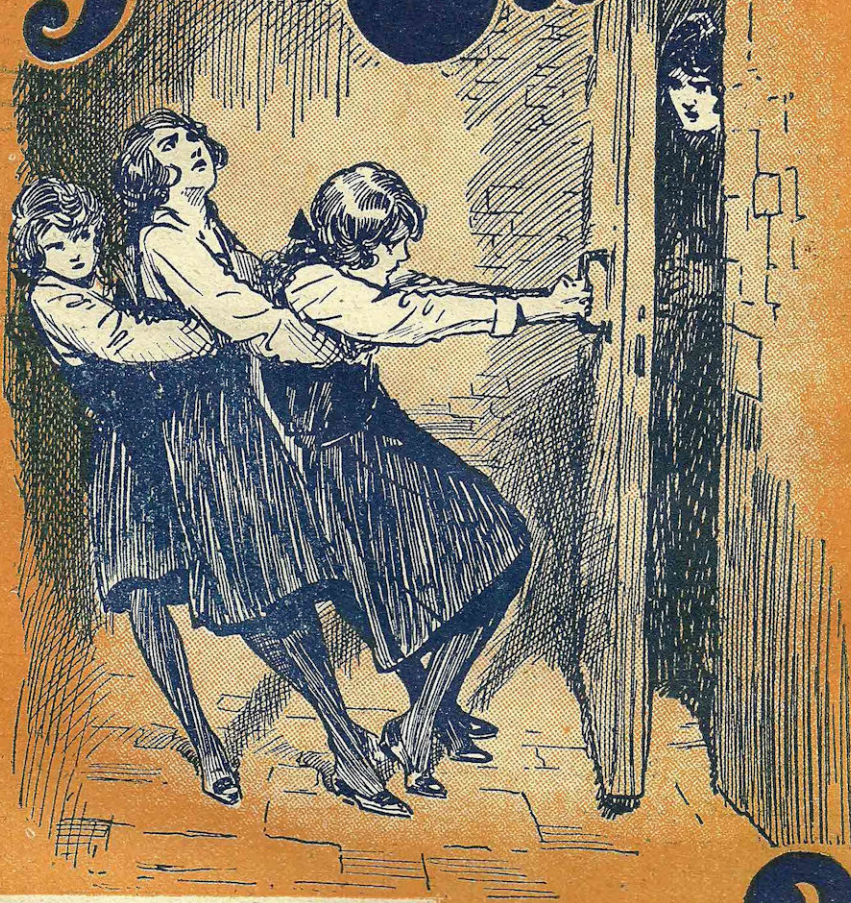


In this issue: **Wonderful Announcement of FREE GIFTS**

# The Schoolgirls' Own



**A PULL FOR LIBERTY!**

(An incident from the grand new long complete story of the girls of Morcove School contained in this issue.)

**2<sup>d</sup>**



When you have read this "MORCOVE" Story turn to pages 522 and 523—There is Splendid News for You.



### No Proof.

**A** GIRL in cap and apron tapped at the door of a certain room at The Priory, and then made the dramatic announcement:

"Inspector Morgan, please!"

The name evoked a rather excited "Ah!" from all who were in the room. It was as if they were inclined to say "Now we shall hear some news!"

"Ask the inspector in, Ellen!"

That was a quiet word from Miss Somerfield, the grey-haired headmistress of Morcove School.

She was sitting at a table, with every appearance of having just reached The Priory after a fatiguing journey. Her hat and travelling clothes had not been laid aside. At her elbow was a cup of tea, at which she had already taken a few sips.

As for her companions, they included at least two of the school's mistresses, and four or five girls.

"Good morning, inspector——"

"Morning, Miss Somerfield; 'morning all!" responded Detective-inspector Morgan, of the Barcombe police, as he came forward, peaked cap in hand.

"Well, ma'am," he exclaimed in the next breath, "this is a pretty ugly business that your colleagues have asked me to take in hand!"

"Yes," sighed Miss Somerfield, nodding. "A very terrible business, indeed. As you know, I was in London when the first upset occurred. I left by the night mail, last night, and have only been here five minutes. You, I am told, were here as early as four o'clock in the morning!"

"With a few of the men to help me—yes, ma'am," said the inspector. "And since then we have really done everything that seems possible——"

"Without finding any solution to the mystery?"

The inspector referred to a notebook for a moment.

"I would like to go over the facts as they have been given to me, ma'am," he pleaded.

"First of all, there is the remarkable disappearance of a scholar named Betty Barton, aged fourteen, member of the Fourth Form."

"The girl was captain of the Fourth Form."

## TRACKED DOWN AT LAST!

A magnificent long complete story of the girls of Morcove School, which describes the thrilling end of a great adventure at the Old Priory.

By **MARJORIE STANTON.**

"Yes, ma'am, that has been mentioned. The Fourth and Fifth Forms have been quartered here at The Priory since the fire at Morcove School, and Miss Barton vanished after being sent upon an errand to the old school——"

"From which she is believed to have returned in safety."

"I've got a note of that, too, ma'am," assented the inspector. "Then, early yesterday evening, there was the disappearance of two other girls, Madge Minden and Paula Creel. No trace of those girls, either!"

"And to crown all——"

"Ay, I'm coming to that, Miss Somerfield. During the night, the discovery was made that Miss Myra Marshall, a senior and prefect, had also disappeared."

"In her case, however," rejoined Miss Redgrave, one of Miss Somerfield's colleagues, "there is reason for believing that it is simply a case of a girl running away."

Inspector Morgan nodded again.

"Well, ladies, all," he said, shutting up his notebook, "I am very sorry to say that, up to the present, we have done no good here, I and my men. We——"

He broke off to say: "Pardon, miss?" as he caught some tense remark from one of the girls.

It was Polly Linton who had let excitement get the better of reserve.

"I—I oughtn't to interrupt," she faltered, blushing; "but have you done anything about—about the people who live at the lodge?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Michael Carnay?" returned the inspector. "Why, yes!"

"I am aware that you are all inclined to associate the disappearance of these girls with certain doings which you suspect to have been going on at The Priory. There is a sort of belief——"

"One we have been forced to entertain," interposed Miss Redgrave.

"Exactly! A sort of theory that the work of making counterfeit coins has been going on in secret, in this very house! And the parties engaged in this work—if it really has been going on—are believed to be Mr. and Mrs. Michael Carnay."

Miss Somerfield got up from her chair.

"One moment, Mr. Morgan, now we have come to this part of the subject. I, of course, having been off the scene, have not had any opportunity of forming my own opinion as to the bona fides of Mr. and Mrs. Carnay. But I can say this: when I was arranging for two of my forms to be quartered in this house, the agents mentioned that the lodge was let off to a Mr. and Mrs. Carnay—people of excellent credentials."

"So they may be, ma'am," said the inspector drily; "and yet it may be that we have a pair of wrong 'uns to deal with. In my time, ma'am, I've seen how much faith is to be placed in 'excellent credentials'!"

He added quickly:

"But, mind you, we have all got to be very careful how we deal with Mr. and Mrs. Carnay! Personally, ma'am, I can't make anything like a swoop upon them, in the name of the law—"

"Oh, no—"

"As long as that is understood," the shrewd officer went on. "But so often people expect the police to make arrests before any real evidence has been produced. In the present case, you will realise that not one tittle of definite evidence has been forthcoming. It is all, so to speak"—he waved a hand—"in the air."

"But—but—" burst out Polly again.

"Well, miss?"

"Doesn't it seem certain that there is some secret place in this great old house where bad coins have been made? The neighbourhood has been flooded with bad coins lately, and we girls can tell you this. Before we had all been here a day or so, Mr. Carnay asked Betty Barton to get him a postal order in the village. He gave her two half-crowns, and one was bad!"

