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A Great Story of School, Mystery and Adventure.



The RIVALRY of MORCOVE



In which the mystery that has exercised its strange influence over the destinies of ETHEL COURTWAY and CYRIL DUDLEY remains a mystery no longer

By MARJORIE STANTON

Tom Thorne Has the Last Word.

MAURICE THORNE—Cyril's brother!
Now the secret was revealed, Ethel wondered why this possibility had never occurred to her before. If she had had the bump of curiosity more highly developed perhaps it might have done. But then she had never questioned Cyril to any great extent about his childhood—those early years before her father had adopted him.

She had vaguely understood that his parents had died when he had been quite an infant, and that the first years of his life had been the reverse of happy. Cyril had never said much about them, and for that reason she had sternly suppressed all curiosity.

But that Maurice, of all people, should be his brother!
After the startling announcement, Cyril and Maurice had bent over Mrs. Banyard—now showing faint signs of returning consciousness—and once more Ethel saw their resemblance in build, the same broad shoulders, the similar pose of the head.

"Strikes me she's broken her arm," muttered Cyril.
"I think so, too," said Maurice. "Lucky Bramble's here with a cart. We shall be able to get her to the hospital. Ah-h! What's that on the ground? Jove—it's the letter!"

"It belongs to you, Ethel," said Cyril.
Ethel picked up the letter, as one in a dream. On the top of the discovery of the relationship between Cyril and Maurice Thorne, there was now the equally surprising discovery of the identity of the injured woman as the wife of the caravan owner.

"The letter belongs to me!" repeated Ethel. "Oh!"—a flood of light broke in on her as she glanced at the contents—"then she did steal it, after all."

Cyril glanced at her in some surprise, as if to say: "Didn't you know?" But this was not the moment to ask questions, for whatever Mrs. Banyard had done, she was evidently in great pain and it was necessary that they should seek medical aid as soon as possible.

So, all lending a hand, the woman was hoisted into the cart, and the journey to Morcove was continued.

Mrs. Banyard, beyond a moan of pain, never opened her lips; but she gazed at the letter Ethel held, as if longing to snatch it from her. Ethel, guessing her feelings, smiled slightly.

"It may interest you to know," said Ethel, "that you did me a very great service when you took this letter."

The woman scowled.
"How was that, Ethel?" asked Cyril.
Ethel glanced in the direction of Maurice Thorne.

"I'll tell you—when we are alone," she replied.

"I'm on your side now, Miss Ethel," cut

in Maurice quickly. "Aren't I, Cyril? I'm out to help your father—"

"Shut up!" muttered Cyril.
"Oh, well, but I am—I don't care what happens to the other—"

"The others!" cried Ethel, with a curl of her lip. "We have just taken two of those 'others' to the police-station, on a charge of trespass and assault on Mr. Bramble, down at the mill."

"Which two?" breathed Maurice. "D'you know their names?"
"Yes—Joseph Brindle and Samuel Chudleston; at least, those were the names they gave."

Maurice breathed a sigh of relief, and looked meaningly at Cyril.
"Oh, they don't matter," he observed.

Whereas Cyril once more sternly laid his hold his tongue. Indeed, from this point, conversation generally languished, and silence was maintained until the Morcove Cottage Hospital was reached, where Mrs. Banyard was carried inside and put to bed.

An unsuspected, hospitable side of Mr. Bramble's character now revealed itself.
"If you and your friends care to come along to the mill," he said to Ethel, "I dare say the wife could find you a bite o' something. What d'you say, young people?"
The invitation was rather a welcome one

as far as Ethel was concerned, in view of the proximity to Mr. Douglas, but the presence of Maurice Thorne complicated things, so that she hardly knew what answer to make.

"I say!" broke out Maurice. "You're not going to leave us, are you? If he catches me he'll force me to tell him everything. Let me come with you! You must let me come—absolutely must!"

His terror was unfeigned and old Bramble gazed enquiringly at Ethel and Cyril.

"What alls the lad?" he asked. "Wot's he in a funk about?"

"He has an enemy," returned Cyril shortly. He looked about him in a helpless sort of way. Then to Ethel: "I can't leave him," he said. "Do you wish to go to the mill—if so, we'll come along—if we may."

"Yes, yes, certainly—if Mr. Bramble doesn't object," said Ethel, thinking, in her mind, that Bramble must think them a queer lot.

"I don't object," replied Bramble. "Wot's more—if we meet this 'ere enemy of his I'll have a word or two to say to him."

