

THE BEST SCHOOL STORIES, THE MOST
EXCITING MYSTERY STORIES, INSIDE

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



**WHO HAS SPOILED
THE PICNIC?**

(An exciting incident in this
week's long complete Morcove
School story.)

A Splendid Long Complete Morcove School Tale, Featuring Madge Minden.



By MARJORIE STANTON

The Pleasures of Picnicking :

"WHAT a gorgeous day, girls!"

"Splendid!"

"Best halfer we've had!"

"Gorjus!"

And happy faces were turned to catch the sunshine, and to feel the soft-warm breeze blowing across all these miles of gorse and heather.

Six schoolgirls they were, chums of Study 12 at Morcove School, all in the highest spirits, out for a picnic.

"Let me see," Betty Barton, the Form captain, pondered aloud. "We did pack the kettle after all, didn't we?"

"Did we?" pondered madcap Polly Linton, stopping dead. "I remember taking out the kettle to make room for some tinned fruit. But—"

"The last I saw of the kettle, it was down beside the armchair," said Madge Minden, rather increasing the dismaying uncertainty.

"Then Paula will be to blame!" was Polly's prompt comment. "Paula was in the armchair the whole time we were packing. Hey, Paula, what about the kettle?"

This was a shout back to Paula Creel, that amiable if languid member of the coterie, who was straggling behind.

"Kettle, gosh? Howwows, how should I know about any kettle?"

The entire party halted, and various small baskets were set down.

"Um!" said Betty. "No kettle, no tea! Better look and see?"

"And if it's not with us, send Paula back for it," Polly roughly proposed.

"Yes, bekas eet all her fault," was the rejoinder of that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, Morcove's Royal Fourth-Former, from the desert country of North Africa.

"That's wight! Blame me!" complained Paula, with dignity. "When the twuth is you were all so unwuly, so fawolous—"

"Nothing of the sort," dissented Polly. "I for

one was cutting bread-and-butter until my arms ached. If it's being frivolous to cut bread-and-butter for a lot of girls with the appetites of elephants—well!"

"If you recollect, Polly, deah, you did wather throw a loaf at me when I was westing."

"It slipped, Paula. Accidents will happen in the best regulated studies."

"Here's the kettle!" Betty announced, having opened one of the baskets.

"Hooray!"

"Yes, wather! Gweat welief!"

"Only, the honey is coming out of the pot!" the captain further announced. "What cuckoo expected an old envelope to serve as a cap for the honey-jar?"

"You must blame Paula for that," said Polly.

"On—on the contwawy—"

"And look at this jam!"

Polly took from Betty a jar of jam that had come out of the basket minus even an old envelope for covering.

"Urreks! Now I hope you see, Paula," the mad-cap lectured the beloved duffer. "This all comes of your doing nothing,

and not allowing others to do anything properly.

Take it—take it!"

"It can't go back into the basket like this! Hold it!" insisted Polly, and Paula accordingly accepted the sticky jar, holding it at arm's-length.

"And now, get ze jerk on everybodies!" urged Naomer. "Bekas I am ready for my tea, so I tell you."

"You!" Polly addressed her Majesty witheringly. "Whatever else has been left behind, you and your appetite are with us! But I'm not going to let that spoil my picnic! Forward, the Light Brigade! Company—quick march!"

And she began a very effective imitation of a brass band.

"Bam, bam, bam!" Polly sounded an imaginary drum. "Ta, room, ta; ta, room, tee! Bampity, bampity, bam!"

Out for the first jolly picnic of the year, the chums of Study 12 met an adventure they little anticipated. But it was to have a far-reaching effect on quiet, music-loving Madge Minden—perhaps to change the whole course of her happy life at Morcove.

"Bekas—chorus!" Naomer proposed, ready to lead the singing.

But now Polly changed instantly to an imitation mistress.

"Girl, behave! How dare you disgrace Morcove! And keep in step! Pick 'em up, there, Naomer!"

"I say, you know, as we regards this jam-jar, what!"

But Paula, by drawing attention to her fatuous appearance as she trudged on with the jam, only drew peals of laughter from her teasing chums.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out for wasps, Paula!"

"It isn't funny," protested the duffer.

"No," sighed Polly. "It is one of the stern realities of life. Wasps like jam. Zee!" she imitated the buzz of a wasp. "Look out!"

"Ow!"

"Queek! Mind your hair, Paula!"

"Gow, ow!"

Next second the jam-jar was set down, and Paula was in flight from it, flicking at her pretty hair.

"Very well," said Polly, picking up the jam-jar. "No tea for Paula! I don't mind."

"No, bekas, all ze more for us!"

From Morcove's great schoolhouse, more than a mile behind the girls, came the ding-dong of bells. It was only a quarter to three—early to be thinking about tea, yet Betty & Co. seemed to be thinking about that and nothing else.

As they tramped on over the rough, undulating moorland, carrying various baskets that emitted sundry rattlings and jinglings, they discussed the intended al-fresco meal with enthusiasm.

An advance party, consisting of Pam Wiloughby, Helen Craig, and Dolly Delane, had gone forward to collect sticks and get a fire started in a safe spot, so that there would be no delay, and now the rest of the chums began to wonder why smoke from that fire was not already showing.

"Where are they, then?" fumed Polly, peering ahead. "It's only a little way now to the spot we fixed upon, but I can't see any signs!"

"They haven't mistaken the place?" was the awful thought that Betty voiced. "Nice thing if they have!"

"I want my tea," said Polly grimly.

Then Naomer yelled:

"But look! Here they are, coming back!"

Dismay seized the chums again as they beheld the heads and shoulders of their three schoolmates amidst the flowering gorse. Sure enough, Pam, Helen, and Dolly were returning.

"Now, what's the trouble?" wondered Polly. "Well?" she hailed the returning trio.

"Yes, well," Pam responded, with characteristic serenity, a few moments later, "we can't picnic there, girls."

"We can't? Why ever not?"

"There's a party already there."

"From the school?"

"Oh, no!" Betty was answered. "They're strangers—people down from town by the look of them. Caravanners."

"Such a nuisance," supplemented Helen Craig. "It's such a good spot just there—nice open space for a fire, and water at the spring near the old cabin."

"Well, bother them," grimaced Polly. "The cheek! Coming to camp on *our* moor! What sort of people are they, girls? Nice?"

Dainty Pam shrugged as if the caravanners had not impressed her favourably.

"Can't say that I took to them either," murmured Helen. "Still, have a look at them for yourselves. It is not far from here."

That was enough for headstrong Polly. And Naomer—she also was off instantly. Imp and madcap went bursting on through the gorse and heather, jumping over the bushes in their way until they came in sight of the intended picnic spot. Then they stood still to gaze.

Betty and the rest came up quietly and joined in a more or less discreet survey.

Two large motor-caravans were drawn up on a piece of ground which offered rare advantages for campers or picnickers out here on this vast moor, which was so close-grown.

It was a dry, gravelly clearing, where a good camp fire might be kept going without any danger to surrounding vegetation. Here and there were patches and knolls of turf, grass as short and green as that on a tennis-court.

In addition to the luxurious caravans, a couple of bell-tents adorned the scene. Deck chairs had been put out, and in one of them reclined a girl, reading a magazine, and dipping into a box of chocolates that was upon her lap.

Suddenly the Morcovians saw a boy come away from one of the caravans with a very lazy air. He wore a brilliant blazer, bright tie, and white flannel trousers, and obviously thought quite a lot of himself.

Catching sight of Betty & Co., he stared at them, and then the girl in the deck-chair roused up to twist about and see what had caught his attention.

Betty emitted a subdued "Um!" that exactly expressed her chums' feelings as well as her own. Morcove retreated, having received the most disagreeable impressions.

"Swank!" breathed Polly.

"Awful!" shuddered Madge.

"That boy!" shuddered Tess Trolawney.

