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SPECIAL ARTICLE
"NOTHING TO SAY."

A WONDERFUL ROMANCE OF THE EAST

THE

GIRLS' FAVOURITE



2^D

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new serial story of
the East.*
STARTS INSIDE.

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The RIVALRY of MORCOVE



Amazing and exciting happenings bring ETHEL COURTWAY and her boy-chum, CYRIL DUDLEY, within reach of the solution of the mystery that surrounds the Old-Chum.

By Marjorie Stanton

"Temper!"

ETHEL experienced two distinct thrills. The first, naturally, was caused by the conviction that the presence of these three men meant danger to her father; the second was the feeling that, unsuspected, she might very possibly frustrate their intentions.

For they had sinister intentions, without a doubt. Her father's stealthy visit to Winchmoor Down, and now the unexpected appearance of this trio—it would be foolish to put these down as mere coincidences. No; the two things were connected—formed a solution to the whole puzzle.

Cyril—she must speak to him!
She looked about for her friend; but Cyril, for the moment, was nowhere to be seen. Then once more she turned in the direction of the little knot of people gathered round the three men.

"Hallo! Maurice Thorne's interest was apparently directed in the same channel as hers! He was hovering about the group, then gradually he mingled with them.

The sudden blast of the referee's whistle awoke the echoes with its signal to line up. The players stepped on to the ground, and the spectators retired to the touch-lines; but Ethel, for the moment, remained where she was.

She saw Thorne exchanging a few brief words with those men. If only she could hear!

"Come on, Ethel!" called out Tom Holliday.

"All right, I'm coming!" she answered. And then, out of the corner of her eye, she noticed that Thorne's companions did not pause by the touch-line, but walked over to the gap in the hedge, passed through, and disappeared from sight.

"I don't know them and has warned them to clear out," was the conclusion Ethel came to. Why, she wondered? Could it be because of her? But it was impossible for Thorne to know anything—impossible for him even to guess.

By this time Ethel had reached the centre of the field, and was getting ready to "bully off," and, consequently, Thorne was directly in front of her. She looked at his heavily-cut features, noted his small, cunning eyes, and low forehead. Dull, slow-witted, she had always considered him. Now, however, she wondered!

"Ready!" called out Maxwell Dyke, who was officiating as referee.

Then, "Phwett-t!" went the whistle, and the game had started.

A scratch holiday match of this description can be seldom described as an exhibition of skill. Plenty of excitement, of course, but usually singularly lacking in thrills so dear to the heart of the onlooker.

The first five minutes showed a total absence of the finer points of hockey. No

short passing, no long passing—indeed, no passing at all. It was simply a rough-and-tumble. And the misses! The hardest worker during this period was Maxwell Dyke, with his constant solo on the whistle.

All at once, however, Ethel intercepted the ball, and, being quite unmarked, she set off on a zig-zag course down the centre of the field. A second or so later she swerved just in time to avoid a wild rush on the part of Thorne.

Wriggle and twist—twist and wriggle. Ethel seemed to be walking through the enemy's defence. Three bewildered opponents she left in her tracks before Thorne caught her up and she was forced to part with the ball.

Thorne's stick rattled viciously across her own—so much so, that Maxwell Dyke, as he ran by, grunted a "Steady, Maurice!" Thorne glared.

"What's the fathead mean?" Ethel heard him mutter.

Ethel was too keen on the game to pause and enlighten Thorne; but the little incident was sufficient to prepare her for what was to come later on.

The ball was well in the opponents' territory at this moment. Marjorie and Mabel, on the left, were doing a neat little passing movement that spelt danger for the Dyke side.

The feminine portion of the Courtway team was certainly far stronger than that of

the Dyke house-party. On the other hand, however, with Cyril absent, Dyke's side were stronger, as far as the males were concerned.

Into the mêlée near the shooting area dashed Thorne, with a whirlwind rush, and, securing the ball, he lofted it up the field.

Immediately Maxwell Dyke blew the whistle. "What's up now?" demanded Thorne truculently.

"Lifted your hockey stick too high," Maxwell condescended to explain. "It's hockey, not golf, you know."

Thorne gave a gesture denoting an equal amount of contempt for hockey, as a game, and Maxwell Dyke, as a referee.