So once more they clambered into the cart and the vehicle rumbled and jolted along towards the mill.

They were just clear of Morcove and had entered upon the road, which led direct to the landslip, when Ethel spotted a solitary individual coming towards them. She recognised him at once. It was the lantern-jawed man and she knew it was he whom Maurice Thorne feared.

She gripped Cyril by the arm.

"Look!" she whispered.
Cyril stiffened in every muscle, and the expression on his face told Maurice that something was wrong. He, too, looked.

"My word!" he breathed. "Uncle Tom!"
"Pull yourself together," said Cyril. "He can do nothing to you. He has more to fear from us than we have to fear from him."

The cart ambled along until it drew abreast of the oncomer. He scrutinised it keenly, and on seeing its occupants, he hailed old Bramble.

"Excuse me, my good man," he said. "I just want to have a word with the young people you are driving."

"Surely!" returned Bramble, pulling up. The man raised his hat to Ethel. Then he regarded Cyril and the shrinking Maurice.

"It is a beautiful sight to see brothers united once more," he remarked. "I take it that this is what it means? Or is it that the virtuous brother is going to sacrifice the prodigal?"

"You can take it how you like," answered Cyril coldly. "What I intend to do with Maurice is my own business."

"Well—I wish you joy of him. I suppose he has given the whole game away? I have just heard that froe lodging has been found for two of our friends—doubtless thanks to Maurice."



BEGIN HERE.

ETHEL COURTWAY is the head girl of Morcove school, whose friendship with **CYRIL DUDLEY** has stood many a test. Ethel's father is financing an inventor, but there are three men who are plotting to steal the invention. Mr. Courtway entrusts a letter to Ethel to deliver to the inventor in his workshop in the caves in the landslip near Morcove. The letter is stolen by gipsies, and Ethel is imprisoned by her father's enemies, but languished in the very cave she wished to enter. She sees the inventor, and later is of some service to the Brambles, who live in the old mill. She helps them to capture two of the three men who are after the invention. On their way to the police-station, Ethel and the Brambles encounter Cyril Dudley and

MAURICE THORNE, an old enemy of theirs, who have tackled the gipsies who stole the letter from Ethel. The gipsy woman is hurt, and Ethel and Cyril stop to help her and, to Ethel's amazement, Maurice Thorne stops too. Noting her surprise, Ethel suddenly blurts out a fact that adds to her amazement. "I am Cyril's brother!" he says.

(Now read on.)

"Not altogether," put in Ethel.

"The man favoured her with a look that was partly a smile and partly a glare."

"The luck has strangely favoured you, Miss Courtney," he said. "One of these days I may find out exactly the part you have played in this affair. In the meanwhile, I fancy I had better make myself scarce for a while. Tell your father that Thomas Thorne has a good memory and that he will not forget. As a parting reminder—"

Before they could guess his intention he raised the stick he was carrying and brought it down with a thud on the horse's flanks.

Instantly the animal reared up, kicked, and then, as the stick again descended, it seized the bit in its mouth and bolted.

Vainly old Bramble tugged at the reins, awaking the echoes with his belabouring to the horse to stop, and his fierce denunciation of the man who had done this deed. His protests had little effect on either. The horse pelted down the road, threatening every minute to overturn the cart; whilst Tom Thorne, with a look of triumph, scrambled through the hedge and made off across country at a pace that defied all pursuit.

For fully a hundred yards the cart took its zig-zag course along the road, threatening every moment to overturn. All Ethel and the others could do was to hold their breath for the best. Had any vehicle been coming in the other direction, a fearful catastrophe would have been bound to happen. Fortunately, however, the road was clear.

Now one side of the road—now the other—swaying over cart ruts—perilously near the ditch—lump—over—crash—and, intermingled with it all, the hoarse "whoa's" of old Bramble.

Every second Ethel expected the smash to come, and mentally she pictured the details of the affair; but just as they were in sight of the cross roads, the horse's mad career was brought to a sudden close by its catching its hoof in a rut, stumbling, laughing, thudding to the ground. The cart lurched round at right angles—there was a jarring note of cracking timbers, then it slowly heeled over and collapsed on its side.

Luckily for all concerned, its action was so deliberate that they had plenty of time to scramble clear and no casualties. "The cart," bellowed old Bramble, shaking his fist in the direction of the figure they could dimly make out scudding across the fields.

Maurice broke into a foolish, hysterical song of chuckle.

"Uncle Tom's hot stuff—he is!" he bellowed. And then added: "We're well quit of him. He might have treated us a jolly sight worse!"

