel," she cried; "but it's my opinion we've been simply asked here to be made game of by the Prior people!"

"Hush!" implored Ethel. "What has happened?"

It did not lessen Stella's anger because she couldn't explain. How could she tell these two that Dyke (as she had taken Thorne to be) had suddenly deserted her, and that she was without a partner?

Therefore, the only answer she could give was to toss her head and sweep away like a tragedy queen, not forgetting, however, in her legal progress, to peer everywhere for signs of the missing Maxwell Dyke.

It is true that Stella Hawkes at times was a trifle slow in the uptake, but in the present instance anger had sharpened her wit. She had a shrewd idea she was being made a sort of cat's-paw, and that Dyke was up to some prank or other. And she meant to find out what prank it was.

For the next hour she roamed about the place, and, as the corridors were deserted, she had ample opportunity to indulge her best of curiosity to the full. Eventually her

ETHEL COURTWAY is the head girl of Morcove School, and her boy friend is

CYRIL DUDLEY, at one time her father's confidential secretary. Mr. Courtney, however, dismisses Cyril in disgrace, and in order to clear himself from the charge against him, Cyril comes to Prior's Board School, next to Morcove. There he gets into touch with Ethel. Various adventures befall them at the old mill in the landscape, where, Ethel discovers, a treasure is hidden.

The Christmas holidays approach, which Ethel is spending with her aunt, and at a masked dance, at Prior's, Ethel discovers two Cyrils—one of them obviously masquerading. But which?

(Now read on.)

prying footsteps led her to the apartment where Dyke and Thorne had done their quick change, and there, of course, she discovered their discarded costumes.

"Oh!" breathed Stella, eyeing the wig and the other portions of the Georgian costume. "Now, what can this mean?"

The half-opened window suggested a possible explanation. She tip-toed to it and looked out. The ground was only ten feet or so below, and the thick ivy made descent a matter of no great difficulty.

"At any rate," decided Stella, with a vindictive gleam in her eyes, "I won't do any harm to shut the window and bolt it."

Which she promptly did.

Hardly had she retreated than two damp and decidedly wrathful figures arrived below the window. They were Thorne and Dyke, just returned from their fruitless errand to the landslip.

"This is the last straw!" fumed Dyke, on viewing the closed window.

"Absolutely!" agreed his companion. "We'll have to find some back way of getting in."

They say misfortunes never come singly, and this time the conspirators quickly discovered to be a fact. Hardly had they turned their footsteps, than the biggest misfortune of the lot—in the person of Sergeant Binnion, Prior's gym instructor—came their way.

They may be said to have met misfortune half way, for, as the sergeant advanced from one direction, they advanced from another, and the place of compact was almost directly beneath the large window behind which Morcove and Prior were mingling in merry dance.

The sergeant saw them a second or so before they saw him, and the stealthy nature of their approach caused suspicious doubts to arise in the sergeant's mind. Promptly he pounced, and had Dyke and Thorne in a grip of iron.

"Now, then!" he began, but then his captives' wriggling struggles left him no breath for further words. All he could utter were hoarse grunts for assistance.

As it happened help was quickly forthcoming. Cyril—now in his ordinary workaday attire—chanced to be near, and promptly he darted to the sergeant's aid.

The hubbub penetrated within, and Mr. Broom quickly had the window up to see what was all about. Behind crowded the dancers, and the broad shaft of light lit up the exciting scene.

The headmaster's sharp tones had the same effect as a referee's whistle. All movement promptly ceased on the part of the strenuous quartette.

"Found these two prowling about, sir!" boomed the sergeant. "Don't know who they are, but, bearing in mind the young ladies' cloaks in the dressing-room—"

Suddenly he stopped short in gaping astonishment as he recognised the identity of his captives.

All three Ethel and Cyril and perhaps Stella, Hawkes, shared in the surprise.

"Indeed—in-deed!" breathed the headmaster. "Dyke and Thorne! Well—er—later on I will inquire into this—this affair. In the meantime—he closed the window with a bang—"I will ask everyone to unmask in ten minutes—has anyone gathered?"

But the unmasking revealed no further absences.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Broom, and his tone foreshadowed ructions for Messrs. Dyke and Thorne; ructions, by the way, which did not fail to materialise the following day.