The "free hit" came to nothing; but the proceedings leading up to it had brought Ethel and Maurice Thorne into the limelight—Ethel, because she was evidently a class performer; Thorne, because he was obviously so easily nettled when things went badly.

For the next ten minutes Thorne shadowed Ethel, and to such an extent that the game, as far as they were concerned, was utterly spoilt. It was foolish and very unsporting of Thorne to act like this in a friendly match, and even Dyke was disgusted. Besides, Dyke was feeling spiteful, and wanted to vent his spite on someone. So he kept his eye on Thorne.

Ten minutes before half-time, his opportunity came.

For a brief moment Thorne relieved Ethel of his pressing attentions, for the ball shot out to him, and he got it into a nice position to make a run.

Promptly he forgot all about Ethel, and started away full pelt. Owing, however, to eagerness, and maybe, lack of skill, he suddenly fumbled, and lost control for the briefest possible space of time. It was fatal!

Ethel was on him like a flash, her stick curled round the ball, and Thorne's beautiful hope of a run through and a score was dashed to the ground.

What made it all the more maddening, from his point of view, was the loud burst of applause from the crowd that rewarded Ethel.

Thorne wheeled round, and sped after her like a charging bull. He was heavy and he was fast, and Edith's cousin Dorothy, being in his line of advance, was sent spinning, and collapsed on the ground in a heap. Shrill and clear went Maxwell's whistle.

Thorne pulled up and bent over Dorothy. "I say," he mumbled. "Awfully sorry! Didn't see you. Are you hurt?"

"Not much," faltered Dorothy.

Dyke strode up.

"Look here, Thorne!" he snapped. "This sort of thing has got to stop!" He bent



BEGIN HERE.

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

CYRIL DUDLEY, at one time secretary to Ethel's father, but dismissed for some mysterious reason. Ethel has been asked by her father to keep an eye on the old mill in the hands, and learns that some secret is contained there. She catches a glimpse of three men who are seeking the treasure in opposition to her father. The holidays come, and Ethel goes to Winchmoor Down to the home of her aunt, who has a house party of young people, among whom Cyril is numbered. There Ethel and Cyril again encounter

MAXWELL DYKE and MAURICE THORNE, two boys of Frior's school, near Morcove. While skating on the "Lag o' Muttonpond," Ethel and Cyril rescue a man who has fallen through the ice. He turns out to be Ethel's father. Later the Dyke house-party challenge Ethel and her friends to a hockey match. Cyril, having lost his arm, is unable to play. On the ground Ethel suddenly recognises her father's enemies.

(Now read on.)



down and discovered Dorothy to her feet. "You haven't sprained your ankle, or anything like that, I hope?"

Dorothy was a bit white; but evidently she was more startled than hurt.

"Dyke," said Thorne thickly, "what sort of thing is it that's got to stop? I want to know right now—see? Do you let me know to accuse me of knocking her over on purpose—eh?"

Maxwell eyed him steadily.

"What I mean is this," he returned. "This isn't a Soccer match for a cup, but a game of hockey between friends. You've got to remember that, if you're to continue playing."

"Continue playing!" echoed Thorne.

"Yes, that's what I said!"

"Meaning that you'd order me off—eh?"

"Yes!"

Thorne glanced round at the assembled players to discover that there wasn't a sympathetic face in the whole group.

"We'll go into that presently," he mumbled.

Maxwell nodded as if to say, "We will," and then ordered the free hit to be taken.

This time, results came from it. Ethel, despite Thorne's interception, got the ball, and, steering it into the shooting area, sent it hard and true into the net.

Whereat Thorne's feelings can be better imagined than described.

Soon afterwards, half-time was called, with the game 1-0, in favour of Ethel's side.

As Ethel walked towards the touch-line to join Cyril, Maxwell Dyke hurried over to her.

"You can rely on me, Ethel, to keep that boundary in check," he said impetuously.

"I never should have asked him down here. He's simply an outsider and a cad."

Ethel nodded. She was quite indifferent to Maxwell's sudden influx of righteous indignation.

"What a splendid game you play!" he added, "Far better than many fellows I know."

