

THE PAPER WITH STORIES THAT ALL SCHOOL-
GIRLS LIKE BEST!

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



"HAVE YOU SEEN OUR
MISSING SCHOOL-
FELLOW?"

(A dramatic moment from the *only*
complete Morcove School story inside.)

A splendid complete story of the girls of Morcove.

A SCARIE FOR THE SCHOOL!



By
**MARJORIE
STANTON.**

An Attack on the "Cap!"

DIANA FORBES came to Study 12 at Morcove School with a rather important air.

"Betty—"

Betty Barton rested her pen.

"Well, Diana?"

"Some of us would like to have a word with you, if you'll come downstairs?"

"Downstairs?" echoed the Form captain wonderingly. It was late in the evening, and so hardly the time for any gathering below.

"In the class-room. We thought," said Diana, giving an officious note to the "we," "that we would make it there."

"Oh, all right! I'll come."

"Look sharp, then!"

Betty, after that parting injunction from Diana, smiled across the study table at Polly Linton.

"The check!" said Polly.

"Yes, wather," drawled Paula, who appeared to be learning up something out of a book whilst reclining in the easy-chair. "Just when we are all gwapping with pwp., too!"

"What the diggings!" was Naomer's exclamation, as she turned away from the corner cupboard. "Just when I was going to see about refreshments!"

"But," suggested Betty, laying a blotter over her page of writing, "you others needn't come if you don't want."

"Oh, we must!" declared Polly, jumping up. "I can tell what Diana's game is now!"

"I don't like the way that girl is going on lately," murmured Betty, also rising. "Anything to get a hit at us. It wouldn't matter a scrap, only it disturbs the Form. She has been rushing round again, I suppose, making mountains out of molehills."

"I expect," Polly reflected aloud, "Pam had better come down with us? It's sure to be something to do with Pam and the missing casket!"

It has been one sensation after another for Morcove ever since Pam Willoughby brought the Casket of Kangpur to the school, and now comes the biggest sensation of all. What that is and what the school does about it, you will read in the exciting story below.

"That's what I think," agreed the Form captain. "So we'll find Pam."

She was only next door but one, at work with Helen Craig. In the end, all the chums of Study 12 proceeded downstairs together to the Fourth Form class-room.

With varying looks they filed in—Betty, rather grave; Polly, indignant; Naomer, ripe for fun; Paula, rather distressed. Madge Minden was serious; Tess Treclawney, irritable. Helen Craig had a perplexed frown. Only Pam Willoughby looked—bored!

"Quite a meeting!" smiled Pam carelessly, as they all saw what a number of girls were in their places, whilst Diana Forbes was taking charge.

Standing at the desk used by the Form-mistress in class-room hours, Diana kept a chilly silence, plainly desiring the rest of the meeting to do the same, until Betty & Co. had got to their places.

"Present!" Naomer roguishly answered an imaginary roll-call with a shout that made the silence seem absurd.

"That will do," snapped Diana. "We don't want any of your nonsense, Naomer."

"Then what the diggings do you want? Bekas—"

"Order!" cried Eva Merrick, a girl who was generally ready to back up Diana. "Stop rotting, Naomer!"

"It's about that business of the lost casket," Diana bleakly informed the Study 12 girls. "Some of us feel a bit annoyed at the announcement you made, Betty, a few hours ago."

"Do you?" returned Betty. "I'm sorry to hear that, but I would like to know where the grievance comes in?"

"I'm going to explain," came Diana's tart response. "The casket that Pam brought away from her home, to keep in her study, was found to be missing awhile ago. Promptly you, Betty, as captain, go and pass round word that amounts to—well, I call it an insult!"

"Oh, rubbish!" Polly exclaimed, jumping up. "If that's all—"

"Order! Sit down, Polly!"

"Well, such utter nonsense—"

"It isn't!" was Eva's counter cry. "Just have the decency to listen, Polly!"

Diana, smiling now that two at least of the captain's chums had got the wrong-side of the meeting, resumed officiously:

"You set word round, Betty, that unless the casket turned up within half an hour, it would be considered to have been stolen."

"Quite right," nodded Betty. "It seemed best to allow an hour for anyone who, perhaps, had been playing a joke with the thing, to think better of it and quietly put it back."

"The casket has not been returned?" Diana remarked.

"No."

"So, going by what you said when you gave that notice, you now conclude that it has been stolen?"

"That's it," agreed Betty. "And what's wrong with that?"

Diana smiled and shrugged, giving looks to the girls in general which invited hostility towards the captain. But Betty, the meeting seemed to consider, was showing a spirited defence of her recent action. There was no murmuring against her.

"The casket, you say, has been stolen—by a Fourth Form girl?"

Then Betty stood up.

"I don't say anything of the sort, Diana! I simply—"

"Oh, but—"

"Am I to be heard?" Betty calmly appealed to the meeting. "After being brought here—"

"Yes, go on, Betty!" Diana, don't interrupt!" came fair-minded cries from different parts of the room. "Give Betty a chance!"

"I am perfectly willing, I am sure!" Diana declared loftily. "An explanation is certainly needed, as I have been saying to all of you."

"Then let Betty get on with it!" shouted Polly. "Ugh, you Diana!"

"Wasting ze time like this," sang out Naomer. "When we might all be having refreshments before call-over. What the diggings! Ah, bah, I shall go!"

And, suiting action to the word, the dusky one did a sudden bolt, amidst great laughter.

"I honestly believe it is a sheer waste of time," Betty resumed, with a smiling gravity. "But I don't want anyone to go away before this unpleasantness has been ended. If Diana and some of you others feel that I have cast a slur upon the Form, then you are quite, quite mistaken."

"Hear, hear!" cried Polly.

"I thought you all understood the position," Betty said warmly. "For the second time that casket of Pam's was suddenly missing from her study. She had just been warned over the phone by her father to take great care of it—and it was lost again! The first time it was lost Pam took it far too good-naturedly. But this second time—well, even Pam saw that there must be no more nonsense."

The meeting was following Betty's remarks so eagerly, Diana impatiently walked about.

"That is to say," Betty continued, "we had to know for certain whether it was a jape or—a theft. As captain, I put word round that an

hour would be granted, to give any japer a chance of putting back the casket before a row was made. If that wasn't fair, I don't know what is!"

And she sat down.

"But," broke out Diana, before any comments could be voiced, "was it fair to suppose that there had been a jape?"

Up sprang Betty again.