A Leaf from the Past.

THE Brambles' "something to eat" proved a very serious affair, and it was not until well after two that Ethel and Cyril found an opportunity to be alone.

"Maurice," ordered Cyril, "you stop in the sitting-room and keep an eye on the Brambles."

"Oh, certainly," said his brother meekly. "I'll be with you when we'll send for you."

Maurice nodded, and went off like a lamb to the sitting-room, where he discovered the host and hostess snoring placidly at either side of the fire.

In the meanwhile Ethel and Cyril were passing the yard by the mill.

"Ethel was our first," said Cyril. "And Ethel related all her adventures since leaving Windmoor Down. She told them as quickly as possible, for they were of far less interest to her than the revelations which she expected from Cyril."

Cyril heard her to the end, with just an occasional interjection. When she had finished he drew a deep breath.

"Now it's my turn," he muttered. "My family history!" He gave a bitter, little laugh. "It's not a very edifying story. Maurice Thorne—his real name, of course, is Sinclair—my brother! Thomas Thorne—my uncle! What relations! And yet my father and

mother, Ethel, from the little I've heard of them, were as straight as a die! Yes! both of them. I, too, can say I hope, without boasting, that I try to play the game."

Ethel gave his arm a sympathetic squeeze.

"Father and mother died when Maurice and I were small nippers, and we were taken in charge by mother's brother—Thomas Thorne—the kind gentleman who so nearly broke our necks this morning. That dead Ethel, is a pretty fair sample of his life. A thorough wrong 'un, if ever there was one."

"Of course, he treated you badly?" murmured Ethel.

"No—at least, not in the sense that he knocked us about. He didn't do that; but he tried to bring us up according to his code of morals. He taught us to tell lies, to be underhand. He laughed at the truth; he sneered at honesty. To be 'smart' was what he was continually dunning into our ears; and his idea of smartness was to cheat and rob those who were not so clever as yourself. That's what he's done all his life, and that's what he'll do to the end. A fine sort of guardian for two small boys—eh, Ethel?"

"Horrible—horrible!"

"When I was about eight, I ran away," resumed Cyril.

He paused, as if uncertain how to continue.

"And Maurice Thorne—that is—your



Maurice slouched out and stood before them—a hang-dog specimen of humanity.

"Maurice," said Ethel, "your brother and I are very great friends, but both of us have room for other friends—YOU, for instance!"

brother—he remained with your uncle?" queried Ethel.

"Never mind about Maurice," cried Ethel quickly. "I'm not at all interested in Maurice. The mere fact that he was content to stay with your uncle—I quite understand."

"Maurice is weak," muttered Cyril. "He is easily led. His worst enemy is himself. He hadn't even a sporting chance, coming under the influence of a man like that, when so young—"

"He had the same chance as you," said Ethel.

"Natures are different, Ethel. Anyway, I fell in with your father and he, like the fine, upright, generous man he is, took me under his wing. He found me wandering about, footsore, weary, tattered and torn—he was sorry for me. He took me on my face value—and a grub for a night has been, too—and didn't ask any questions. Even in those days I was a proud little beggar, and I could not own up to Uncle Tom and his swindling ways. You remember my first appearance, don't you?"

"Yes," said Ethel softly. "But you didn't look at all like a street urchin."

"No; I was washed and dressed before. I was let loose on the Courtney family. Well, as you know, I was schooled and educated and eventually became your father's secretary. Then—"

"Ah! That terrible quarrel!"

"Exactly. I have now arrived at that point. A month or so before I quitted your roof, I ran into Uncle Thomas. I recognised him at once and he recognised me. He was perfectly friendly and, therefore, especially to be feared. You've seen sufficient of him to learn that the more polite he is the more he is bent on mischief."

Ethel nodded.

"As I say, he was perfectly friendly—asked how I was doing, and gave me news of my brother, although he didn't tell me he was 22. Prior's. Unfortunately, your father, unknown to me, witnessed this interview. You know the construction he placed on it?"

"I do, indeed," said Ethel.

"A week or so later—in the early hours of the morning," continued Cyril, "I was awakened by a sound which led me to believe that burglars were at work. Nor was I wrong; for on creeping down to investigate, I found a fellow in your father's study. It was my own brother, Maurice!"

"He was after the plans of Mr. Douglas's invention, I suppose?"