"What about ze girl?" said Naomer.

"Yes, well," murmured Pam, smiling, "we won't let it spoil our outing."

"But they've bagged the only spot where you can light a fire," complained Polly. "Bother them, I say! Now we shall have to—"

She broke off, suddenly aware, as were her chums, of someone hastening after them through the gorse. Hardly had they all halted, turning round, than "that boy" was before them, looking very officious.

"Were you talking about lighting a fire?" he remarked. "You musn't light any fire round here. It's not safe."

"We are quite aware, thank you," Betty responded stiffly, "that damage is done to the moor by people being careless."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of the moor," disclaimed the objectionable boy. "We've got two motor caravans that cost a thousand pounds apiece over there."

"Then mind you don't set them on fire with your cigarette," Betty advised him smartly. "Come on, girls; we'll find somewhere else."

"We would rather you did," the offensive youth threw out.

But Betty & Co. took no more notice of him. They turned their backs on him and walked away.

Madge Minden's Surprise!

"HORRID fellow!" said Polly Linton under her breath.

"Awful!" was Madge Minden's opinion. "In spite of his wonderful blazer with the stitched-on shield!"

"The way he talked—as if he and his lot owned the universe!" was another disgusted comment.

Then Betty Barton chuckled.

"It wasn't worth the delay, we're in such a hurry for tea, or I might have explained that we Morcove girls have special rights over the moor!"

"And as for setting fire to ze bushes, what ze diggers," exclaimed Naomer angrily. "Miss Somerfield knows we can be trusted. But queek, get ze jerk on and find another place."

"Not so easy!" said Helen, and others murmured glumly to the same effect.

There were, of course, any number of places where they might have squatted down and unpacked the baskets, but they would never have been at a safe distance from the undergrowth to light a fire. And Betty & Co. were not for taking any chances.

On the other hand, to miss having tea would be no fun at all!

In the end, they floundered down a thickly-grown slope and then up the other side of the hollow, where there appeared to be a bit of bare ground. But when they had floundered this extra distance they found that even here there was no safe place for a jolly blaze of collected sticks.

"Who's going all the way back to the school for boiling water?" Polly grimly jests. "Don't all speak at once! Oh, but it is a sickener, this!"

"Shall we go a bit farther? No." Betty answered her own question, and she let her share of the luggage go flop to the ground. "We shan't do any better. That other place was the only right one—and they've got it!"

"Helpful article in next month's Morcove Mag.," grinned Helen. "How to Make Tea with Cold Water."

"By one who has tried it, yes," grimaced Polly. "Ugh!"

"Never mind! Get ze jerk on!" shrilled Naomer, kneeling to open a basket. "Bekas everyzingk is ready to eat, any old how. Ooo," as she turned back the wicker lid, "gorjus! Tinned fruit, sardines—"

"By the way," jerked out Betty, "did we bring a tin-opener?"

They looked at one another, all suddenly and appallingly convinced that they had not brought a tin-opener. They had some of the most tempting, appetising things in tins. There was a tinned pineapple, a tin of pears; there were tinned sardines, and there was tinned milk. But as for a tin-opener—no!

Polly sat down in the fragrant bracken, plucked a blade of grass and chewed it. Her attitude said plainly: "Don't speak to me!"

"And we can't," exclaimed Betty at last, "go asking those caravanners for—"

"No, we can't!" was the very decisive chorus.

"But, girls," Madge exclaimed brightly next moment, "look! There's the cabin, and smoke coming from the chimney, so someone is there for once!"

She was giving directing nods,

and her chums looked that way. The cabin was such a low-built, shack-like dwelling that only its heather-hatched roof was visible to the girls, with one brick chimney, out of which blue smoke curled lazily.

"Then who is living there?" marvelled Betty, for they all knew the so-called cabin as a place long shut up. "Oh, dear, Morcove is getting quite overrun this summer!"

At this instant Polly realised that Naomer had started operations upon a bag of pastries. With a fearful yell, Polly drew attention to Naomer's having helped herself to a cream-bun.

By the time Naomer's greediness had been suitably cried down, Madge was ready with a really helpful suggestion.

"I'm taking this," she said, holding up the kettle. "across to the cabin. I may be able to buy boiling water straight away, or, if not, get some put on to boil."

"That's better!" Betty applauded this idea. "So come along, you others, and get the cloth out!"

Madge left them busy over their happy preparations, hastening the two or three hundred yards to the shack. Coming closer, she wondered at anyone inhabiting the lonesome, derelict shack.



The strange boy and girl stared at Betty and Co. rudely. They did not seem to realise that they had usurped the Morcove chums' chosen picnic spot.

Probably it was somebody down from town, roughing it for a holiday.

Her mind flew back to the recently-seen caravans, which could not be more than a quarter of a mile away, although they were out of sight. What a difference between that camp and this!

The weather being so fine, it did not surprise her to find that things belonging to the shack had been stood outside, to give more room within. Those things, by the state they were in, prepared her for an encounter with some very undomesticated person—probably a bachelor, she decided. What she really encountered, in the very next moment, was the surprise of her life.

A man, hearing her approach, came out of the cabin, and at sight of him she not only gave an amazed cry, but even dropped the kettle, for it was her own father!

"Daddy!"

"Hallo, Madge!"

And even that cheery response of his did not instantly dispel her sense of illusion. She still stared, as if it were his ghost.

"What on earth, daddy!" she gasped out at last. "I mean to say, you aren't staying here—not living here, surely?"

"Ah, then, you haven't had my letter yet?" he smiled. "I felt when I was posting it this morning in Exeter that I might be seeing you before you got it. I intended strolling across to the school presently, my dear."

In his shirt-sleeves, in the shack doorway, he glanced down at her dropped kettle.

"Picnic! Is that the idea, Madge? And you've come for some water? Right-ho! But I've only cold water, although there's a fire inside that will soon boil you some up, to save lighting sticks on the hearth."

He had picked up the kettle before she, still a little spellbound, moved towards him and belatedly kissed him.

"But, daddy, darling, why—why are you here?"

"Simplest of reasons, my dear. I've let our house in Exeter—let it furnished for the summer. Thumping good price, Madge. And, you know," he smiled, twirling the kettle, "it all helps the exchequer. Helps to keep you at Morcove, and all that."

"Oh, daddy, we—are things worse than ever with you suddenly?" was her distressed cry.

But he instantly gave her a reassuring shake of the head.

"Oh, no, dear; it's not like that. Simply, as I say, this chance turned up, and I felt I might as well seize it. You don't break up for a month yet, and really the house is wasted on me at this time of year. Listen, my dear! I'm getting six guineas a week for the house, and I have only to pay six shillings a week for this nice little shack!"

Madge was very much the little woman now, going by her widowed father to pass into the moorland cabin and take stock of its interior.

Her thoughtful eyes went all round the smoke-begrimed living-room, with its open hearth and plain deal furniture; then she faced him again. He was coming in quite jauntily, having dipped the kettle in a water-butt at the porch.

"You'll never be able to stand this for a month, daddy!"

"What?" he retorted, at the same time dumping the kettle on the wood fire. "Won't I, my dear—and quite enjoy it, too! Don't look like that, little girl! Daddy's all right."

"Well, I don't know!"

"And only a couple of miles from Morcove

School!" he beamed, starting to fill a pipe. "Not that I can have you continually running across to see how I'm getting along! But now and then, Madge, I must shave, and put on a clean collar, and shine my shoes, and stroll across to the school!"

She suddenly laughed.

"Oh, daddy, you are the limit! I suppose you really are going to enjoy the novelty of it. Only, who is going to cook for you, and do the chores?"

He gave a careless flourish of his pipe.

"I'll cook for myself, Madge—be my own house-keeper!"

"Have you had a proper meal to-day? You had better come across and share our picnic!"