This victory resulted all along the line for Ethel and Cyril, and the luck, as Cyril truly said, was indeed with them; a fact which Stella Hawkes, besides Dyke and Thorne, was shortly to find out.

Press Night.

The last night of the term! It was past "lights out" but still the hum of conversation and occasional outbursts of shrill laughter echoed through Morcove. The authorities turned a deaf ear to all this. The last night of the term! The

authorities themselves were going home to-morrow, and they, too, were just as excited as the girls.

So the noise went on unchecked until a daring pillow raid by the Fourth on the Fifth culminated in Polly Linton and an opponent measuring their length on the corridor.

The crash was so loud that Ethel and Monica Trent, with a sigh, got up from their chairs and sallied forth to give a gentle reminder that limits had been exceeded.

The gentle reminder came precious near to the reading of a Riot Act before the dormitories were induced to quieten down; and, as Stella Hawkes, who ought to have been on duty, appeared to have deserted her post, Ethel and Monica rapped on that young lady's door on their way back to their quarters.

"Stella!" called out Ethel. "Open the door."

"No answer," said Monica.

Thereupon Ethel turned the handle and went in. The study was in complete darkness. Monica struck a match, to find the place deserted.

"Where can she be?" muttered Ethel. "It's all very well; it's the last night of the

term, when all at once sounds of rapidly approaching footsteps came to their ears.

"She's coming back!" breathed Monica. "Get ready to collar her!"

With hands outstretched they barred the way, and within a few seconds their fingers clutched and held a wriggling figure that sought vainly to get free.

"It's not a bit of good struggling," said Ethel, getting a firm grip of the captive's arm, whilst Monica fastened on to the other.

"Now—come over by the window and let's see who are you?"

"Oh, all right!" came the agitated answer. "I'm Janet Trent!"

"I might have guessed it!" groaned Monica. "Janet, henceforth I disown you. That a sister of mine should—"

"You, Monica!" ejaculated the younger sister. "Well—make your speech and get it over as quickly as you can. Then I'll tell you something really interesting. Who's that with you?"—they had come to the window by this time. "Oh-h! Ethel Courtney!"

"Give her at least a million lines, Ethel!" snapped Monica. "She is dragging the honoured name of Trent into the dust!"

"Look here, Janet!" said Ethel sternly.



Littered about were various sheets of paper, some unused, others covered with writing of a purple hue. Ethel and Monica bent over the tin dish, and glanced meaningfully at each other. "The printing apparatus of the 'Morcove Mirror,'" their looks said.

term, I know, but I don't see why we should do her work!"

"Hear, hear!" agreed Monica. "Them's my sentiments!"

A patter of footsteps and a faint giggle floated by the door at this moment.

"They're at it again!" said Monica, with a sigh.

Ethel darted at the door, pulled it open, and precipitated herself into the passage in hot pursuit. Dimly she could make out a scurrying figure in the distance, and, closely followed by Monica, she gave chase.

Fleet of foot as the two seniors were, their quarry was equally fast. Up the small flight of stairs they saw her dart, and then twist and turn down a maze of passages which led in the direction of the various store and lumber rooms.

"Ah," thought Ethel, "she hopes to hide in one of these!"

Along they pounded, but there was no sign now of the girl, and, with only a glimpse of moonlight streaming through the windows that occasionally dotted their path, they soon reluctantly came to the conclusion that it was a hopeless business.

"The only chance of capturing her is to go back together to the dormitories and watch for her return," said Monica. "But, really—is it worth while?"

"No, I suppose it isn't," Ethel was begin-

"I've heard very bad accounts of you from your sister. If you don't turn over a new leaf next term there'll be serious trouble. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Ethel! I'm sorry—and—and I think it was horrid of Monica to tell tales about me. But, I say—there's something awfully queer going on up here. I got the fright of my life just now!"

"Don't listen to the child's babblings!" put in her sister. "This is just her artfulness to excite our compassion. I know her little ways, Ethel—none better!"

"Nothing of the sort!" protested Janet indignantly. "If either of you have the courage to—"

"Silence, Janet!"

"Oh, you shut up, Monica—the courage I say to go where I went, you may find something jolly curious!"

"What do you mean?" the seniors demanded, both slightly impressed by Janet's earnestness.