The inspector smiled indulgently upon the girl. "I see your meaning, young lady," he murmured. "Mr. Carnay was using Betty Barton as a means of working off some of the bad money? But does it prove that he made it, his happening to be in possession of at least one bad coin?"

"No. Still— Oh, it's a shame!" fumed Polly. "I, for one, am dead sure now that Mr. and Mrs. Carnay are a pair of wrong 'uns!"

"As to that," rejoined the inspector, addressing the general company, "I am inclined to think your theory is right enough. But it is only theory, worse luck!"

"And so?" questioned Miss Somerfield, eager to hear what his suggestion was.

"Ah, that's what I was coming to!" declared Morgan. "You know, ma'am, in the circumstances, I feel the cutest thing for me to do is to get back to Barncombe, along with the men. Ay, withdraw them all—or pretend to!"

He winked.

"You won't think I'm throwing up the case as hopeless, ma'am? Anything but, I can assure you! My feeling is: Mr. and Mrs. Carnay are either the perfect lady and gentleman that they set up to be, or else they are a jolly artful couple who will want some catching! Now, then! If they see me and my men hanging about The Priory, nosing everywhere, don't you think they will just sit tight?"

"Why, yes—"

"But if I and my men clear out, and these young ladies, who, I am sure, have their heads screwed on the right way, are careful about what they say, don't you think Mr. and Mrs. Carnay will feel the way is clear for their next move?"

As the inspector finished, obviously proud of an

argument that was sound enough, Miss Somerfield nodded her approval.

"You are perfectly right, inspector! You will return to Barncombe, then, with your men. After all, we are on the telephone here, and can get you at any moment. And these girls—Polly dear, Tess, Trixie, all of you—"

"We shall hold our tongues, you may be sure of that, Miss Somerfield!" cried Tess Trelawney.

"As Betty Barton would put it, in her Lancashire way," added Trixie, with a feeble smile, "we must say nowt!"

There came a despondent sigh from Polly.

"Betty—poor old Betty!" she murmured. "Oh, I do wonder if we are ever going to see her again!"

### The Coiners' Captives.

"WHAT is the time now, I wonder?"

"Bai Jove, it must be getting on for midday—what?"

"Half a second, and I'll tell you."

The words passed between three girls who were in absolute darkness.

"Just on twelve, yes!" exclaimed the last speaker, as she peered closely at the illuminated dial of her wrist-watch. "Midday, girls—"

"And it might be midnight, for all we could tell without a watch!"

"You are right, Betty dear."

Here, in fact, were the three members of the Fourth Form whose inexplicable disappearance had led to the police being called in by those in charge at The Priory.

Betty Barton, Madge Minden, Paula Creel—here they were, hapless prisoners in an underground chamber, whose existence was little dreamed of by Miss Somerfield and all other members of Morcové School, whose anxiety as to the fate of the missing trio was so terrible.

"The air is fresher now, that's one comfort," said Betty.

"Yes, wather!" agreed Paula Creel. "A gweat weliel, and no mistake, that woman bwinging in that chemical appawatus to keep the air fwesh."

"If Mr. and Mrs. Carnay hadn't done something of the sort for us," muttered Madge, "we would have been half stifled by now."

"Ah, there is not much in the scientific way that that man doesn't know, I'm sure!" spoke Betty. "Just fancy his setting up for a mere idle, country gentleman, and all the time he is nothing else but a clever coiner!"

"His wife, too, bai Jove!" chimed in Paula Creel. "We thought her such an attractive lady—yes, wather! A most agweeble twiend for all us goals, when we came to The Pwiowy. Howevah, it stwikes me she is just as clevah as her husband, bai Jove!"

"And as heartless, too!"

A heavy pause followed Betty's bitter rejoinder. Ever since, perhaps, three hours ago, they had awakened from the deep sleep into which they had sunk during the night, they had been talking together by fits and starts.

One would make a remark, and the conversation would go on for a minute or so; then, silence again; the heavy silence of those whose thoughts are too painful, too desperate for words.

Twelve o'clock—midday! In Betty's case, well over four and twenty hours since she was cast into the terrifying darkness of this underground prison. As for Madge and Paula, even they had been here since the previous evening. And freedom for all three was to come—when?

They did not know. What they did know was that a rescue was almost altogether out of the question, a futile hope to cling to.

Betty had found her way into the underground passages in such a fashion that her entry-point would never be discovered by friends searching for her. Madge and Paula had done just the same thing, only in a different way. All three, then, were beyond being traced, whether they were friends who did the searching, or even the police.

Here, under lock and key, they were at the mercy of Mr. and Mrs. Carnay. And all the time—oh, how galling it was to know this—all the time, Mr. and Mrs. Carnay were most likely affecting great anxiety as to what had become of the very girls whom they themselves had captured!

"Paula dear—Madge!"

"Yes, Betty?"

"You say it is midday now. Do you think Mrs. Carnay will pay us a visit, presently, to bring us a midday meal?"

"Bai Jove," murmured Paula, "we have not touched that breakfast yet!"

"No. And I, for one, am not a scrap hungry," sighed Madge. "Mrs. Carnay is not to know that we have left the other food untouched, however. So, Betty, she may bring us some dinner."

"Well, then," Betty exclaimed, suddenly crawling on all fours, closer to her fellow-captives, "what did we agree to do, girls, before we dropped to sleep last night? If we could only seize the chance, when Mrs. Carnay had unlocked the door and come into to us—"

"Yes!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Howevvah, geals, we awvanged to wait for anoath time, didn't we, if Mr. Carnay was with her?"

"We did," answered Betty. "But does Mr. Carnay ever come with her to this prison door? I doubt it!"

"He was not there, that's certain, that time she talked outside the door as if he really was. Next time, let's take our chance!"

"We will!" said Betty, grimly. "All three of us together—one wild rush! Oh, just think, if we could get past her and out of this awful place!"

"Bai Jove, yes—"

"Never mind if we only find ourselves still amidst a lot of underground passages, we sha'n't be prisoners, anyhow!" said Madge.

Then Betty suggested softly:

"Let us listen, so as to be fully prepared if she comes!"

Madge and Paula were willing enough. They knew only too well that Mrs. Carnay, in her craftiness, might adopt a tricky method of getting food to them. She might creep to the door, insert the key without a sound, and then suddenly open the door just wide enough for her to throw in the food.

In that case, she could slam the door again, and re-lock it, before the girls had time to make a rush.

So now they ceased all talk, and remained keenly alert.

After a few minutes of anxious listening, Betty got up from the floor and tip-toed to the door. Madge and Paula joined her there, realising that it was another good idea for them to stand ready at the door.

But Mrs. Carnay did not come.

The minutes wore away. Ten—fifteen—twenty; a full half-hour; still the silence was unbroken.

"Perhaps," whispered Madge at last, "she will not come to us again until after nightfall. Not that it makes any difference down here; day and night are alike! But—"

"Yes, if the police have been called in and are spying around The Priory grounds," Betty exclaimed, "the Carnays will certainly sit tight. That is, unless they have a means of entering the subterranean passages that we don't know."

"Bai Jove, geals—" was Paula's beginning to some drawing remark, when she suddenly clutched her chums in the groping darkness, whilst they each clutched her in return.

"Hark!"

If it had been the sound of Mrs. Carnay's stealthy step in the passage that had come to the girls, they would never have voiced that word in such a horrified way. They would not have



**THE ROOM OF MYSTERY!** While Betty and Paula looked on expectantly, Madge put her weight against the door, which opened just a few inches.

spoken at all, perhaps, but would have merely nudged one another as a signal, "Be ready!"

But there was no footfall, however stealthy, sounding in the passage. The sound which the girls had heard was a wailing one, made by a human voice—a wailing cry of distress!

They thrilled from head to foot.

What did this mean—this crying out of someone down here in the secret labyrinths of the age-old Priory?