"My dear, I'm sure it's going to be a jolly picnic, but I won't come now, thanks all the same—and my kind remembrance to all your chums! I have my work, Madge. You know, my dear, I have been working on an idea for some time—"

"Oh, the invention!"

"Call it that when it has become an invention," he returned. "It's only an idea at present, Madge. Still, something may come of it."

"I do so hope something will, daddy, darling! Then you'll become a millionaire!"

"You don't want a millionaire father," he stated. "But to be really comfortably off—eh, Madge? To have enough to see you properly through a music training by-and-by, and—eh, everything like that!"

He lit his pipe, flourished out the match, and then took her to the doorway of the only other room. Adjoining the living-room, it was meant for sleeping quarters, but he had converted it into a makeshift work-room. Certain apparatus and jars of chemicals and fine instruments made Madge remark:

"Quite a lab, daddy!"

"It will serve, my dear. I'm not sure but what I won't get on better here than in the shed at the bottom of the garden at home in Exeter. I can work here at night if I wish, without keeping neighbours' dogs on the bark."

She turned to him, smiling.

"But you've neighbours here, daddy! Caravanners."

"I know," he nodded. "I don't know anything about them. I only know they are there, and I rather wish they weren't."

"They'll be company for you," she suggested. "Is it a big family party, dad? We girls have only seen a girl in a deck-chair and a boy."

"Ah, that boy! He wants whacking!"

"We rather thought so," smiled Madge.

"I suppose it is the spring of water in the hollow that has brought them here to camp," Mr. Minden mused aloud. "There appear to be a father and mother and the two children, and a man and wife for running repairs, cooking, and so on. The name is Elswick. A loud man, the father. I hear him shouting his orders to the man, shouting to his children; even shouting down the son's gramophone."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Madge. "Is it like that, daddy? That's far worse than the neighbours' dogs at Exeter!"

"They'll only stay a day or two, surely. Ah, the kettle's starting to sing, Madge."

"Oh, and have you a tin-opener, daddy, whilst I think of it?"

He rummaged in a knife-box on the small dresser.

"Here's a spare one, my dear. I've two. Out here in the wilds one is lost without a tin-opener."

She agreed, telling him how tantalised they had felt when they unpacked all their tinned stuff to find themselves minus an opener. This and other light chatter ended with the kettle's boiling over, whereupon Madge departed with it.

"I mustn't keep the girls waiting, dad, or I'd love to stay around. Cheerio for the present! One thing, I can slip across often from the school, daddy, and clean up the place for you."

"That's a thing I've said you are not to do! 'Bye, Madge, dear!"

Smoked Out!

"HOORAY!" the chums greeted Madge's appearances with the kettle of boiling water. "Well done, Madge! But what's the joke?"

Usually she was rather serious, so now they wondered to see her smiling so broadly.

"You'll have fits when I tell you," she rippled. "I give you three guesses at the identity of the person living in that hut!"

"Gather round!" cried Polly, now pouring boiling water on the tea. "Well, who, Madge?"

"My daddy!"

It was like a bombshell to the merry picnicers. Those who did not flop back involuntarily, made pretence of being quite knocked over.

"Your father?" gasped Betty incredulously. "Mr. Minden—living there?"

"Bai Jove—"

"Bekas have him to tea, queek! What ze diggings—"

"He declined with thanks, girls," said Madge, "and sent his best wishes. But imagine my surprise!"

"Didn't you faint?" marvelled Helen.

"Very nearly! I suppose, though, it's not a bad stunt," Madge chatted on. "He seems to be going to enjoy it."

"Extwaordinawy!" drawled Paula. "To want to wough it!"

"This is rough enough for Paula," chuckled Betty, handing the elegant one her cup of tea.

"There, dear! Two lumps, and a few twigs, I'm afraid. But surely you won't mind them! But, Madge, why is your father doing it?"

Then Madge told them the whole simple story. She was the last girl to want to make out ever that her father was better off than he really was. Betty and the rest had always known that Mr. Minden's means were small. To Madge it was a matter of pride rather than false shame that her widowed father had chosen to live like this for reasons of economy.

On this, her chums fully agreed with her.

"And did he say anything about the caravaners?" Betty was asking, when she and her chums were startled by the sound of a girl's strident voice not far off, followed by a cackle of laughter.

Tea-cups were set down hastily. Looks of blank amazement were exchanged.

"Cora Grandways!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Yes, bekas you always know Cora, bekas she—"

"Quiet!" Polly silenced her Majesty.

In the renewed silence there came again the voice of Cora Grandways; Cora, known to the mistresses of Morcove as a "difficult" girl, and to Betty & Co. as the least likeable girl of their Form.

"She is over there, talking with that brother



Madge dropped the kettle in the surprise of seeing the man who came to the door of the hut. "Daddy!" she cried. "Whatever are you doing here?"

and sister who belong to the motor caravans!" was Betty's astounded murmur at last. "Cora knows them, then!"

"Yes, well," said Pam serenely, "they are the sort of people Cora might be expected to know."

Across the hollow came another loud cackle of laughter. Evidently Cora's turning up had provided the young Elswicks with great amusement. Cora would be just the one to keep them in fits of laughter; that is to say, they were the sort to appreciate her sort of "humour."

"Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!" The moorland rang with the boy's guffawing.

"It must be something very funny," grimaced Polly. "About us?"

"Most likely," chuckled Betty. They knew Cora so well. "About Morcove, anyhow."

"Never mind! Get on with ze doings," counselled Naomer, passing her cup for a refill. "It will take more than Cora to spoil my appetite!"

"I am sure it would," Polly sweetly agreed.

"What, another cream-bun?"

"He is only my second!"

A few moments later they heard the Elswick girl calling out to Cora, as if that girl were a little way off.

"Cora, where would you like tea—indoors or out?"

"Oh, I don't mind, Syb!"

"I'll tell them to lay it in the caravan."

"Right-ho!"

Then a gramophone started in the open. It must have had a huge metal horn, for even at this distance the music sounded like a brass band not a yard away.

Madge looked troubled.

"I'm thinking of daddy," she remarked gravely. "He didn't bargain for that when he came to live in that cabin."

"Cora knows we are over here, of course!" conjectured Helen. "The Elswicks will have told her. She'll bring them across presently."

"That's it," nodded others.

"So the best thing," Naomer advised, "is—hurry up and feenish ze spread! Bekas—Ooo!" she broke off. "What ze diggings!"

For suddenly a great cloud of smoke was drifting across the hollow. It came rolling heavily at the picnickers, and they were hardly on their feet, staring in mingled annoyance and alarm, when the pungent pall was upon them.

So thick was the drifting smoke, it instantly set their eyes tingling and tickled their throats.

"I say," Betty exclaimed, coughing violently, "what have they done now?"

"Set the whole show on fire, I believe!" was Polly's dismayed cry. "Hark, though!"

Then, listening, they heard Cora and the young Elswicks giving more shrieks of laughter.

"Oh," Polly stamped, "too bad! They've done it to annoy us!"

"A bonfire!"

"Disgwaceful!"

"So that we shan't be able to feenish!" was Naomer's disgusted comment. "But I don't care! Ect take more than this smoke to spoil me appetite! I shall carry on!"

And she was as good as her word.

But the others—there they stood, their smarting eyes glaring in the direction of the caravan camp, although nothing was to be seen. Thicker than ever the smoke came billowing this way, darkening the scene to the girls.

Now and then they heard a crackle, crackle as more dry vegetation was thrown on the bonfire. The Elswick boy was feeding the fire, cheering himself on, whilst his sister and Cora Grandways, standing well clear of the smoke, of course, were applauding in a shrieking manner.

Piercely Betty spoke.

"We'll go and say what we think of them!"

"Rather! Come on!" Polly urged, and next moment they were all on the run.

After blundering down one side of the hollow, they went scrambling up the other side, like infantry advancing under a smoke screen.