"It was more than fair; it was jolly good-natured of Pam. I say Pam, because she was all for treating it as a possible jape and not having a fuss made. Look here," Betty addressed the meeting, quite fiercely, "would any of you rather have had it regarded as a theft from the very start? Supposing there had been a great fuss made, ending in a big rowing for some girl who had only wanted to be funny at Pam's expense!"

"Meaning—me!" said Diana. "You know very well, Betty—you and your chums had me in mind all the time!"

"And if we did," cried Polly, on her feet again, "wasn't there some excuse?"

"No—"

"Oh, all right! We know better!"

"But where is your grievance now, anyway?" Betty challenged Diana. "Since the idea that it was a jape has been dropped?"

"You needn't adopt that tone to me!" fired up Diana. "You seem to forget that lots of us have feelings! You are kind enough to grant that no one has been larking about with the casket. And so, one of us must be—a thief! Is that much better?"

Betty rose again, laughing bitterly.

"Why will you give such a horrid twist to everything, Diana, putting thoughts into others' minds? I have not said that we know for certain a Fourth Form girl has stolen the casket. What I do say is that we know for certain it has been stolen! To fetch me down here simply to hammer a point like that into you all—"

"Well!" objected Diana aggrievedly. "Look at the way you left it! I'm not the only one!"

"If there are a dozen, then," Betty rapped out, "I take jolly good care they don't go away from here before I've hammered it home! Girls"—she again appealed to the meeting, amidst which there were shame-faced juniors who had obviously been misled by Diana—"listen!

"The one object has been to avoid making a fuss about nothing! The casket is very valuable, and we had to know for certain, within an hour at least, whether its loss should be made known or not. Of course, it's a rotten thing for the Form and the whole school that we have to treat it as a theft. No one will be comfortable until the matter is cleared up. But—"

She paused.

"I've nothing to regret," she said spiritedly, "except this! I only wish now that I, as captain, had taken the same sort of action that first time the casket was missing!"

Diana, reduced to silence, shook her head. But if she chose to be still dissatisfied, others did not.

Murmurings came from all over the meeting, and here and there girls got up to go. Many had only joined the conclave at the entreaty of those few who had listened too readily to Diana's assurance that the captain had done the Form an injustice. They were more than satisfied, now, that there was "nothing in it."

It only needed a word of calm scorn, and the

meeting would be glad enough to melt away. Nor did one of the Study 12 coterie fail to supply that word.

"Well, I have work to do, if others haven't," said Pam.

"And I!"

"And I!"

There was a general uprising; a good deal of stalking past Diana by girls who felt they had been "had." A few moments, and she looked like being left with only Eva Merrick; but a certain girl turned back to speak. It was Ursula Wade.

"I'm sorry," Ursula sympathised, with her sickly smile. "Cutting short the meeting like this is hardly fair on you, Diana. But there! It never answers to criticise the cap!"

"If they'd waited," Diana seethed, "they'd have seen I was not merely criticising! I consider Betty and her lot owed me an apology—one that should have been given in front of the Form!"

"Anyhow, it's taught them to be more careful of what they say," was Eva's soothing comment. "You've done that amount of good, Di. They'll think twice before trying to put the theft on to you and me, as they were ready to put the japing, if there had been any."

"Bother the rotten old casket," muttered Diana. "I wish now that I never had said a word about it! All I did say was that too much fuss was being made about it."

"And I'm sure," fawned Ursula, "you had the right to make fun of it. Only in the last few hours has it been known that the thing was really valuable. Er—why is it so valuable, Diana? Have you heard?"

"What should I hear!" shrugged Diana. "I don't belong to the Study 12 set! Come on, Eva!"

And they walked off, making it clear to Ursula that they had little use for her, even though she might be disposed to take sides with them.

Ursula, however, was by no means inclined that way at heart. Her only purpose in staying behind to talk with Diana and Eva had been to try to see if they had any information to impart about the casket. Why was it now known to all the Form that the casket was of great value? That was what Ursula wanted to find out.

She, the generally—and deservedly—despised member of the Fourth, never had other girls running up to tell her the latest news. So, this evening, she had felt that some girls might be aware of facts about which she was ignorant. She had come to the so-called meeting in the hope of seeing Pam herself drawn into giving a very dramatic explanation. But Pam had said nothing!

Suddenly Ursula went from

the otherwise deserted class-room and ascended to the Fourth Form quarters. At any minute, now, the bell for call-over would be ringing. Meantime—was there a chance, perhaps, of over-hearing confidential talk going on in Study 12? An ear at the keyhole, and one might glean a lot!

But the sneakish girl was to meet with an exasperating disappointment.

All she heard, after creeping to the Form captain's closed door, was some very general talk, while Naomer passed round the "refreshments." Yet Pam was there—Pam, from whom the casket had been stolen!

"I don't know how she can take it so calmly," was Ursula's sullen comment to herself as she sneaked away.

For Ursula herself was in a fever about it all. She wanted to know in what way the casket was so valuable; she wanted to know who had it now. She, who had stolen the casket in the first place, when its disappearance was attributed to a jape—she wanted to know!

Valuable, and it had been in her possession that time! Ah, if only it had remained there, in secret! More valuable than she had ever deemed it to be, and now—now some other thief had it, and she could only wonder who that other thief was!



Ursula Wade stopped dead suddenly, while her heart pounded. In the full beam of the light and not three paces ahead of her was—the Casket!

Does Nobody Know ?

HALF an hour later all Morcove knew that Pam Willoughby must have reported the loss of the casket to the headmistress.

Miss Somerfield, with the girls mustered before her in Big Hall, had been making her usual mention of current matters. With a pause, as if to add impressiveness to her next utterance, she remarked:

"I suppose none of you girls can say anything about the disappearance of a valuable Burmese curio from Pamela Willoughby's study? It was missed soon after tea to-day, and it will be a very serious matter if it is not recovered."

A great stillness was upon the assembled school now. What else was Miss Somerfield going to say?

Of all who had that question running in their minds, none was more excited than Ursula Wade.

For hers was the secret and special interest of one who had handled the casket! She had owned it for that little while at least, as a thief—only to see it in the hands of Pam Willoughby again!

"I have only this to say," Miss Somerfield continued: "an opportunity was very fairly given, before the loss was made known to me, for any girl who had been playing a foolish trick with the casket to put it back. No one has availed herself of that fair chance, and so, if at any time from now onwards a scholar is found to be in possession of the casket, she will be deemed to have stooped to thieving. But I cannot believe that any Morcovian has so disgraced herself and the school!"

Dismiss followed, and the Forms filed out, to mount to the dormitories. Amongst the Fourth Form there was much comment on Miss Somerfield's remark about the opportunity that had been "very fairly given." Thus was Study 12 vindicated and the captain's prestige more than restored! Diana, twitted not a little, was glad to get to bed to-night and pretend not to pay any heed.