Ethel turned on him with flashing eyes.

"The last thing I want is compliments from you!" she said, "In some ways I prefer the boundary—as you call Thorne—to you. He at least is consistently objectionable, whilst you act as many parts as there are days in the week. I have never had to speak to anyone before like you force me to speak to you."

"Do you intend to remain while Cyril Dudley and I talk?" she went on. "I can't prevent you—neither can he, for he has only the use of one arm. Stop, if you was to. Or perhaps now the moment has come to tell your friends the little you know about Cyril? All right, call them here. We shan't run away."

Dyke had gone white and red by turns during this.

"Ethel—" he began; then he bit his lip, and halted in his stride.

Ethel walked on, and a second later Dyke felt a heavy hand on his shoulder. He turned round, to find himself gazing into the eyes of Maurice Thorne.

"I say, Dyke, old bean," said the latter, with a forced grin, "don't be any malice; but you've been a bit rough on me this afternoon—"

"Take your hand off my shoulder!" breathed Dyke, in tones that ought to have warned the other.

"Come on, old son—smile!" said Thorne, shaking him playfully. "I know you didn't mean—"

Crash! Thorne saw a thousand stars between the time of Dyke's fist meeting his jaw and his impact with the ground. It was a clean knock-out, and Thorne lay there like a log.

At that moment, all who had witnessed the affair were too astonished to do anything but gape. Then they surged forward in a mass until they surrounded the prostrate Thorne and the quivering Maxwell Dyke.

Major Dyke stepped up to his son.

"Max," he said sternly, "have you taken leave of your senses? Struck your own

guest! I could never have believed it of you! You have disgraced our name!"

Maxwell gazed at those engaged in getting Thorne to his feet. All his concentrated fury had gone out in that blow, and now his anger had evaporated into a sort of dull lethargy.

"I simply had to hit him!" he mumbled to his father.

By this time Thorne had partially recovered and was endeavouring to get free from those who supported him. He was evidently out to return the blow—return it with interest, too!

"Thorne," said Major Dyke, going up to him, "I am more sorry than I can say that this has happened—"

"Your son will be sorrier still. I give you my word!" shouted Thorne. "Let go of my arms and let me get at him!"

He struggled furiously with those who held him.

"Thorne," ordered the major sternly, "I can make every allowance for you; but I must ask you to remember that there are young ladies present. Full justice shall be done you. Come with me to the house. You, too, Max!"

He turned to the assembled players.

"I think, in the circumstances—the unfortunate circumstances—we had better call the game off. On behalf of my son, I apologise for what has happened."

"Awfully sorry—didn't see you. Are you hurt?" apologised Thorne. Dyke strode up. "Look here, Thorne," he snapped, "this sort of thing has got to stop!"

"Ethel," he said, "I don't want to be an alarmist, but it strikes me that desperate attempts will be attempted against your father. Those fellows will stick at nothing!"

"For instance?" queried Ethel.

"Breaking into the house," said Cyril.

"You mean, to get something that father possesses?"

"Yes, I do mean that," nodded Cyril.

"It's pretty certain they followed him down here, and it's pretty certain they've discovered that there's a new visitor at your aunt's house. Well, your father can't defend himself; and I'm practically a cripple with this wretched arm of mine; and you—"

He paused.

"And I'm only a girl," concluded Ethel.

"That's what you were going to say, wasn't it?"

"Yes-s. But in no derogatory sense, Ethel. You must see, however, that the big guns, as it were, are all on the side of the enemy?"

"I see it quite clearly, Cyril. What do you suggest?"

"Tom Holliday."

Ethel nodded in enthusiastic agreement. The young sailor would make all the difference in the world.

"We'll take him into our confidence, as far as possible," went on Cyril, "and, if he's agreeable—as he's certain to be—the



A murmur went round. It was an embarrassing situation. It had all been so sudden—everyone was totally unprepared for Maxwell's extraordinary outburst; neither could they think of a reason to account for it.

The players, however, thought it due to the remarks Thorne had called down on himself by his too strenuous methods during the first half of the match. Even so, the assault usually comes from the player, and not from the referee.

But Ethel knew it was something more than this. The words she had spoken to Maxwell had left him in such a condition that he had to take it out of someone.