As they came out of the dip on the caravaners' side, they had feathery ash from the roaring bonfire flecking their faces. And now, amidst

the thick smoke, they caught the dull gleam of red flames. Another forkful of litter had been dumped upon the fire, and there was a loud sizzling and crackling.

"Stuff to give 'em!" the Elswick boy was shouting when Betty & Co. came dashing towards him and his roaring fire.

In that first moment at the fire the girls saw Cora and her friend, standing at a safe distance, holding their sides as they laughed. But it was only for that moment the ill-natured pair were to be seen. They scampered away, shrieking louder than ever, having noticed the fury in Betty & Co.'s looks.

Betty marched up to the boy.

"You are doing this to annoy us!"

He grinned.

"Oh, is the smoke blowing your way?"

"We call it a caddish thing!" Betty flamed at him.

"Yes, bekas we can't feenish our tea!" yelled Naomer. "So you jolly well put ze fire out—quick!"

"I'd be ashamed," Polly now took turn in storming at him, "to make myself a nuisance!"

"What about yourselves?" he retorted insolently. "Coming here to have your rotten picnics, planking yourselves down just over there—"

"The moor doesn't belong to you!" cried Betty hotly.

"Oh, cut it out!" he shrugged. "This is our camping-ground. If dad and the mater had been about, they'd have seen that you went farther before you started littering up the place! You and your salmon-tins—we know!"

"You know nothing!" flashed Morcove's Fourth Form captain. "You've got it all to learn, including manners, and what's a joke and what isn't!"

"We girls belong to this district, understand," Helen carried on the furious protest. "Our school has its own special rights over the moor."

"Oh, I know all about Morcove!" he laughed in a lordly way. "My sister Sybil has a friend at your school. Cora Grandways—she's here now."

"She's not here. She appears to me to have run away," Betty remarked scathingly.

"Ha, ha! Think so?" he chuckled. "I must tell 'em what you thought! Ha, ha, ha! But you must excuse me getting on with the job. I haven't put on all the rubbish yet—not half the stuff there is to burn!"

They saw him stride, with his pitchfork, to a pile of cut and withered bracken. In went the fork, and he slowly raised the fresh load of litter, to bring it to the bonfire; but Betty ran straight at him.

"You shan't!" she cried, and made a spirited grab at the pitchfork.

He tried to shake her off, but the only effect was to shake all that litter from the upturned fork, so that he was suddenly smothered. Then it was the girls' turn to enjoy a laugh.

"Good job!" clapped Naomer.

He changed instantly from loutish impudence to bad temper.

"Gerrout!" he yelled savagely, for he found Polly and others uniting with Betty in trying to get the fork from him.

They got it, too! A brief tussle, and the pitchfork was no longer his. Polly had it, and smartly she speared it right into the bonfire, so that it struck straight upright amidst the flames, where he could never get it.

"You little—" he fairly raved, looking as if



Betty marched up to the objectionable boy as he piled more rubbish on the smoking fire. "You are doing this to annoy us!" she panted. "Oh, is the smoke blowing your way?" he grinned.

he did not know which one to fly at first, with clenched fists. "Now, clear out! Go on—clear off! Beat it!"

"So we will," Betty said blandly, "now that we've beaten you!"

Growling, he talked after them as they hilariously marched away.

"Saucy monkeys! Don't you come this way when the gov'nor's about, or the mater! Clever! Oh, it's something to laugh at, isn't it?"

They let him see that they thought it so!

"Yah," he began a parting shot at them through the smoke, "you'll enjoy the finish of your picnic, you will!"

This they took to mean that he meant to go on smoking them out. Only when they got back to their own territory did they understand exactly what he had been hinting at.

Then, to their renewed disgust, they found that Cora and the Elswick girl had been here in their absence.

That pair had made a lightning visit to the picnic spot. In the short space of a few minutes they had wrought total havoc.

The tea-pot was turned upside down on the cloth spread upon the ground, and the stains from hot, strong tea were considerable. The kettle had been kicked into the middle of a gorse-bush. Cups and saucers were all thrown about, some of them broken.

Sardines had been stirred into the jar of honey. The last of the pastries had had salmon "gravy" poured over them. The tin of Swiss milk had been left to drain into the sugar-basin. A banana was stuck hard down into the jam.

Polly's, perhaps, was the greatest anger. She hadn't words for it all; she tried to speak, but could not. From Paula came expressions of disdain rather than rage.

"Bai Jove, if that isn't bad form, what?"

"I call it disgusting," frowned Betty. "It ought to be reported."

"Yes, bekas—ze waste! But no, bekas we won't allow it to be wasted," Naomer said, cheering up again. "What ze diggings! It take more than this to spoil my appertite!"

And she would have begun upon the jammy banana, but was forcibly restrained.

"Put her on the chain, girls," advised Polly.

"Ugh! Ugh! I call the whole thing—"

"Gorjus!" said Naomer, having managed to pop a Swiss-milky lump of sugar into her mouth.

"About the nastiest, meanest thing Cora has ever been mixed up in!" Polly gave her opinion at last. "And that's saying something! Wait till I see her at school!"

"I weally think we ought to pwotest—yes, wather!"

"You!" the madcap rounded on Paula. "You'd be the one to stand up to Cora, wouldn't you? Oh, but it's just too bad! Talk about a picnic!"

Every face there was a study in raging indignation. Moodily the girls began to clear up all the wreckage. There was nothing else for them to do but to remove every trace of the litter, even though others had caused it.

They buried all that could not be taken back to the school, and then disconsolately began the march back. Madge ran by herself to the cabin, to return the tin-opener to her father. She found him working at a bench in his make-shit "lab," very absorbed over that idea which for months past had kept him experimenting.

"There has been a lot of bonfire smoke coming over from the Elswicks' camp," he commented, with only slight detachment from his task. "I hope it didn't annoy you girls. That Elswick boy is a young rotter, I'm afraid."

Tactfully Madge did not mention the annoyance to which they had been subjected. She did not

want to cause trouble between her father and his present "neighbours."

"Well, daddy, darling, I'm going back to Morcove with the others now. I hope you manage all right for yourself! And how fine it will be, dad, if only you win through over this invention affair of yours! It will make a stir if you do succeed!"

The father smiled sideways at her, his delicate hands still busy with a bit of apparatus.

"Whether we want to be millionaires or not, Madge, dear, we may be yet. If—if I do succeed, there will be a master patent worth a fortune to me."

"A fortune, daddy?"

"Certainly. But don't start building castles in the air, Madge, dear! And don't talk too much about it, please."

Madge laughed.

"I couldn't, dad; I know so little."

"Just as well!" He smiled and nodded. "Secrecy is imperative, my dear. For, let me tell you, there are some people who, if they knew what I am aiming at, would be only too glad to see me fail."

"Rival inventors, dad?"

"Oh, no, my dear; but people with money in a certain industry that will be turned upside down if—I succeed."

Mr. Minden ceased his activities for a few moments, giving his daughter a serious look.

"It's the way of the world, Madge, dear. Progress! One thing must supersede another. You may think it a pity that my invention, if it comes off, will give such a knock to an existing industry. But were we never to have motor-cars because they were bound to hit railways?"

"Daddy, is your invention something to do with motor-cars?" she roughly inquired.

"Yes and no," was his cryptic answer. "And that's all I'm going to say."

Sisters at Morcove!

ROUND about six o'clock, Cora Grandways came whistling down the Fourth Form corridor at Morcove School, in her loud, jaunty way.

And the tune she made a point of whistling was one that had been played on the Elswicks' gramophone, away yonder on the moor. Cora whistled it louder than ever as she went by the closed door of Study 12.

She treated that door to a runaway knock—rap, bang!—and went round to her own study very noisily indeed.

"Hallo, Misery! Well, Faceache!" was the derisive remark she had for her sister Judith. "How's Moody Judy?"