Different from Ursula, who was paying closest heed to all the bed-time chatter in the hope of hearing facts about the casket and perhaps a theory or two as to who had taken it.

But in vain the sneak-girl of the Form kept her ears on—the alert. Pam was living up to her old reputation of being serenely disposed. That girl refused to "keep on" about her loss. Her father would be over in the morning. Mean-time—bed!

So, at last, Ursula was lying awake in the darkened dormitory, her mind in an utter turmoil. Why—why was the casket so valuable? And when they spoke of value, what did they mean? A hundred pounds—as much as that? Or even more? Very likely. Curious often went into such big figures. And to think that she had once had hold of the thing!

If—if the casket had vanished, that second time, in the night, then she would have known whom to regard as the thief. Madame Khan, at the bungalow, or her elder daughter, Sherami, acting for her!

As it was, Ursula had been compelled by reasoning to rule out the Khans in connection with this second theft. The casket had been taken from Pam's study some time during the afternoon. That being so, how could anyone from the bungalow have been the thief?

No. It seemed to Ursula that the school owned scans other girl who had been just as

covetous as she. Diana? Could it be Diana Forbes? That girl's touchiness over the whole mystery rather made one wonder.

And yet Diana, whatever her faults and failings, was not the sort to be hard pressed for money, or to stoop to stealing if she was. Perhaps she had taken the thing out of spite against Pam, and simply did not mean to put it back?

Ursula could not sleep to-night. Round and round in her brain went thoughts of the previous night's thrilling escapade.

She could not get over the exasperation of having stolen the casket so easily and safely, and then its being recovered by Pam. Also, she was continually thinking of that staggering discovery which had been the outcome of her search for a hiding-place for the casket.

That secret passage—the tunnel under the grounds, leading from the mysterious entrance near the implement-shed, right into the school-house! There again she was faced with one big WHY!

Why had that secret passage been made, if not to serve smuggling purposes in the old days? And why, then, should there not be treasure down there still? Only once had she been along the tunnel, and then she had been far too agitated to go slowly, looking for a possible treasure-chest. She had hurried wildly along, convinced that she was being followed!

Nor was there any doubt that someone had come after her last night. But to-night—supposing she ventured into the tunnel from the schoolhouse end to-night? Would she meet with the same bad scare?

It would not have been Ursula Wade to be able to go to sleep after having a thought like that. The maddening loss of the casket only made her feel the lure of the mysterious passage all the more. Ursula's nature was always a covetous one, and the thought of possible treasure in the secret tunnel was too alluring to be dismissed.

She heard the midnight bell, and remained awake. At long last came ONE!—just the single stroke of Morcove's deep-toned bell.

The same dead hour at which she had left her bed the previous night. Should she go again—should she? Why not?

Presently she put off the bed-coverings and set foot to floor.

Stealthily she donned her day attire and shoes, not liking to go down simply in dressing-gown and slippers. In her pocket was the torch used last night, with plenty of current still left.

If only she could steal away in safety, there was no reason why she should not make a good search down there. Far easier than last night's venture—for to-night she need not go into the open air.

Five minutes later Ursula came to the old clothes cupboard that was behind the ground-floor hall and under the stairs.

She listened, felt sure that all was safe, and drew open the door.

Creeping in, she drew the door shut, then switched on the torch.

A kind of vanity made her smile as she gazed around. Other girls and the mistresses and staff only knew this great cupboard as a handy place for storing amateur-theatricals stuff—costumes, bits of scenery, and stage "props." She alone knew that in one of these panelled walls there was a secret door.

"What a shame; what an awful pity," she

was thinking, "if I don't make something out of this! The only one who knows!"

She crossed the littered floor and took her stand in front of that small section of the panelling which comprised the secret door.

Ursula remembered that, so far as she had noticed last night, there was no visible means, on this side, of opening the door. It could hardly be expected. And yet those who fashioned the secret passage must have had some contrivance for getting the inside wooden hasp to work from the outside? Shining the light over the section of panelling, she could find nothing—except a mousehole. At least, so anyone would have taken it to be.

Suddenly it occurred to her that the tiny hole might supply her need. By putting in a finger, perhaps—

Yes! Her heart was leaping now, for the finger she had inserted into the hole had encountered the bottom edge of a wooden strut. That was the *hasp!*

She understood. The secret door was made to open from this outer side in a way just as simple as many a stable door is made to open—with a hole through which one could push up the hasp with a finger.

Desperately hard she prised with one finger now, and at last the wooden hasp on the inner side flew up. Then she could draw open the door, and the dark, mysterious passage was before her.

Stealthy as a thief in the night, she ventured in, then drew the door shut behind her.

Now!

Now to examine every yard of the tunnel, keeping a special look-out for any recess where a long-lost treasure might be found. It was such a recess that she had stood a good chance of missing, last night, in her haste and excitement.

She went forward, shining the torch. Her timidity, to-night, was not nearly so great, although she was not unaffected by the creepy nature of the place.

The spirit of adventure was a minus quantity in Ursula. Another girl might have been lured to this spot again by sheer love of exploring. Ursula was simply out for gain. Unless she found something valuable—well, she would far rather have stayed in bed.

On and on; twenty, thirty, forty paces from the entrance. Still nothing for her to get excited about. The wonder of such a human contrivance, fashioned in older days, did not impress itself upon her. She never paused to see where a bit of the wall had been rendered safe by brickwork, and where there was pure rock. Was there going to be no great find? That was the point!

Like all those who are out for undeserved gain, she soon grew impatient, bad-tempered, at meeting with nothing.

And then, suddenly, she stopped dead, giving a loud gasp.

Amazement and joy surged up in her. Right in

Miss Massingham, coming to the breakfast table, noticed the empty seat. "Where's Ursula Wade?" she wanted to know at once.



the way of the beam of light, and not three paces ahead of where she stood, was nothing else than—the casket!

Her heart pounded.

"My word!" she panted to herself. "But—but—"

The casket—she had come upon it here, in the secret tunnel. She had found it again, which meant that she could steal it again!

Only, this time, obviously, she would be stealing it from some other thief.

That other thief—who was it? One of the Burmese, after all? Still Ursula could not see how that was possible, but what did it matter, anyway? So she was saying to herself, whilst the covetous delight mounted within her.

"Mine again!" she exulted, going towards the casket, where it stood upon the floor of the tunnel. "And the beauty of it is—"

She paused in her self-whisperings, whilst taking it up, the torch still burning.