Not inappropriately, Maurice Thorne had been the victim.

Midnight Visitors

"When thieves fall out, honest people come into their own," was perhaps too severe a simile to extract from the row between Dyke and Thorne, yet both Ethel and Cyril were inevitably reminded of the saying as they discussed the affair on their homeward journey.

But Ethel's statement concerning the three men quickly put every other topic in the background. Cyril looked very grave as he listened.

three of us will mount guard to-night. What about your aunt?"

"There's no need to tell her yet," said Ethel. "There's one thing, however, that we must do Cyril; and that is, directly father is strong enough to discuss things go to him and explain the whole position. For instance, although you say he half-recognised you yesterday evening, I don't think he really knows you're down here. He must be told; and, what's more, you'll have to see him."

Cyril remained silent for a while.

"He can't refuse to see you," persisted Ethel. "Remember, you saved his life. And in the present crisis he wants all the friends he can get."

"Friends—yes!" echoed Cyril, a trifle bitterly. "But then I hardly come under that heading. At least, he doesn't think so."

"Oh, but he will now! He must!"

"We shall see. Anyway, directly we're indoors, we'll get Tom Holliday to ourselves and sound him."

Getting Tom Holliday to themselves was not an easy matter, for the general sailor was always in great demand; but eventually it was accomplished, and leading him to the room dubbed by the name of "library," in virtue of the small bookcase it contained,

they proceeded to take him into their confidence.

"Well, what's it all about?" he asked.
"The invalid upstairs, chiefly," said Ethel. "The—the fact is, the invalid is my father."

"Your father! Now—now, Ethel, don't try to take in a simple sailorman."

"I assure you, Tom, it is a fact. Cyril will bear me out in this, and so will Aunt Susan. We three are the only ones who know, and now you make the fourth. It has to be kept a dead secret, mind!"
Tom Holliday glanced from one to the other.

"Well, go on!" he said.
"Father has enemies," continued Ethel, "and these enemies were on the hockey ground this afternoon. I happen to know them, though, luckily, they're not aware of it. Now, Cyril and I both believe that they followed father down here, and it was through trying to give them the slip that, he ventured on the ice yesterday evening."
"Are they out to rob him?" demanded the sailor.

"Yes," said Cyril.
"Money?"
"No; I rather fancy it's some plan or other that he carries about with him."
"But, at any rate, this plan is to do with money or valuables of some sort?"

Ethel and Cyril nodded.
"It sounds a little exciting," murmured Tom. "Where, exactly, do I come in?"
"To-night, likely enough," said Cyril. "There is just an outside possibility that these enemies we speak of may make some attempt to break in here."

Once more Tom Holliday scrutinised them.
"It sounds wild, weird, and wonderful," he observed slowly. "I can see you're dead serious, and on the strength of that I'll hear a bit more."

"There's not much more to tell," said Ethel. "Cyril and I only know the bare outlines of the business; but the last month or so we've seen enough to take every precaution, because we know we're dealing with desperate men. We're going to watch to-night. Will you watch with us?"

"All right," said Tom, after a pause. "I'll go on guard with you. Where and at what time do we all meet for the lonely vigil?"

"I suggest the long corridor which runs by the room where father is lying," said Ethel. "There is a window at each end, so

we can keep an eye on both back and front of the house."

"Ah! Not a bad idea. And the time?"
"Half an hour after everyone's gone to bed."

Cyril nodded agreement.
"It's half-past six now," he muttered, glancing at his watch; "fully six hours before this household snores. It'll seem an age!"

Cyril was right—an age truly described the interval. It being Boxing Night, the customary "high jinks" and revelry banished all thoughts of an early retirement, and one o'clock chimed before the lights were finally extinguished in Aunt Susan's house.

Even then, murmurs of the girls' voices came from their rooms, further to delay matters, and it was past two when Ethel, fully dressed, but with a dressing-gown around her, crept forth to the rendezvous.

Two vague figures emerged into view for a brief moment when she reached the long corridor, to tell her that Tom and Cyril were already there.

"You watch by the back window," breathed Cyril's voice. "I'm at the front. Tom's at the top of the staircase."