"Hello—help!"



There it was again—this time a distinct appeal for aid!

"My gvaacious!" Paula said, in a palpitating whisper. "There must be another prisoner!"

"Yes! Hark!"

"Help—help!" they heard the voice calling faintly.

"Who is it?" panted Madge. "One of the other girls? Polly, perhaps? Oh, if it is Polly—alone in some other chamber!"

"Let's answer!" suggested Betty excitedly. "She will hear us, though we know that our cries can never be heard by anyone on the surface. All together, then—"

"Hillo, there! Hillo! Who are you?" they shouted wildly. "We can hear you, if you answer!"

But now no answer was returned.

"That's queer!" exclaimed Betty. "Unless she has fainted? Oh, who was it—who is their other prisoner?"

"Listen again," murmured Madge.

They did so; but still that other captive voiced no further cry.

All was silence—once again!

#### Their Chance at Last.

MICHAEL CARNAY came into the bright sitting-room of The Priory lodge, where his handsome wife was lolling musingly in an easy chair.

"Well, the police have gone!" he chuckled.

"They have? How splendid!" commented Mrs. Carnay, and her vivid red lips parted in a wide grin, revealing a very fine row of pearly teeth.

"Yes," her husband went on, taking out pipe and pouch for a smoke, "and I gather that they have distinguished themselves no better than usual. Our friends up at the house are pretty disappointed, anyway!"

"You mean Miss Somerfield and her colleagues?" smiled Mrs. Carnay, starting to set the easy chair, which was a "rocker," swinging backwards and forwards.

"The ladies I have not spoken to," explained Carnay; "but one of my genteel saunters round the ground, just now, led to my meeting with a few of the girls. There was one in particular, Polly Linton, I think her name is—"

"Oh, I know that Polly!"

"A garrulous little miss, trying not to be garrulous," the man remarked. "You can just imagine how I handled her and all of them, my dear! They didn't want to tell me that the police had failed utterly—chucked it up in despair—but they had to in the end!"

The clever couple certainly had the knack of acting in a way to disarm suspicion. Tradesmen called, on their round of the district, and Mrs. Carnay, as she took in groceries and bread, or other goods at the back door, made sympathetic references to the trouble which the inmates of The Priory were in, over the missing girls.

At the usual hour they sat down to their elegant midday meal, and had their cup of coffee afterwards. Then Mrs. Carnay, being without a maid, had more duties to fulfil, of course, out in the kitchen.

By that time the autumn day had clouded over, and rain was just starting to fall. Only this nasty change in the weather, seemed to induce Mr. Carnay to close the front door, which had stood open to all comers since breakfast time.

A minute later, however, and he was making a significant comment to his wife about the rain.

"Just what we can do with!" he remarked, coming into the gloomy kitchen. "The scholars won't be out and about all over the place, now that the afternoon has set in wet."

Mrs. Carnay was cutting up a loaf into thick slices.

"Just one thing bothers me," she confessed. "We shall have to take a lot of food from the tradespeople if we go on keeping those girls down below much longer! What will the baker and the grocer think, Michael, at a mere couple like ourselves wanting so much stuff?"

He tapped out his pipe upon the kitchen stove.

"It is all right, my dear," was his easy response. "I am going to get all the plant away to-night. The girls will have to stay there until we have had time to get right away, and they may have to go hungry for a bit. But that won't hurt them!"

"To-night you mean to get the plant away? Then this may prove to be the last meal I shall have to provide for the girls—and so much the better!" Mrs. Carnay threw down the knife, and turned to find a white cloth in which to wrap the food.

When she had made up the bundle, knotting the ends of the cloth together, she gave her husband an eloquent look, and he nodded.

Stepping to the window, which was now bespattered with the cold rain, he peered out. The rising wind was ruffling all the overgrown shrubs in the back garden and the ivy which mantled the house-walls, making all the hurly-burly of a rising tempest. Puddles of rain had begun to form, and altogether the outer world looked anything but inviting.

"Yes, it is excellent, weather like this, to coop up all our amateur girl detectives!" he chuckled. "And you are ready, my dear?"

"Quite ready, Michael."

"Right!"

With the word, he suddenly kicked aside a square of carpet that was placed, mat-like, upon the stone-flagged kitchen floor.

Then, going upon his knees, by some means which he was evidently quite used to practising—for the whole thing was done in a few seconds—he had one great flagstone raised on end.

A way down into the subterranean passages! Here it was—the Carnays' own favourite means of entering and leaving the strange labyrinth, ready to hand in their own little kitchen!

"I sha'n't be long!" was Mrs. Carnay's calm word to her husband, as she quickly took her stand upon the topmost step of a whole flight. "You'll close down the stone after me, of course?"

"And wait for the usual signal—yes!" he nodded. "Ta-ta, my dear!"

She descended the steep steps, and he, the moment her head was below the level of the kitchen floor, took hold of the raised flagstone and carefully lowered it back flush with the floor.

The woman, of course, was now enveloped in black darkness. But she was provided with an electric torch, and suddenly it flashed its brilliant ray before her.

Even so, anybody in her position might well have felt a shrinking fear of setting forward along the narrow underground passage, with its brick walls all glistening with moisture.

The wife of Carnay the coiner, however, had no dread of threading her way along one passage into another. Hers was an iron nerve; and, in any

case, she had penetrated the labyrinth far too often, as her husband had, to feel nervous about it now.

So, with a calm step she hastened along, and all at once she even switched off the torch, leaving herself in groping darkness again.

Letting the torch fall and hang suspended by the strap which passed over one of her shoulders, she changed the bundle of food from one arm to another, then drew a few keys from her dress pocket.

They were large keys, tied together with string. She stood quite still for a moment, singling out one key by the feel of it, then went on again. In utter darkness though she was, she turned out of at least one more passage into another without colliding with any wall. Perhaps she guided herself by counting her steps.

Be that as it may, very softly she came at last to the door of that prison in which the three schoolgirls were under lock and key. Once before, when bringing them food, she had made a pretence of having her husband with her, so as to daunt them. Another time—this had been at three o'clock in the morning—she had visited them when they were lying asleep on the prison floor.

Now she was going to take them by surprise, so that they would have no time to pull themselves together and make any rush at her. She was absolutely confident of success. The three captives were most certainly sitting about on the rug that was spread upon the prison floor, and it would take them a moment or two to get to their feet.

Gathering her breath, after having slipped the key noiselessly into the lock, she suddenly turned back the wards and pushed the door open.

Into the dark prison she flung the bundle of food, then would have pulled the door shut, but it was held fast by other hands!

She gasped her wild dismay.

The girls had been waiting for her—expecting her to resort to the very ruse which she had practised!

"Now!" was the shout which she heard them giving.

Wider open the door was dragged, despite her frantic efforts to pull it shut.

Another moment, and she was being set upon by the captive three!

#### Thrill Upon Thrill.

"**H**OLD her—hold her tight!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, geals—"

"We'll do it! We'll manage! Ah, now, come on!"

Such were a few of the excited cries from the desperate trio, as they held on to the struggling woman.

It was a conflict which had started at the very threshold of the girls' underground prison; but, inch by inch, they now dragged her into the vault-like place.

In vain her efforts to battle free! Great as was the woman's strength, and lithe as a cat though she was, Betty and Co. were more than a match for her. If she was frantically desperate, so were they.

Mingling with the girls' panted cries of encouragement to one another, there sounded the slithering of all their feet upon the brick floor. Once or twice, also, Mrs. Carnay's lips emitted a hissing cry of fury. She writhed and wriggled and scorchated like a tigress resisting captivity.

Suddenly, however, the conflict was all over. The girls had dragged her right into the room and had her fast. Or rather, Betty and Madge had

her completely overpowered, whilst Paula, having found the torch and detached it from the strap, so that it might not get broken in the struggle, now switched on the light.

