

THE HOLIDAY PAPER FOR EVERY GIRL!

The Schoolgirl's Own 2^D



AT DEAD OF NIGHT!

A dramatic incident from this week's splendid complete story of Betty Barton & Co. of Morcove School.

A Magnificent Complete Tale of the Morcove Chums on Holiday.



GUARDING HER SECRET!



By
MARJORIE STANTON.

Little did Betty Barton and Co. think, when they went off on their novel holiday, that they would be embroiled in the strange mystery which surrounded little Amy Ashdown, the maid-of-all-work at a seaside boarding-house! This is a tale that will hold your interest to the last line.

Taken on Trust!

YES, come in, please!" A hand had knocked softly at the door of one of the bed-rooms in Mrs. Juddings' boarding-house at Sandmouth. Now there sounded, outside the room, a faint rattle of teathings on a tray, whilst the knob of the door was turned.

Paula Creel promptly sat up in bed, beaming with delight.

"Naomer deah, you are awake, I twust?" she called across to her fellow-occupant of the room, who was in a similar bed to Paula's own. "This bwight morning, what? Oh—er—good-morning, Amy!"

"Good-morning, miss."

It was a subdued, embarrassed response that Amy Ashdown gave, as she came forward with the tray.

"An early cup for each of you, please. I thought—"

"Bai Jove, how wipping! Do you see this, Naomer deah? This geal has pprovided tea all woud for the lot of us, bai Jove!"

"Ooo, zank you! Queek, queek, then!" was the eager cry from Naomer Nakara, who had awakened to another day of the holidays, feeling as gay as a lark. "Ze tea-cup, I love him!"

"Haw, haw, haw, yes, wather," simpered the aristocratic member of the Fourth Form at Morcove, as she lifted her cup and saucer from the tray. "Thanks, thanks! But you should not have twoubled, Amy!"

"It was no trouble. I was up early. And I thought you might feel rather tired, some of you, after yesterday."

"On the contwawy, Amy," Paula said, sipping gratefully, "one feels weally gwand, doesn't one, Naomer?"

"Ooo, yes, and I must give you ze good-mornink kiss, Paula! I—"

"No, pway, get away, dwop it!" squealed Paula, taking fright as she saw Morcove's royal scholar preparing to ensconce herself on the edge of the bed. "Mind my tea, Naomer!"

Amy was drawing off to the door, carrying the tray, which held other cups of tea—an indication that she had yet to visit those rooms where the rest of the Morcove Concert Party had been accommodated.

"Er—Amy!"

"Yes, miss?"

But now Paula was seized with embarrassment.

"Er, yes, wather. What? Er—what was I going to say? I weally—weal, yes! It's a gwand morning, I gather?"

"Oh, a beautiful morning."

"Pwecisely! And—howevah, I wather fancy I had bettah not detain you, Amy. Thanks, thanks, all the same!"

So Amy made her quiet and cautious exit with the tray, closing the door behind her.

In the dim passage outside she seemed to have to stand still for a moment, because distressing emotions had seized her. Her eyes looked very sad, and she bit at her underlip as if to keep it from trembling.

Poor Amy! Only too well had she sensed the conflict going on in the heart of that pretty Morcove scholar, Paula Creel, resulting in such embarrassment just then. Behind all the absurdity of Paula's fatubous exclamations, there was the same serious state of mind in which the other schoolgirls must be this morning.

They were not the sort to want to rake up that painful business which had followed last night's charity concert, on the sands. And yet—they were going to feel very reluctant to leave this town presently, and to leave her for ever, without explaining how impossible it was for them to have anything more to do with her.

She went to the landing-table and set down the tray, so as to be able to wipe her eyes.

To-day, if only she had not been ruined in their sight, she would have been going away with them! But they deemed her a thief—they were left with no alternative but to deem her guilty of having pilfered the collection made at the concert. Good-bye, then, to them for ever, presently. Good-bye to the glorious hope there had been of finishing with this life of drudgery in the boarding-house. They would go, and she would remain—to be at the mercy of her enemies!

Meantime, Paula Creel was looking most unhappy as she finished sipping at her tea. Unhappy, not because the tea was not to her liking. Amy had made a splendid brew! Paula Creel's amiable disposition was not adapted to a worrying state of affairs; but she was worried now.

"Yes, wather, Naomer deah," she lamented, setting aside the cup and saucer. "You know, Naomer, it's extremely distwessing, and a gweat wowwy."

"Eef you mean, because that girl was shown to be ze thief last night—"

"That's it, Naomer deah. Weally—"

"Ah, bah, I not believe it, no!" was the sudden vehement assertion which left Paula Creel open-mouthed with joyful relief. "I almost say, just now, when she is here: 'Eet is all right, Amy!'"

"Bai Jove! Just what I—"

"Another moment, and I rush at her and say, 'I love you!'"

"Weal, I declarè! Pwecisely what—"

"Thief? I not care eef feefty million pound is found in her pocket! I know she not steal it!"

"Wheah's my dwessing-gown?" Paula said blithely, slipping from her bed. "Haw, haw, haw, yes, wather! No more of this, Naomer! I'm going to run in next door to Betty and Polly! I'm going to ask all the west of the geals, bai Jove, if we can't—"

"Take Amy with us after all! Ooo, yes, queek—queek!"

"Weal, all wight. I'm being wemarkably quick, I consider!"

Paula was. Not often did the languid one act with such celerity. On went her pretty dressing-gown, and in a moment she was at the door. Then she turned back, to touch her hair to rights in front of a mirror.

"Yes, wather. Must look pwesentable, Naomer! That's bettah, bai Jove!"

She padded away in her downy bed-room slippers, and was most heartily bidden to "Come in!" by the voice of Polly Linton, next door.

"Bai Jove, good-morning, Polly deah!"

"Morning, Paula! Heigh-ho, must get up, I suppose! Fancy you being up before me!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Well, what do you want, Paula?"

"Where's Betty, Polly deah?"

"Slipped away to have word with Miss Redgrave a few minutes since. Betty and I have been thinking, Paula—"

"Have you weally, bai Jove! So have I, Polly deah," said Paula, absently drifting to the dressing-table, to look at herself in the mirror. "I was thinking—"

"How pretty you are, of course!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, I'm getting wather a nice brown complexion, Polly deah, what? I twust no fwuckles will appear. Fweckles, Polly, are— Ow!"

A playfully-hurled pillow had nearly knocked Paula over like a ninepin!

"Coming in here," Polly cried out in mock disgust, "to admire yourself in our glass, when—"

"No, Polly, I pwotest! I hadn't a thought for my looks, weally! I have been feeling pwofoundly twoubled about Amy Ashdown."

"You have?"

"I have, Polly. I—"

"Come to my arms, my chice-ild!" cried the madcap of Morcove dramatically. "I forgive you! Why, Betty and I have been talking—it's the only thing we have been able to talk about—"

"Hooway! Then you and Betty—you wather feel as I do!"

Polly came out of bed like an avalanche, flung on her dressing-gown, and then proceeded to waltz Paula round the room.