Ethel went to her position, and for some while gazed into the dim outlines of the trees and shrubs that dotted the garden. How calm and peaceful it looked! The tall elms gently swayed in the breeze, patches of moonlight mingled with the snow-clad ground, and—

Then Ethel felt a sudden thrill pass through her. Did her eyes deceive her, or were shadowy forms creeping up the centre path towards the house? She looked again. At that moment the moon drifted behind a cloud, and everything was plunged in darkness.

Ethel wondered if her eyesight had played her false. After all, moonlight is very tricky; and besides, she was strung up to the point of imagining all sorts of things.

The moon at this point emerged from the cloud, and once more the scene was illuminated.

Ethel peered. Of course, she had made a mistake; no one was there.

Stay! What was that strange-looking mass apparently creeping up the side of the house—the side that jutted out over the kitchen?

In a dazed manner, Ethel tried to reason that this could not be possible. That portion of the building was nothing but bare brickwork—no ivy, not even a drain-pipe. How could anyone secure a foothold?

Yet something was certainly, slowly but surely, ascending towards the window which gave entrance to the apartment used by the servants as a sitting-room.

Ah! Now she understood. What is known as a human pyramid was being formed—that is, one man stands on another's shoulders, whilst a third clambors up and perches himself on the shoulders of the second.

Ethel flitted over to Tom Holliday, by the staircase, and in a few hurried words acquainted him with what was going forward. Cyril, at the front window, heard the sound, and instantly joined them.

Tom said nothing, but, with a gesture, beckoned them to follow him down the stairs.

The hall safely reached, with cat-like tread they proceeded to the short stairway which led to the room which was being entered.

Half-way up they paused to listen. Not a sound!

With a bound as light as a cat, Tom Holliday reached the landing. They saw him crouch down, alert and ready to spring directly the door of the room opened.

In a second or so it would happen—then! Suddenly the stillness was broken by a terrific rat-tat at the half-door, accompanied by a loud peal on the bell.

They all jumped—how could they help it? But Tom, intent to capture, sprang at the door of the room and attempted to burst it open. In this he was frustrated, for the door was locked, and a couple of valuable moments elapsed before he discovered the

fact. Into the room he burst, Ethel and Cyril close on his heels. A sound of scrambling footsteps on the path outside, and the open window told them they were just too late.

In the meanwhile, the knocking on the front door and the ringing of the bell continued with unabated vigour. Added to this noise were the sounds of doors opening in various parts of the house, and the excited murmurs of voices.

"I'll stop here," said Cyril hurriedly. "You two go down."

Young Dyer retreated Ethel and Tom Holliday, and they reached the hall a minute or so in advance of Aunt Susan and the rest of the inmates.

Tom shot back the bolts and threw open the window, whilst Ethel switched on the electric lights. Then she ran to Tom's side.

"Excuse me!" breathed an excited voice from the portico. "I've just spotted some men attempting to break into the house. I happened to see them creep in at the back. I was passing. I'm Dyke—Maxwell Dyke. Sorry if I've alarmed you, but thought I ought to warn you."

"Warn us?" muttered Tom angrily. "Yes, but you warned them, too! We'd have collared them if you hadn't have kicked up that shindy."

He did not, however, utter these words aloud, for at that moment Aunt Susan sailed towards them.

Ethel, in the meanwhile, was grappling with the problem of Dyke's sudden and very unexpected appearance on the scene here.

Was his presence really so accidental as he would have them believe? Not for one moment did she associate Maxwell with these men who had entered the house—or, at least, she did not associate him in a friendly sense. Maurice Thorne, however, was a very possible connecting link.

Thorne was mixed up with the case—may have been with them to-night for aught she knew. And wasn't it just possible, in view of the enmity now existing between Thorne and Dyke, that the latter had shadowed the other's movements and thus got wind of the projected attack?

Naturally, all these points did not occur to Ethel, at once. She gradually evolved them as she, with the rest of the party, spent the next half-hour in searching the house from cellar to attic.

Nothing suspicious was discovered—not even the open window in the servants' quarters, for Cyril had taken the precaution to close it.

"Well," rapped out Aunt Susan, regarding Dyke with a decidedly hostile eye, "I don't say that you didn't mean well; but it strikes me you meant precious little else. There isn't the slightest trace, as you see, of either burglar or burglars."

