

**"CAUGHT IN THE CAVES!"**

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# The SCHOOLGIRLS' TOWN <sup>2<sup>d</sup></sup>

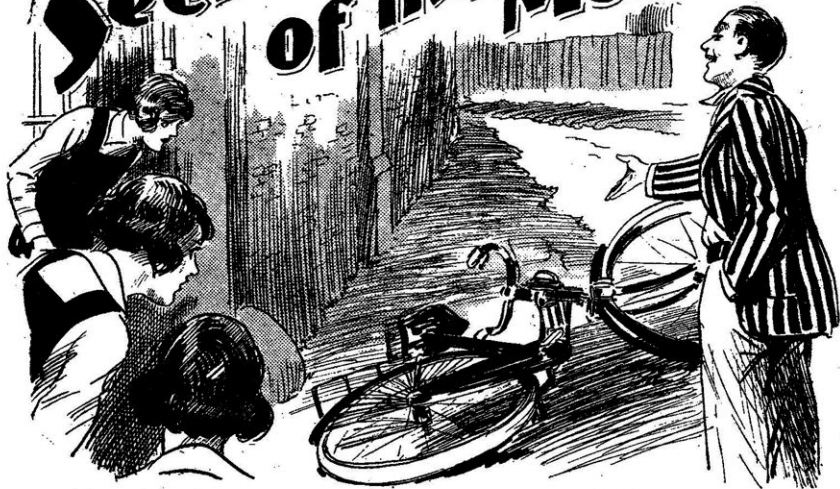


**A NIGHT ALARM  
FOR THE SCHOOL!**

(A thrilling moment in "The Secret of the Moors!" in this issue.)

A Fine Long, Complete Story of Adventures In and Around Morcove School.

# The Secret of the Moors!



By MARJORIE STANTON.

## A Night-Time Thrill for Morcove!

THE long summer's day was over, and the girls of Morcove School were trooping up to their dormitories.

They went reluctantly, for who could feel like bed when "summer time" meant going up to the dormitories whilst the last of the daylight still lingered out of doors?"

So there were pauses on the way while various juniors worked off the last of their high spirits. In particular, there were sudden skirmishes between the Fourth Form and their traditional rivals, the Fifth, and shrieks of laughter and jokes and snatches of talk floated down the stairs.

"Girls, girls!" Miss Everard, the Fourth Form mistress, called upstairs in a far different tone from that of stern Miss Massingham, the mistress of the Fifth, as she called:

"Silence, up there! Do you want me to come up!"

"No, zank you," was the muttered reply of that roguish junior, Naomer Nakara, Morcove's royal scholar from the desert country of North Agrica, and she pulled a face.

"One of these days," chuckled madcap Polly Linton, "she will hear you!"

"Good job," said her Majesty the girl-Queen of Nakara. "Bekas she doesn't belong to our Form, any-old-how."

"The poor Fifth; they are greatly to be pitied!" some of the Fourth-Formers said sympathetically.

But even though the Fourth Form rejoiced in a more youthful mistress who was most indulgent, it seemed to Betty Barton, the Form captain, presently, that things were getting just a bit too riotous.

That oft-tormented duffer, amiable Paula Creel, had afforded Polly and Naomer the usual sport, with the usual amount of squealing and yelping. There was nothing out of the way in that! But somehow, then, a pillow fight had developed; East Side of the dormitory versus West—a battle royal which resulted in real havoc. Not a bit of matting was left straight, not a bed!

"I say, I say!" Betty intervened at last. "Easy on, girls! Half-time!"

Then the belligerents, realising the state of the room, collapsed with laughter. There was some hasty straightening up—not, it is to be feared, carried out by those who had done most to create this disorder. Naomer, as one of the latter, suddenly flitted off downstairs whilst there was still time.

"Bekas he has made me thirsty, that pillow fight!" said Naomer, as she daringly departed upon her quest of liquid refreshment.

*Only Madge Minden knows what precious secret her father is guarding out in the lonely hut on the moors. But there are others who suspect, and their suspicions mean DANGER!*

Then a bat flew in at one of the windows, and the occupants of the dormitory, of course, had to go off into shrieks of pretended fright. Not that all the fright was pretended. Paula Creel, vaguely aware that a bat was a sort of mouse with wings, took refuge under a bed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed the girls, when the bat had flown out again and Polly was hauling the duffer by the latter's dainty feet from her shelter.

"Look here, are we going to get to bed?" Betty demanded, making a fresh attempt at coping with all this unruliness. "There'll be a row!"

"Here you are, everybody!" was now Naomer's joyous whisper, as she reappeared, carrying a mighty jug, a few glasses, and a quarter-pound packet of sherbet. "Now for a jolly good fizz-up!"

Too late was she warned not to put all the sherbet in at once. Naomer gaily tipped in the entire packet, and next second the jug of lemonade from Study 12's private buffet was in great agitation.

The most violent frothing and fizzling started, and it proved uncontrollable. Foam appeared, and when Naomer frantically blew at it, she only managed to blow some foam in Paula's pretty face! As for the sherbety lemonade, it still went on foaming up and foaming over—all on to the carpet.

"Wow!" howled Paula, retiring to wipe her eyes. "You silly cuckoo, you!"

"What ze diggings—queek!" gasped Naomer, not knowing where to rush with the almost-explosive mixture.

It was at this moment that Miss Everard came in.

"Now what is this! Naomer—"

"Ze refresher, plis, Miss Everard! Bekas—"

"You naughty girl!"

"No, bekas I was thirsty!"