"So you are another, Paula—another who feels that we ought not to believe that evidence against Amy? Madge and Tess have been in, saying they can't believe—"

"Hooway! Mind my toes, howevah! Polly deah—"

"Helen Craig also—she can't believe it!" the madcap rattled on boisterously. "So we are all agreed about it!"

"Yes, wather! Naomer, I know, is—"

"'Ello, present!" said that dusky little imp, suddenly announced herself, whisking into the room. "Mornink, Polly! But I not kees you unless you say Amy shall come with us!"

"I do say it, Naomer drrling, so there you are!" Polly said, offering a cheek. "But it is what Miss Redgrave will say that that must count! We'll keep on at her, though—"

"Yes, wather! Miss Wedgwave is such a bwick —"

"If Betty doesn't convince her—"

"Girls, any news yet?" asked Madge Minden, suddenly appearing upon the scene, more or less toiletted. "Tess and I are anxious about this business with Amy. She must come—"

"She shall!" insisted Polly, in her headstrong way. "Hark, here comes Betty! Yes, Betty—well?"

That girl, the captain of the Fourth Form at Morcove, fairly danced into the room, waving her arms joyfully.

"It's all right—"

"Hooway! Bai Jove—"

"Miss Redgrave has been thinking about it half the night," Betty panted on. "I didn't have to plead with her at all! She feels that it was all a plot—must have been—"

"Carried out by the Grange people, of course!" Polly said vehemently. "And so, Amy can come with us, Betty, can't she?"

"Does Amy know?"

"Not yet. But—"

"Then where is Amy?" rushed on Polly, dashing away to the door. "Half a sec., I'll fetch her."

The other girls, all looking jubilant, could hear their impulsive chum fairly yelling: "Amy, A-my!" all over the house.

During the interval of waiting, Paula stepped to the mirror and used comb and brush. She seemed to feel that an occasion was at hand when she must look particularly "pwesentable."

"Haw, haw, haw, but it's such a welief, geals! After feeling so vewy depwessed about the geal —"

"Here is Amy! Come in, dear!" Polly's

hearty voice suddenly sounded at the door. "Then hear what we've all got to tell you!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove——"

"You are coming with us, Amy! Miss Redgrave says so! Miss Redgrave doesn't believe——"

"Neither do we!"

"So, queek, queek, let me give you a kees!" was Naomèr's own characteristic contribution to all the high-spirited cries. "Oh, and you must not cry, please!"

But Amy simply had to, now.

Overnight, when she was alone in her little attic bed-room, some sort of desperate spirit in the girl had kept her from breaking down. It had seemed no time for tears, but only a time for steeling oneself to endure the cruel ordeal which had been sprung upon her. But now——

She was overwhelmed. The sudden change from tragic despair to intense relief and happiness—it was too much for her. She wept freely, only sobbing all the more as she felt how compassionately one girl after another was standing close to voice soothing words.

"You poor little soul," came Betty's turn again, at the end of a minute. "There, there, Amy, it's all right now."

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Quite all wight!"

"The pity is that we didn't settle it all last night," deplored Polly. "I was feeling, even then, I couldn't believe it against you, Amy."

"Not for a moment, Amy!" Madge Minden said, with quite unusual emphasis for one so habitually reserved. "Tess and I were talking about it for a long time before we slept."

"So were Polly and I," chimed in Betty. "The whole thing began to look as if it might have been a cruel plot."

"And a plot it was," cried Polly. "Those Grange people, knowing that we had befriended you, were out to smash our faith in you. But they haven't succeeded—not quite."

By now Amy had mastered her tears of joy. She was still very emotional, however, as she faltered at the girls:

"I'll never—no, never will I be able to thank you enough! Oh, it is good of you—too good! To be so trustful, when everything pointed to my being guilty. All night I've been lying awake, thinking, if only there was just a slight chance for me still! But the way it was done——"

"Yes!" nodded Betty, with a sudden stern frown. "As Miss Redgrave says, there must have been a very clever manipulation of the money by somebody who need not be named."

"So off we go, and you with us, presently!" Polly exclaimed gaily. "As soon as we've got some brekker, and packed up, Amy!"

"Yes, wather, geals——"

"I say, though—ha, ha, ha!" Polly suddenly laughed outright. "I wonder what old Mother Juddings will have to say?"

"She—she won't be able to—to keep me back?" was Amy's anxious whisper.

"She will never dare!" frowned Betty. "We have a match for her in Miss Redgrave. You will be in the train with us, for Bacton-on-Sea, by eleven o'clock!"

And when the eleven o'clock to Bacton-on-Sea steamed out of Sandmouth Junction, Amy was with the girls—the happiest of them all!

These Girls Again!

"MARINE MANSIONS, West Parade," was the address for which the Morcove Concert Party had to make, when they got to Bacton shortly after midday.

Some of them went with Miss Redgrave, in the only taxi to be had; the rest followed in a very ancient cab. But for both detachments it meant precisely the same pleasant surprise, to find that these new quarters were quite the opposite from what Mrs. Juddings' deplorable boarding-house had been.

Here was a seaside boarding establishment properly run, by ladies who knew their business!

Miss Redgrave and the girls were made welcome to this real home-from-home with unmistak-



BAITING THE MISTRESS!

"Girls," said Miss Redgrave sternly, "you are not going to pretend that this is a surprise to you to find us all here." "I am afraid I can't say it is altogether a pleasure," answered Laura impertinently.

able cordiality. Their various rooms, when they were conducted to them, were all that could be desired.

No overworked little Amy here! Betty & Co. had not been five minutes inside the place before they gained the impression that a large and happy staff went to the smooth running of the prosperous establishment.

All this was capital; but what pleased the chums more than anything else was to be lodging where there were shoals of other holiday folk.

"It is nice to meet people running up and downstairs like yourself!" declared Betty, when she was with Polly in their little bed-room, after lunch. "And to go down to a large dining-room that's packed out, everyone chummy and jolly!"

"Makes you almost feel you're back at Morcove—yes," agreed Polly, whilst she stood looking out from the balcony window at the sparkling sea.

"Shan't be in a hurry to get away from here, Betty!"

But, of course, the girls were working their sea-side concerts to a time-table, and they would have to move on in a day or so, whether they liked it or not. If they should feel immensely sorry to go, it was certain there would be no grumbling. Nothing was going to deter their novel enterprise.

Sandmouth had shown them what they might expect in the way of public support throughout the tour. After such a splendid send-off as Sandmouth had given them, it was not to be wondered that the chums were even keener now than they had been at the start. If they didn't make a nice, comfortable hundred pounds towards the hospital rebuilding fund before the tour finished—well, it wouldn't be their fault!

Paula came in, beaming.

"Bai Jove, a wegarular tweek, geals—what? I don't know when I had a bettah light for my dwessing-table miwwow! Coming out to see the place?"

"We'll be downstairs long before you!" was Polly's withering answer to that. "Of course we are going out. We want to see what sort of a building the Jubilee Hall is, where we are to give our next two concerts."