The younger sister had been alone when Cora came in. Such nicknames as the elder girl had given Judith were quite undeserved. But, then, equally undeserved were all the slights and petty tyrannies which she had to put up with for the sake of peace.

"What's the book?" demanded Cora, snatching it from her sister's hands. "Bosh!"

Not liking the volume, after a mere scornful glance, Cora did not hand it back. She shied it across to a corner.

"But I went across to see these Elswick people," she threw out grandly, after flopping into the easy chair. "Pa Elswick and Mrs. Doings were away for the day; but Cyril and Sybil were there, and I must say I liked them. Just my sort!"

The speaker seemed to suspect, from her sister's silence, that Judy thought that a pity.

"Yes, I know what you are thinking!" jeered

Cora. "Why—why don't I seek friends who will 'improve me'? I ought to have been out with Betty & Co., eh?"

She laughed recklessly.

"Talking of Betty & Co—ha, ha, ha! We did have a game with them—the Elswicks and I! The Study 12 lot had the cheek to plant themselves down for a picnic not far from the Elswicks' camp. So Cyril lit a grand bonfire, a huge bonfire—ha, ha, ha—and smoked them out! Smoked them like kippers, Judy! Ha, ha, ha!"

Cora sprawled back in her chair as she laughed.

"Fetch me something to drink, Judy. And don't forget, I want you to take on my prep this evening. Girls who've got nothing better to do than read—Hi, when I'm speaking!"

This was to bring Judy to a standstill in the doorway.

"You said you wanted a glass of water, Cora."

"I never said I wanted a glass of water! I want a lemonade! What next? Water! But I'll have an apple instead."

So Judith went to a small cupboard and gave her domineering sister an apple from a bag.

"Funny thing, too!" Cora suddenly chuckled.

"Madge Minden's father is living like some squatter out there on the moor—at that old shack, not a quarter of a mile from where the Elswicks are parked! It's a scream. He's come, there to be quiet—so he told them—and to work. They're giving his quiet! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think that's rather a shame, Cora!"

"You would! You never can see a joke!"

"They can't be nice people, Cora."

"You don't know them, so see! They're my sort, anyhow! And didn't dad himself send me a line to say that they were business pals of him, and would I look them up?"

Cora got to her feet, standing tall and looking excessively handsome and fiery. It would have been hard for anyone to believe that they were sisters. The elder girl had all the looks—a real beauty—though her looks were spoiled by the sour spitefulness of her expression. Judith's was merely a comely face, although some students of character might have discerned in her that rarest loveliness of all, the charm of a patient yet noble nature.

"But it won't be long before you do know them, Judy. I am going to have Sybil and Cyril to tea one afternoon. They are staying at that camping ground—"

"Staying?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I am only thinking about Madge's father."

"Blow him! The man who is mean enough to come down to paying a few bob a week for a shack to live in—he can't expect consideration! What next?"

"Cora, the Mindens are not well off, by any means. I admire Mr. Minden for having—"

"Well, I don't! If you ask me, he's potty!" jeered the elder sister. "Gone cracked upon some invention! Ha, ha, ha!"

Judith stared, her interest being quickened.

"Yep," nodded Cora flippantly. "The Elswicks have a notion that he's working at some crack-brained theory, working all day and half the night, but—"

There was an interruption. The study door had opened in front of Betty Barton.

"Oh, goo-ood evening to the Form captain!" bowed Cora. "All stand!"

Ignoring this bit of insolence, Betty calmly advanced into the study, holding a slip of paper.

"Now, Cora," she said steadily. "I don't sup-

pose you wish me to report you over what happened this afternoon?"

"Oh, report away, if you like! I don't mind!" "Very well," responded Betty. "But I thought I would give you an alternative. This isn't the time of a year when a girl wants to be gated."

"And you so hate reporting, don't you?" sneered Cora. "You would much rather not be captain, only the Form won't hear of another! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall not have the slightest hesitation in reporting you for what you did at our picnic," Betty announced sternly. "Either you can pay this little bill, Cora, for the damage you did, or go before the Head!"

"Let's see the bill," grinned Cora, taking it up from the table. "One smashed kettle, half-a-crown; broken crockery, seven-and-six; spoiled food, two bob. That's sticking it on, Betty! It wasn't half a tin of Swiss milk that we tipped on to the sugar. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll either pay that bill, or—"
"I'll give you ten bob to hear no more about it—"

"You'll pay the total, Cora!"
"Oh, blow you!" she said through clenched teeth. "All right! A few shillings is more to you than it is to me, we know! Have every penny, Miss Shylock! There!"

A thin hand passionately banged a pound-note upon the bill.

"And keep the change! So long as you take your ugly face out of my study!"

Picking up the note, Betty began to give the change, putting down silver coins.

"Thank you," she said then, turning away to the door.

"And no more about it. Judy's a witness, mind!" jeered Cora.

The Form captain went out, taking the money to Study 12, to show it to Polly and others with a smile of quiet triumph. Madge Minden was not one of them, for Madge had gone to the music-room as usual, and there Judith was to find her presently, playing from memory.

"Hallo, Judy!" smiled Madge, looking round whilst her skillful fingers still drew melody from the keys. "Done your prep., then?"

"Haven't begun it yet."

"And neither have I! But I must make a start now," realised the Form's musician, and she finished off with a little run up the keyboard.

"You wanting to practise, Judy?"

"Oh, no, Madge! I—I only—I heard you playing, and thought I might come for a word with you," faltered the younger Grandways girl. "I'm sorry if your father, over at his holiday camp on the moor, is having annoyance from the Elswicks. If I could do anything I would, Madge."

"I know you would, Judy. It is nice of you."

"Your father wants to be quiet, doesn't he?" Judith pursued earnestly. "To work at some invention, is it? Cora was saying—"

"Something like that, Judy nodded Madge, sauntering across to the door with this schoolmate. "I can't say what the invention will be."

"Oh, I wasn't trying to—find out," Judith disclaimed hastily. "Such things are best kept secret, aren't they?"

"I suppose so," responded Madge lightly.

Next moment she realised that her companion had stopped, as if to stay behind in the music-room after all. Madge had to look round for Judith, and then she saw how the girl was frowning.

Was she put out by something that had been said? But that, Madge decided, was impossible. They parted, after being together for only a minute or so, and the incident seemed so trivial that Madge could never have believed that some day she was to recall it, and was to know then why Judith had looked like that!

When School Was Over!

"THE class," said Miss Everard at the end of the following afternoon, "may now— Naomer, go back! I haven't said it yet!"

So Naomer resumed her seat, but kept one foot in the gangway that she might be, as it were, first off the mark.

"Oh, and before I do give the dismiss, girls," resumed the Fourth Form's adored mistress, "no forgetting altogether about prep. this evening, please! I know the evenings are light, and I love to see you girls out of doors as much as possible, still—"

A hearty "Right-ho!" from the desks assured Miss Everard that the hint would be taken in the spirit in which it had been given.

"Dismiss!"
"Zank you!" muttered Naomer, bounding away. "Hooray! Get ze jerk on, everybody!"

"Wow!"
"Quiet, girls! Girls! Paula—Naomer—please!"

Thereupon impish Naomer changed from a disorderly rush to be first out of the class-room to a slow tiptoeing.

"Ees that better?" she saucily inquired of Miss Everard, who gave the imp a playful push that sent her back into the gear.

Out surged the whole Form—once again before the Fifth had got its dismiss! Accordingly, Polly and a few others went to the Fifth Form classroom door to show their faces to Miss Massingham's less fortunate charges.

Having flattened their noses and lips against the glass of the door, to create an effect likely to upset the decorum of the Fifth Room, Polly and the rest fled. The schoolhouse heard their pounding rush up to the studies. Schoolbooks were dumped; wide-flung windows were rushed at.

"Gorjus!" was the dusky one's shrilled comment. "It's lovely outside after tea—"

"Tennis!" cried Polly. "For those who, like me, can leave prep. until the morning. Paula, darling, you won't forget what Miss Everard said about prep.?"