"There is water. But hurry up and drink it, then—"

Miss Everard could not finish her remark. The sight of Naomer, in such a hurry to avail herself of permission to sample the fizzy drink, was too much for the Form-mistress' gravity. Like the girls, she laughed.

"Well?" she rippled, when at last Naomer removed the jug from her lips. "Have you had sufficient?"

"Yes, zank you, for ze present! But won't you try him, plis?"

Miss Everard took the jug, but not to sample its contents.

"Bed, every one of you, at once, this instant!" she commanded severely. "You don't hear such noise going on in other dormitories! Am I to be really angry with you all?"

They doubted if she could be, she was such a sport. And in the end her good nature achieved, very likely, far more than bad temper and sternness could ever have accomplished. She withdrew, leaving all quiet on the Fourth Form front.

Any further talk was in very subdued tones.

"And to-morrow—let's see, what's to-morrow?" yawned Polly, now ready for bed. "School all day again—um!"

"Eet nothing but school," complained Naomer, pounding a pillow before settling down. "One of zese days I shall strike."

"Then you'll be packed off home to Nakara," retorted the madcap. "And what a blessing to Morocco!"

"Yes, wather; gweat welief!" Paula Creel was rash enough to agree. "I mean"—hastily, for Naomer, in the adjacent bed, was rising up threateningly—"I mean—er—"

"What do you mean? You say queek!"

"Theah is no need, Naomer, to— Ow! Healp! Gewwoff me, wowp, ow!" came Paula's smothered wails.

"Naomer," spoke the captain, "if I get out of bed to you!"

"Eet all right," said her Majesty, bouncing up and down on Paula. "I am only—"

"Gwoow-ow!" came from Paula, with her head under the bedclothes.

Then Betty got out of her bed, to nip across and rescue the long-suffering one from treatment that was rendering the rest of the dormitory hilarious again. One step was all Betty took, however, then she stopped dead.

At the same instant, and for the same reason, other girls gave cries of surprise. Naomer left off teasing the duffer, exclaiming:

"Ooo, what ze diggings!"

A strong light had suddenly shone in at all the windows of the dormitory. For a moment it seemed to the startled girls like daylight come back.

Never before had they known anything like it to happen. There was nothing lurid in the scaring thought that it might be fire! It was like brilliant electric light.

Out of their beds came the juniors to swarm to the windows.

"Where is it—what is it?"

Even as the girls chorused their wondering remarks, they could hear other dormitories becoming just as excited.

Peering out, they had at least a part of their natural curiosity satisfied. They could see where the mysterious light had originated—not far from the school, on the open moor.

"Why, girls," Polly exclaimed with rising excitement, "it's just where those Elswick people are camping! Those people with the motor caravans—"

"That's it," others nodded. "But what are they up to, then?"

The strong, incandescent light was still issuing from that spot. It was as if someone were burning whole yards of magnesium ribbon, such as is used for flashlight photographs.

"I know," said Helen Craig; "it's that stupid Elswick boy, up to some nonsense or other."

"So long as he hasn't set the whole show on fire!" Betty rejoined. "But it can't be a fire, thank goodness. By the way—Madge! Your father has his shack somewhere just there on the moor, hasn't he?"

There was some excited turning to Madge Minden, who nodded gravely, her gaze still fixed upon the lit-up moor.

"And—my word," resumed Polly, "now you've mentioned the shack; isn't the light coming more from there?"

Then Cora Grandways gave one of her jeering outbursts.

"Oho, it's your father, Madge, working at the wonderful invention! Either that, or he's overdone some experiment—ha, ha—and blown himself up!"

"It's at the shack," Tess Trelawney said with conviction. "The Elswicks' camp is just a wee bit more to the left, over there. But I shouldn't think it means your father has had an accident."

"No," chimed in others, in haste to set Madge's mind at rest. "The glare is too steady."

"So now we know!" Cora jeered again. "The wonderful invention is something to do with electric light! The Minden pocket-torch, sold in all the market-places, ha, ha! Or is it a new health ray, Madge?"

That girl treated the derisive remarks with the scorn they deserved. The light was now dying down. It went out, and as soon as darkness was upon that lonely moorland world again, Madge herself was one of the first to go back to bed.

Girls who were her best chums were inclined to bombard her with questions. All Morcove knew that Madge Minden's widowed father had rented that cabin on the moor for a few weeks, using part of it for a laboratory. It was known, too, that he was working at some great idea. What had happened in the last few minutes was, naturally, going to leave girls all the more curious about Mr. Minden's activities.

Madge, however, could tell them nothing. She herself had not been given the slightest idea of what form the invention was taking. Her father was maintaining the closest secrecy. Had Cora Grandways hit the mark, when she jeeringly suggested: "Something to do with electric light?" It might be so.

But whatever it was, Madge longed for the morning, so that she might set her mind at rest that there had been no accident.

Her father was living quite by himself at the shack. True, he had near neighbours, as they might be called, in the persons of the Elswick family. But she knew that her father had rather fallen out with them, they had made themselves such a nuisance, and it was not nice to think of his having to be beholden to them in any emergency.

So, next morning, she was down very early, getting her machine from the cycle-shed when the rest of Morcove, still a-bed, was only just answering the tiresome getting-up bell.

Away rode Madge, bumping along a moorland track that was mostly turf, the risen sun driving dew off every frond of bracken, the larks singing madly overhead.

A couple of hundred yards short of the shack she dismounted and laid aside her bicycle, for it was easier to walk than ride the rest of the way. By then, she could see the ramshackle little dwelling, and there was smoke curling from the one chimney, so she guessed that her father was quite all right, after all. Even getting his breakfast, perhaps!