For just a second the ray flashed out, showing Mrs. Carnay in the hands of Betty and Madge; then, with wonderful unison, all three girls dashed for the wide flung door.

Out into the passage they sped, whipped about, and drew the door shut.

Slam!

"Now, the key!" gasped Betty.

And next instant, snick! went the wards of the great lock, as they were turned once more.

The prison door was shut fast—with Mrs. Carnay on the inner side! The tables were turned; the captor was now the captive!

"Hurrah!" Betty shouted.

"Yes wather!, Hooway, geals! I'm fwightfully wuffed about my hair, bai Jove! How-eh-ah!"

"Now, what to do next?" panted Madge.

The torch was still giving them its welcome light. Betty took it from Paula, who seemed only too glad to be relieved of it, so that she might devote both hands to the tidying of her rumpled locks.

"The next thing is to find out who that other prisoner is—where she is, that is to say!" declared Betty.

Madge suddenly turned back to the door which they had made fast against Mrs. Carnay, and drew the bunch of keys from the lock.

"Yes, we may want those!" Betty smiled approvingly.

They went forward together, full of joy at the success which had crowned their hours of patient waiting for this moment. All the same, a feeling of awe was upon them. It was one thing to have clapped Mrs. Carnay under lock and key, whilst they themselves were free to explore the whole vast labyrinth. It was perhaps going to be a far from easy matter to regain the light of day!

"If the light lasts, we shall find our way in time," said Betty cheerfully. "It is everything, having this torch to light us along."

"Yes, wather!" Paula agreed. "Bai Jove, I don't know what your opinion is, Madge deah, but I wather fanc we turned into this passage frowm the wight. What?"

"You think so?" said Madge, as they all stood and looked about them, at a junction of the subterranean passages. "Well, I may be wrong, but I thought we turned in from the left!"

"Um!" said Betty. "Well, one thing at a time, eh? We are going to find that other girl-prisoner before we trouble about getting back into daylight, I say! Shall we give a shout to her?"

"Yes, wather!"

Madge, however, appeared to have her doubts as to the wisdom of doing this, and Betty at once understood.

"You think our shouts may be heard by Mr. Carnay—is that it, Madge?"

"We don't know where he is, do we?" returned Madge, very gravely. "If we can find the girl without making any outcry, so much the better."

"Bai Jove, naow you mention it," said Paula. "we had better be careful about that howwid Carnay man! Madge is quite wight, Betty! I ppropose we cweep aound for a-bit, what?"

Betty nodded, and then all the talk lapsed, whilst the three of them prowled on again. Which





**ANOTHER PRISONER!** The light fell on a girlish form huddled up on the floor. "It's Myra Marshall!" gasped Betty Barton, in amazement.

passage they took did not seem to matter much; one was as likely to reward them with a discovery as another.

The bewildering ramifications of these secret tunnels awed them still. Nevertheless, they never checked for a moment, but pressed on with feverish anxiety. It was a race against time, they knew. Mrs. Carnay's failure to rejoin her husband would soon cause him to take action. Not only that, but they had to think of the torch.

At present it was working splendidly, but the girls had had experience of these electric torches, and knew how easy it was to exhaust the current.

"Here's a dead end, anyhow, so we must turn back!" Betty remarked. "Is it, though? No!" she answered herself, in the same breath. "Oh, look—"

"A door, at last!" cried Madge.

"Yes, wather!"

For as Betty steadied the beam of light, it had revealed something other than damp brickwork at the end of the passage.

With a rush they covered the last few yards of the tunnel, and fetched up in breathless excitement in front of oak timbers. Yes, this was a door, right enough!

"There's a keyhole!" Betty pointed out. "Madge—"

"Right-ho!" responded that girl, stepping closer with the bunch of keys.

She tried first one and then another, but without success. Then Madge came to the last key.

It slipped into the hole easily enough, but so had all the others. Would it turn—that was the question!

Even as the girls were going through this critical moment, something happened to make

them feel it would be an absolute tragedy if they could not open the door.

From the other side of the door a feeble moan came to their ears.

"My gwacious!" breathed Paula. "Madge deah, you are not going to tell us that—"

"Ah! It's all right!"

"What? Oh, good!"

"It turns, girls! Betty, the light, quick! I've got the door open!"

Forth flashed the ray, as brilliantly as ever, and there was the door, just a few inches ajar. Madge was putting her weight against it, as if it was all she could do to prevent someone on the inner side pushing the door shut.

"Look out, Madge!" cautioned Betty. "There may be an enemy to reckon with!"

"No, it is only stuck fast," panted Madge.

"We can leave it like this and just manage to squeeze through, perhaps. Here goes, anyhow!"

So saying, she put herself close to the narrow aperture and wriggled through.

Betty handed the torch in to her, and then followed. Paula came wriggling through, last of all, and thus, in the brief space of three or four seconds, they made their entry into what was evidently another underground chamber.

With an excited chum on either side of her, Madge flashed the torch around.

Instantly their peering eyes made out just what that moaning sound had prepared them for—the sight of a girlish form, huddled upon the floor!

"We were right, then!" cried Betty, starting forward. "It is one of the other girls—Polly, perhaps!"

Next instant, however, the Form captain looked round upon Madge and Paula, to voice another cry:

"It's Myra Marshall!" gasped Betty. "It's Myra!"

#### Myra Marshall's Confession.

**T**HE three girls were astounded.

To have found that one of their own chums, Polly Linton, for example, had fallen into the corners' hands would not have been a surprise at all. They had even suspected that something of the sort had happened. But—Myra Marshall!

This girl, the unpopular prefect, the very girl whom they had been forced to suspect of being mysteriously associated with the Carnays! Here she was, and until Betty and her two chums had burst in upon her, a moment ago, she had been under lock and key as a prisoner!

"Myra!" broke out Betty at last. "What does it all mean?"

But Myra seemingly had nothing to say. She only remained huddled on the floor of her prison, passing a hand across her forehead, as if her thoughts were driving her crazy.

"The Carnays captured you—thrust you into this cell?" conjectured Madge. "Oh, Myra, do explain! Pull yourself together! After all, we have been through something, too, as you must know full well!"

Then a sorrowful nod came from the girl.

"Yes, they—they brought me here—"

"Brought you here?" echoed Betty, raising her brows. "Do you mean that they found you venturing into the secret passages and caught you?"

"No. They brought me here—to prevent my running away!"

This was simply too bewildering, the listeners felt.

"Myra—"

"Oh, all right; I will tell you!" she quavered wretchedly, getting upon her feet at last. "But I am so miserable, so upset, you must—you must give me time!"

So they waited, simply gazing at her in a shocked way, whilst she made an effort to pull herself together.

"I'll have to tell you everything, I know," she gulped at last. "The whole school will have to know now. Oh, if only the Carnays hadn't stopped me from running away! It would have been so much better, and I wanted to do that; I wanted to go right away and never be heard of again by anybody at the school!"

"That's a shocking thing to say, Myra," Madge could not help exclaiming. "What have you been doing?"

"I will tell you," she sighed drearily, "and then you will understand why I annoyed you all, from the time you came to The Priory, by spying upon you so. I was afraid you would find out that Mr. and Mrs. Carnay were coiners, and that they had a place where they made the bad coins."

"You knew, then—you knew all along what the couple were doing!"

"Yes." Another nod went with the reluctant admission. "I—I have been associated with them from the first. That box of bad coins I had at Morcove School, it was money which they supplied me with, to pass off—bad money—"

"Oh!"

"Gwreat goodness, Myra! This is dweadful!"

"It is. I knew you would say that. I was a senior scholar in the school, a prefect, too, and yet—and yet I was really only a confederate of those people!"

"Not a willing confederate, anyhow?" suggested Madge.