"I'll tell you," said Janet, sinking her voice to a whisper. "I got right to the end of that passage when suddenly I saw a long streak of light along the floor. I thought it a bit strange, because I'd been given to understand the attics were not occupied. I didn't dare to pull up because you two were so close on my heels, so I ran towards it, hoping to get by. I suppose I made a bit of

a noise, for all at once the light disappeared and there was a sound—

Janet paused to glance at their faces to see what effect she was making.

"Go on!" they encouraged her.

"A sound—just a sound, that's all!" said Janet. "It made me go all creepy; I thought of the two things it was better to go back, so—I came back!"

"Really, Janet," observed Monica, with deadly sarcasm. "As a one-time stalker of the truth myself, I cannot congratulate you on your inventive powers. The tall spectre who stalked towards you with a faint sigh; the rattling of its chains; the hollow groans! All these should have been included to give artistic effect. Moreover—"

"Half a minute, Monica!" interrupted Ethel. "This may, after all, be worth investigating. Show us where you saw this light, Janet!"

"Oh, all right!" grumbled Monica. "If you think fit to encourage the child, *vo vo*. She's simply pulling our legs."

Janet hotly denied any such intention.

"I tell you I did see the light!" she declared. "And I'll show you the exact place where I saw it."

And with this Janet led them along the passage.

"There! It was over there!" she whispered.

Ethel groped her way forward and presently came in contact with a door knob. She turned it and the door swung open. Then she paused and sniffed the air. Undoubtedly a candle had been burning here and had lately been extinguished.

"Monica," she whispered, "take your sister to her dormitory and then come back here with a light. Be as quick as you can!"

"Right!"

And Monica led Janet away.

Ethel, left by herself, considered the various possibilities that might account for the attic being occupied this evening. She wondered if Stella Hawkes was mixed up in it. Vainly she tried to pierce the darkness, all the while listening for the slightest sound. The silence, however, was profound, and remained so until broken by Monica's returning footsteps.

As the light Monica bore flooded the place one particular object immediately held their attention. It was a square packing-case, the top of which was a large tin dish the size of a tea-tray. In this dish was a jelly-like substance.

Littered about the base of the packing-case were various sheets of paper, some unused, others covered with writing of a purple hue. The very apparent signs of disorder pointed to a rapid evacuation on the part of those who had been working here.

Ethel and Monica bent over the tin dish. Then they glanced meaningfully at each other.

"The printing apparatus of 'The Morceve Mirror'!" their looks said.

Yes; undoubtedly this is what it was. It was an old-fashioned copying graph known as a "jelly-graph." The preparation is made and then poured out in a dish, where it sets to a jelly. Then the manuscript is written in a special ink and pressed on the graph until the characters are transferred. That being done, copies can be taken.

In the present instance the jelly bore the impression of three of the pages of the "Mirror." The space reserved for the fourth page, however, was blank.

"Monica," said Ethel, "we have hit upon their press-to-night!"

"That's so—only they haven't yet started printing."

"No—not yet. The fourth page, as you see, is missing. Look if you can find any traces of the hunter about Ethel hung over the graph and attempted to read the writing. Being, of course, backwards, this was a matter of some difficulty.

"Ah!" suddenly ejaculated Monica. "Here's a clue! It's only the heading of the page, but it speaks for itself. Look!"

"She'd glanced at the crumpled piece of paper her friend dangled before her eyes.

"Further Exclusive Details Concerning 'Our Ethel'" she read.

Ethel's lips moved in a hard line.

"I see!" she murmured. "Now I'm about again. 'The Morceve Mirror' returns to the attack. I expect," she went on musingly, "the 'exclusive details' were just going to be manufactured when your young sister disturbed the editress and her staff. They probably slipped up into the tank room."

Monica nodded, and her gaze was directed towards an iron ladder fixed in one of the corners of the apartment communicating with the trap-door in the ceiling.

In the attic above was a huge cistern containing hot water both by night and day for the use of the school.

"Maybe they're still up there!" she remarked.

"It's possible!" agreed Ethel, with a rather preoccupied air; "but there are ways of getting in and out other than that ladder. Probably they're back in their quarters by now. Stella Hawkes! Yes, I still think it's she who is responsible for this publication. The copies no doubt were to be run off and distributed to-night."

"Well—at all events we've nipped that idea in the bud!" said Monica. "We'd better start packing up this pretty little box of tricks and cart it down to your study."

"Is the ink they use anywhere about?" asked Ethel.