Sure enough, as she came with her light step to the open doorway of the shack, she smelt frying bacon—delicious. Could even hear it sizzling in the pan!

A playful rap of her knuckles on the wide-set door, and in she went.

"Morning, dad!"

"What! Oh, hallo, Madge—morning, my dear! But how

dare you!" joked her father, using his handkerchief to take a kettle off the blazing fire of sticks—"how dare you absent yourself from school without leave!"

Madge crossed the room and kissed him.

"I told one of the maids where I was going, daddy. And I had to come," she joked back at him, "just to see if you were still alive after last night!"

#### An Unpleasant Neighbour!

USUALLY there was a seriousness about Mr. Minden which his daughter had inherited—making her the quiet one of the Study 12 coterie. Now he twinkled his eyes at her.

"Oh, did I give you a surprise last night, Madge?"

"You gave us all a shock. The whole school was scared stiff for a moment, daddy. We thought it might be the Elswicks' motor caravans going up in flames!"

"Mustn't say I wish it had been," he grinned, "but those Elswicks, across the hollow—they are a confounded nuisance, Madge. I do wish they would move on. I came here to be quiet."

She nodded gravely.

"I know, dad; and it really seems as if they only came here to annoy you—Gracious, you'll have that bacon on fire!"

"I like it well done, my dear!"

All the same, Madge whipped the pan from

Fond as she was of sherbet, Naomer became alarmed when it fizzed up right over the top of the jug. Then she blew at the froth and Paula got it—right in the eye!



the blaze and blew at the smoking fat. Then, with a fork, she turned the rashers.

"You do want someone to look after you, daddy! Can't you ask if I can attend school daily for the present, so that I can be with you?"

"No, my dear," he declined flatly. "I am quite all right. I shall have to tell Miss Somerfield to gate you, Madge, if you won't keep away!"

"You do, and I shall bolt from the school! Daddy, I am going to have brekker with you; may I? It smells so good! You have put tea in the pot, have you? But you didn't warm the pot first. Oh, you men!"

"I find it answers just as well——"

"Nonsense," was her laughing protest.

Then, emptying out the dry tea from the unwarmed pot, she found that he had put in—"enough for twenty!"

"Oh, go and get shaved, and I'll call you when the table's ready," she commanded, a moment later; but although he meekly effaced himself, it was not that he might complete his morning toilette. He had withdrawn to the adjoining "lab" when, presently, she rattled a teaspoon between cup and saucer, calling:

"Brekker, daddy darling!"

And then he had become so absorbed, hovering over some of the apparatus connected with his secret labours, that she had to go into the lab, to fetch him away.

"It was you, daddy, making that fearful light, at bed-time? I mean, it was no—accident?"

"An experiment that got rather out of hand; call it that," he said, sitting down at a white-clothed table which Madge had rendered much more homelike. "I got rather scared myself at such an illumination, Madge."

"So I should think. To us, it seemed like fifty fair-grounds by night, all made into one." She handed him his tea. Daddy, I'm going to repeat a guess made by someone at the school. Your invention has something to do with electric-light!"

"It's useless to deny it, perhaps—after last night. But who made the guess, my dear?"

"Cora Grandways."

Mr. Minden stopped stirring his tea. "Ah—that girl," he said quietly. "That's the elder of the two Grandways sisters; not the nice one——"

"No, daddy; not Judith. She never makes nasty remarks. We all like Judy Grandways. But Cora—you know how she is."

He nodded.

"The sort of daughter one would expect Josiah Grandways to have. By the way, Mr. Grandways and this Elswick fellow who is here with his family and the swagger motor caravans—they're great pals, Madge. On the board of some company or other together."

Madge took mustard for her bacon; nice fresh mustard which she had made a minute since to replace the awful brown-yellow crust that she had had to scrape from the pot.

"I know that Cora Grandways has become friendly with the young Elswicks," she responded. "I suppose Mr. Grandways let Cora know that the Elswicks were here for a bit. And that reminds me——"

A voice from outside struck into the talk; a loud, false-hearted voice:

"You there, Minden? 'Morning, Minden!"

Madge's father set down his knife and fork. Frowning, he hitched back his chair to rise.

"That's the Elswick fellow, confound him. I suppose I must go out to——"

"Your brekker will get cold, daddy."

"Hang him, anyhow," Mr. Minden muttered, hurrying into the open.

Then Madge, as she covered her father's plate with a warm dish, heard the two men in talk, a few paces from the doorway.

"Morning, Mr. Elswick. Did you want anything?"

"And a grand morning it is, eh? The air on this moor, what? Grand! You were up with the lark, eh, Minden?"

"I'm having my breakfast, and my daughter is here——"

"Is she now! Nice for you, Minden—very nice! She is at a fine school, I understand. Morcove—my youngsters have been shown over it by their friend, Cora Grandways. Why I strolled across here, Minden: last night, about bed-time, that bright light—some experiment of yours, was it?"

"Why, yes——"

"Thought so. Ha, ha, ha! But what a light you gave us! As I said to my family at the time, if Mr. Minden is out to provide the world with a new light that rivals electricity—well! How did the experiment go off, Minden?"

"It was not quite a success."

"Ah, pity! Still, perseverance does it, eh? You must let me attend one of your experiments some time, old man. I'm interested. The coming invention is, I take it, something to do with lighting?"

"Mr. Elswick, you must excuse my reticence, but at the present time I prefer to say nothing about my work. Think it will keep fine?" Madge heard her father conclude on an entirely different topic; and next moment he was re-entering the tiny shack.

"Can't stand the chap!" he said blackly, resuming his chair. "If I was rude to him, it's because I must be."

Gravely Madge nodded her head, understanding.