"Finding it like this—after someone else has stolen it—makes it so much better for me! Oh, this is great! I can—"

And there she broke off. Not her breath only, but her very heart seemed to fail her. She felt suddenly frozen with fear.

Someone coming!

Nor had that conviction held her for more than one terrifying moment, when her frightened eyes saw a dark figure rushing at her.

It was no one who had come after her from the cupboard entrance. It was someone who had entered at the other end, in the grounds. And—it was Sheram Khan!

Missing From School!

MORNING sunshine, suddenly striking in upon the Fourth Form dormitory, joined with the first bell in opening many a junior's eyes.

Polly Linton, turning upon her back, gave a prodigious yawn. But Naomer, not to be outdone, answered with an "enormous" yawn—one that caused Paula Creel to rise up in alarm.

"Good gwacious!"

"Good-mornink!" responded Naomer. "How do you feel for another day of work, Paula?"

A groan answered the question.

"However," Paula added, a few moments later, "there is one gvatifying thought, geals. A halfer, this afternoon."

"And a glorious one it will be!" cried Polly, already out of bed and at a window. "Another topping day—hurrah!"

"Why weren't we up at sunrise, doing a run down to the shore and back?" Betty regretted. "Why didn't someone wake me?"

"Bokas," said Naomer, whilst she sprang from bed, "there was nobody to wake everybody else!"

"Hallo, though, someone's up before us!" came Helen Craig's comment on an empty bed. "Where's Ursula, then?"

"What!" laughed Polly. "Has Ursula put us to shame? Bravo, Ursula! I like to be fair. Up before the rest of us is something to her credit."

Then the talk turned again upon the grand morning that it was. Not one of these girls had even the ghost of a misgiving on account of Ursula. That time of the year had come when any of them, waking by accident at an unusually early hour, would feel like getting up and getting out of doors.

"Well, Pam!" exclaimed Betty, when most of the chums were going downstairs together. "I wonder what time your father will get here?"

"And what will he have to say when he does, turn up?" was Polly's glum rejoinder. "It is a pity about that missing casket, Pam. He's going to be badly upset."

"Oh, not very badly!" Pam corrected, with her usual gay assurance. "It takes a good deal to upset dad. Anyway, he knows that it's gone, for you remember that I phoned last evening."

"And he didn't, even when you rang him up to tell him, have anything to say as to why the casket was suddenly known to be valuable?"

It was Helen Craig who had asked that question. Pam shook her finely-poised head.

"I'm afraid I did most of the talking, before we got switched off," she smiled, "explaining how the casket had vanished once before. Only I told him I found it, so it might come to hand again, mightn't it?"

"Might!" echoed Polly. "You are a one, Pam, for taking things calmly."

"I don't know so much," returned the little lady of Swanlake. "Look at the way somebody must have calmly taken the casket!"

They reached the front porch and stood grouped to receive the early morning sunshine and the fresh, soft breeze.

"Do wish we had been down earlier!" sighed Pam. "In time for a run as far as the bungalow and back, before brekker! Talking of that, I shouldn't be surprised if Sherami Khan looks across presently."

"Quite likely," agreed Betty. "She seemed very concerned on your account, Pam, over the loss of the casket."

They all sauntered farther into the open air, whilst other girls, in twos and threes, came running out by that sunny porch.

During the next fifteen minutes Pam might

have revelled in being a centre of interest if she had been that sort. As it was, she began to have less and less patience with girls who ran up to ask if there was any news of the casket—whether it had even turned up again.

"Just as if," she remarked to her chums, going in to "brekker" at last, "the news would not have been all over the school in a moment if there had been any! Some girls are such fidgets over a thing like this."

Betty and the rest exchanged grins. They knew one girl, who, for her part, was such a marvel of cool composure.

Miss Massingham, coming to her place at the breakfast-table at once noticed a vacant seat.

"Where's Ursula Wade then?"

The Form was inclined to wax facetious over Ursula's unique action in being out of bed before anyone else. Miss Massingham was gaily informed that Ursula had done the wonderful thing—gone for an early morning ramble.

"But she should be back by now. She should not be late for breakfast, like this. She was late yesterday morning," the Form-mistress remembered testily. "It would serve her right to her to have to go without."

But the complete breakfast was kept in readiness for Ursula. There was a covered hot dish, with her ration of grilled bacon, on the table when the Form rose. Ursula had not shown up, and there might have been some flights of fancy as to what she had done with herself, only the sound of an arriving car caused a bit of a stir.

Mr. Willoughby!

Here was Pam's father, as early as this!

Far speedier than Pam herself, other girls ran out to meet him as he got down from his car. He was thus in the thick of quite a crowd when Pam arrived with her casual:

"Hallo, dad!"

"Ah, Pam," he responded, returning her loving smile. "And now, what about it? Do you know you've cost me quite an hour's loss of sleep in the night!"

"Poor thing!" she murmured. "I'm awfully sorry."

"But not so very concerned about that casket!" was his half-admiring comment on her airy looks.

"Pam takes after her father, sir!" cried Polly. "I hope she doesn't," he said; but Pam declared:

"I hope I do! Anyhow, dad, there it is; or, rather, there it isn't! The thing has vanished, and all we can say is that it wasn't a jape. You would like to have a word with Miss Somerfield, dad?"

"I must, my dear."

"And do I stay around—out of school? I should do?" Pam suggested blandly. "I and my chums, of course?"

A bit of a twinkle came into Mr. Willoughby's eyes.

"I'll see, Pam! But you had better all come along with me for the present, anyhow."

Thereupon, at the tail of the procession, Naomer did a caper, whilst Paula beamed. Study 12 had high hopes of missing first school and taking part, instead, in a very fascinating inquiry.

Mr. Willoughby's name was taken in to the head-mistress, and he, as soon as he was asked to go forward to the private room, said that Pam and the rest had better come with him. That was Pam's father, "taking the tip" from Pam her-

self! Betty and the others could have cheered them both.

"Morning, Miss Somerfield!" he blithely returned her cordial greeting. "You don't mind these girls of yours coming in? We may need to ask them a few questions."

"Certainly," responded Miss Somerfield, with a look that asked Betty & Co. to line up. "Mr. Willoughby, this is a very distressing business about the missing casket."

"But please don't let it distress you," he pleaded earnestly. "I have a daughter whose shoulders are very well able to bear the whole trouble—without the least concern!"

"Ah," exclaimed Miss Somerfield, whilst she smiled at this fatherly allusion to Pam's serene nature, "but I am bound to feel distressed, when it is from Morcove School that such a valuable curio has vanished!"