"No—"

"Then that makes all the difference!"

"Yes, wather! Howevah—"

"Listen, and I will tell you the whole truth," went on the wretched girl. "I was brought up at an orphanage, and the Carnays seemed to be doing the kind thing when they offered to take me away and adopt me as a child of their own. You know what a lady and gentleman they appear to be; so can you wonder that I was glad to be taken over by them? For a time, too—for several years—I was ever so happy in their hands. I didn't know what was going on in secret!"

"Bai Jove—"

"Then, by chance, I found out," Myra faltered on. "If I had been a better girl, one with more character, I suppose I would have got away from them somehow, never mind how hard a life I had to live. But they over-ruled me, and so, when I came to Morcove School last year, I was really a confederate of theirs. They had always wanted someone to help them get rid of the spurious coins, and I—that is what I had to do!"

She paused, her shaking hand going across her eyes again.

"You mayn't believe me," she almost sobbed; "but I was always miserable—nervous and miserable—"

"We can easily believe that," put in Betty gently. "Oh, Myra, what you must have suffered!"

"After this," exclaimed Madge, "I feel like saying, thank goodness the fire at the school did occur, compelling us to make our quarters at The Priory. It has meant everything being found out.

And now, Myra, if you make a clean breast of everything to Miss Somerfield, and show how truly sorry you are—"

"There will be prompt forgiveness for you, yes," Betty chimed in. "You were young, and it was cruel of the Carnays to compel you to help them over their wicked work!"

"Geals," said Paula, "I don't know when I felt altogethah so distwessed! Howevah, it wather looks like being all wight now—what? I mean, if we can only find our way out of this wetchin' underground place, and tell Miss Somerfield—"

"And get the Carnays captured!"

"Yes, wather!"

"And handed over to the police; that's the idea!" Betty said excitedly. "Myra, don't be alarmed at our talking like that. We are absolutely convinced that you will never be punished by the law. You were under their thumb—a mere schoolgirl—"

"Yes, bai Jove! Howevah," said Paula, "do you realise, geals, that the torch is getting wather dim?"

"We must keep close together," Betty suggested, as they started to prowl towards the door in the groping darkness that was closing upon them. "Paula—"

"Quite all wight, thanks!" came that young lady's cheerful assurance. "Howevah—"

However, in another moment it was quite all wrong!

One of the girls—and it was Paula—got to the door a moment before she expected to. She stumbled against it, and the shock of the impact must have jarred it free from that unevenness in the floor by which it had been jammed half-way open.

Then a dreadful thing resulted.

Madge had had to push hard at the door to open



**SURPRISING NEWS!** "Come quickly!" yelled Polly Linton suddenly appearing at the door of the cycle shed. "I'm on the trail of the missing girls!"



it, when it was first unlocked, because of the powerful spring with which it was fitted. And now that it had been jarred free by Paula's taking one step too many in the dark, the door swung the foot or so, and then closed with a dull slam. "Oh!" jerked out Betty, taking alarm. "The light, Madge, the light!"

Madge switched it on.

"Where are the keys?" panted the Form captain then.

The keys had been left in the lock—on the outer side of the door!

"Then—then we are locked in!" gasped Myra, shaking from head to foot. "We can't get out!"

"No—"

"My gwacious—"

"We can't get out!" Betty and Madge echoed, in awed tones. "Whatever shall we do?"

In the same instant the electric torch completely failed as Madge still held it, and all four hapless girls remained huddled together in black darkness, stricken to silence by the terrible plight in which they stood.

#### Mr Carnay Feels Uneasy.

**I**N the lodge kitchen, Carnay the coiner was awaiting his wife's return from her visit to the schoolgirl captives.

An hour had worn away since he saw her descend the secret flight of steps leading to the underground passages. He had smoked another pipe, and had quite calmly taken a glance at the daily paper, feeling no anxiety because his wife was taking longer than usual over her mission.

But now the first feeling of uneasiness was attacking him. A full hour! And in the ordinary course of things twenty minutes should have sufficed for the visit.

He and she, they had got to get away from here as soon as possible, that was decided. He had no intention of flitting, however, and leaving all that valuable plant behind in the underground workshop. Down there he had apparatus and implements that had cost a good deal of money and diplomacy to acquire, and he wanted to save everything so that it would be possible to resume operations in some new lair yet to be found.

Rain and wind, and all the girls at the house forced to remain within doors! What a chance was this for him to get busy—just as good a chance as dark night would provide. But he must kick his heels in idleness up here until his wife returned.

He wandered into the front room; but five minutes later found him drifting back into the kitchen.

What did it mean, this failure of his wife to return?

He was feeling really anxious by now.

The idea he had formed—that she had merely delayed to talk to the girls, she on one side of the door and they on the other—could no longer be held. Why, then, was she still down there? Had something happened to her?

"Hang it! I shall have to go down and see what has become of her, that's all!" he muttered desperately at last. "The last thing I wanted to do; but it can't be helped!"

He had good reason for regretting the necessity of going below in quest of his wife. Except when conditions had been quite favourable, and even then only at dead of night, they had never resorted to the underground passages together.

At present, when it was quite on the cards that he and she were under suspicion, only one thing rendered it safe for him to venture down. So

stormy was the day out of doors that a chance visitor to the lodge was most unlikely to turn up. So, with his back to the window, he kicked aside the square of carpet, then knelt down to raise the flagstone.

A few moments sufficed for his practised hands to deal with the slab, and then he got into the opening disclosed in the kitchen floor.

His back was to the window all this time, and he had not seen a face appear at the rain-whipped pane for a brief instant!

With his feet on the topmost step, he paused to shoot a cautious glance around. He was listening, too, but heard only the hurly-burly of the wild afternoon.

"Then here goes!" was his muttered comment on such reassuring conditions; and down he went, lowering the stone after him.

But close it altogether, flush with the floor, he dare not. If he did, certain mechanism would come into play, locking the stone in its normal position, and then he and his wife would only be able to emerge, presently, by using sheer force.

So he brought the stone almost, but not quite, flush with the rest of the floor, and wedged it thus by means of a piece of wood.

This done, he groped his way to the bottom of the steps, and set off along the pitch-black passage in quest of his wife.

And now, at the kitchen window, that face appeared again!

With such a flash was it there, and then gone again, anybody might have been in the room and yet thought that nothing had happened over there at the window, save the waving of a cluster of ivy leaves in the wind. But for just that brief instant a daring girl had taken a peep into the room.

Polly Linton!

She it was, and no other, out here in the wild wind and the pelting rain. Daring Polly, to have made this her self-imposed task during an afternoon which other girls were mostly spending in moping about within doors.

Half an hour ago at least she had crept stealthily away from the house and through the spacious grounds. She was clad in oilskins and sou'-wester; even so, during her period of crouching here in the Carnays' back garden, she had felt herself getting horribly wet. Wet about the feet, and wet with the trickles of water that somehow found a way of running down her back. And she didn't care a scrap.

Not she! How could one bother about a mere wetting in the rain when so much, perhaps, would turn upon this bit of detective work!

So she had felt, whilst the ordeal of trying to see and yet remain unseen had gone on. Now her patience, her daring and endurance, were surely rewarded!

For what was it her lightning peeps into the kitchen had shown her? Nothing less thrilling than the sight of Michael Carnay raising a flagstone from the kitchen floor, and then vanishing down a secret flight of steps!

He had gone, and now was the time for her to act!

#### Just Like Polly.

**D**ARTING away from the ivied wall against which she had been crouching, Polly ran to the back door, and knocked softly.

This was to see if Mrs. Carnay was still about the cottage. Polly, however, felt certain that the lodge was now deserted. Surely if Mrs. Carnay were about the place, she would have stood by

her husband when he was making ready to enter the underground passages.