"I was going to say, dad, you want to be careful. The young Elswicks have all the cheek in the world. I know they were prying around this place of yours the other evening."

Mr. Minden finished his bacon and started upon toast and marmalade.

"You've given me a grand breakfast, my dear! I would never have bothered about toast. Of course, Madge, I love to see you often; it's a great joy to be so near your school—if you don't think I am rather disgracing you, living like this! What do your chums say about it all?"

"Just as if they could think it anything but an awfully jolly arrangement, at this time of year!" she laughed. "And they know, daddy darling, that we are not well off, and that you were renting this holiday shack for the sake of economy, while you had the Exeter house let furnished."

"I never think of your chums, my dear, without feeling thankful that you have such a nice set—Betty, and Polly, and the rest of them. Give them my best wishes when you go back. You should bring them over to tea, though I don't suppose it will be any great treat for them!"

"Oh, dad, but they would love it! Only, you want to go on quietly——"

"Well, I do, if people will let me," he agreed, earnestly. "I tell you what, Madge; as soon as my experiments have reached a really promising stage, you and your chums shall come over to see the great invention being tried out!"

"That's sweet of you, daddy!"

"Meantime, be careful what you say at the school—I mean Madge, to any except your chums. You may tell Betty and the rest the meaning of

last night's display. I really am working at a new system of lighting—electricity, with several processes left out."

Madge could not quite take this in, as her expression showed.

"Electricity as we know it today, Madge, is a wonderful thing, clean and cheap; a great boon to humanity. But it has to be made accessible to thousands, millions of people. That is what I am trying to do, my dear."

"Oh, dad! Then I do think you are doing something that is really worth while! Will it mean that people in lonely places will be able to have electric light—people all over the world—without having to make it themselves?"

"You've got it," he smiled and nodded. "No costly installations of private plants, and no more outlay of millions of pounds on public undertakings. Whether it's a shack like this, Madge, or a great country mansion—the whole thing will be available for a few shillings."

"Daddy!" she cried. "So that any poor old soul, in a cottage, can have the light—"

"At less than the cost of a paraffin lamp! Yes, my dear—that is, if only I succeed, as I believe I am going to—"

He broke off, turning round in his chair to eye the doorway. Then he looked at his daughter.

"Confound!" he exclaimed softly. "Didn't that Elswick fellow go away?"

They both rose, and in a moment, whilst the father was looking out from the sunny doorway, Madge glanced out of a window.

Nobody!

Mr. Minden laughed.

"This won't do; I am becoming too suspicious of people, Madge! As it happens, though, that Elswick fellow is interested in the electric-light business. My invention, if it comes off, will give the electric-light industry a knock, of course. Can't be helped. We must progress. And if I don't invent this thing, somebody else will!"

"I ought to be going now, daddy," said Madge. "Thanks for the brekker. And best of luck over the great invention," she added.

"Walking, Madge?"

"Oh, no, I have a bike!"

But she was to discover that her machine had vanished. Back at the spot where she had stalled it, she searched around in vain for her bicycle.

Five minutes she spent—ten minutes—her anger increasing all the time. That the machine was not here, and not to be found, could only mean that a trick had been played upon her. She would not go back to tell her father about the annoying hindrance; on the other hand, she did not like to go, without him, to the Elswicks' caravan-camp, making a fuss about her missing machine.

"It is their doing, for a certainty!" she fumed. "Either the brother or the sister—both of them. Oh, how I wish those people would go to the other end of the country!"



"What do you call this, Naomer?" demanded Miss Everard, holding up the blotted copybook. "He is my prep., plis," Naomer said demurely.

At last she set off for Morcove on foot. It was the only thing to do. Faintly on the morning breeze had come the chimes of Morcove. Nine o'clock. So she would be late—horribly late for school.

All this sudden flurry, and a sense of getting into disgrace—two things that she hated—and all because of the mean trick played upon her by the Elswicks. It was a maddening end to what had begun by being such a happy morning.

Suddenly, when she had been running long enough to get hot and all the more cross, someone appeared before her, wearing an air of holiday laziness. Cyril Elswick!

"Hallo!" he grinned, sauntering out from a by-path on to the one she was traversing. "What's the hurry, then?"

"You know!" she panted, reading mockery in his eyes. "Oh—go away!"

"You don't want me to help you, by any chance?"

"No, I don't!"

"Right!" he grinned. "Then you can jolly well look for that bike yourself—with some hopes of finding it!"

And he strolled away, whistling.

#### In Class!

MISS EVERARD, correcting the overnight's "prep" at her desk in front of the Fourth Form, whilst her charges coned the text-books and raced away with pens, suddenly emitted a vexed murmur.

"Naomer, come out!"

So her Majesty, the girl queen of Nakara trotted out, to take her stand very demurely in front of an irate mistress.

"What do you call this, Naomer?"

"He is my prep., plis."

"I never," sighed Miss Everard, "saw anything more disgraceful. Never! You don't get better; you get worse. What were you doing last evening?"

"I was doing ze prep., Miss Everard! I was working ever so hard. Bekas, you can ask—"

"Thank you, but the alleged 'work' is evidence enough. Well, you- will stay in after school, Naomer. Very sorry, but there are times when one must be firm. I am willing to make allow-

"Accident, do you call it? A few blots? I call it a disaster, Naomer. Well, you must have a fresh book, that is all!"

And Miss Everard, consigned the ink-smothered exercise-book to the waste-paper basket, to the accompaniment of tittering, all over the class-room.

"Sh! Go on with your work, girls!"

After a minute of renewed silence, it was: "Stand up, Paula Creel! Paula, how do you spell 'irregular'?"