"Ow, don't wowwy me!"

"Poor dear!" the madcap sympathised with Paula, already reclining in the best armchair.

"She shall have her tennis."

"Tea first!" yelled Naomer, rushing to get out the white cloth. And zen I show some of you how to play tennis! Bekas I am in form—"

"Wow!"

"So it seems," said Polly as Naomer fell over indolent Paula. "That's right! Break up the happy home! Girls, as Pam and Madge and a few more came drifting in, "we rather think—"

"It would be nice."

But Madge Minden, although she loved tennis as much as any of them, was not to figure on the grass courts later on. When the time came, she saw her chums, looking nice and cool in summery frocks, careering away to the nets, whilst she herself set off alone for her father's moorland cabin.

He had said she was not to be always popping across to see him, but that, of course, was an order meant to be flouted. Madge knew it simply meant that he did not want her to worry or put herself out about him.

She had chosen to walk out to the shack, for really it was not worth while using a bicycle. It was a glorious afternoon, and it was a sheer delight to walk in the fragrant, sunny air across the moors.

The linnets were singing gaily. Her musical ear delighted in the sweet song of the birds, and it was a jar to her senses when presently she heard that gramophone of the Elswicks screeching away with a particularly noisy, unmusical record.

So as to avoid a clash with any of the caravanners, she made a wide detour that enabled her to approach the cabin on the side farthest from the Elswicks' camp. By the time she got to the shack, the gramophone was taking a rest, and there was a proper countryside hush upon the enchanting spot—a silence all the greater because, as she instantly discovered, her father was not at home.

It was a padlock, securing the one outer door of the tiny dwelling, which told her he was temporarily absent. Probably he had gone into Barncombe for some supplies, and would be back presently. That it was only a temporary absence was evident from his having left a window or two open, to keep the place airy.

Madge gave her grave smile when she noticed the unfastened windows. She was not as acrobatic as Polly Linton or Naomer, but she guessed it would be an easy thing to get in by a window. And so it proved.

Reaching in a hand to free the bar that was keeping one little casement only slightly open, she set the diamond-paned frame right round, and then began her clambering and scrambling.

Knees against the wall and hands gripping hard at the window frame, up she drew herself. A bit of a breathless squeeze and she was through, jumping down to the living-room floor.

Her first action after that was to refix the casement as he father had left it. Then she eyed the room in which she stood, and felt a mixture of amusement and distress.

"Oh, the muddle! Poor darling daddy!" she mused, and her her eyes grew moist even as she smiled.

It was a thought that had been hers often before, but now it came all the more acutely. How he needed someone to look after him!

Even at home, in the nice villa in Exeter, where they had one faithful servant who had been in their service for years, it had never been the same since mother died.

Well, she would see what she could do for him here, anyway!

"And it will be a nice surprise for him when he gets back presently," she smiled to herself.

Quickly she set to work. First she had a straighten up, which meant rescuing a frying-pan from where it had been flung down upon the hearth, and setting chairs and other furnishings to rights. Her father, in the flurry of his house-keeping, appeared to have hiked things out of his way with a foot, being cramped for room.

Then she did some washing up, luckily finding hot water in the kettle. There was no water laid on, of course, and she could not go out for it, except by way of that casement window.

When plates and dishes and cups and saucers that had been all slid into a basin and left there were back on the small dresser, all shiny-clean, the living-room began to look somewhat better.

But Madge could see heaps more to do yet. She tidied the hearth, made up the fire, cleaned and polished the kettle, then started to go round the whole room with a damp cloth.

"Oh, the dust!" she sighed, mopping it off from the walls and ledges. "But the place, of course, should have been thoroughly spring-cleaned before dad took it over! If only that door were not padlocked, I'd take out every mat and every bit of carpet for a beating!"

As it was, she could only go down on her knees and use dustpan and short-handed broom very slowly and carefully. Madge was sufficiently domesticated to know that violent sweeping only makes a smother.

At last she got up from the sweeping and looked around critically. There were the brasses—candlesticks and so on; she could clean them. Nothing looked nicer than the gleam of brass in a place like this! Oh, and there would be the paraffin lamp to clean, wipe it free of all that fluffy oiliness, polish the glass, trim the wick, and—

Hark, though!

Now, who was that, prowling round the shack? Keeping quite still to listen. Madge was quite sure of one thing; it was not her father, back from his shopping. The sound she had heard was not a man's unguarded footfall, nor had the sound, such as it was, come from in front of the padlocked door.

"Told you so, Syb," said a boyish voice softly.

"He's away. I saw him go off, an hour ago."

"I say, then, Cyrrie, do let's have a squint inside!"

"Yes, let's!"

The young Elswicks! It was like their impudence to come nosing around when father was absent! Madge's first impulse was to stride to the window and let them know that the cabin was not deserted, after all. Then she felt it would be only right not to disclose herself at once, but to wait and see to what lengths their mischievous inquisitiveness might lead them.

On tiptoe she crossed to the dimmest corner of the living-room, flattening herself against the wall.

Hardly had she done so than the room darkened, two heads having been brought close to that casement window, blotting out a good deal of light. Standing unseen, she heard jeering comments.

"Talk about a pig-sty!"

"Rather different from our motor-caravans, Cyril!"

"You're right, Syb! He's living like a squatter."

"Batty!"

"Not he, Syb. You heard what dad was saying about him. But these inventor chaps are always a queer lot—like poets."

"Anyhow, he locks up the place when he has to leave it, as if it were a place anyone would want to burgle! Bah! Cyrrie, give me a bunk up!"

"Don't be silly, Syb! There's nothing more to be seen!"

"But the sister whispered, 'what a scream to climb in, Cyril! This window will come wide open. Set a booby trap for him—shall we?'"

"No-o-o! Silly! Come away! This other is the room I'd like to look at," said the boy, his voice dying away as he went to another window. "Here, Syb!"

Then she moved after him, and Madge knew they had taken their stand outside the window of the makeshift "lab."

"Gosh!" she heard Cyril Elswick's ejaculation. "The stuff he's got in there!"

"What's it all for, Cyrrie? I mean, what's he working at? Some idea, I know, but—"

"Ask me another!" came the boy's murmur.

"Something he is pretty close about. The dad tried to get a talk with him, but the chap froze."

Sybil Elswick gave a flippant laugh, still peering into the laboratory.

"It'll end in his going up with a bang, I dare say. And what a scream that will be, Cyril! He, he, ho! I hope we're still here when it comes off!"

"We'll be camping here as long as he's here, sis."

Madge's heart sank as she heard that remark. Poor dad! He was not to be rid of his noisy neighbours!

"I know, because I was asking the gov'nor if we'd be moving on," Cyril Elswick continued, "and he said no. We're here for a month, anyhow—and that's as long as this Minden merchant is staying."

A pause, then:

"I say, sis, what about a run over to Morcove to see Cora Grandways?" the boy suddenly proposed. "Didn't she say any evening—"

"Yes, we will! I like Cora Grandways. And we want to see the school, Cyril."

They were withdrawing now. A moment Madge stood, wondering whether she could go after them. Then, deciding that she would do no good by losing her temper with her father's neighbours, decided to stay and get on with those last trifling jobs, which would help to give dad such a pleasant surprise when he returned.

"I'm not going to wait about for him," was her happy decision. "I'll just leave a little note for him."

The moment soon came for her to do that, and she found great delight in pencilling on the scrap of paper:

"Darling Daddy,—Sorry I missed you! Get proper meals, and don't set up *too* late working at the wonderful idea! Love,
MADGE."

"P.S.—I got in at the window. Let it be a warning to you!"

Leaving this on the table for him, with a bright candlestick for a paperweight, she made her exit through the casement window, and then it was that something made her heart leap with horror.