"Haw, haw, haw, Jubilee Hall, bai Jove! Geals, we are getting on, what? Some chance of a pwoper dwessing-woom this evening, yes, wather."

"Where's Amy?" wondered Betty.

They found her with Helen Craig, whose room she was going to share. Madge and Tess had "paired," as usual; Paula and Naomer were inevitably together, like Betty and Polly; and short of having a Morceavian in with her, Helen could have wanted no one more welcome than was Amy.

"She is a dear," Helen confided, when they had all reached the sunny parade. The listeners were Betty, Polly, and Madge. For Paula, Tess, and Naomer were a little way in front, with Amy in their midst.

"It was a case of taking her on trust, of course," said Madge soberly. "But we are never going to regret it."

"Regret it! Oh, girls," Helen exclaimed, quite emotionally, "if you had heard her, just now, telling me how heart-broken she felt last night! It was enough to make you cry! Now it is like—like having some poor, dumb creature one has taken pity on, following you around. Whenever you look at her, you find her grateful eyes upon you."

At this instant, the girl they were discussing turned round in common with the friends she was with, so the talk had to be dropped.

"I say, I do believe that's the Jubilee Hall!" Polly said rather glumly, pointing towards a building that disfigured, rather than ornamented, the parade. "It looks, somehow—"

"It does!" smiled Madge. "The sort of place that would be called the Jubilee Hall."

Apparently, too, Paula's heart was sinking as she gazed.

"Ah, deah! Not much pwospect of a pwoper dwessing-woom there, geals. I wondah if the acoustics are all wight?"

"The what?" asked Polly, offering an ear.

"I am merely wondering, Polly, deah, if anyone with a wick contwalto voice can do justice to it in that hall?"

"And the piano?" murmured Madge, with misgivings. "They gave us such a good one at Sandmouth. I hope it isn't a Jubilee piano!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They hastened on, to learn the best or worst, as

the case might be, and it was a minute after they had been admitted to the dim and musty building by a woman caretaker that a certain motor-cycle and sidecar took two girls spinning past the hall.

"Marine Mansions, West Parade—it must be this way," Cora Grandways said, giving half an eye to the names on house fronts and terrace-walls as she drove the motor-cycle. "What crowds of people, Laura! Worse than Sandmouth!"

"Yes," the girl in the sidecar spoke back, above the noise of the engine. "I do hope we shall be able to get in, dear!"

"That's just it! Anyhow, we are not going back. You know what your mater said, Laura."

That girl smiled and nodded, as if the remark had aroused the most delightful recollections.

"How you did come along, Cora! We didn't leave the Grange until one o'clock, and it is only—"

"Marine Mansions—here we are!" Cora exclaimed triumphantly, and steered the machine towards the kerb. "I say, what a lark if the first person we meet indoors is Amy herself!"

Laura laughed, at the same time unlatching the sidecar door and springing out.

Not entirely because she had got rather cramped did she hold herself very straight now. She and Cora were alike in always remembering to put on airs. After dismounting from the saddle, Cora came round on to the pavement with a mincing step, chin in air.

"Rather a decent show, Laura!" she commented on the spick-and-span exterior of the boarding-house. "We ought to have a nice time here, as well as do all your mother has entrusted us to do. How lucky for us that Mrs. Juddings took a note of the address the girls were coming to in Bacton!"

"Oh, we'll get our bit of fun, I dare say!" grinned Laura, and with that they mounted the steps and gave a ring at the bell.

The place had emptied by now, all the visitors having been eager to get out into the sunshine again as soon as lunch was over. Quietly a maid came forward, and showed the well-dressed girls to a small room off the hall, where one of the lady proprietresses of the place would come to them.

"Good-afternoon!" the girls were being greeted in a moment by a very pleasant, refined-looking woman of middle-age. "I understand that you require—"

"Board and apartments, please, if you can manage us," Laura spoke up demurely. "My chum and I wish to stay for a few days in Bacton. We have just come from my home—the Grange, near Sandmouth."

The way Laura said this, it did not sound as if her parents only rented the Grange, furnished, whilst the owners were abroad. Laura spoke as if the residence had been "in the family" for generations!

"I see," the lady responded, rather looking both girls up and down. They were exceedingly dainty and stylish, and she was thinking what a charming pair they appeared to be. "We are very full up, however, and—"

"I was to give you this, please," Laura interposed, suddenly offering a note. "Mother thought it would be as well if this introduced us and explained things."

"Oh, thank you!"

Ripping open the envelope, the lady quickly scanned the brief contents, nodding in a pleased and impressed manner as she saw what she had

been asked to do by the person signing herself: "Yours sincerely, Mrs. Laura Dillon."

"Your mother wishes me to do all I can for you, as she is prevented from accompanying you," was the cordial remark for which Laura came in. "It is hard to refuse the request when it is so nicely put, but, unless you can share a room that is very small—quite a nice room, however, facing the sea—"

"Oh, anything will do for us!" both girls said sweetly. "Anything does for the holidays!"

"Then will you come up, and I'll show you?" invited the lady, leading the way to the stairs.

On the way up, she explained that the girls could only have the room for a couple of nights at the most, as it was booked by people who were coming in on Saturday. This again was all right for Cora and Laura, and they said so.

They did not add that they only wanted to be here whilst Betty & Co. were under this roof!

Two minutes later the daring pair were alone together in the room which they had taken over. Its one drawback was its smallness. There was only one bed, but it would take the two of them easily. For the rest, the room was on one of the best floors, with a narrow French-window opening on to a balcony that ran all along the house-front, overlooking the parade and the sea.

"Did you notice some luggage that has been dumped down outside the door next to ours?" Cora Grandways said softly to her holiday crony. "Laura, I do believe we have got some of the Morcove girls in the next room!"

"Never!" grinned Laura. "What a lark if we have, because the balcony goes right along!"

"Yes! Half a sec.!" So saying, Cora nipped to the door and went out, returning instantly.

"It is so!" she exulted, closing the door again. "There is a portmanteau out there with Helen Craig's name on it. She and Amy have been given the next room!"

"How lovely!" chuckled Laura, and, in her delight, she flopped herself on to the bed and kicked up her feet. "I can see a chance for a great spree, Cora! He, he, he!"

"Oh, but behave!" grinned the girl who was the standing enemy of Betty & Co. at Morcove. "Remember, this is a very select place, dear. But I must have a cigarette after all this time!"

They both lit up, and whilst they whiffed at the cigarettes there was much whispering and tittering. It was such a huge joke to them, the surprise they were going to give the Morcove Concert Party!

"Thought they had shaken us off their heels, did they?" was Cora's malicious chuckle. "They little know that we have your parents behind us in what we are going to do, Laura, and that is—follow them from town to town, until we get our chance!"

"The chance to part Amy Ashdown from them somehow," nodded Laura, suddenly changing from smiles to frowns. "You are only in it for fun, Cora, but I—"

"Not quite for fun, even in my case," corrected the other girl. "I am in it, as I have been in many a daring game before this, to do Betty and her chums all the harm I can, so there!"