No response came to the knock at the door, and so Polly did the bold, headstrong thing once again. She tried the latch, and, finding the door would open before her, simply walked straight into the house!

Striding into the deserted kitchen, she gazed excitedly at the stone slab. She could see that it was not quite shut down, and she all but yielded to the reckless impulse to raise the stone and venture down alone!

She desisted; but oh, the effort it cost her to turn away from this secret way into the labyrinth, and to quit the lodge altogether! Now she knew what had become of the vanished scholars, and it was just Polly to want to go to their rescue single-handed!

For once, however, she did the shrewd thing. Away she ran, through the howling wind and the pelting rain, to tell the exciting news and bring others to the spot.

The breathless girl expected to have to rush all the way to the mansion before meeting anyone; but such was not the case. Midway through the long-neglected grounds, she had to pass an old shed where the girls were temporarily storing their cycles. Polly heard voices coming from the shed, and she swerved out of her course.

In a moment she was in the shed doorway, a breathless, bedraggled figure, gesturing excitedly.

Tess Trelawney was there. So was Bluebell Courtney. So, too, were Trixie Hope, Audrey Blain, and several other members of the Fourth Form. They were devoting an hour of this hopeless afternoon, apparently, to cleaning their machines, and perhaps mending a few punctures.

"Oh, you girls—"

"Hallo, Polly! Why—"

"Quick—quick!" Polly quivered excitedly. "I want you—all of you! Quick!"

"What's up, Polly? What's the news?" they cried at her, in blank surprise.

"Betty and the others! I've found out—oh, I've found out where they are!"

"No!"

"Never!"

"You mean—"

"It's the Carnays!" rushed on Polly wildly.

"Where then—where?"

"In some underground place! There's a way in to it at the lodge—in the kitchen. Mr. and Mrs. Carnay are down there now, and—and—oh, run and tell Miss Somerfield!" entreated Polly.

"Tell them all! Quick!"

"Great goodness! Polly, is this really—"

"It's absolute fact!" the madcap of Morcove School fairly shouted. "Will some of you run up to the house, or must I?"

"No, I'll go!" volunteered Dolly Delane, ever the one to proffer her services. "You've done enough, Polly!"

But Polly did not appear to think so.

Willingly enough she let Dolly Delane and one or two others rush off to tell the thrilling news; but that is not to say that headstrong Polly now meant to sit down, as it were, and take things easy. Far from it!

"They have been keeping those girls prisoners!"

In a moment she was rallying the girls who had not sped off with Dolly Delane; girls who were certainly ready to respond to any daring suggestion.

"Will you come with me, back to the lodge?"

Would they do that!

Hardly had Polly voiced the question before the girls were dashing away with her.

Helter-skelter, through the wind and rain, they tore along, reaching the back door of the lodge in an absolutely breathless state.

Crash! they sent the door round against the wall, and so stormed into the kitchen, with Polly the foremost.

"There! Look!" was Polly's triumphant cry, as she pointed to the stone slab. "You see, it is not quite flush with the floor."

"Wedged by a piece of wood," remarked Tess. "And you say this is a way in, Polly?"

"I say I saw Mr. Carnay go down, just now!"

"That settles it!" was Bluebell's prompt rejoinder. "The girls are down there, and we'll soon be down there, too!"

"Yes, come on!"

They gathered round the stone, four of them in all, and next second they had raised it on end.

"Half a sec.!"

That was Polly, as she suddenly remembered they would need a light of some sort. She nipped to the kitchen mantelpiece and took down a lantern.

Having lit this, she slipped the box of matches into a pocket of her waterproof, and proclaimed her desire to lead the way.

"We're all going!" cried Bluebell, as if in fear of being asked to stay behind, on guard.

"Yes, why not?" said Tess. "Come on, Bluebell—and you, Sybil Farlow!"

Polly had already gone down, lantern in hand. Tess had followed and was six steps down. Bluebell got into the opening, and began the descent. Then Sybil Farlow stepped off the floor on to the topmost-stair.

One or other of the girls had held the stone slab upright all this time. Now Sybil, who was left to see to it, wanted to know what she should do.

"Shall I lower it after me?" she questioned excitedly. "Or—"

"Yes, that's the idea!" called up headstrong Polly. "Leave it just as Mr. Carnay left it!"

But Sybil and all of them were forgetting that Mr. Carnay had used a wedge to prevent the slab from shutting right down. That piece of wood had dropped away, and the excited girls had no thought about the need of putting something of the sort in its place.

Sybil lowered the slab hastily, begrudging a moment's needless delay. As it came over and downwards, with the girl on the steps underneath, its weight upon her upreaching hands increased. She had to let the stone come the rest of the way with a violent fall, and, all in an instant, it crashed into its normal position, flush with the floor.

"I say!" cried out Sybil in sharp alarm. "Does it matter? I've let the stone crash down, and I can't push it up again!"

"Oh, never mind!" sang back Polly. "Come on! No; it doesn't matter at all!"

But perhaps the others had their doubts about that. And perhaps those doubts were to be justified!

#### Morcove to the Rescue?

WITH the lantern held well before her, fearlessly Polly Linton led the way along what was to prove the first of several tortuous passages.

"I think we ought to give a shout," she suggested suddenly. "Never mind if the Carnays hear us! Shout, girls, shout!"

And they shouted.



"Betty! Paula! Madge! Hallo, there! Where are you?"

Instantly there was a response. The four heard a confusion of appealing cries, sounding faintly along the passages.

"Help! This way, quick! Help—help!"

"Oh, come on!" was Polly's breathless comment. "Now we sha'n't be long! Hurrah—hooray! They are all right up to the present, anyhow!"

Twenty paces further on they came to a parting of the tunnels; but the missing girls were still hallooing for help, and the cries left the rescuers in no doubt as to which way to turn.

On—on! What a maze of passages it was! How appalling, too, the sense of being far below the ground, with brick walls around one that were rotting out of place!

This, however, was one of those moments when the spirit of Moreove School was thoroughly roused.

Polly and her companions would have held on along these awful passages, even if the roof had been threatening to cave in upon them at any instant.

And so, all at once, they came to the door of that cell in which Betty and her fellow-victims of the Carnays' ruthless villainy were held prisoners.

A massive door, closed and locked—and the key not here!

"The key—we need the key!" panted Polly.

Then came a shout from the other side of the formidable door.

"The key was in the lock, but Mr. Carnay fetched it away just now!" This was Betty, crying out to the rescuers. "The Carnays have the key!"

"Then where are the Carnays now?" exclaimed Polly, turning upon her excited companions. "That's the question!"

She called out to Betty and the others:

"All right! Keep calm! We'll get the key somehow!"

"We can wait—"

"Yes, wather! Howevah—"

"You poor girls!" Polly spared a moment to shout to them. "Oh, what you must have suffered! But it is all over with the Carnays' little game now!"

Then she turned back along the passage, lantern in hand, with a cry of: "Come along, girls!" to her fellow-rescuers.

"We should have provided ourselves with sticks or something!" said Tess ruefully.

"Well, we just didn't!" was Polly's retort. "Only let me get a sight of the Carnays, and—"

"Hark!"

"Yes! That's the Carnays! Trying to give us the slip!"

It was a moment when the four simply did not care what risks they ran, so long as they did something towards ending their chums' awful captivity. They had heard the tell-tale sound of two people scurrying through the labyrinth, and they dashed in pursuit. Not a case of Madcap Polly inciting others to follow her headstrong action. They were all madcaps now!

Out of this passage into another; out of that into a third—so they tore along, the lantern lighting their way. The moment came when they just glimpsed the fugitives; then they lost them again.

But half a minute more, and the chase was over. Into a vast underground chamber had the girls dashed together, to find the Carnays at bay there.

"You wretches!" was Polly's furious shout. "The game is up! The keys—we want the keys! We will have them—at once!"