"Iwwegulaw, Miss Eweward?"

"Yes."

"Er—iwwegulaw. Er—two r's, Miss Eweward; that is to say, thwee r's. Two togethah and one at the end, what?"

"Then why spell it with one r, when you know better?"

"I iwrequently have twouble with my r's, Miss Eweward, as you are awcah. I—"

"Sit down, Paula! Ah!" Miss Everard exclaimed, as the class-room door opened, letting in Madge Minden. "At last!"

Madge came forward, looking unusually hot and flurried.

"Well, Madge, what does this mean?"

"I'm late, Miss Everard; very late! I am so sorry. You knew where I—"

"Oh, yes; I received the message that you were kind enough to leave with a parlourmaid—dryly. "Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, thanks, with father. And I would not have been late like this, Miss Everard, only I—my bicycle—"

"Punctures! The man who invented the pneumatic tyre, invented, I think, the best excuses there ever was for being late!"

"But—"

"Oh, go along, and don't let it occur again, Madge! I am surprised at you, of all girls!"

It was said so generously, so affectionately, that Madge only felt all the more annoyed with that Elswick boy, for having caused her to be late. It did seem such a shame that a mistress like Miss Everard should be put out.

Of all the schoolmates who had at least a sly smile for Madge, if not a teasing whisper, as she went to place in class, Naomer was the sauciest—and the most inquisitive!

"What ze diggings," breathed Naomer, sitting behind Madge's desk; "going off to get ze special brekker! What did you have, Madge? You say, queek!"

Miss Everard called out:

"Naomer, go on with your work!"

"Wiz ze greatest of ze pleasure," said her Majesty, under her breath.

"How much have you done, Naomer?"

"I have ruled some lines—"

"Do you see the time!"

"Yes, Miss Everard; soon time for break."

This was too much for the Form's decorum. It went off into one of those ill-suppressed bursts of merriment that were not infrequent during lessons in the Fourth.



Quaking with alarm, the Elswicks and Cora Grandways crouched down away from the window, hoping against hope that the Morcovians would not discover them.

ances whenever there is a good excuse. We cannot always be a hundred per cent—"

"No, bekas my appetite—"

"Oh, your appetite can have nothing to do with this! Or has it, perhaps, everything to do with it?" softened Miss Everard. No use, one could not be really cross with this little imp. "Come to me after school, Naomer."

"Zank you—"

"In my room, Naomer. I must have a serious talk with you!"

"Much obliged—I mean—et jolly good of you to be so sporting, bekas. I know I did have ze accident with ze ink, last night, and make a few blots—"

But there; all Miss Everard could say to herself, when sometimes she wondered if she should be stricter, was that on the whole the class did work well. The girls were happy, and that was far better than having them in a nagged-out, sullen state. Far better!

Out they ran to "break," presently, and whilst some started games others preferred to mob round Madge for news. They were sure that she could offer some explanation of last night's strange occurrence, and she readily told them that it had been the outcome of an experiment by her father, as they had suspected.

But Madge was not going to say more than that about the invention just then. Sauntering down to the gates with Betty and the others intending to turn back there, she was telling them about the affair of the bicycle, when—

Tr-r-ring, ring! TR-R-RING, ring, RING

It was a bicycle bell, being chimed violently as the rider came whizzing in at the gateway. A girl's bicycle—Madge's—and it was being clumsily ridden by Cyril Elswick.

"Old iron!" he shouted. "Hi, look out! Has anyone lost a bike?"

Madge felt as angry as before. Furiously she put herself in front of the impudent fellow, so that he had to pull up sharply. Dismounting, he let the bicycle fall crash to the ground.

"No charge for delivery!" he mocked. "It's the one you lost, isn't it?"

"No," Madge said fiercely; "it is the one you took."

"Bravo, Madge!" applauded some of her chums.

"Naughty, naughty! Go back to your lessons, like good little girls!" jeered the boy. "And if you behave nicely you shall be taken out in a crocodile by-and-by—ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, Cyril!"

This was Cora Grandways, suddenly prancing up. She meant Betty and Co. to see on what friendly terms she was with Master Cyril Elswick. She hoped that the chums would be impressed, but they promptly walked away."

**Cora is Moody!**

"WHAT'S the joke, Cyril?" grinned Cora, for she had noticed Madge giving him a final glance of disgust whilst picking up the machine to take it to the sheds.

"A fair scream," he prefaced his chuckling narration, and Cora, as she listened, threw back her handsome head and shrieked with laughter.

"How lovely!" she praised the ill-natured "jape." "Serve Betty & Co. right. An uppish lot, Cyril. What's your sister doing later on in the day?"

"She wondered if you'd come over to the camp to tea?"

"No, you come to tea in my study!" was Cora's counter proposal, delivered very grandly. "Round about four, tell her."

"But isn't it putting you to a lot of tag?"

"Oh, Judy will get the tea," was the answer that set Cyril grinning again. He quite admired the way in which Cora domineered over her younger sister.

"I say," he resumed in a confiding tone, "great doings last night at the shack! Pa Minden—"

"Yes, we all saw the light from the dormi. windows!"

"Gosh, and wasn't it a light!" he muttered. "The gov'nor went across this morning to try to find out what it meant; but the Minden merchant was as close as ever. Positively rude! So now the gov'nor is done with being friendly—"

"I don't blame Mr. Elswick," put in Cora.



"Can't see anybody hanging about, can you, girls?" Madge commented. "No," they answered. "I've brought you on a wild goose chase, I'm afraid," she said ruefully.

"Seems to me, the poorer people are, the more they think of themselves! But I wonder what the Minden man is up to?"