Laura stood up, casting away her finished cigarette. She gazed at her equally handsome crony for a long moment in silence. Then:

"How you do hate those girls, Cora! As for me, I am in this to help my parents. They want that secret out of Amy Ashdown, as to where she

hid that paper, and I mean to see that they get it!"

And she added in a more guarded tone: "For there is a fortune in it, I know!"

Under One Roof!

AT ten to seven that evening Morcove's chums of Study 12 came down to a dining-room that looked very inviting, arranged as it was for some fifty guests, to take their places presently.

Miss Redgrave and the girls were early comers, having to get away to the Jubilee Hall before half an hour was out, but they were only midway through the dainty dinner when the other tables began to fill up.

Fathers and mothers, with their boys and girls, trailed in. A bearded professor came in along with an old Army officer. Then some prim spinsters rustled in, looking round to confer their smiles on one acquaintance and another. They saw Miss Redgrave and the girls, and they included them in the favouring smiles.

Betty & Co. did not look around much as the room filled up. They were conscious of being the object of inoffensive, yet very interested, glances.

Suddenly, however, they saw Miss Redgrave give such a violent start, as she chanced to look towards the doorway, that they instantly switched their own eyes in that direction.

"Eh, what?" palpitated Paula, as if she could hardly believe the evidence of her own vision. "My gwacious, geals!"

"Cora and Laura!" Polly gasped, under her breath. "Well!"

And the others felt just the same—struck all of a heap by this amazing surprise.

There, advancing into the crowded dining-room, were the selfsame girls who had made such trouble for the Morcove Concert Party at Sandmouth, to say nothing of the misery and distress they had caused poor Amy Ashdown.

So, then, their foes had followed them up!

The hateful pair had had the audacity to secure apartments in the very establishment that housed the victims of all their malicious scheming!

Even whilst Betty and the rest were suffering the greatest agitation, they were compelled to realise that amongst the other diners the entrance of these two girls had created a small sensation.

And no wonder!

Cora Grandways and Laura Dillon were, together, the last word in lavish dressing. They were wearing frocks beside which the simpler evening toilettes of other girls looked in very poor taste. They were, moreover, excessively handsome girls, and knew how to wear an air. How they must have enjoyed the mingled admiration and envy which their appearance excited!

With all the composure in the world, they went, in a high-stepping way, to the table that had been assigned to them. Just as they were sitting down, Cora pretended to be surprised at seeing people here whom she knew.

"Hallo, you here?" she exclaimed sweetly, looking across, with raised brows, to the chums' table.

Miss Redgrave waited a few moments; then she rose and went across to the couple whose presence was so ominous.

"Cora, and you, Laura Dillon," she said very quietly, "are you going to pretend that this is a surprise to you, to find us here?"

"I am afraid I can't say it is altogether a pleasure!" answered Laura impertinently, calmly



TO BREAK UP THE CONCERT!

Laura drew something from her pocket, then, as Cora looked on, she unfolded the packet and shook the contents of it through the skylight into the hall beneath, where the chums of the Fourth Form were giving their concert.

shaking out her napkin. "We saw quite enough of you and your precious concert at Sandmouth!"

Miss Redgrave was a good hand at keeping her temper. She now ignored Laura altogether, and addressed Cora.

"You had better be careful, Cora Grandways, that I do not make a report about this when we are back at Morcove. I will say no more, but just be careful!"

Then she returned to her table, where the chums were doing their best to look unconcerned.

They had formed the greatest regard for the people who ran this highly successful establishment, and they were ready to put up with anything rather than let any hostility between themselves and their enemies cause general annoyance.

Cora and Laura, for their part, were all for letting the other guests see that here was a case of declared enemies being under the same roof. As Miss Redgrave and the girls fled out of the dining-room, the handsome couple sent derisive smiles after them.

"Their concert is at the Jubilee Hall, isn't it?" Cora remarked loudly to her crony.

"Yes—awful hole! Have you seen it?" was the disdainful answer.

"I've seen their concert once, and that was enough!" grinned Cora, smiling round to invite hearers.

Nor was she the least bit abashed when she saw some of the older guests glaring.

"Well, we don't want to stuff in the Jubilee Hall a lovely evening like this, anyhow!" remarked Laura, hoping that this would cause

intending patrons of the concert to change their minds.

"Heaps of better ways of helping a charity, certainly!" agreed Cora tartly. "Such showing off shouldn't be encouraged!"

Two or three of the prim spinsters drew themselves up as they heard this. The bearded professor stuck his glasses on the bridge of his nose and surveyed the mischief-makers resentfully. Then, after consulting his table companion, the Army officer, he beckoned to the waitress.

"You might find us another table after to-night, miss," said the professor stolidly, he and the Army officer rising together. "We don't like to have a lot of noisy chatter going on close at hand!"

"Oh, dear!" commented Cora, shrugging up her shoulders with repressed laughter, as the couple of serious-looking elderly men made their exit. "Are they off to the concert already? They will be surprised. It's only fit for children just out of the nursery!"

"Well, they're in their second childhood!" Laura excused them lightly. "Don't think much of the dinner, do you, Cora?"

"Awful!"

By now Betty & Co., with Miss Redgrave, had run upstairs to get their things on. They came down, and most eyes in the dining-room went to the big window as the schoolgirl pierrettes quitted the boarding-house.

"There they go!" Cora grinned derisively, turning about in her chair to gaze. "How glad I am that I didn't let myself be drawn into the whole silly business! Nothing but swank!"

There is an old saying that, if enough mud is slung, some is bound to stick. So Cora and Laura kept up their belittling comments, despite the resentment that at least some of the other guests were showing.

Meantime, the chums were hastening along to the Jubilee Hall, without having anything to say amongst themselves about Cora and Laura. They fully expected the hateful pair to try and make trouble during the concert. But the girls knew as well as Miss Redgrave that there was a very simple remedy—and it was one they would enforce—for ridding an audience of any disturbing element!

But what if this malicious campaign against them, as a concert-party, was not the primary object of Laura and Cora's coming to Bacton?

This was an aspect of the situation which gave Betty & Co. cause for great uneasiness.

Had they debated the position on the way to the hall, they would have found their minds in full agreement.

Every one of the Morcovians, in fact, felt sure that Laura Dillon's mother must be at the bottom of it all. That sinister woman, because Amy Ash-down was now with the concert-party, had commissioned Laura and Cora to follow them up! And why?

For what reason could it be, except that there was still a desperate intention to get Amy away from her friends, and bully her into yielding up her secret?

Well, Mrs. Dillon's pair would have their work out!

That was the thought common to all the girls as they passed in at a kind of "stage-door" at the Jubilee Hall. The crowd they made just there—seven of them, not counting Miss Redgrave—made them feel that Amy would always be safe whilst in their midst.

A very old, shabby, and lifeless sort of woman

conducted the girls to a dim-lit part of the building behind the stage. She was the caretaker, and on occasions of this sort she took on the task of money-taker at the one public entrance to the very dismal place.

For it was dismal. There was no denying it!