"Oh, yes, I did see some men round at the back, Miss Courtway," returned Dyke sullenly. "Four of them!"

Aunt Susan regarded him pityingly.
"All right," she said tartly. "Thank you for all the trouble you've gone to—and good-night!"

"Her good-night" resembled the crack of a pistol, and under its withering finality Maxwell wilted into the night, discredited by all save Ethel, Cyril, and Tom Holliday.

"But why didn't the young idiot manage his alarm better?" demanded Tom.

Confidence for Confidence.

"Ethel," said Aunt Susan, when they met the next morning, "after breakfast your father wants to see you. I am glad to say, my dear, that he seems very much better. It is also satisfactory to find that he heard nothing of that absurd disturbance caused by young Dyke last night. He slept through it all."

"Oh, Aunt, I am glad!"

"Aunt Susan nodded.
"And what about Cyril Dudley?" she asked. "Are you going to tell your father he is here? I hope you are; for the sooner those two meet, and become reconciled, the better."



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GIRLS' FRIEND



Reconciled! Ethel's heart beat at the thought. Surely, when she told her father that he owed his life to Cyril, reconciliation must follow.

Mr. Courtney was propped up in bed when his daughter entered the room, and he embraced her with great cordiality.

"I'm feeling quite my old self this morning, Ethel," he remarked, "and by the New Year I ought to be about again. Hope so, because I have much to do—a great deal to do, yes."

He paused, as if uncertain how to continue. There was almost an air of embarrassment about him.

"I—er—expect Ethel," he resumed, "You're a trifle curious to know why I am down here—eh?"

"I'm more curious to know, father, why you approached the house by way of the Leg of Mutton pond, instead of by road."

Mr. Courtney smiled.

"Well, Ethel, the fact is I was being followed, and I had to give those who followed me the slip. By the way, who was it fished me out of the water. Whoever it was, I'd like to thank him."

Ethel drew a deep breath.

"Whoever it was?" she queried.

"Yes—yes, naturally."

"Father," said Ethel slowly, "it was Cyril Dudley!"

Mr. Courtney sank an inch farther into his pile of pillows.

"Cyril, was it?" he muttered. "He didn't know it was I?"

"Not when he rescued you. Afterwards, of course he did."

For quite an alarming time her father maintained a grim silence.

"I'd like to see Cyril," he said at length.

"Now—at once!"

"Yes, please."

Ethel immediately left the room and sought out Cyril.

"Come along," she said, with a brave attempt at a smile. "Father wants you."

"Reactions?" asked Cyril.

"I—I hope not."

So Cyril proceeded to the bedroom, and stood before his erstwhile guardian.

"I'm really awfully glad to see you looking so well, sir!" said Cyril.

"Ay—ay," returned Mr. Courtney. "I'm not too bad, considering. I might have been far worse—so I am given to understand—if it hadn't been for someone."

"Two someones," smiled Cyril. "Ethel took the same risks as I did."

"You and Ethel—Ethel and you?" burst out Mr. Courtney, with a short laugh.

"The inseparables! Now, how much am I to eat?"

"Eat, sir?" asked Cyril, thinking Mr. Courtney was wandering in his mind.

"Humble-pie, my son—humble-pie! may have to reconsider previous attitudes; soften down previous opinions and words. Ethel has always held that you play the game. I didn't agree. Maybe I was wrong—maybe."

"Look here, sir," broke in Cyril. "All this of minor importance just for the present. The enemies, that you very naturally thought I was in league with, know you are in this house. Last night they tried to break in here. We foiled them. We may not have the same luck again. What is to be done?"

Mr. Courtney shrugged.

"I'm not in the condition to do much myself," he said; "and I see you've got your arm in a sling. However, there's Ethel. Come and sit down here, Cyril—you, too, Ethel. We'll hold a council of war. You shall confess to me, and I will confess to you. Now, just tell me all that you two have been doing over at the landslip at Morcove. Some of your adventures Ethel wrote me; but I'd like to hear it all over again."

Between them, Ethel and Cyril related every detail of their varied experiences at the hill.