(Continued from previous page.)

secret vaults, but where exactly his workshop was, they had no idea. You remember when you, Maurice and I, met here on the first day of the term, and Maurice declared he'd seen a ghost? The "ghost" was all part of the scheme to frighten people away from the mill by getting the place the reputation of being haunted. They particularly wanted the Brambles to shift; but in that they were no more successful than your father. Nothing less than a bomb would shift old Bramble if he didn't want to shift."

"And now what are you going to do with your brother, Cyril?"

"Goodness only knows. Of course, he'll have to leave Prior's, for there'll be no one to pay his school fees. Emigration's the best thing for him. Of course, Prior's will want a new 'boot-boy' this term," added Cyril with a smile. "Maurice might put in for the job."

"No," said Ethel decidedly, "that wouldn't do at all. This, Cyril, is a problem for father to solve. Silence, please—I won't hear a word. I've made up my mind, and there's an end to it."

"Cyril dug his hands in his pockets. "I only hope the chap makes good," he said.

"Tell him to come out here, Cyril." Cyril went to the door of the cottage and called his brother.

Maurice slouched out and stood before them—a hang-dog specimen of humanity.

"Maurice," said Ethel, going up to him and placing her hand on his arm. "Your brother and I are very great friends, but both of us have room for other friends—you, for instance."

Maurice's head slowly lifted, until his eyes met Ethel's.

"Has he told you?"—with a jerk—"everything?" he mumbled.

"I believe he might have told me a great deal more," said Ethel candidly. "But that's neither here nor there. A little while ago I thought the past was more interesting than the present. I don't think so now. I want to forget about—about the past so that you and I can start fair. I think it would please Cyril—it is what he wants."

Maurice drew a deep breath.

"Let me prove I'm not such an outsider as I was!" he cried. "Put me to the test—I'm ready for anything to prove—"

"Right!" said Ethel, with dancing eyes.

"I'll take you to your word. Here's a ten shilling note. Go into Morcove and buy as many provisions as you can carry and bring them back here."

"What—what d'you mean?" stammered Maurice. "There's no test in that!"

"Oh, yes, there is. When you return, you shall come with you to these things and pay a visit to a friend of ours."

Slow in the uptake, Maurice still did not understand.

"You chump!" cried Cyril, not unkindly, however. "Doesn't it penetrate that our friend is Walter Douglas, and that if we didn't trust you, he is the last person we should ask you to visit?"

And then Maurice understood.

Rivals no Longer.

A FORTNIGHT has elapsed, and once more the calm of Barncombe is disturbed by the returning scholars of Morcove and Prior's schools.

Many routes converge upon the little wayside station of Morcove road, and the two-third train, that is steaming in, carries the leading personalities who have figured in our story.

Let us take a brief glance at some of them. First—this, you will observe, is not strictly

in the order of merit—there is red-haired Steve Hawkes. She is not looking forward particularly to the new term. The sense of her failure to oust Ethel from popular favour is still present, and she has an uncomfortable feeling that the authorities have their "eye on her," and that she will have to mind her p's and q's."

Buby Swan and Jane Possoms—her travelling companions—have much the same thoughts, and consequently a gloomy silence pervades the carriage.

If their carriage is silent, the same cannot be said of that occupied by Betty Barton & Co. of the Fourth. Only the engine whistle can drown their merry din.

And now your attention to a first-class compartment in the centre of the train. The four occupants are Ethel Courtway, her father—now fully restored to health—Cyril, and Monica Trent.

Mr. Courtway has a newspaper spread out on his knees and two of the paragraphs will tell us the main trend of their conversation.

"A Marvelous New Electric Motor"

—followed by a column-length account of an interview with that well-known leader of commerce—Rupert Courtway, in which the said leader of commerce gave a few details of a certain invention he was putting on the market on behalf of Mr. Walter Douglas.

"Revolution of Traffic for the Inventor," and other such statements, dotted the article. Both of which, we are happy to say, the future amply bore out.

The other paragraph bore the rather lurid announcement of—

"Arrest of Notorious Swindlers"

It went on to state that two individuals, long wanted by the police, named Joseph Brindle and Samuel Chuddleton, had been committed for trial on various charges. A third malefactor, who was alleged to be the ringleader of the gang, was, however, still at large, though the police were reported to be in possession of clues that would lead to his early apprehension.

To peep once more into the future, we may say that this optimism quite failed to justify itself. Tom Thorne was never captured.

"I imagine, Cyril," observed Mr. Courtway as that your appearance, decked out as you are in the outward and visible signs of extreme prosperity, will cause some mild excitement at Prior's."

"Rather!" chuckled Cyril. "One fellow's face especially will be a study. You know who I mean, Ethel?"