Everything inside the Jubilee Hall was in accordance with the depressing exterior. Just as the seats in the auditorium were as plain and uncomfortable as could be, so Betty & Co. found that the facilities for artistes behind the stage were anything but up to date.

Two small, cellar-like retiring-rooms were at their disposal, and so they split into two parties and made a joke of all the hindrances to getting into stage attire.

"Geals—geals, have you a miwwow in here that isn't cwacked?" Paula wanted to know, in great distress, by-and-by.

She had come rushing into the room which held Betty, Polly, Helen, and Amy.

"Outside!" ordered Polly breezily. "You've got your room!"

"Woom, bai Jove! It's a chamber of howwows—yes, wather! There are wats—I suppose you geals know there are wats all over the place?"

"Are there?" said Betty, putting the last touches to her stage toilette. "We've spiders in here, but—"

"Dweadful, dweadful!" shivered Paula. "I am sure this damp atmosphere is affecting my contwalto! Now I've left my bwacelet-watch in that other woom!"

"I'll fetch it!" Amy offered blithely, and away she ran, returning instantly with the watch.

She was proving an absolute marvel at helping the schoolgirl pierrettes behind the scenes. Discarded garments carelessly thrown down were picked up and placed in order. She was ready to make hooks and eyes meet in a flash, or sort out shoes that were mixed up, and by-and-by she would show how quickly and deftly her willing hands could fold away the stage costumes in the dress-baskets.

Madge came in, a very sober-featured pierrette.

"That piano is as bad as ever," she sighed. "The tuner we fetched round to it this afternoon hasn't done it a bit of good!"

"Weal, nevah mind, Madge, deah! We must sing all the loudah—what? And ddown the bwute—yes, wather! But had I bettah sing contwalto to-night, geals? Or shall I sing sopwano?"

"You had better not sing at all!" said Polly.

"Oh, look, there's a mouse—there!" Betty suddenly exclaimed, and Paula hopped up on to a chair, howling:

"Wheah—wheah? Geals, this is a howwible expewience we are having—what? And then, to think that those geals, Corwa Gwandways and Lauwa Dillon, are going to try and bwing widicule upon the performance!"

"If they do," Betty said fiercely, "we are none of us in the mood to stand that sort of thing this evening—Miss Redgrave least of all!"

"And you are right, Betty!" Miss Redgrave herself rejoined, entering the dingy dressing-room in time to overhear that last remark. "My mind is made up. At the first bit of disorder caused by those two girls, out they go!"

But, alas for the Morcove Concert Party, Cora Grandways and her holiday crony had already planned to ruin the concert without being in the hall at all!

The Enemy at Work!

NOW that the doors had been thrown open to the public, the lengthy queue of well-dressed holiday-makers was slowly shuffling along the pavement and up the two shallow steps to the "box-office."

It was obvious to Cora and Laura, as they now came upon the scene, that a good many people were rather amused at the forlorn state of this old entertainment-hall which they had decided to visit for a bit of fun and music. But, for every facetious comment on the grab exterior of Bacton's Jubilee Hall, there were half a dozen enthusiastic remarks about the schoolgirl pierrettes, inspired by the really attractive posters which adorned the entrance.

Some of Tess Trelawney's artistic work, these! They consisted of two or three placards done with oil-paint on mounted canvas, and they had taken the girl artist of the Fourth Form at Morcove a whole week to achieve. They were tasteful, yet "fetching," and they certainly did not promise people anything that the concert-party was not prepared to provide.

If one picture represented a little golliwog of a girl doing a very graceful sort of pas-seul—well, didn't the concert-party include Morcove's own dusky Naomer amongst its artistes?

"I believe it is going to be very good!" Cora and her crony heard somebody in the queue say, with enthusiasm. "Cissie's staying at Sandmouth,



WOULD AMY REPLY? "Amy!" whispered Laura persuasively. "Where is that paper hidden at the Grange?" There was no response save a gentle breathing from the sleeping girl. Would the desperate experiment succeed? Cora and Laura were asking themselves.

and she mentioned what a fine show these girls gave."

"Anyhow, it's a jolly good wheeze, and it deserves backing up," said the brother of the girl who had spoken, getting out his money.

The seheming couple drew off, their ill-nature only intensified by such remarks as that.

"Jolly good wheeze, did he say?" muttered Cora. "Ours is the jolly good wheeze, I think, Laura?"

That girl grinned.

"Yes, and all they will get will be a jolly good-sneeze! Ha, ha, ha! It will be a scream, if only we can bring it off!"

Then, halting at a little distance from the hall, their eyes stole upwards to the flat roof. From where they stood, the two girls could glimpse a portion of the large skylight which was let into the roof, and about which they had got to know, a couple of hours ago, by venturing up some outside iron steps.

These steps had evidently been built against one side of the hall, to serve a couple of doors that were used for taking in scenery belonging to travelling theatrical companies. There was a small iron platform outside these lofty doors; then the steps continued to the roof.

Cora and Laura sauntered away, taking a turn upon the parade. It was half an hour later when they came back to the hall, turning aside into the old-fashioned alley-way that served the side doors. Not a soul was there. The concert was now in full swing, and even the front entrance was deserted, the money-taker having closed the pigeon-hole and departed.

Safe though they felt the conditions to be, however, the daring couple cast many a nervous glance around.

Laura was even inclined to wait awhile, for the dusk to deepen; but Cora feared that then they might have people passing to and fro.

"It'll never be quieter than now, so come on!" she urged, with some of that recklessness which had often dominated her at Morcove School.

"Who's afraid? I'm not!"

That was enough for Laura. Next moment, the darkly cloaked girls were nipping up the old iron steps.

At the platform they paused for breath and to take a look round. If they were being observed, they could go down again without creating much suspicion. They had seen children running up and down the steps in play.

But they were still unnoticed, and now Cora led on up the last flight to the flat roof of the hall.

A few moments, and both girls were treading away to the centre of the roof, only needing to stoop, as they walked, to escape observation from below.

Reaching the skylight, they knelt down and craned their heads to peer through that portion of the glass frame which was roped open to ventilate the hall.

Immediately below them were the rows of crowded seats, and up from the big audience came roar after roar of laughter at some bit of nonsense being given on the stage.

Laura suddenly looked at Cora, to find that girl grinding her teeth with jealous hatred against the schoolgirl pierettes.

"Shall we, then?" whispered the daughter of Mrs. Dillon, slowly putting a hand into her coat-pocket.

"Yes, go on!" Cora was ready to say, her eyes aglint.

Then Laura drew something from her pocket. It was a tiny white-paper packet. She undid the folds at one end, and then held the packet just inside the skylight's open window, giving the package ever such a gentle shake.

That done, she drew back her hand, and both girls waited for results.

Soon enough they came!

A few moments more, and people in the audience were seized with paroxysms of sneezing. They wanted to laugh, and they could only sneeze and sneeze again.

Rapidly all the laughter that had been marking delighted interest in the chums' acting gave out, and it was Betty & Co.'s unnerving ordeal to have to carry on the acting in front of dozens of violent sneezers!