"Thrilling—quite thrilling," murmured Mr. Courtney. "My story, I am afraid, is a tame one compared with yours. However,

here it is—such as it is. I'll try and make it as short and concise as possible."

He paused for a minute to collect his thoughts.

"It was almost eighteen months ago that I first met Walter Douglas," he began. "I came across him in very doubtful company, in a small wayside hotel. The doubtful company consisted of three men whose character, through certain business transactions, I well knew."

"The three I met in the vaults and who now are down here?" asked Ethel.

"Yes, the same three. Walter Douglas interested me from the beginning, and, on the first opportunity, I took him on one side and bluntly told him in so many words that he had fallen amongst thieves. Douglas seemed to have some sort of inkling of this himself."

"Anyway, he jumped at my friendship, thanked me profusely, and—the simple sort of chap he is!—told me all about himself. He hadn't told me much before I thoroughly understood why these three men were hovering about him."

"He had pots of money, I suppose?" said Cyril.

"Hardly a penny to bless himself with," returned Mr. Courtney drily. "No; but he had the means of making money—heaps of

struck him that here was the ideal spot to complete his invention. So he established himself there, and not a soul knew, until he told me."

"Then he didn't tell the three men?" asked Cyril.

"No, fortunately he kept that a secret. Well, I saw his invention, and its possibilities greatly impressed me. I arranged that I would deliver, by boat, all the extra things he needed, and save him the trouble of making long journeys. Besides, with those soundrels on the look-out, it was safer for him to take cover."

Mr. Courtney took a brief rest at this point.

"I propose to skim over certain delicate ground," he continued, with a not unkindly glance at Cyril, "merely observing that our three friends tracked Douglas and myself down—to an extent. They discovered the existence of the hidden places in the landslip; but, so far, they haven't discovered the workshop."

"A day or so ago," continued Ethel's father, "I found that they were shadowing me, and I resolved to give them a run for their money. I didn't mind their wasting their time with me if it meant their leaving the landslip alone. I played a trick on them. I allowed them to think that I was carrying



Tom threw open the door, and Ethel ran to his side. "Excuse me!" breathed an excited voice from the darkness. "I've just spotted some men attempting to break into your house! I'm Dyke—Maxwell Dyke."

it. He was in the process of perfecting an invention to generate an almost unlimited supply of electricity at a very small cost, and its storage was simply a matter of mechanical construction. Like most inventors, he was in need of capital, and these three men, if you please, were the capitalists he had discovered to finance him.

Mr. Courtney paused to chuckle.

"Lived on 'nothing a year'—every one of them," he said. "They were out to steal his invention, and poor young Douglas was just a fly hovering round a spider's web. I told him so. But the details of his invention interested me, and I offered to finance him. As a matter of fact, I'm still doing so. In a month's time Mr. Walter Douglas will be worth thousands. However, this is a digression. I asked him to take me to his workshop. He agreed, and that night, without the three men knowing, we slipped away from the hotel and went by cross-country route to—where do you think?"

"Barncombe and the landslip?" said Ethel and Cyril, in one voice.

"That's right. His workshop was down in those secret vaults under the landslip. Douglas had discovered their existence quite by accident, during a holiday at Barncombe, through poking about the caves, and, as secrecy was of the highest importance, it

then the plans of the invention about with me. Then I set out on a little journey, with them in close attendance, and I pretending to know nothing about their tracking me off

"On Christmas evening I shook them off about ten miles from here, and I decided to pay a visit to your aunt. I approached here via the wood, and took a short cut across the ice. The rest you know."

"Yes," murmured Ethel, with a swift glance, in Cyril's direction. "The rest we know."

She tried to keep the questioning note from her voice, for, although much was now explained, the chief part of the mystery—the part played by Cyril in the affair—was still untold.

Cyril got up and walked across to the window. He stood there for a little while, his face drawn and pale. Ethel knew he was undergoing a great inward struggle—whether to speak or to continue to be silent.

Suddenly Cyril turned and met their anxious gaze.

"Was he going to speak?"

(What mystery lies behind Cyril's reluctance to speak out? Why was he dismissed in disgrace from Mr. Courtney's service long ago? See a splendid instalment next week. Order your copy now.)