"That is, if there really has been a theft. But has there?" questioned Mr. Willoughby comfortingly. "Surely there is still plenty of room for doubt? Girls will be girls, just as much as boys will be boys. A practical joke—so much more likely."

"I wish I could think so," sighed the headmistress. "But—no doubt Pam has told you—a very sensible chance was given in the way of a warning. The girls themselves acted very commendably, with a view to avoiding a needless upset. But nothing resulted. This morning, we are as much in the dark as ever."

Mr. Willoughby became graver.

"Of course, some practical joker may be keeping hold of the casket still; but if so," he muttered, "it doesn't show a sense of fair play."

"No, indeed," agreed Miss Somerfield sternly. "As I myself warned the school last night, if any girl is found with the casket now—well, she'll have a difficulty in satisfying me as to why it was not put back! One thing let me beg you to believe, Mr. Willoughby. We have no servants who could ever stoop to thieving. We have had the same staff for years—faultless characters, all of them. Their integrity has been proved over and over again."

"Quite," Pam's father nodded. "And there has been no sign of the schoolhouse having been entered?"

"None."

"Besides, dad," put in Pam quietly, "the casket went in the day-time, don't forget. It was in my study after dinner yesterday; I didn't look in there until a little while after tea, and then it was gone."

The father met Miss Somerfield's eyes again.

"That, surely, suggests a whisking away of the thing by one of the girls? The time of day when it vanished! You know, I am inclined to believe that someone has been having a game, and that is all. I am glad to be able to favour that theory still."

"And I—I simply cannot!" deplored Miss Somerfield. "Can you, Pam—or you others?" They shook their heads.

For a few moments there was silence. Then Pam's clear voice asked:

"But, dad, does it matter so frightfully much, after all? The casket didn't look so very valuable, anyhow. I mean, even as a curio—well, you have heaps of things much more fascinating to look at!"

"This time yesterday," the father murmured, "I would not have cared twopence what hap-

pened to the thing. It was only one of my knicks of junk; one of some hundreds of knick-knacks that I brought home from Burma. But now—"

"Yes, dad?" Pam asked, showing eager interest at last. He had made such an impressive pause. The other girls and Miss Somerfield— they hung upon his next words.

"It's like this—a most startling thing altogether," he resumed gravely. "You know I did a good deal of photography out there in Burma—Pam, you have shown your chums some of my albums, I fancy?"

"Oh, yes, dad!"

"Yes, wather! Weally wonderful!" Paula added her murmur to that of others, whilst Naomir exclaimed excitedly:

"Ooo, yes, bekas that night we are all at Swanlake, when Madame Khan turn up with her daughters—I look through one of ze albums with Lotilla, and they were gorjus pictures!"

"Some of them wanted some getting, anyhow," Mr. Willoughby smiled reminiscently. "Well, then; yesterday afternoon I took up one of the albums—it happened to be lying about. Very likely it was the one that you, Naomir, looked through with Lotilla that evening. I started turning over the pages, and suddenly I got a bit of a shock."

The listeners' breathing quickened, for they knew that something very thrilling was coming now.

"It was when I looked at one photograph that I've always rather prized," Pam's father resumed quietly. "One of those that took some getting! But that story would take some time to tell. Anyhow, the photo I mean was of an old Burmese temple—the interior. It was the Temple of Kangpur, in one of the teak forests. I got a very good picture, showing plenty of detail, and—here is the strange thing! Often though I have looked at that photo, never, until yesterday, had I seen that it showed—"

"The casket?" broke from all the girls, in their great excitement, and Pam's father nodded.

"The very same casket! If you saw the photo now you would see the casket, placed in what I may call the altar part of the temple."

"But, dad!" came from Pam. "If the casket belonged to that temple, and you didn't steal it—which, of course, you would never have dreamed of doing—how on earth did you ever come to bring it home to this country?"

"That's easily answered," he smiled ruefully, "but the answer makes me feel very small. I'm in no better category than all the heaps of other people who, at different times, have been too easy-going over their 'collecting.' In plain words, I bought what somebody else had looted!"

"Stolen?" exclaimed Miss Somerfield, in a tone of horror. "From that Burmese temple—a sacred object, as I suppose the casket must have been? You brought a thing like that home to England with you!"

"In my utter ignorance—yes," he assented glumly. "And now, wouldn't I give a hundred pounds—a thousand, if you like—to be able to return it! I hate the idea of that temple out there in the teak forest being the poorer for the loss of the casket! I know enough of the country and its people to realise what such a robbery might mean."

Pam spoke tensely:

"Dad, supposing—oh, supposing it had been

traced to you! They might have fancied that you stole it! And then—"

She drew in her breath sharply. Pam was concerned enough now.

"Would your life have been safe, dad?"

"Very likely not," he answered composedly. "But it is all so long ago; don't you get windy on that account, Pam—all this distance from Burma, too! Oh, no, there is nothing to fear!" he assured his listeners; but the sudden sense of dread was not to be easily dispelled. "The casket was valuable, though—prized beyond all else, most likely, by the priests of that temple. And so, as I say, I would give a good deal to be able to send it back, with my apologies, as it were."

A lengthy silence ensued, and a hush seemed to be upon this room and upon the whole school-house. Partly, no doubt, that was due to the Forms having gone into class. But Betty & Co. felt that it was a tragic silence, which they themselves were unable to break.

"If only you had known before!" Miss Somerfield exclaimed suddenly. "If only Pam had never taken a fancy to that casket, bringing it to the school!"

"It was—unlucky," Mr. Willoughby agreed. "Up to yesterday afternoon I just didn't attach any special value to the thing."

"I am sure I didn't," murmured Pam, "until you phoned. It was just a handy work-basket, and that was all. Dad, I am so sorry!"

"My dear girl, as if you were to blame!"

"Still, there it is! I—I feel that I have done something that may—I don't know—bring trouble upon you! Unlucky! That's the word."

"One thing I see," Miss Somerfield broke out uneasily. "We had better not make the theft of the casket from the school too widely known. It might—it might become known in dangerous quarters!"

"You must not be over-alarmed," Mr. Willoughby counselled them all stoutly. "At the same time, it might be better not to circulate a description of the casket."

At this instant there came a tap at the door, and Miss Somerfield voiced a "Come in!" To the surprise of Betty & Co. and the headmistress, it was a Fourth Form girl, not one of the servants, who entered.

"Yes, Etta? Is it urgent?" asked Miss Somerfield. "We are discussing an important matter."

"It's about Ursula Wade, please," came Etta Hargrove's explanation. "Miss Massingham wishes to know what is to be done about her. She is still absent—"

"Absent? Ursula absent?"