"Maxwell Dyke," smiled Ethel. "I do hope, however, that Morcove and Prior's will be more friendly this term. There were certainly signs of a thaw—if I may so express it—when we attended that dance just before Christmas. I have hopes! And, besides," she went on, "now father is rebuilding the mill and the Brambles' cottage, and generally taking command of the landslip, I should think Miss Somerfield will put it in bounds once more."

"I shall certainly ask her to," said Mr. Courtway. "Except, of course, the secret passages. Those can only be visited under the charge of one of the mistresses."

"Thank you, Mr. Courtway, for nothing," observed Monica Trent, making a wry face. "It's like giving with one hand and taking away with the other. We shall see those wonderful secret places, and that is a very different thing from exploring them. Having made my protest, I will now gracefully submit."

They all laughed, and as Monica joined in the mirth, it showed that she was not half so put out as she pretended to be.

They were a merry party. How could they be otherwise, now that everything was right? Ethel, for her part, could do nothing but rejoice to be out of the secret of her father's trusted and confidential secretary—splendid that!—whilst his brother was apprenticed to Mr. Douglas, Maurice having shown a decided bent for scientific research.

And now, here they were, nearing dear old Morcove.

A grinding of the brakes—the train slowed

up—finally stopped, and then out of the carriages whirled the girls. The station rang with their joyful clamour.

Through the gates they darted: into the yard—there to pause in their extreme doubt. Gathered around the entrance was a crowd of Prior's fellows, and at their head was Maxwell Dyke.

As we say, Morcove paused. Had Prior's assembled there in peace or in war?

Maxwell Dyke advanced, and his face bore his fascinating smile. Determined to be in the good graces of Ethel, he had taken advantage of his school coming back a day earlier than Morcove, to march them over to meet the train containing the girls, and give them a polite but rousing welcome.

There was another thing that influenced Maxwell. A new general utility boy was now installed in place of Cyril, therefore Cyril, Maxwell decided, had got the sack, and with Cyril out of the way—well, friendship with Ethel would be decidedly easier.

And so Maxwell was all smiles.

"Morcove," he said, raising his cap. "On behalf of Prior's I bid you welcome back from your holidays. It's turned to his school. "Now, chaps—three good hearty cheers for Morcove!"

They gave them.

Hardly had the echo of them died away than the ranks of the astonished Morcovians parted and Ethel, closely followed by her father and Cyril, stepped into view.

"Thank you, very much," said Ethel. "It's very nice of you. Morcove! Three cheers for Prior's!"

"Hip—hip—hooray!"

Then Maxwell spotted Cyril. Instantly his jaw dropped, and the same may be said of the rest of Prior's. An audible gasp went round. Their old job boy, looking like a varsity man, and smiling and whispering to the aristocratic, middle-aged gentleman—what on earth did it mean? Astonishing!

Ethel smiled at the bewildered Dyke.

"No doubt you remember my friend, Cyril Dudley?" she said. "He has resumed his old position as my father's secretary. I expect you'll see a lot of him during the coming months, as he will be down here looking after my father's affairs. Cyril, Dyke wishes to shake hands with you."

Dyke wished no such thing; but he hadn't the spirit left to refuse. He held out a limp, lifeless palm, which Cyril grasped.

It was like shaking hands with a cod.

Ethel Courtway—Morcove's head-girl. What else is there to say concerning her?

Has this brief glimpse of her character shown those standards which make the words "British girlhood" a token of truth, high-spirited enterprise, and all that we most highly prize?

It is to be hoped so.

Who can delve into the future with certainty? Yet, on the pages of youth's bright scented manuscript, are inscribed certain indications of success or failure. If you were to question the Morcove girls on this point concerning Ethel, they would promptly answer:

"Success, because she's such a jolly fine sort."

And Cyril would add even more eulogistic terms for this friendship of theirs every day grows more and more lasting—and makes every day more worth living.

And one day—

THE END.

And one day— Upon the possibilities of "one day" we must let our imagination work for at this point the author leaves the destinies of Ethel Courtway and Cyril Dudley. One day, perhaps, we shall hear more of them, but for the time being, at least, they leave us. Though sorry to part with them at this juncture, there is nevertheless a satisfaction in knowing that there will be other good friends to fill the blank they leave for next Wednesday's issue. It starts a splendid new series of stories of the Brambles' Club, the first of which is entitled "The Boats of Daphne" (York). You will quickly grow to admire Daphne and her chum, Eric Holiday, the principal characters in Ada Orundell's new series of stories.