Monica held a small bottle up to the light.

"I should think this was it!" she said.

"Very well! Collect all the papers and carry the ink. I'll take the tin."

They subjected the place to a thorough search for anything that might give a clue to those who were responsible for the production of the "Mirror"; but in this they were unsuccessful. Still, although the enemy had escaped, the enemy's belongings were theirs; for, as Monica remarked, they had imitated Bo Peep's sheep, and gone home leaving their "tales" behind them.

Stella Hawkes opened her eyes the following morning in response to a vigorous shaking from her two satellites, Ruby Swan and Jane Possums.

"W—what on earth if you think you're doing!" she yawned indignantly.

"Stella! The 'Mirror'—it's published!"

They said the words in tones one would use to announce the end of the world.

"Hi!" Stella was wide awake now.

"Published! How—? What d'you mean?"

Jane thrust the paper under Stella's nose.

"That's what I mean!" she breathed.

"Whoever it was who ran us to earth last night—and were I little doubt it was Ethel Courtney—decided that our efforts should not be wasted. So they've printed the copies, and the whole school is shrieking with laughter."

Stella pulled herself together.

"Oh, well," she granted. "It isn't a complete number. They only had three pages—"

"That's all you know!" broke in Ruby Swan. "There are four pages right enough. Just turn to the last page and read the jolly old Exclusive Details Concerning Our Ethel." It's slightly different from the version we were going to write—still, it's there, all the same! Look!"

And this is what Stella Hawkes saw displayed in neat, clear handwriting in the centre of the page:—

"We have learned since the publication of our last number that the statements we made concerning Ethel Courtney were totally devoid of truth; totally uncalculated for; in heretical bad taste; and mean and petty in the extreme. As a token of our sincere regret, and also because we are thoroughly ashamed of ourselves, we—the editress and staff—have decided to subscribe our next month's pocket money to any Cats' Home Ethel Courtney cares to suggest. (Signed) JUNE SNEAK."

"Mum—my word!" ejaculated Stella feebly.

"A-Carolling We Will Go!"

A half-past ten that morning Morceve began the great trek homewards, and its members dispersed to the four corners of England to celebrate in various ways the Yuletide festival.

Naturally almost everyone made a bee line for the station, but there were a few exceptions, and of these Ethel Courtney was one. Just as she was saying good-bye to Miss Somerfield, a servant whispered her the welcome news that a car containing her aunt was awaiting her at the gates.

"Oh, Aunt Susan!" cried Ethel, rushing up and embracing the tall, rather gaunt-looking elderly lady pacing the footpath like a Grenadier on guard. "This is splendid of you!"

Aunt Susan cordially returned the embrace. She was rather old-fashioned in dress, and, as Ethel knew, certainly peculiar in manner. Not that this peculiarity was objectionable. By no means. She gave one the impression of a woman who had made up her mind, a servant included, her the welcome news that a car containing her aunt was awaiting her at the gates.

"I have at last, Ethel, as you see, gone in for a car," she remarked.

"Indeed, yes, aunt; how splendid!"

"Any your adjectives, Ethel, please. You have already remarked that I am splendid. Use some other term concerning the car!"

Ethel laughed, and squeezed her aunt's arm.

"But 'splendid' just describes you both!" she cried. "There's no other word. And now, you must be frozen waiting here in the cold, please get inside, aunt. Are we going straight back to Winchmoor Down?"

"No!" returned Aunt Susan. "I have yet another passenger to pick up. We may have to remain at Barcombe for an hour or so."

Inwardly Ethel was rather surprised, but she took good care not to show it. Neither did she look at her aunt, since she was so greatly wondered who the other passenger could be.

The car drove slowly into Barcombe and then halted at the main street.

"No, no!" broke in Miss Susan Courtney as Ethel made to open the door; "we are not getting out. Let me look at you. Humph! You're still a trifle pale. How did you fall ill?"

"It was a sort of chill—a cold that—"

"Colds!" cried her aunt. "I am thankful to say that I have not had a cold since Easter. Then, however, I did have one! If I sneezed once, my dear, on Good Friday I sneezed a thousand times. It was impossible to keep my spectacles on for a single second."

"Have you seen father lately?" Ethel asked. She put the question so that if her aunt had heard about Cyril and had any views to express on the matter, she could do so now and get it over and done with.