"She didn't come in to breakfast. Her bed was empty when the rest of us got up, this morning," the headmistress now learned. "And," Etta added gravely, "no one, it seems, has seen her since last night!"

In Search of Their Schoolfellow!

URSULA—missing?"

Miss Somerfield was like one struck back a step by a blow. Her looks showed that here was something that seemed far more serious even than the disappearance of the Casket of Kangpur.

She turned to Betty and the other girls.

"You know nothing about this?"

"Nothing, Miss Somerfield. We thought she had wakened early and had not cared to lie in

bed waiting for first bell, as it was such a lovely morning."

"The girl seemed just as usual, last night?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And none of you were disturbed in the night?"

No, not one of them had lost a moment's sleep.

"Extraordinary!" came Mr. Willoughby's own uneasy comment. "This is a nice upset, on top of the other! But don't give another thought to the missing casket until the girl has been found. Can I help?"

"It's good of you to offer, Mr. Willoughby. Surely," the headmistress muttered tensely, "the one trouble has no connection with the other? Surely Ursula Wade has not—"

"Gone off with the casket? I don't know the girl, but," said Pam's father, "she would have to be a bit crazy to do a thing like that."

"Besides," rejoined Pam, "the casket vanished yesterday afternoon. Ursula has only been gone since—well, since daybreak, most likely. Not that that proves her innocence," Pam realised regretfully. "Bother, it's horrid—this!"

"Well, Betty?" For Miss Somerfield saw that the Form captain was longing to burst out with a suggestion.

"Although Ursula has not been seen since 'lights-out' last night, it doesn't follow that she went away in the night, does it? We can still suppose that she only got up very early—"

"We can, thank goodness!" agreed Miss Somerfield. "And so the obvious thing is to have search made for her at once. She may have met with an accident. Each Form had better provide a search-party. I'll go and see about it now. You girls—if you like to be off for a hunt round, you may. I know you can be trusted to do wisely."

The words had a trigger-like effect upon the chums. They were out of the room almost as if they had been fired from it. Etta joined them in the passage, and she finally started out with them upon the search.

Scarcely a minute had it taken the girls to prepare for out-of-doors. They were doing a run down to the gates well before any other search-parties could be seen making a start.

"It's a licker!" Polly remarked. "First the casket, and then Ursula Wade—missing!"

"I do hope to goodness," exclaimed Betty, "that she has had nothing to do with the casket. But Ursula has always been—weak."

And the others were bound to nod in sad agreement with that significant fact. They would never have dreamed of saying so in front of Miss Somerfield; they avoided talking about it now, amongst themselves; but—

They knew Ursula so well; her weak and shifty nature, her proneness to "finding things before they were lost."

"We mustn't all go different ways," Betty said, as they came out on to the open road. "But it might be as well if we divide into several parties."

"That's it," Polly agreed heartily. "There can't be too many search-parties."

"There can't," said Helen. "We want this mystery cleared up, and the sooner the better."

"Most twying," sighed Paula. "There's nothing worse, geals, is there, than for a geal to be missing."

Missing! Even as Paula used the word, its suggestion of tragedy sent a kind of shudder through them all.

Missing from school—Ursula, a mere junior, like the rest of them!

They formed into three parties, and without a moment's waste of time each party went its own way. Betty, Polly and Pam were to take the Barncombe Road, but they would not go nearly as far as the town. They realised that Miss Somerfield would not wish them to go right into Barncombe at this stage.

Madge, Tess and Helen, with Naomer, were going down to the shore. The rest were intending to scour the open moorland, where, no doubt, they would soon have other searchers to help them.

Silently Betty and her two chums strode along the main road. They knew one another's thoughts—such thoughts as were best not voiced.

Had Ursula gone from the school before the others were up? Had she gone in the night? What a serious state of things that must suggest! Even if she had gone only an hour or so before



The bungalow was already in sight; a picturesque, low-built dwelling, standing in its couple of acres of private ground, on one of Morcovia's breezy headlands. It was practically the only other dwelling, apart from the school, in the immediate neighbourhood.

Smoke was going up from a kitchen chimney; otherwise, the three chums could see no sign of life as they hastened on to the gate.

No sooner were they going up the path to the porch, however, than someone appeared at the front doorway. It was Madame Khan.

Charged as were their minds with anxieties



The door was tapped and Etta Hargrove came in. "It's about Ursula Wade, please, Miss Somerfield," she said. "Miss Massingham wants to know what is to be done about her. She is still absent." Miss Somerfield looked disturbed.

others awoke, there was still the grave question: why had she not come back?

So, whichever way the anxious girls looked at the problem, it offered the most alarming possibilities.

Suddenly Betty exclaimed: "I say! We might call at Cliff-edge Bungalow and ask if they have seen anything of a Morcove girl this morning!"

"And then go down by the zigzag path to the shore, meeting Madge and the others," Polly furthered the suggestion. "That will make a swift round—"

"Just the round that Ursula may have made, if she was only out for a stroll," was Pam's rejoinder. "Oh, dear, I don't know which is worse to think of; her having met with some accident—on the cliff path, or along the shore—or her having—well!"

"I hope it's the first thing," Polly said flatly. "I may be wrong, but better anything than for a girl to have become a thief!"

Then the talk lapsed again. They were thinking, if only it were some other member of the Form—any girl but Ursula! Then they needn't have such grave suspicions that her disappearance was connected with the casket.

about Ursula, the trio were able to think what a strange, romantic figure this Burmese lady presented—all the more so, amidst such a homely setting. She wore a rich, Eastern dress, and it was completely out of harmony with that simple holiday dwelling.

The bungalow called for a jolly, British-born lady, mother of a madcap girl or two; and instead, there was this Burmese lady, with her rather fierce, if handsome, looks.

"Good morning!" cried all three girls, as they came up.

"So," Madame Khan said, smiling her surprise, "you not go to school this morning!"

"We have been sent out to look for a school-fellow," Betty started to explain. "That's why we have called here, Madame Khan. You have not seen a Morcove girl go by?"

"I? Oh, no! No," was the emphatic answer. "Not any of us see her, I t'ink. But I shall ask."

Then, and without inviting the girls indoors, she turned about and called to Sherami, who instantly came forward.

This elder daughter of Madame Khan looked alarmed, the girls thought—no doubt because she had heard it being said that a Morcovian was missing. Hardly noticing the trio for the moment, Sherami became engaged in talk with her mother, in the native.

A few seconds later Madame Khan again addressed the searchers.

"It is so!" she said. "Not any of us see the girl who is not at school. You t'ink—what? That she is lost?"