"Cora, it begins to look as if there's going to be some wonderful invention that will just about play havoc with concerns that the gov'nor is interested in," Cyril whispered. "Your pater as well! There's no telling for certain—the gov'nor would give something to know for certain, too! But if Mr. Minden brings out some patent gadget on the lines we suspect, some of us will get a nasty knock."

Cora was suddenly an impressed listener, all flippancy gone.

"But, Cyril, Mr. Minden might sell the invention to—your father and Mr. Grandways?"



"Perhaps—and at a price!" grimaced the lad.  
 "No, it doesn't do to reckon on that, Cora. Hang Mr. Minden and his invention, I say. I'm worrying the gov'nor—your father the same, I dare say."

The ding-ling of a small bell was sounding at the porch, recalling girls to the class-rooms.

"I must go in, Cyril," said Cora carelessly.  
 "Don't forget—four o'clock this afternoon."  
 "Right—ho!"

Thoughtfully the schoolgirl dawdled up the drive to the schoolhouse. It was like Cora Grandways to find room in her mind for thoughts about money and her father's business—which was simply to make more money, always.

Most girls of her age would have felt quite unconcerned about pure money-grubbing. But she had been born into a grand life—and she had known her father and mother come down in the world once, with a great crash! It made her shudder now to think that they might do that again. One never knew!

Was Mr. Minden's invention threatening her father's prosperity?

She found that question coming between herself and the lessons. At midday she came out of class with the rest of the Form, still moody about it. The sight of Madge Minden made her feel specially venomous.

And then, suddenly, cunning made her go on tip-toe, ready to be a listener at the Study 12 keyhole.

No one else was in the corridor just then, and she could hear animated talk going on in the Form captain's study.

Madge was speaking.

"Dad said I might tell you girls, because you can be trusted. His invention, if only he brings it off, will be a most wonderful boon to the world. The very poorest people will be able to have electric light in the very loneliest cottages. People in the wilds of the Colonies will be able to have it."

"But how wonderful!" exclaimed Polly.

"Mawvellous, bai Jove!"

"And it will bring your father a big fortune, of course, Madge!" cried Helen. "Well, he'll have deserved it."

"I am glad," Madge resumed in her own quiet way, "that it is a useful invention. Fancy a man devoting his brains to some poison gas or a new gun. But an invention like dad's—"

"My word, what a stir it will make!" broke from Betty. "Well, Madge, jolly good luck to Mr. Minden, and may he—"

The listener at the door dared not stay even a half-second longer. Someone was coming round from the stairs. She darted on to her own study, unseen by Naomer, as that lively junior came galloping down the passage.

The earnest discussion in Study 12 was interrupted by the imp's bounding in. Crash, bang!

"Hey, steady, Naomer!"

"Yes, wath—owp! Theah she goes!"

"Naomer," said the captain, "that is NOT the way to come away from an interview with your Form-mistress!"

"Yes, eet is!" insisted the dusky one. "Bekas—hooray, she was a sport I tell you. All she said was that I must not let you others keep me from working hard—"

"Story!" howled Study 12.

"Any-old-how, she ended by making me sit down and have a refresher!"

"Then you won't want another now!" said Polly. "Hi, leave that cupboard alone, Naomer. What next?"

"Next," said Naomer, opening the cupboard door, "I am going to have a grape fruit to give me ze appetite for dinner!"

#### Judith Gives the Alarm!

CORA GRANDWAYS, at a little before four, that afternoon, came to her study carrying two or three cardboard cartons, bearing the Barcombe Creamery label.

Her sister was clearing the table of books, intending to lay tea.

"Here you are, Face-ache—put those out as well," Cora said, setting down the things that had arrived by the Creamery's afternoon delivery. "And mind—tea ready by four, sharp!"

Judith said nothing. What use was it? She entirely disapproved of her sister's increasing friendship with the young Elswicks; but Cora had obtained special permission to have them to tea from Miss Everard, who only knew of the Elswicks as friends of the Grandways family. In such circumstances, what could a younger sister do?

"And no giving yourself airs whilst they are here!" Cora scowled, turning back to the door.

"My friends have got to be your friends, Judy."

The latter could not let that pass in silence.

"I shall never agree to any such thing, Cora—"

"What!"

"Not—", while you make friends with people who—"

"Who what?" flared out the elder girl. "Isn't Mr. Elswick a business friend of father's? What more do you want, then! Didn't father write and say that he'd like me to look up the Elswicks at their camp on the moor?"

There was again a sudden pallor in Judith's face as she turned away. How could she say anything against the Elswicks, when they were friends of her own father's. And yet, how awful it was to feel that father had friends like that!

After giving Judith a look of great contempt, Cora stalked out. She went to make herself specially tidy for her visitors, then descended to the schoolhouse porch, with an air of owning Morocco.

Sybil and Cyril Elswick were a few minutes before the appointed time. They rode up on bicycles, Sybil looking excessively dainty and a bit overdone for her age, Cyril all the colours of the rainbow.

Various girls who happened to see this youth felt blinded by his scarlet blazer and striped tie, his white flannel trousers and shiny hair, not to mention the apricot collar and heliotrope socks. He "reported," according to custom, to Miss Everard, and finally appeared in the Grandways' study.

"Hallo, Judy!" he greeted the youngster sister. "How's Judy-Woody?" And he pulled her hair. She sharply set herself at a distance from him.

"None of that!" she said. "Cora, everything's ready, so I will leave you to it."

"Oh, aren't you going to have tea with us?" was Sybil's mock-concerned cry. "We shall miss you, Judy!"