Fire!
"There's no mistaking it, and at once Madge's thoughts flew to the valuable apparatus and dangerous chemicals in her father's "lab."

Whilst she was still climbing out by the window, her glance had been attracted to some smoke, curling away from a smouldering heap not a foot from the cabin's creosoted weather-boarding.

It was a heap of rubbish, close under the window of the makeshift "lab," and even now the moorland breeze was fanning that tinder-dry stuff into deadly flames!

Madge Faces the "Neighbours"!

MADGE jumped down from the window and rushed round to the water-but.

Luckily a pail used for dipping was ready to hand. She snatched it up, plunged it into the water, and fetched it out brimful—all in a second or so.

Then she rushed that pail of water to the burning heap. Swoosh! The smoke thickened to a rolling cloud, reminding her of yesterday; but that first drenching did not quite put out the fire.

She saw little tongues of flame surviving, and she stamped at them before dashing back for more water.



Hearing noises outside, Madge flattened herself against the wall. Next moment, two faces appeared at the window—those of Sybil Elswick and her equally objectionable brother. What were they doing here, prying into her father's little home?

The second pailful got the fire under, and after that it was merely a case of swamping on more water, to leave the heap of rubbish completely saturated. The scare was over, but still Madge could not repress a shudder at the thought of what might have happened.

She was thinking in that strain all the way back to Morcove. Supposing the wooden building had caught fire! It would have meant far more than the loss of the shack and its cheap furnishings. Dad probably had costly apparatus in the "lab." that he had had to pinch and scrape to buy. All his papers, too!

"And what a blaze it would have been!

Chemicals, very likely," was her still more appalling thought. "And simply because that Elswick boy dropped a lighted match or a cigarette-end. Careless monkey!"

Madge was seen by none of her chums when she got back to the school, otherwise they would have wondered at her indignant looks and flashing eyes.

She raced up to the Fourth Form quarters and whirled down the corridor, seeking the Grandways' study. It was her belief that the Elswicks had just arrived. There were two bicycles stalled near the porch, as if belonging to visitors.

Sure enough, as she turned into the little lobby that served the Grandways sister's study, she heard Cora gushing over the callers. Madge had no sooner tapped at the door than she was in the study. Visibly quivering with anger, she burst out hotly:

"You two! Please have the decency not to come prying around my father's place any more!"

Sybil and Cyril, in the act of sitting down, remained staring, agape at the intruder. It was Cora who was quickest to draw herself up resentfully.

Cora flared out:

"What do you mean? How dare you, Madge! How dare you burst in like this—when I've got friends!"

"How dare they come prying round my father's home!"

"Your father's what?" laughed Sybil Elswick. "Give it a name!"

Madge returned her furious eyes to that girl.

"It was horrid cheek of you—low-down prying! You didn't know that I was in the place! Just you keep away! It's a nice thing if my father can't leave the place for a bit without you two—"

"Oh, that's enough!" Cyril found his tongue at last. "What harm did we do, anyway?"

"You nearly set the place on fire—that's the harm you did!" was Madge's retort; and, whilst it staggered Cyril and Sybil, and made Cora's brows lift sharply, it drew a little cry from Judith.

"Oh! Oh, Cora, do you hear this?"

"You shut up!" snapped the elder sister. "It's an exaggeration—if it isn't an utter lie!"

"Your friends," Madge said, with an ironical emphasis on the second word, "they lit cigarettes just where they had been standing to pry in through a window. The match they threw away set fire to some rubbish—"

"I don't believe it!" Sybil Elswick cried out, tossing her head. "There shouldn't be a lot of rubbish there, anyhow! Filthy old hovel! I'd be ashamed to have a father living there!"

"There's something in that!" Cora grinned at Madge. "But fancy if there had been a fire! My word! That valuable place burnt down! Dear, dear!"

"Why, you silly idiot, to make such a fuss! The whole place isn't worth a ten-pound note!"

"My father has his things there!"

"What things? Oh, his wonderful invention, of course!" Cora nodded derisively. "Sybil—and you, Cyril—you must be more careful!"

"They had better!" Madge said, backing away to the door.

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed Cora and the Elswicks. "Oh, dear, what a scream she is!"

Slam! went the door after Madge's exit.

"My word," laughed Cora, "I've never known Madge Minden in such a state! But if you nearly

set fire to the place—well, no wonder! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thinks it might have put an end to the wonderful invention, is that it?" chuckled Sybil. "And so, no being millionaires some day!"

"Serve people right! They shouldn't be so selfish over their ideas!" grinned Cyril. "Mr. Minden is so close, anyone would think he's afraid of his idea being pinched! He was like that when the gov'nor tried him with a few questions. As if the gov'nor cares tuppence what the invention is!"

"Is your father in business?"

This question, suddenly voiced by Judith, made Cyril aware that she was keeping her eyes upon him, as if mistrustful. He had not taken to her at all—she was so different from Cora—and he let her know it by treating her to a supercilious glance.

"The gov'nor's chairman of a big company, if you call that being in business," he drawled. "Electrical. Isn't Mr. Grandways on the board with him, Cora?"

"Is he?" returned the elder sister. "He may be. Dad is in mostly everything in the City. But enough of this! You two want to be shown round the school. Come along, then!"

They went out, and so Judith was left to herself.

What was it that made her at once sit down in a reflective manner, elbows on table, chin resting between clenched hands? Was there something more than a silent sorrow that her sister should be such friends with these objectionable newcomers? There was!

Shadows of things to come, it seemed to Judith, were lying across her heart. She felt a vague dread, a presentiment of evil, menacing Madge and her father, a suspicion that Cora would do far better to keep clear of the Elswicks!

A long while Judith remained alone in the study, greatly troubled, trying to believe that it was all nonsense, this mistrust which had seized her; and yet something within her would keep whispering: Danger!

Sister Against Sister!

AT last Cora Grandways came back, having said good-bye to her new-found "friends."

By that time Morcovians were coming in from games to settle down to prep. The preliminary riot was taking place in Study 12. Someone was at the music-room piano, playing brilliantly. That would be Madge, Judith guessed. One could always tell Madge's playing.

"I've asked them to tea for one day next week, Judy," threw out Cora. "Sorry and all that if Sybil and Cyril don't quite meet with your approval!"

"Well, they do not, Cora."

"They wouldn't! We know the sort you like! But you might remember that Mr. Elswick is mixed up with dad in business, and that dad wrote and asked us to be pally with Cyril and Sybil. As for Madge Minden, kicking up that fuss—she can be blown!"

Judith stood up, laying aside a book that she had thrown open when her sister stalked in.

"We don't want to quarrel, Cora, but Madge had good reason for protesting—"

"Oh, shut up! You can't see things from the Elswicks' point of view, of course! Is it nice for them to have that Mr. Minden living so close, like a squatter?"

"They can easily move on; he can't. They are only camping—"

"They don't choose to move on! There's a spring that gives them a good supply of water."

"And that is probably why someone built the cabin there," Judith rejoined. "Mr. Minden has more right than—"

"Will you be quiet! I don't want to hear any more about it!" stamped Cora. "But, by the way," she suddenly softened, "if you should get to know what Madge's father is inventing, you might tell me."

"Why?" jerked out Judith, with another start of alarm.

"Oh, it is probably some cranky thing that will amuse us!"

"Cora," said her sister tremulously, "I believe the Elswicks are anxious to find out what Mr. Minden is trying to invent. You had better be careful! I don't like the look of it!"

The elder girl turned imperiously to confer a resentful look.

"What on earth do you mean, idiot?"

"Why should the Elswicks be going to camp there as long as Mr. Minden is at the shack? Do they seem the sort of people to like a quiet holiday, when they've got those two swagger motor-caravans that might take them all over the country?"

"Oh, you're batty!"

"I wish—oh, I wish I could feel that there is no reason for me to think as I do," sighed Judith.

"But I can't help thinking it will be very terrible if—if—"

"If what?"