"We don't know quite what to think," cried Polly.

"She was missing when the school got up this morning," Betty explained. "By now she should have returned to school, of course. So we are all anxious."

"Yes? I am sorry," declared Madame Khan. "You t'ink she run away? She is not 'appy at the school?"

"She had no reason to be unhappy," Pam answered. "Sherami, you have seen enough of Morcove School to know how happy a girl should be?"

"Oh, yes!" Sherami nodded and smiled. "Only stupid girl run away from Morcove. We are sorry; we cannot help you!"

"Of course you can't," Betty hastened to respond cordially. "We merely thought that you might have seen her go by. There is a zigzag path just over there which we often use. We are going that way now."

All three of them said a friendly "Good-morning" and hurried away. The zigzag was not dangerous, yet it was there that Ursula might have met with an accident, owing to carelessness.

Madame Khan stood watching the girls out of sight, and with her, just as silent, stood Sherami. When at last the schoolgirls had gone from view, mother and daughter looked at each other. One smiled in a strange, grim way, and then the other did the same.

They withdrew to the sitting-room, where they were alone together. Kundra, the old woman-servant of the place, was working quietly in the kitchen; but Lotilla appeared to be absent.

"There will be others, Sherami," muttered Madame Khan, in the native language. "Truly, our peril is now great. In this country, all is law and order. It will be, in the end, a matter for the police. Yea, ere another hour is sped, it may be the police at our door—asking us!"

"Then must we answer them as we answered those girls," Sherami said in a desperate tone. "We know nothing! Why should we know aught of what has happened?"

"Tis only that they will be saying: 'The Burmese casket and the girl—missing! Yea, and are ye not from Burma?' they will question me. Sherami, I would that we could be gone at once!"

The daughter subsided into a low chair and frowned at her thoughts. At last she sighed and shrugged.

"Yea, then, if I did wrong, my mother—"

"Sherami, no! Ye would not have been my daughter—the light of thy father's eyes—not to seize the casket at all costs! I blame thee not; I have only praise."

"The girl should not have been there," was Sherami's brooding utterance. "Ah, I despise her—a thief no better than the one who first stole the casket from the Temple of Kangpur!"

"So," came Madame Khan's nodded agreement. "And if it were our own country, Sherami, what would the unwritten law say? Thou and I, we know!"

"Then, my mother—"

"Yea, Sherami, I will have done with these

fears," the native lady declared with sudden vehemence. "It was life or death to us, whether we gained the casket or not. How, then, can there be worse for us than that. Even though—even though they take us in the end to an English prison?"

Sherami stood up. She, too, had now braced herself.

"The girl," she said, with a curling lip, "was ready to steal for gain—for the money it would bring. I have done what I have, not for gain, but to save the lives of all of us, forfeit, unless the casket goes back to the Temple of Kangpur. Yea, well," she added, passionately proud of her achievement, "it is in our hands at last! It goes with us, back to Kangpur, and then—and then—the promised pardon!"

They talked on in subdued, anxious tones for some time. Whilst doing so, mother and daughter frequently looked out by this window and that, as if in momentary dread of other callers.

For a full minute, presently, they stood watching in great suspense, because some girls from the school were visible on the moorland beyond the road. But these searchers ended by wandering out of sight of the Khans, whose relief expressed itself in deep sighs.

With no one else coming into view, they at last resumed the uneasy talk.

"Ye say it must be a week, my mother, ere we venture to leave this place," Sherami murmured. "We dare not make it sooner!"

"Not by a single day, Sherami," was the emphatic answer. "It would but draw suspicion upon us; moreover, we could not leave the country sooner, even if we left Morcove."

The girl shrugged resignedly.

"Yea, then, it must be so, my mother. And now I have a thought of one thing we may do; that suspicion may avoid us. Cause them to think, at the school, that the missing girl is—safe!"

Madame Khan seemed to jump at the shrewd idea.

"Ye mean, Sherami— Yea, I see thy meaning, and it shall be done. A message—"

"From the schoolgirl herself—"

"Even so!"

"From a distance," Sherami spoke on eagerly. "Then will it be thought that— But what is this?" She broke off, now that her eyes had again strayed to a window. "Look! Those same girls are returning!"

One uneasy glance Madame Khan sent from the window, then she drew back, as if afraid of her frightened looks being seen.

Betty, Polly and Pam were back on the cliff-top, and with them were Madge, Tess, Helen and Naomer. They showed signs of having rushed up the zigzag path from the shore as quickly as possible, for now they were making for the bungalow in a breathless, laboured manner.

Sherami, drawn back from the window like her mother, struck her hands together in a despairing way.

"They have made a discovery!" she whispered. "What are we to do, my mother? Ah, let us go away—anywhere, and at once! This minute!"

"Nay, for that is impossible," Madame Khan answered the distraught suggestion. "We are lost, that is all. It is fate, Sherami."

A murmur of voices sounded near the porch. "Fate!" sighed Sherami tragically. "And so the vow ye gave, my mother, will never be ful—"

filled. The pardon ye were promised will never be granted! It is fate, and it is death!"

There was a knock at the outer door.

"Madame Khan, Madame Khan!" several voices called eagerly. "We want to tell you what we have found!"

The Message.

AFTER such an excited outcry, it seemed strange to the chums that they were kept waiting at the bungalow's outer door.

They could only suppose that Madame Khan and her elder daughter were feeling rather fed-up with Morcove School and its scholars.

At last, however, the door was opened, revealing the Burmese lady and her daughter, and if they were feeling annoyed, they certainly did not wish to appear so. Both smiled.

"How, then?" asked Madame Khan pleasantly.

"Sorry to be such a bother!" panted Betty, "but we felt bound to hurry back. Madame Khan, you know the old cavern that goes into the cliff from the seashore below—the private cave that forms a boathouse belonging to this bungalow?"

"So!" Madame Khan nodded.

"Of course you know about it," Betty spoke on, "for it is left to you along with the bungalow. There are gates to it—they were put up to keep it private—"

"They should be locked!" struck in Madame Khan, with a rather sudden show of anger. "The key is with us—"

"They are locked!" several of the girls answered together. "With a padlock and chain—"

"And, of course, we have not been into the cave," Betty added briskly. "Only, there are some footprints in the sand outside the cave—footprints leading along from the bottom of the cliff-path to the cave."

"What's more," rejoined Polly, in her downright way, "we believe they are Ursula Wade's footprints—at least, some of them are!"