Such laughter as still went on had nothing to do with the girls' acting. It simply meant that those members of the audience who were not affected by the sudden fit of sneezing were most amused at those who were!

But the number who failed to "catch" the complaint very quickly dwindled.

To the dismay and confusion of the amateur actresses, they even realised that young and old alike were sneezing away by the dozen and the score.

What was to be done, then?

Could anything, short of a sudden alarm of fire, have been more unnerving to the girls?

They were only novices, and at the best it was a big strain on them to carry through the performance without "going to pieces." They had been all right during each performance, simply because they had such a sympathetic, indulgent audience. But now—

No wonder there was a sudden stupid pause in the stage dialogue.

No wonder the amateur actresses stood gazing at the sneezing audience, instead of carrying on in the hope that the strange disturbance would end as quickly as it had begun.

But even worse was to follow!

Just as Polly and one or two others were rising to the occasion, and were ready to urge the rest, in stage whispers, to carry on with the farce, they felt their own nostrils tingling.

In vain the poor girls strove to resume the dialogue. Simultaneously, three violent sneezes were given on the stage itself!

"Tishoo! Tishoo! Er—tishoo!"

"Oh, my gwacious—yes, wuw-wather!" gasped Paula, hurriedly getting out a handkerchief.

"Geals, I—tishoo! Tishoo!"

"Pepper!" Betty panted out, in between two sharp sneezes. "It's in the air. It's— A-tishoo! What shall we do, girls?"

"Tishoo!" sneezed Madge.

And for the moment that was really all they could do!

No matter what sort of a laughing stock they might be in the eyes of those members of the audience who were still escaping the epidemic, the schoolgirl pierettes simply stood and sneezed over and over again. They realised how ridiculous it was, and they wanted to laugh whilst they sneezed. At the same time, they knew that it was caused by somebody's practical joking, and they were furious.

Miss Redgrave was in the wings. She called and beckoned to the girls to come off, whilst she saw about letting drop the curtain.

But she did not know exactly how to lower the curtain, and so, after all, the discomfited girls were forced to remain upon the stage.

"My gwacious, what's it mean!" gasped Paula, wiping the water from her eyes. "This extra-ordinary inclination to—tishoo! Rushoo! Healp! Oh, dear, it's— Gurrushow!"

"Cora's doing, you may be sure!" Polly said passionately, as she also dabbed the water from her eyes. "There's pepper in the air—it's those girls upsetting the performance!"

Miss Redgrave, looking as angry as the girls had ever seen her, peered round the edge of the stage-curtain.

She was relieved to see that most of the afflicted people in the audience were now getting over their helpless sneezing. There were fewer nasal explosions and more peals of laughter now.

As fast as people recovered from the attack, they began to compare experiences one with another, and to wonder how the outbreak had been caused.

Was it the dampness of the hall? So some of them theorised; but the majority said—"Pepper!"

Then Miss Redgrave, raising her gaze to the roof of the building, saw the large skylight, a portion of it opened to assist the ventilation. With a fierce ejaculation, she flashed round and surprised the girls by rushing towards the exit that the stage-door offered.

"If I catch them!" they heard her muttering, in a very fury of indignation.

"Cora and that other girl?" exclaimed Polly excitedly, getting up from her seat, and going into the wings.

Meanwhile Miss Redgrave had gone towards the stage-door.

A flight of iron steps was close at hand, leading to the lofty scenery-doors, and thence to the roof itself. Up those steps rushed the youthful mistress.

Too late!

The miscreants were not to be caught. Good care had they taken to bolt off down the steps as soon as that mischievous discharge of pepper had done its harmless yet upsetting work!

Meantime Madge Minden was seized with the spirited impulse to restore order by playing the piano.

She struck up the first popular air that came to her mind, and next second Paula became infected with a desire to do something equally meritorious!

Hardly realising what she was about, the duffer of the Fourth Form got up from her seat, beaming. So Madge, when she reached the end of that particular chorus, did not start another. There was silence, with Paula suddenly and fatuously giggling.

"Haw, haw, haw! Yes, wather! Er—ladies and gentlemen; unaccustomed as I am to public sp— That is to say, don't you know, with your kind permission, I will now—er—er—"

Lucky for Paula she had a level-headed chum like Madge to come to the rescue. The girl pianist decided that she had better get going with one of Paula's songs, before the audience went off into fresh convulsions of laughter.

So, just in time to check the first titterings, Madge began to play "Annie Laurie." She heard Paula say: "Thanks, thanks! Yes, wather! Pweicisely." And then—

"Tishoo! Ladies and—tishoo! I much wegwet that after all I cannot—rushoo! Ah, deah, most distwessing! The pepper—my throat—wich contwalto—iwvitation of the membwane, what?"

"You silly duffer, come off!" came a whisper from Polly, who was in the wings. "You're making an idiot of yourself!"

"Who is?"

"You are!"

Paula thereupon walked to the wings, to have this out with Polly, and it would have been a most trying moment, indeed, for poor Madge, only Naomer came to the rescue.

Any pepper that still lingered in the air was not going to affect Naomer's dancing! She bowed, and kissed her hands to the audience, and then—with calm Madge switching into one of the dainty dances that she had so often played for the dusky scholar, at Morcove—Naomer simply held the audience spellbound.

"Bravo, bravo!" was the deafening shout that mingled with the handclaps, as the dance ended. "Encore, encore!"

But although the remainder of the performance was given according to programme, it was only natural for the schoolgirl pierrettes to feel that this first concert of theirs at Bacton had been "hashed up" very badly.

To the very end the audience was a restless one, with a good many people withdrawing in between the items, lest a fresh disturbance should occur. Those who sat it out gave the schoolgirl pierrettes many a consoling cheer after the National Anthem had been played. To hear these same people going off into fresh fits of laughter, however, as they passed from the hall, made the girls feel very humiliated.

"The annoying thing was, not to be able to step forward and say exactly who threw the pepper," was Miss Redgrave's vexed remark, as she was walking home to Marine Terrace with the girls.

"But how could I have named the culprits, even if we had caught them in the act, when one of them is a Morcove scholar!"

"Yes, that Cora!" said Betty, through her set teeth. "If only we had caught them in the act, both of them! As it is—"

"Cora always is cunning enough to escape being caught," Polly said under her breath to her chums. She was thinking of many a misdeed done at Morcove by Cora, about which Miss Redgrave would never know. "One of these days, though, we'll bowl her out!"

For the present, however, the laugh was certainly with both Cora Grandways and her holiday crony. Nor did they fail to enjoy it.

As the schoolgirl pierrettes passed in at the front door of the boarding-house, Cora and Laura appeared in the hall.

"I've been staying down to say good-night to you, Miss Redgrave," Cora grinned. "So don't say I never do the polite thing!"

"Some of the other guests got back from the concert ten minutes ago," remarked Laura, patting her hair very coolly. "Who upset the whole show by making everybody sneeze? Ha, ha, ha, it must have been funny!"

"We can guess who did it," Polly said furiously. Miss Redgrave was turning aside, refusing to answer the impudent miscreants.