For a long moment there was silence in this study. It was a tense pause, filled in by the incongruous light-hearted babel from other studies and the music from downstairs. Judith was very pale. Cora's looks were full of the old contempt.

"Go on, Misery! If what?"

"Let me ask you, Cora—have the young

Elswicks told you to find out, if you can, what Mr. Minden is inventing?"

"And supposing they have!"

"Then—then I am sure there is something behind their curiosity—something that ought to make you very careful, Cora. We don't want to help in anything like that," Judith spoke on, under the urge of a suspicion that was so definite—and yet it was only a suspicion! "Madge Minden is our schoolmate."

"Pooh! As if I care about that!"

The heartless remark was like a spark to gunpowder.

"Cora, you should care!" Judith flamed suddenly. "Can any misfortune befall Mr. Minden that won't affect Madge? And she is one of the best—"

"She is one of the Study 12 lot! You may think all the world of Madge and her chums, Judith, although I can't see that you gain by it," sneered Cora. "You are never with them!"

"You know why—you know!" broke from Judith in sudden great emotion. "I'm your sister, and you carry on this persistent war against them all! How can I—how can I mix with them as much as I would like? It's no fun to me to be always alone!"

"You're such a tiresome girl! When I do get you friends, you won't be friendly! Look how you were to Cyril and Sybil!"

"I couldn't stand them!"

"No. Well, you'll just have to stand them, see? For they'll be here a good deal, and if you dare give yourself airs—"

"Cora, listen! Oh, please, once again, don't have them for your friends! Don't!" Judith implored.

"I'm to take your advice, am I, and not father's? Oh, I've no patience," flared out Cora, flouncing back to the door. "Next thing you'll

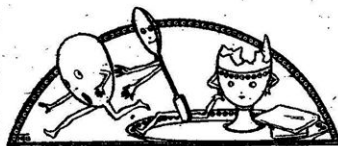
Our Cookery Expert says—

LEARN TO COOK!

And this week she tells you

HOW TO

BOIL!



How to Boil.

Our first lesson in boiling is making tea and coffee.

For tea, rinse the pot out with boiling water, dry it well with a clean cloth, put the tea in—one spoonful for each person—and pour the boiling water over the tea. Cover the pot, allow to stand for three minutes, and then pour out.

Coffee is more expensive to make than tea. Real good coffee needs plenty of coffee as well as plenty of milk. Heat the coffee-pot as you did the teapot, put in one good tablespoonful of coffee and add one pint of boiling water. Stir, and let the coffee stand in a warm place for a few minutes for the grounds to settle. Then strain into another warmed jug, or coffee-pot, and serve with plenty of hot milk. It is most important that the milk should be heated, or the coffee will not be really successful.

Potatoes

Potatoes of even size should be chosen, and

peeled thinly. Put them in a pan, cover with cold water—new potatoes with boiling water—add a spoonful of salt and bring to the boil. Boil slowly until soft, and then

strain away the water. Dry the potatoes over a slow heat for a few minutes, shake the pan to prevent burning, and turn into a heated vegetable dish.

Floury Balls.

Sometimes, boiled potatoes will commence to break before they are cooked. This may be because they are boiling too quickly, and they will soon become a "sloppy" mash—an absolute failure. To prevent this, at the first signs of breaking, strain away all but a little of the water, and continue cooking very slowly. The potatoes will finish cooking in the steam. When all the water has evaporated, shake the pan to prevent burning. This method of cooking will result in nice, floury balls.

be saying that father, as well as Mr. Elswick, is wanting to stop Mr. Minden from inventing whatever it is! There is a conspiracy! What rot!"

There was a derisive laugh, and then renewed silence. Cora dropped her hand away from the door-knob and came back a step or so, struck by her sister's increased agitation.

"Well, what, Judy—what?"

"Nothing, Cora."

"And that's what it all amounts to really! Nothing!" laughed the elder girl. "Oh, I can't stand you!"

She banged out of the room, and Judith, in the first moment that she was alone again, held a hand up to her eyes.

The old, old trouble—discord! She could not live in love and harmony with her sister! Always Cora must be taking a course that meant trouble—for others. And now it was to mean, alas! trouble for the Mindens.

In spite of a sister's warning, Cora would go her own reckless, malicious way.

Judith was sure that her fears were not groundless, yet what to do about them she knew not.

Even if she obtained proof, what steps would she be able to take when her own sister had entered into alliance with the Elswicks?

And worse than that—far worse!—it looked as

if Cora had spoken the truth in jest just now, and that there might indeed be a conspiracy to frustrate Mr. Minden's work.

Poor Judith Grandways! She had not only to think of a sister who was so ready to lend herself to anything that would harm one of the Study 12 girls. She had to think of a father who was ruthless where business interests were concerned.

To her sorrow, Judith knew that nothing mattered with her father except money, and still more money.

Was she, then, to find herself ranged against sister and father alike, standing up for what she knew to be right?

"Oh," cried Judith, with a sound that was almost a sob, "I can't think—I dare not! Not that—oh, not that!"

But to that it might have to come! Who knew?

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Are Judith Grandways' suspicions to be found correct? Is there really danger for Madge's father in the nearness of the Elswicks? You will learn when you read next week's great complete Morceve story, entitled "The Secret of the Moors." Make sure of reading this and learning what happens now.

Guide Captain Talks—

About Raising Company Funds

DEAR All-of-you,—Thank you for the delightful letters I have been receiving lately. I am glad to know that so many of you enjoy reading my letters. "Blossom," Birmingham, I do wish you had given me your full address, then I could have answered your letter ever so much sooner. I am so pleased that you had such an enjoyable time in Aberystwyth. You must have had some great fun in the hills! No, I have never been to Wales, at least, I have only been through a little of it in the train. Congratulations on your efforts to gain your first-class award. Yes, there is a pamphlet published by the Girl Guide Headquarters, price 3d., which will tell you about the origin of the Guide Movement.

The greatest snag which most of you seem to be up against at the moment is the question of entertainments to raise funds. I suppose these are wanted for camp now! At this time of year our thoughts turn to outdoor thrills always, and so why not have a tennis tournament?

One member of the company is almost certain to know of someone with a tennis court, if not, perhaps you could persuade a club to lend you a court for an afternoon. If you could get the loan of a private court you might be able to have it for a whole day, which, of course, would be ever so much better.

Don't make the mistake of charging too much for admission, 6d. or 1s. per person is quite sufficient. If you don't have to hire a court, whatever you make will be profit. Make plenty of lemonade, and the company cook can make some biscuits and buns. charge a little—sufficient to cover cost—for these, and you ought to have a very successful tournament, one that will help your funds for future events.

Try A Treasure Hunt!

Have you ever had a treasure hunt? I assure you it's great fun, and you can raise quite a lot for funds from the entrance fees. Those of you who live in the country could have a "bicyclo hunt." Arrange a series of clues which entrants must follow around the lanes near the village where you live. Station yourselves at the various "clue points"—that is, where one clue ends and the fresh clue begins. Then you must hand out the fresh clues to competitors.

The first competitor to get round the course correctly following all the clues wins. The prize could be a Guide purse, haversack, etc., if there are only Guide entrants. If no Guides are entering then choose something suitable for a non-Guide. If both Guides and others are entering choose something that will be suitable for either.

A Hiking Recipe.

Can you make dampers? They are just the thing for a hike. You mix flour and water until it forms into a nice dough. Peel a green stick, and then wind a piece of dough round it, and toast it in the red embers of the fire. When cooked remove from the stick, and eat with butter.

Cheese dreams are also good. Cut a very thick slice of bread, make a slit in it and insert a slice of cheese. Toast this over the fire on both sides. The smell while you are cooking it is so delicious that your appetite will have increased tenfold by the time the toasting is complete!

Yours, in love with the great outdoors,

GUIDE CAPTAIN.