Madame Khan and Sherami turned to each other. In their own language they conversed for a few seconds very agitatedly, but this did not surprise the girls. It was to be expected that the tenants of the bungalow would be both amazed and annoyed if the missing girl had taken liberties with the private cave.

"The footprints end at the cave-gates," remarked Pam. "At least, those that we think were Ursula's end there."

Then Madame Khan shook her head.

"They are not footprints made by the girl whom you

seek. Sherami will tell you; she was down there yesterday—"

"Quite likely," broke out Betty. "But, you see, there are several lots of footprints! And one lot must have been made by shoes such as we girls wear. Your shoes, Sherami," the Form captain added, looking at them, "are not a bit like ours!"

"Any way," added Polly, "after accounting for your footprints, Sherami, there are another girl's! You understand?"

"We can see where you went to and from—yesterday, as your mother says," Pam further explained. "But there is that other set of footprints only going one way. They lead to the cave, and don't come back!"

"Even so," insisted Madame Khan, "you are mistaken. My other daughter, Lotilla, was with Sherami. She has shoes like those you school-girls wear. She bought them last week, in the town."

"Oh!"

"Lotilla went down with me to the cave yesterday," Sherami said slowly and impressively. "There she hurt her ankle, and so I must carry her back."

This left the chums fairly dashed. After becoming so excusably excited over the discovery of an apparently important clue, it was a bit humiliating to find that clue proving a mere "mare's nest"!

"Lotilla—we were forgetting her!" came from



Sherami struck her hands together in dismay as she caught sight of the Morcovians approaching the bungalow. "They have made a discovery!" she whispered. "What are we to do, my mother?"

Betty at last. "By the way, where is she this morning?"

"She is even now in her bed, resting the injured foot," Sherami answered. "But wait, and I will show you!"

So saying, she went away to one of the bedrooms. It was the one where Lotilla slept, but Lotilla was not here now. The strain of the deception and bluffing was in Sherami's face as she reached the deserted bedroom. But she had this relief; there really was a pair of shoes, locally purchased, along with other spare footwear of the younger sister's.

Eagerly Sherami caught up this pair of shoes, to return with them to the front door.

"You see," she said, and Betty & Co. were not to know how hard it was for this Burmese girl to smile as if merely amused by the so-called clue. "My sister wear these!"

"Oh, then," said several of the chums in a "That settles it!" tone.

"So much for our theory that perhaps Ursula had gone into the cave to hide, using a key of her own for that cheap padlock," remarked Betty glumly. "But—"

"Ooo, queek, please," cried Naomer, "can I go in and see Lotilla? Bekas we are such good friends, and if she is in bed with a bad foot—"

"Not now," Madame Khan refused the entreaty gently. "I think it much better you all go and look more, for the girl who is missing. You do no good here!"

That last, to all the chums, seemed a plain enough "Be off with you!" Again, they were not surprised, and certainly not offended. The mystery of Ursula was the school's affair, not the bungalow's. So, after suitable words of apology for any trouble given, they roamed off again.

Right on until past midday, and then again during the afternoon, they were out and about with other searchers, and all in vain. No trace of Ursula was forthcoming, and no information!

It was many a day since Morcove School had been so scared. Whether the girls connected Ursula's disappearance with the theft of the casket or not, the alarm was just the same. She had gone—run away! But whither and with what rash intention? That was what Morcove was asking itself, feeling scared as to all sorts of disastrous consequences.

Not until sundown were lots of girls, Betty & Co. included, back from further efforts to trace the runaway.

Wearily they all came drifting back at last, and still there was no news of the missing girl. The Barncombe police had the matter in hand, and could report—nothing!

And so, after Morcovians had sat about in the various studies, still debating the affair in scared tones whilst resting after futile activities, there was the bell for call-over, which meant bed-time again—and Ursula still missing, her fate all unknown!

The Fourth Form dormitory seemed a grim place to go up to to-night. There was Ursula's bed; but Ursula herself—where was she?

What madness had possessed her to act like this? Above all, where was she now?

The juniors, after lights-out, might talk and conjecture afresh, but where was the likelihood of a theory that came near the actual truth? Where, indeed, when the fate of Ursula-Wade was still the desperate secret of Madame Khan and Sherami!

Morcove slept at last. Morcove, after dreams as scaring as overnight thoughts had been, awoke to another bright morning.

"It was just this time yesterday that she was first missed!" Polly remarked, whilst dressing.

"What a relief it would be if we could hear that she is at her own home—got there late last night," came Betty's wistful exclamation. "Nothing could be better; but is it likely?"

"Well, I can't believe that she is anywhere in the neighbourhood," said Helen. "Or why did all the searching and the inquiries lead to nothing yesterday?"

"And yet," smiled Polly, in a crestfallen way, "we were so sure we had been the ones to trace her yesterday morning. We and our wonderful footprint clue on the seashore!"

"A wash-out, bother it!" cried Naomer furiously. "That would have been gorjus—to find her hiding in ze cave; only, it was nozzings to do with Ursula at all."

There was hurried dressing, so that a rush downstairs for any news might be made. Betty & Co. were soon waiting about with dozens of others in the hope of learning something as to the position this morning.

The post was in, and Miss Somerfield's letters had been taken to her instantly, in case someone had written imparting information.

But there proved to be nothing of this kind in the headmistress' post to relieve the great anxiety.

It was not until after breakfast, when the girls' letters were distributed according to the usual routine, that the great sensation came.

Then Betty found a letter coming into her hands that bore the postmark of a town some twenty miles away.

"Braunton? Who's writing to me from Braunton?" she wondered aloud, whilst opening an envelope that bore a girlish handwriting. "I don't know of anyone at present who— Oh!" she broke off astoundedly; and then again: "Oh!"

"What's the excitement, Betty?" asked Polly, who had no letters to open.

"Look! Polly—all of you!" gasped the Form captain. "A letter from—Ursula!"

"What?"

"Bai Jove—"

"Ooo, queek, queek! Show me, queek!"

"But, Betty—"

That girl, carried away by excitement, sent her voice ringing above all the others' eager cries.

"It is—it is a message from Ursula! Look, all of you—look!"

And within a few moments scores of girls had taken their first excited glimpse of this message, in the unmistakable handwriting of the missing schoolgirl:

"To Betty Barton,

Captain, Fourth Form.

"Tell them not to worry. I am safe and well.
"URSULA WADE."

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Will this message of Ursula's turn the chums of Study 12 from suspecting the occupants of the bungalow of the reason for her disappearance? Will they think her really miles away, when, in reality, she is, it seems certain, being kept captive so very near Morcove? Next week's fine story will tell. Entitled "Made Known at Midnight," it is one you simply cannot afford to miss.