"Yes, my father and I are more often than we meet. We get on excellently apart."

And with this Aunt Susan fell silent.

Yet Ethel noted that every now and then she peered sharply out of the window at the few passers-by.

Presently the car even chimed, and hardly had the sound died away than the window nearest the pavement suddenly became the frame of a face.

And that face was Cyril Dudley's!

"Cheerio, Ethel!" he cried, the excitement in his voice. "I say, Miss Courtney—Ethel's right. Mr. Brown's giving us a week's holiday, so I can come to Winchmoor Down. Isn't it splendid!"

"Everything seems to come under that heading with you two!" replied Miss Susan, with her grim smile, but also with a strong feeling of affection in her eyes as she regarded Cyril. "Come on, get inside, so that we can drive off!"

Cyril, bag in hand, bounced in and sank into the seat next to Ethel.

"You haven't said you're glad to see me!" he said to her, with mock reproach.

"I'm too bewildered to say anything!" protested Ethel. "Aunt—what does 'all mean'?"



(Continued from previous page.)

He ant regarded them with an expression not unworthy of Cinderella's fairy godmother.

"Just before I arrived at Morcove," she said, with a sort of defiant note in her voice as if daring them to imagine that there were any soft places in her nature, "I came across this young man of ours carrying other people's luggage. Now, I don't want to know why he was doing it, or why he happens to be here, or why it is your father and he have parted company. I'm not interested in other people's affairs. I'm a selfish old woman who only cares for my own enjoyment. I like young people about me at Christmas, and as long as Cyril doesn't want to bore me with his side of any particular question, I told him I should be pleased to have him with me for a week—longer if this excellent Mr. Brush, or whatever his extraordinary name is, will permit. You will excuse me if I have a short nap, but I was up rather early this morning."

And Aunt Susan sank back in the cushions and closed her eyes.

Ethel and Cyril regarded each other as if in a dream. It all seemed too good to be true. Even when at the end of forty miles they drew up to the fine old Manor House where Miss Courtway lived and they entered its stately portals, it was in a sort of waking swoon.

Once more "splendid" seemed to be the only word.

They were not the only visitors, either. Members of a distant branch of the Courtway family—the "Sussex Courtways"—arrived at tea-time, a whole bunch of them it seemed, comprising three girls about Ethel's age—Mabel, Mary, and Dorothy—two younger brothers, a breezy sailor cousin, and a jovial mother and father who absolutely bulged with presents for all and sundry.

Over this pleasant gathering Aunt Susan presided, with a velvet hand concealed in an iron glove. She pretended to be very stern, and mapped out the order of their enjoyments, with hints at dire penalties if they deviated from it by a hair's breadth.

"This evening," she announced, "I shall expect all the younger members of the party to go carol singing. I don't care what you say, you can all sing. What is more, you've got to sing well. One of my neighbours goes in strongly for music, and he has a son who is quite a genius at the piano. Dyke is his name. The father is a Major Dyke."

"Dyke!" echoed Ethel, with a slight catch in her voice.

Her aunt nodded. "Sing your very best there!" she ordered. Ethel glanced at Cyril, and his face was decidedly grim. Could it be, she wondered, the same Dyke that they knew—Maxwell Dyke?

There was, of course, no opportunity of questioning Cyril then; but soon after the carol singing party set out with their lanterns Ethel managed to whisper the query to Cyril.

"I'm afraid it is the same," he muttered. "I know Dyke lives somewhere in these parts, and—and—Ethel, my word! I wish he

didn't! What infernal luck! Are we never to be free of the fellow?"

There was a cold, frosty mist this evening, and it was some time before they hit on the right path to the major's house. But presently blurred glimmers of light shone ahead to tell that their destination was close at hand, and shortly they were gathered in a semi-circle beneath what was evidently the dining-room window.

"Now," ordered the sailor cousin, striking a note on his violin, "give it tongue. One, two, three!"

"The first Nowell the angel did say, Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,

In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,

On a cold winter's night that was so deep."

Having concluded the last note they listened for a minute or two, and were just about to attempt further efforts when the door suddenly opened and a clear, musical voice rang out in the frosty air.

"A merry Christmas, singers! My father would be honoured if you would come inside and join us. You would be very welcome!"

"It is Maxwell Dyke!" muttered Cyril. "Welcome! There won't be much of a welcome for me when he sees my face!"