"Shan't survive the blow," declared Cyril, and he flopped back into a chair, turning up his eyes. "Been looking forward to a talk with you all day, Judy!"

Cora laughed.

"What screams you two are! But, Judy—you're to stay!"

"I'm sorry, Cora, but—please—"

"You want to be rude, do you! All right, my girl! I'll let your father know about this! And you've laid the tea disgracefully!" the elder sister flamed on. "Look at the way you've piled those cakes together!"

"I was a plate short, Cora. I did my best."

"This tea!" seethed Cora, pouring it out. "You've done your best to make us ill, I think! Oh, clear out, and good riddance!"

Cyril darted across to bow Judith out.

"Good day, Miss Grandways!" he grinned.

"And my kind regards to Study 12!" drawled Sybil, taking the seat at table to which Cora had assigned her. "Ask them when they are going to have another picnic, Judith. Ha, ha, ha!"

Outside, Judith paused for a few seconds, needing to pull herself together before she went round into the main corridor. From the study came heartless remarks about her, and laughter as heartless. Biting a lip, she moved away, very lonely, yet not minding the loneliness one bit as much as she felt the shame of her own sister's conduct.

The Elswicks would never have behaved like that to her, Judith, she was certain, only Cora encouraged them.

Ah, well! Such things, after all, were trifles compared with what was upon the way! Her suspicions that her own father and Mr. Elswick were allied to spoil Mr. Minden's invention—that was the real trouble.

Not for innocent reasons, Judith was sure, were the Elswicks camping near the shack on the moor. They were the last people in the world to be content with a holiday as tame as that. Beyond all question now, there was an unfriendly interest on their part in Mr. Minden's experiments.

A study door came open just as Judith was going by.

"What, have you had your tea, Judith?" smiled Madge, coming out.

"I'm just going to get it, Madge—at the school tables—"

"Downstairs? Oh, you can do better than that. I'm due in Study 12; come along, and I'm sure they can find a place for you!"

"No, thanks, Madge. Don't think I'm being horrid, but—I don't feel like it."

She passed on, and Madge stood looking after her, her sympathetic nature stirred to its depths. Poor Judith Grandways!

Hardly another girl wanted tea at the school tables, that afternoon. There was always a liberal meal set out, for those who liked to claim it, but Morcove had long since adopted the privilege, so generously granted of having tea "in study"—a joyous, social half-hour every day in the term.

Judith had her lonely tea down there, then wandered out into the grounds keeping away from games' field and the courts. Soon the girls would be flocking forth, and she did not feel she wanted to let herself be drawn into a party for games.

How could she—how could she mingle with Betty and Co., and all the rest, when the hour was to come, perhaps, when she would be unable to hold up her head before them all, knowing that she was the daughter of the man who had ruined Mr. Minden's invention!

Out here in the open air, again and again she distinctly heard the voices and the laughter of

Cora and the young Elswicks, coming down from the study, through the wide open window.

At last, if only to put herself beyond reach of those sounds, she sauntered out of bounds. For half an hour she wandered about, always alone, and so lost in thought that, as it happened, she very nearly had the very three whom she was avoiding running full-tilt into her.

Cora and the Elswick pair—she suddenly saw them riding her way on bicycles. It was a moorland path they were following—one that would take them out to the camp—and Judith, luckily, was standing amidst tall bushes. Down she dived and crouched there to remain unseen as they pedalled by.

"It's worth trying, anyhow," she heard her sister gleefully remarking, as all three bicycles whirred by.

"And if he's at home in the shack—well, we can leave it till some other time."

"And then you'll come on to our place, Cora—that's the idea," said Sybil Elswick.

That was all Judith heard as they flashed by. But the few words were enough!

She got to her feet looking greatly agitated.

Why were those three going, not straight to the camp, but to the shack? Why did something depend upon Mr. Minden's being absent?

Her first impulse was to hasten after them, on foot. Then it occurred to her that they might carry out whatever they had in mind regardless of her protests. She could not do much good by following.

Finally she turned to go back at top speed to the school. Madge and the others had seen nothing of her in the last hour at least, so there was no reason why she should not leave them to infer that she had been for a walk in the direction of the shack.

The chums of Study 12 were at the grass courts, and she went straight up to Madge Minden, who was at present only an onlooker.

"Well, Judy!" smiled Madge.

"Er—Madge, is your father at the shack?" was the casual-sounding question that none the less startled the inventor's daughter.

"Why?"

"I fancy, if you were to go along now—you and some of your chums—you would find some people hanging about the shack. That is, if your father is away."

Madge's stare had become one of sudden alarm.

"What sort of people, Judy?"

"Oh—up to no good, I should imagine."

And Judith, having said that, walked away hoping desperately that she had said enough—and that she would not be pressed to say more!

#### Someone Coming!

MADGE turned to Pam Willoughby, who had been standing by during the brief talk with Judith.

"You heard that, Pam? I don't like to think what it may mean! Supposing my father is away from the shack? And he does go into Barncombe sometimes, about this time."

"Yes, well, Madge; if I were you—"

"I must go over, Pam. Will you explain to the others why I have gone—"

"Oh but we had better all go with you," Pam suggested, serenely, and she ran out to interrupt the brisk game. Betty and Polly had taken on Neomer and Paula, but there was no more thought of tennis when they heard the news.

Meantime, Cora and her recent guests for tea had completed their short run from Morcove. They left their machines at the Elswicks' camp and lost no time in starting upon a loiter-round that would take them near the shack. Mr. and Mrs. Elswick were out, and the servants attached to the caravans had been given a half-day off, so there was no one to say them nay, in whatever they meant to do if only Mr. Minden were absent from the neighbouring cabin.