"Can you prove it, though?" Cora twitted. "Come along, Laura dear, up to bed! Good-night, you others. Tishoo! Ha, ha, ha! A-tishoo, tishoo, tishoo!"

And the pair of them were still giving imitation sneezes as they ascended to their room.

Done in the Night!

"WHAT'S the time now, Laura?"

"It must be—yes, it is; half-past eleven!"

Question and answer came in guarded tonca

Cora and Laura were sitting about in dressing-gowns, in their balcony bed-room at the boarding-house, watching the moonlight on the sea.

The parade lamps had long since been switched off, and now all was dead silence down there, except for the monotonous splash of the waters. The house itself had been dead quiet for a full hour or more.

"I wonder if those girls in the room next door are asleep yet?" Cora whispered. "They stopped talking a long time ago."

"Amy Ashdown is one of them, Cora?"

"Yes! And there is only one other girl in there, we know—Helen Craig. I say, I've an idea!"

A cane chair creaked faintly as Laura Dillon bent forward to listen. The two girls had switched out their light, and the moonbeams seemed to enhance the couple's good looks—Laura's in particular, as she now sat in that attentive attitude, with the moonlight full upon her.

Cora lounged back, hands clasped behind her neck.

"There was a girl at Morcove School, Laura, who once had something on her mind. She babbled about it in her sleep, and so another girl got to know her secret. I am thinking—would Amy Ashdown be likely to give away the great secret whilst she slept?"

"My word, what a chance to try!" was Laura Dillon's whispered response, given with an excited sparkling of her handsome eyes in the moonlight. "We could creep round—"

"By way of this balcony window, yes!" nodded Cora, speaking as softly as before. "The girl must be worrying a lot about that secret of hers, in regard to the paper that your people want to get hold of. And so, perhaps—"

"Sh! Yes, we'll have a try, anyhow," Laura broke in, with a gesture implying that the pair of them could not speak too cautiously now. "But are they asleep yet, in there? Hadn't we better wait awhile longer?"

"I don't mind," was the subdued response. "It's jolly staying up on such a glorious night. Where are the cigs.?"

Again a cane-chair creak. This time it was Cora's, as she softly arose and fetched the cigarettes from the mantelpiece. They each took one, and then a match was struck.

Whilst the tiny flame was burning, the two looked into each other's eyes and grinned. They could have wanted nothing better than the "sprée" that this holiday was proving.

Resuming their seats, they sat silent now, the glow of the cigarettes coming and going upon their faces. Cora's expression was one of mere enjoyment, coupled with a certain malicious glee over the chance she was having of splitting the Study 12 chums. But Laura, when the red glow of the cigarette came upon her face, seemed to be thinking deeply, anxiously.

Was she pondering, perhaps, on what a narrow financial margin her parents were having that grand life at the Grange, and what a desperate necessity there was for them to get hold of that vital paper? The paper which plucky Amy had vowed they never should handle!

At last she tossed the stump of the cigarette into the grate, and stood up.

"Now, Cora! They must be fast asleep by now!"

"Right-ho."

Silently they crept forth on to the moonlit bal-

cony. The parade was still deserted, and likely to be until morning came again. The entire house-front was in darkness. As Cora had said, all they had to do was to clamber over one of the iron partitions that marked off each room's section of the balcony, and they would be outside the balcony-window of the other girls' room.

That that window would be standing wide open to the gentle breeze from off the sea they had not the least doubt.

Nor had another minute crept by before the crafty couple were at the neighbouring window, and it was indeed quite wide open, with the curtains left slightly drawn apart.

It was Laura who craned her head forward to listen, whilst still screened by the curtains. A few moments, and she made a sign to Cora that the girls must be fast asleep, they were breathing so deeply and so steadily.

Then into the bed-room itself they tiptoed, to stand motionless just beyond the windows, peering around and listening again.

By the light of the moon they could distinguish the occupants of the beds. With Helen Craig they were not concerned, except that they must be sure she was so sound asleep as not likely to be awakened when any whispering started.

For a brief space, therefore, they watched that girl as she lay reposing upon her side, the coverings drawn up to her cheek. She was absolutely passive—sleeping like a log, they were certain.

Thrilling with delight, the midnight intruders now turned without a sound and stole across to Amy Ashdown's bed. Again they watched and listened. Asleep—fast asleep, not the least doubt.

Cora and Laura met each other's eyes in the moonlight. A nod from Cora, and then the other girl was done with hesitation. She bent over and whispered in a very gentle, soothing tone:

"Amy—Amy!" A pause. "Amy, where is that paper hidden at the Grange?"

No response; nothing save the deep breathing of the girl, as she lay with her pretty hair brocadeing the white pillow.

"Amy," the persuasive whispering started afresh, "do tell me where you hid that paper—won't you?"

Would the desperate experiment succeed?

Apart from what had happened once at Morcove School, as Cora had mentioned just now, they could think of many instances when persons with something preying on the mind had spoken of it during sleep.

But Amy had given no response as yet, and it was Laura's delicate task now to make the questioning more insistent, without waking the girl.

"Amy dear," the daughter of Mrs. Dillon coaxed, "tell me at once, dear, where is that paper hidden? You will tell me, won't you, Amy? You—"

Hush! The questioned girl was suddenly sighing loudly, as if she would wake. Or was she going to answer at last?

Laura and Cora stood ready: either to flit away or stay and listen, whichever the next moment might demand.

"They'll never search the old boathouse," Amy suddenly spoke with appalling loudness, as it seemed to the excited listeners. "They'll never search—the boathouse."

She had answered them! And the answer was—"the old boathouse!"

The very building in which Amy herself had been locked up, at the Grange, to be bullied and starved into yielding up her secret, if the chums had not rescued her.

Should they ask her more? Dared they? No, it was too risky!

As to that the two girls were agreed. Trembling with the excitement of their triumph, they had all they could do not to blunder and make noises as they escaped from the room.

Now they were out on the balcony again. Over the iron dividing-bars they scrambled, and flitted in through their own balcony-window.

Then they stood quite still, with the moonlight flooding in upon them, the pair of them panting for breath.

"Done!" Laura exulted all at once, under her breath. "Cor, do you realise? We've got it—the secret! Just think how pleased my people will be! We actually know where the paper can be found!"

"The old boathouse—"

"She said it, didn't she—as plainly as any answer could be given?" was Laura's jubilant whisper. "She was dreaming that we were after the paper, I suppose. That's what made her speak

paper now, Laura! You see how I can be trusted—how gladly I have helped you?"

"Yes—well, listen then," was the tense whisper that came to Cora's ear. "The paper is a cypher, so my mother and father are convinced, to say where a great treasure is hidden at the Grange."

"Treasure?"

"Sh! Not so loud. There has always been a tradition about the Grange that it had a huge treasure hidden somewhere. My father has studied up the whole thing, and that's why he rented the place—so as to have the chance to search and search! As you know, he had no sooner discovered the paper than that young Amy got hold of it. But what does that matter now?"