What a stroke of ill fortune that Ethel and Cyril should thus come across Maxwell Dyke! Cyril on holiday is unquestionably on the same footing as Dyke himself, while at Prior's he is merely a servant. What will happen? See a thrilling instalment in next week's great number of the GIRLS' FAVOURITE.



THERE'S A RIGHT TIME TO GO HOME

I HAD a very amusing story the other day of a girl who had been invited to spend the evening with a friend, and who was tactless enough to "wear out her welcome."

She was evidently one of those girls who never seem to know when to take their departure.

Her friend had tried yawning, but even that had failed to produce the desired result.

Presently a clock outside in the hall began to strike in low, deep tones the midnight hour.

"Oh, I say," said the late-stayer brightly, "is that an eight-day clock?"

The long-suffering hostess smiled coldly.

"Well," she answered, stifling another yawn. "Why don't you stay a little longer and find out?"

"This story is, I know, an invention, and like most stories of its kind, absurdly exaggerated, for it is quite obvious that no girl, however sorely her patience was tried, could be so rude to a guest as to make such a retort, but at the same time, the story does point a very useful moral.

Be careful not to "wear out your welcome!"

There is one girl I know who, whenever she is invited to a party, is always the first to arrive, and the last to leave.

"This girl—I will call her Ethel—came to our last year's Christmas party, and I remember I used all the tact at my command to get rid of her when the party came to an end.

One after another the guests took their leave as midnight drew near, until at last the room was empty save for my parents, myself and Hilda.

Mother who was obviously feeling very tired, and looked it, gave me a significant look which I at once interpreted.

"Are you going to business in the morning?" I said, turning to Hilda.

"Yes, rather—are you?"

"I suppose so," I answered, "but I shall probably feel dreadfully tired. I'm not used to late nights," I added.

"Oh, I am," said Hilda airily. "You see, I go to so many parties."

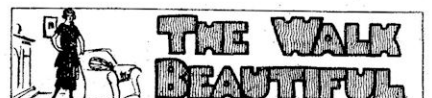
After that I gave it up, and it was only when father began to look up for the night that Hilda took the hint and her departure.

The guest at a Christmas party or any other party should always take care not to wear out her welcome by unduly delaying her departure.

If she does so she is likely to make her presence a trial instead of a pleasure to her hostess.

A golden rule is always to leave when the majority of the other guests take their departure.

If you do this you can't go far wrong.



A PERFECT CARRIAGE ADDS CHARM

WAY is it," remarked a boy friend to me recently, "that so many girls never look smart and attractive despite the fact that they are very well dressed?"

And my answer was: "Because they don't walk properly."

Every girl desires to look her best upon all occasions, and in order to do so, carefully tends her hair, and pays great attention to her complexion. Her clothes and hat must be in the latest fashion, and her gloves and footwear leave nothing to be desired.

But—

In nearly every case her appearance is ruined and her efforts made useless by—her walk.

Examine the gait of the girls you see in the street, and you will find that perhaps three out of every two have a really graceful carriage.

Of the remainder, some will lurch their way along, some will "mince" their steps (that is, take ridiculously small paces in order to give an impression of daintiness), some will take huge strides as though they wished to travel a mile in a minute, while others will drag their feet along as though each step was an agony.

Yet a graceful and easy carriage is not at all difficult to acquire, and its importance to the modern girl cannot be over-estimated.

It brings about a better circulation of the blood which results in good health, a clear skin, and beautiful hair; it adds very largely to a girl's personal charm and attractiveness, and it will prevent heels wearing down unevenly and boots running over on one side.

Don't you think it would be worth while to cultivate a good and correct walk?

I can hear cries of: "Rather! How may I do so?"

The answer is: By devoting a few minutes daily to the following exercises:

Stand with the weight of the body resting easily on the ball of the foot (not on the heels which should merely rest lightly on the ground). Raise the chest slightly, and draw the elbows well back so that the shoulder-blades feel almost as though they were touching. Balance a book on the head to give it the correct poise.

Now walk round the room five or six times, moving the legs from the hips, and allowing the heel of each foot, as it descends to the ground, to point in the direction of the other instep.

Simple, isn't it?

Practice this each day, and endeavour as far as possible to walk thus in the street. You may perhaps feel a slight stiffness after practising for the first time, but this will wear off very quickly.