Even whilst she was crying the words, with her eyes glaring angrily at the coiner and his wife, the girl became vaguely aware of this underground chamber's strange features.

She realised that it was far from bare, but was furnished with a blacksmith's forge and bellows, with electric batteries and worktables, and any number of engineering tools.

And, as was the case with her companions, she suddenly understood. This was the coiners' workshop!

Not for an instant, however, did this startling revelation distract either Polly or her chums.

Their blood was up. With a rush they went for the Carnays, and there, in that vault-like chamber, lit by the lantern which Polly had suddenly, dumped upon a bench, a desperate struggle began.

Perhaps Carnay the coiner would soon have given a good account of himself against the four schoolgirls; but Tess, before she ran in with the rest to attack, had snatched up a spanner as being something to wield, anyhow!

She struck him across the back of one hand that was ready to hit out with merciless violence, and Carnay, with a gasp of rage, had to let that hand fall to his side, bereft of power for the moment.

Then Bluebell saw the keys! They were lying upon the brick floor, to which they had been dropped by Carnay. She dived and picked them up, shouting to Polly and the others,

"Come away! I've got them—the keys!"

"Oh, good!"

Polly voiced that shout as she whipped about and darted for the lantern. Another moment, all four girls were dashing away, retracing their steps along the bewildering passages.

The Carnays did not rush off in pursuit. Their one thought now was how to get away.

"Michael, have you a light, matches, anything?" clamoured his panting wife.

"No; nothing!" he said hoarsely. "But we'll manage yet perhaps. Stay still! We can't venture along to the kitchen exit. Even if we dodged the girls, we'd fall into the hands of others!"

"Then what are we to do?"

"I know!" he answered, steadying his breathing. "We'll go up the shaft which is above our heads; the shaft that leads right up through the mansion. Then we'll bolt through the house—"

"Through the house—a house that teems with schoolgirls, servants, mistresses—"

"No; they'll all have rushed down to the lodge, for a certainty. Come on; anyhow, it's our only way now!"

With the word, he took hold of an empty packing-case, and, finding his way in the dark, dumped it on top of the iron forge. By this means he and his wife would be able to clamber into the vertical shaft; where iron footholds would enable them to ascend to a certain secret exit they knew of, up above.

Meanwhile, Polly and her heroic chums had got back to the locked door. At this instant the right key was being slipped into the hole.

"Hurrah!"

The door was open. At last—at last rescuers and rescued were comforting one another in the dim lantern-light.

"Oh, Betty!" almost sobbed Polly, in her joy. "Madge, Paula—"

"Polly darling! Oh!"

"Bai Jove! Yes, wather! Wuffle me as much as you like with your embwaces, geals!" cried Paula. "I tell you this is a relief—yes, wather!" In the vaguest way, Polly and the others noticed that Myra Marshall was amongst the rescued; but they could pay no real heed to her. Betty, Madge, Paula—these were the three to go wild over!

"Where are the Carnays now, though?" cried Betty at last. "Shouldn't we get after them?"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Howevah, geals—"

"Come on; I'm game!" sang out Polly.

"Morcove for ever! Hooray!"

And so they set off, all of them, and had rushed at top speed some distance towards the stairs under the lodge-kitchen, when Madge suddenly checked.

"I don't believe they will have come this way!" she exclaimed. "They would be afraid of falling into our friends' hands, in the kitchen."

"Then where—" began Polly; but Madge spoke again:

"Paula! How about that shaft, leading down through the house itself?"

"Bai Jove, yes!"

"They have made off that way," Madge pur-

She found one and drew herself up. One by one the other girls followed, until that chimney-like shaft held them all.

Up and upwards they clambered, one below another. How many iron "rungs" they encountered the girls never knew; but the stiff climb had fairly exhausted them by the time it ended.

To Madge and Paula, who had been this way before, there was nothing bewildering in their suddenly emerging upon what seemed to be a secret cupboard behind one of the panelled walls of an upper room. But all the rest of the girls were amazed at the way they found their exit, at last, into—a bedroom!

"Our own bedroom!" cried Betty. "Well!"

"Yes, wather, Howevah—"

"The Carnays have been this way!" panted Madge. "That is why we found that panel in the wall wide open. They smashed it open."

"And now—"

"They are slipping down through the house, to get away!"

Madge only voiced a belief that all her chums held. Beyond question, the Carnays were now in



**CORNERED!** "Stop them!" yelled Betty and Co. as Carnay and his wife tried desperately to shake off the pursuit. Suddenly the grounds seemed alive with policemen.

sued eagerly. "I think it more than likely. They could get into the shaft and ascend it by means of the iron footholds."

"Then why can't we?" cried Polly.

"We can!"

"And we will!" was Betty's resolute rejoinder. "Show the way, Madge!"

That girl was keen enough to do this. She led them all back through this passage and that, bringing them at last to the coniers' lair.

Then, at sight of the packing-case on the iron forge, the girls knew that the Carnays had indeed escaped via the secret shaft.

"After them!"

That was the spirited cry from Betty and the others. In a moment Madge had mounted to the top of the packing-case, and was reaching for a hold in the shaft.

full flight in the open, and so once again, the cry was:

"After them!"

Out of the bedroom; down through the deserted house, and out by the back door; away they raced, determined to run the fugitives to earth. Nor had the girls gone a hundred yards through the grounds before they saw Michael Carnay and his wife in full flight for the woods.

"Hi, hi! Stop them! After them!" yelled the girls with what little breath was left to them. Not that they could see anybody whose aid was to be invoked; they were simply shouting from sheer excitement of the chase.

Yet, as they themselves were amazed to find, the shouts served a very useful purpose after all.

Phee-eep-eep! shrilled a policeman's whistle all

at once, as if in cheery answer to the hue and cry. Phee-eeep!

Then, as the girls still tore on in plucky pursuit of the fugitives, they saw at least three policemen dash out from amongst the trees and charge down upon the man and woman.

Whilst the girls were yet a dozen yards from the couple, other policemen closed in. A moment, and Carnay was down on his back, with a policeman kneeling upon the villain's chest.

#### The End of it All.

**A**ND so at last another series of thrilling adventures on the part of the girls of Morcove School had come to a dramatic finish.

No need any longer for folk in the district to wonder where all the spurious coins came from. Nor was there any need for people to fear that the unwelcome plague of bad half-crowns would continue. Carnay the Coiner had been at the bottom of the whole business from first to last, and Carnay the Coiner would soon be in prison!

Meantime, there was now much general rejoicing that the coiners' schoolgirl captives had come to no harm, after all, as the result of their terrible ordeal in the underground cell.

Paula, it is true, was complaining that her hair had turned "dreadfully gwey, bai Jove, on account of such frightful expewiences!" But when her teasing chums started to look for the grey hairs, Paula changed her tune.

"I pwefer," said the aristocrat of the Fourth Form, "not to be wuffed! Gwey or not gwey, pway don't make my hair any worse, bai Jove, by wuffing it!"

If, indeed, any of the actors in this strange drama of school life had suffered in their nerves, such

victims were not Betty and Co., but Miss Somerfield and her colleagues.

Even the rescue of Betty and the other captives, quite unharmed, did not enable Miss Somerfield and the Form mistresses to get over the terrible scare at all easily. Michael Carnay and his wife were in Barncombe Gaol, but the entrance to the underground labyrinth of passages had still to be stopped up.

One other person had suffered considerably as a result of her share in the events already recounted, and that was Myra Marshall.

Myra, of course, was not to be arraigned as an accomplice of the Carnays. If there had been any talk of including her in the proceedings, Miss Somerfield would soon have got busy on the poor girl's behalf. But Myra's case was readily understood by all, and she only received what she certainly deserved—not condemnation, but pity—pity that she, when only a poor orphan, had fallen into such bad hands.