"Not a scrap, Laura—"

"Now that she has blurted out in her sleep just where the paper is hidden! Well, good-night again, Cora. We simply must get to sleep."

"Good-night, Laura."

And at last they slept.



THANKS TO THEIR ENEMIES! "Ladies and—tishoo!" burst out Paula. "I much wewget that—tishoo! My thwoat—wich contwato—a-tishoo!" "You silly duffer, come off!" came a whisper from the wings as the girls saw how foolish Paula was making herself.

like that. "Never search the old boathouse! Won't we, though!"

"It is a win for your people now, Laura—an easy win," grinned Cora. "They have only to search the boathouse, and that shouldn't be the least trouble. When shall you let them know?"

"To-morrow, of course! You'll have to run me back to the Grange first thing in the morning, Cora."

"Right-ho! I shall enjoy doing that—and having a hand at searching the boathouse."

"To bed then, now," was Laura's urging whisper, whilst she threw off her dressing-gown. "It's awfully late, Cora, and we must be up early. I'll not be able to sleep, though, I am so excited! To think that we two girls have succeeded where my parents failed!"

The one girl was no more wrought up than the other when they were in bed. Neither could get to sleep, but they refrained from all talk, until suddenly Cora whispered:

"Look here, you can tell me more about that

If Amy Knew!

BETTY & CO. were down early next morning, getting a before-breakfast bath.

When they and Miss Redgrave came back to the boarding-house, towels under arms, they were surprised to see Cora Grandways' motor cycle and sidecar at the kerb.

They were still more surprised to see the two girls' luggage strapped to the grid.

"Going, are they?" was Polly's gasping comment. "What joy!"

"Yes, wather! Hooway, geals, if—"

The joyful fact was being confirmed by the ostentatious bestowal of last "tips" by the miscreants of overnight. The maid who was attending them to the door found some silver being very showily bestowed upon her.

"Oh, good-morning—and it's good-bye, too!" Cora said with her usual mocking sweetness, as the chums came up the steps. "We are off."

"How sad!" Polly said witheringly.

"You see," grinned Cora, "there was so much

sneezing last night, we feel we had better clear out before we catch the complaint."

"Tishoo!" sneezed Laura. "There I go again! Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Redgrave passed by the two girls stonily, and so the malicious couple could now hope to indulge in spiteful jeerings against Betty and the rest to the full.

"Well, good-bye, you worthy people," Cora said sarcastically. "We shall follow your great doings in the papers; for, of course, you will get all the publicity you can!"

Madge, always the one to be above bandying words, suddenly strode on into the house, and it proved a lead to the others. Even Polly felt it was best to repress the desire to retort to the goading couple, and so the next moment or two found Cora and Laura looking at the others' backs.

They rode away, grinning up to their ears. It was so lovely to think that Amy and her Morcove friends were feeling overjoyed at this abrupt departure, little knowing that the secret had been gleaned from Amy in the night!

Cora rode "all out" the whole distance back to the Grange, and the morning was still quite young when she and her holiday cronies drew up at the stone portico of the lonely country mansion. In great excitement, they rushed indoors, to be met in the hall by Laura's handsome mother.

"You girls back already!" was that woman's amazed comment. "I thought you were going to stay—"

"But there was no need! We have got what you wanted already!" was the daughter's triumphant cry. "Mother, it's splendid, you'll say! Where is dad?"

"He is away just at present, but—"

"Never mind; we can manage without him!" rushed on Laura, whilst they all three passed into a room that, like the rest of the place, was looking very untidy and neglected.

Mrs. Dillon closed the door.

"Yes, what?" she asked excitedly. "Tell me, then!"

"We know where the paper is hidden, mother! We—"

"What? Never! Amy has told you?"

"In her sleep!" both girls said tensely. "Last night—"

"You got the secret out of her like that?"

"No bullying of her mother—nothing like that," was Laura's exultant whisper. "We crept into her room and put questions to her, whilst she was asleep and very likely dreaming of the paper. We knew it was a ruse that has been known to answer in other cases, and so—"

"Where is the paper, then—where?" panted Mrs. Dillon.

"Hidden in the old boathouse!"

"The boathouse!"

In a flash, Mrs. Dillon was at the window, gazing across the private park to where, at the head of a large ornamental lake, the massive-looking, stone-built boathouse stood.

"Hidden there?"

"Yes, mother. And, when you come to think, it is just the sort of place Amy might have been expected to choose!" Laura spoke on excitedly. "Away from the mansion, and yet—"

"I must go at once, and start the search!" interrupted her mother, in great agitation. "How can I wait a moment, when so much depends upon the finding of that paper? We may even have it ready to show your father, Laura, when he returns presently!"

"And then, mother?"

"Yes! Do you two girls wish to come and join in the search?" Mrs. Dillon said quickly, on her way to the door. "You may, if you wish. Cora Grandways, I am sure, that you, being Laura's friends, can be trusted?"

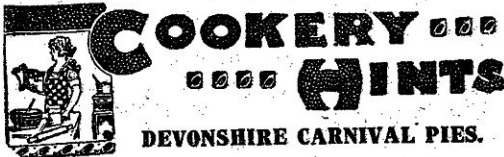
"Certainly, Mrs. Dillon! As I have told Laura—"

"Then come, both of you!"

And a few minutes later they were in the old boathouse, resolved to hunt the place through, resolved not to leave it again until they had found the secret document which would speak of the treasure hidden at the Grange.

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Has all Amy's carefulness gone for nothing? Have the plotters discovered the truth about the paper she has hidden? You will find that out in next week's fine long complete tale of the Morcove chums, which is entitled: "Kept From Her Friends!"



A DEAR and quaint old Devonshire lady gave May and me this recipe for carnival pies—she makes and sells them in her village shop—and when we ourselves tried the recipe, we were delighted with the result.

Carnival Pies.

Required: Short paste, pieces of stale cake of any kind, yolk of egg and cold milk.

This is an excellent recipe for using up small pieces of left-over cake, and as May and I have prepared many bungalow teas during the seaside holiday, we have accumulated some cake remnants in our cake tin.

We first made a short paste. As the weather was very hot, and the cottage does not boast an ice chest, the margarine was oily. So instead of rubbing it

into the flour, as is the usual method for making short paste, we put the flour and margarine in a basin and stirred them together with a fork. This blended the two ingredients as well as if the rubbing method had been used, and easily overcame the difficulty of handling the oiled margarine.

Whilst I was making the short paste, and rolling it into a strip, May prepared the filling for the pies.

The Pie Filling.

The pieces of stale cake were broken into small pieces and then crumbed. The crumbs were put in a basin, and moistened with the beaten yolk of egg and cold milk. The mixture was allowed to stand so that the stale cake soaked up the milk, more being added as required. We were careful not to add too much milk, as the mixture must be well moistened, but should not be made too wet.

The short paste being ready, I lined some small, deep pie tins with it, and cut lids of paste to fit them.

The pies were filled with the mixture, and covered with the lids. The tops of the pies were next brushed over with cold water, then sprinkled with a little white sugar and baked in a moderate oven until a pale brown.

DOLLY HOPE.