As soon as she was sufficiently recovered, Myra left Morcove School, and to-day she is quite happy in a sphere of life which Miss Somerfield found for her.

It was like the great-hearted headmistress of Morcove School to show such compassionate interest in the unhappy scholar, and it is nice to be able to say that Myra, by making good altogether, has well repaid that kindness.

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

Don't miss the first of a new Morcove series next week, entitled "Too Bad To Taunt Her!" Order your copy of **THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN** at once, and make certain of securing it.

No reader of "THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN" would willingly miss anything to do with Morcove School, and therefore the news that a Magnificent New Serial entitled—



By MARJORIE STANTON

is starting in this week's issue of

# THE GIRLS' FAVOURITE

is certain to prove a most welcome announcement!

**M**ORCOVE'S head girl, popular **ETHEL COURTWAY**, is the central figure, and also you will find life on the senior side of Morcove School just as exciting and interesting as that experienced by Betty Barton and her fourth form companions.

But there are other interests besides school life in this absorbing story. Mystery plays a deep part, and also Morcove's new rivals—"PRIOR'S," the old-established public school for boys who, migrating from the Midlands, come to Barncombe. Last, but not least, there is Ethel's brother, **CYRIL DUDLEY!**



Order this week's issue of "THE GIRLS' FAVOURITE" at once.



# Next Week's

## OF "THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"

**MY DEAR READERS,**  
I THINK you will agree, when you have read the announcements on this page and the next, that I have fully carried out the promises I made last week that I meant to give you some great treats. There is, indeed, a rare feast of good things for you next week and for weeks to come. I will say just a word or two about the various fine features in their order.

The first of the new Morcove series is entitled "TOO BAD TO TAUNT HER!" and is, of course, by Miss Marjorie Stanton, who has more than kept up her very high standard in these stories. The tale, I may mention, features a girl whom you all like very much—Madge Minden. Madge, the musical genius of the Fourth, always reliable, always good-natured, should hold a deeper place in your affections than ever, when you have read this series.

With the next issue we welcome back to our pages, after a brief absence, two very popular writers—Miss Gertrude Nelson and Miss Adrian Home. I know this is an item of news that will delight you greatly. Are there any of you who do not remember with deep pleasure that splendid yarn, "The Island Fud," or, going further back, "The Ivory Seekers"? Both of these were by Miss Nelson, and in her new story, "THE GIRL BEHIND THE COUNTER!" which commences next week, she has given us of her best. It is, without doubt, one of the finest serials she has ever penned.

As to Miss Home, I have only to mention the names of such stories as "A Girl of the Circus," "The Snow Maiden,"

and "Lost in the Pacific," to pay a tribute to her wonderful skill as a writer of schoolgirls' stories. Miss Home possesses the power of descriptive writing to such a degree that she carries the reader with her to the scene of her tale. One reason for this is that Miss Home is very widely travelled, and, in addition to a vivid imagination—an indispensable quality of any writer of fiction—she has actually seen much of what she describes. In her latest serial, which starts next week, and which is entitled "MIDST DESERT SANDS!" Miss Home paints an arresting picture of life in the great spaces of the African continent, and of the stirring adventures of an English schoolgirl there.



### TOO BAD TO TAUNT HER!

**YOU** like Madge Minden, of course. Madge is one of the most popular girls in the Fourth Form at Morcove School. She is good-natured, strong-willed, and devoted to her music. But suddenly Madge does a very peculiar thing. She decides to give music-lessons in Barncombe in order to earn money. What possible motive can she have for such an action? Her father is in no financial difficulty; she gets her allowances as usual. Why, then, does she resolve to devote a great deal of her spare time to music-teaching? Cora Grandways, the "sneak" of the Fourth, gets to know of Madge's enterprise, and it is soon well known all over the school, though Madge wishes it to be more or less of a secret. Betty Barton and her chums cannot understand Madge's action at all. But there is a reason, and a very good reason, too! You will want to know what is Madge's motive, so on no account must you miss this splendid story.

To complete our budget, next week's long Guide story is a fine one. It is called "AMY SINCLAIRE'S TRIUMPH!" and describes how Amy Sinclair, leader of the Pansy patrol of the Peachville Guides, gets on the track of the thieves who stole Prince Jumriham's jewels, with unpleasant results—for them!

There will also be the usual instructive Notes dealing with Needlework and Cookery. There is sure to be a huge demand for our next issue, so I strongly advise you to place your order early with your newsagent. You would be very disappointed, I know, to go along and find that he had sold out.

I ask you, too, to do me a great favour by drawing the attention of your friends to the splendid new features which will appear next week. This is just the very best time for new readers to commence taking THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN regularly.

THIS  
GRAND  
ADVENTURE  
SERIAL



MIDST  
DESERT  
SANDS.

STARTS  
IN NEXT  
WEEK'S  
ISSUE

**T**HERE are still vast tracts of country in the heart of Africa which the white man has yet to penetrate. Mysterious tribes of natives, descendants of lost nations, still find habitation there in world-old cities filled with the romance of the past. To such a place pretty little MAY MALLOWES is wafted from school in England, and there she experiences adventures the like of which you have seldom read of before. This is bound to prove one of the most popular stories we have ever published.

# Wonderful Number SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN!"

FOR months past readers have been bombarding me with letters telling me how much they would enjoy a competition, and could I arrange one? Well, I have at length been able to fall in with your wishes, and in next week's issue of "The Schoolgirls' Own" you will find a competition that will prove as fascinating as it is easy.

As you see announced on this page, there are some truly magnificent money prizes to strive after. The first prize is no less than

## FIFTY POUNDS

This is indeed a comfortable little nest-egg for any girl to win, and I wonder which of my thousands of readers will be the fortunate winner. All of you have an equal chance, and it is a fair field and no favour for everyone—I can assure you of that!

But the second prize is also a satisfying amount:

## TWENTY POUNDS

And the same can be said of the third—

## TEN POUNDS

whilst the forty sums of Ten Shillings will form very acceptable gifts.

The Competition will last for SIX WEEKS, and at the end of that time you will be told when and where to send your efforts.

Don't forget to look out for the closing date, and be sure to tell your friends about these magnificent prizes.

AND now I come to a gift that EVERY reader of "the Schoolgirls' Own" will receive next week. It is a new and original game, entitled:

## "BETTY BARTON'S STUDY"

It is a game that ALL schoolgirls will find an endless source of delight, and one that will make the long winter evenings fly by like magic. One, two, three, four—almost any number can play, and "Betty Barton's Study!" can be truly described as the MOST ORIGINAL GAME EVER INVENTED. Added to this, it is simplicity itself, and the rules can be mastered pretty well at a glance.

The week after next I shall present to ALL my readers,

## "THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN RIDDLE AND GAME BOOK!"

and the week after that:

## "THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN MUSIC BOOK!"

containing the words and music of the songs that will never grow stale as long as the English language is spoken. The week following— Ah, for the present—that is MY little secret.

YOUR EDITOR.

## GREAT NEW COMPETITION

### £100 IN PRIZES

- First Prize - - - £50
- Second Prize - - - £20
- Third Prize - - - £10
- Forty Prizes of - 10s. each

The above splendid prizes are offered for a simple competition in which all our readers are invited to take part.

**PRESENTED FREE!** The most original game ever invented

## "BETTY BARTON'S STUDY"



## The GIRL BEHIND THE COUNTER

STARTS IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

**L**ITTLE do you know, when you shop at a large drapery emporium, of the drama that oftentimes is going on behind the scenes. Many of the young girls who serve you are like **ELSIE GREY**, struggling hard to help keep a humble home together—girls who, if they were more fortunately placed, would still be at school, carefree and happy. Elsie's mother is a widow in straitened circumstances, and how Elsie assists her forms the theme of this entrancing story.