"And he is—he is away!" Sybil Elswick presently asserted, with suppressed glee. "Look, the padlock's on the door."

Cyril chuckled.

"Oh, come on then, girls! Let's do as we said, and even if old Minden does find out and get on his hind legs about it, who cares!"

"I'm sure I don't!" shrugged Cora.

"Dad will only treat it as a joke, anyhow," Sybil assured the reckless Morcovian. "He knows what we are—Cyril and I!"

They strolled up to the shack, went all round it, then stopped at the window which, they knew for that of the makeshift laboratory.

Peering in, they could not see much, for their three heads together kept out the light. This evening, all the windows were fastened up, but this was a sash-window, and Cyril was going to let the two girls see how clever he was. Out came a pocket-knife, and he soon had the fastening slipped back.

Then he raised the lower sash.

"Good-bye, girls; I am now going in. Wow, look out for Professor Minden's famous Death Ray! Gee, though, he has got some funny tackle on the benches."

"We're coming in too!" declared Sybil, now that her brother was clambering over the low sill. "Just to see!"

But wasn't there, in the mind of each of them, a readiness to do more than look round?

Cyril helped his sister through the window, and then Cora followed. He drew the sash down, but did not refix the catch; it did not seem worth while, for that catch would not show from outside.

"Gee," he grinned, "if Pa Minden should come back now! There's no back door to slip out by. But he won't! He has to walk all the way into Barncombe and back—"

"And you can see, he had tea before he went, so he hasn't been gone long," said Cora.

She was looking through the doorway into the adjacent living room. Tea-things were still on the table.

"So this is the home of the invention that is going to stagger the world!" jested Sybil, derisively glancing around the cramped workroom, with its benches and apparatus and old sugar-boxes full of paraphernalia. "Well, where is it—the wonderful gadget that is going to make his fortune?"

"Yes, I want to see it," whispered Cora, with more than a flippant eagerness. "There can't be much more to do before he takes out a patent. It was working last night, wasn't it?"

"Was it? I dunno!" shrugged Cyril. "From what he told the pater, the experiment didn't quite come off. Hullo, this looks like—"

"Don't touch!" Sybil exclaimed nervously, for her brother looked ready to fiddle with the object that had claimed his attention.

It was a tall metal box, with a cluster of ordinary gas-filled electric-light bulbs on the top, and two or three controls at the front.

"Might be a new kind of portable wireless, this contraption," Cyril commented. "But we know what it's for—to provide the world with electricity that makes itself—he, he, he!"

"It doesn't sound possible!" muttered Sybil. "Do you mean to say there are no batteries to charge, or wires to supply current?"

"Perhaps this'll tell us!" grinned Cyril, pointing to an attaché case that stood beside the metal box. "He keeps his notes in this, does he?"

"I don't see any safe," commented Cora, glancing around.

"Have a look, Cyril!" whispered his sister, with sudden tenseness.

He clicked open the fastening of the case, and threw back the lid.

"Here we are. Yes, these are his papers. Gee, this beats Algebra!"

As he glanced at the topmost sheets of memoranda, the two girls looked over his shoulders at the pages of hieroglyphics.

"Nothing there we'll ever understand!" Sybil remarked impatiently. "But I suppose some people—"

"Oh, rather! This 'ud probably be A.B.C. to the gov'nor," laughed Cyril. "Hullo, here's a book—ah, what's this he's written on the front page? Specification for Patent and Explanatory Notes."

"Sh! Oh, look out! Sybil—Cyril!" was Cora's sudden gasping whisper. She had glanced to the window. "Someone coming!"

"What! Who?"

Brother and sister looked panicky, the former dropping the small notebook back into the attaché-case, the lid of which he closed.

Then, as Cora gestured to them to do so, they cast about for hiding places. Cora herself was already making a stooping run to where a stack of packing-cases would screen her.

"Some girls from Morcove!" she whispered. "Betty and the rest!"

"Is Madge with them?" quavered Sybil, crouching to hide under a bench. "Oh, but they won't come in—they can't!"

"Yes, they can!" Cora said frantically. "The window—it's unlatched. If Madge is with them—"

"Gosh! Oh, my goodness!" Cyril almost groaned, in greater dismay than ever. "We're caught!"

"Cyril—latch the window!" Cora whispered fiercely from her hiding place. "Latch it—quick, quick, there's time!"

Fairly quaking as he did it, the panicky lad darted across and reached his hand to the latch without allowing himself to be seen from outside.

Then, on that side of the room, he huddled down, to be as safely hidden as were his sister and Cora.

#### Gone!

"CAN'T see anybody hanging about the place, can you, girls?"

"No!" Madge Minden was answered by all those chums who had come with her in great haste from Morcove School.

They were within twenty paces of the moorland shack, standing to gaze around.

"The worst of it is," murmured Betty Barton, "there is so much cover amongst the bracken and gorse. But we came up quietly, so there was a good chance of taking any prowlers by surprise."

"Dad is away from the shack, right enough,"

remembered Madge, going towards the one outer door. "He's looked up the place—and this time he has remembered to fasten the windows!"

"So you can't get in?" inferred Helen Craig. Madge shook her head.

"I suppose it would be possible for anyone to slip back the fastening of this window"—stepping to the one that lighted the laboratory—"but I don't want to do that if there's no need. I might blunder into something in the lab and do some damage."

"Of course," nodded Betty.

They clustered at the laboratory window, peering in.

"Well, it must be all right, Madge," exclaimed the Form captain gladly. "If anyone had entered the place in your dad's absence, it would have had to be by this window. But in that case the catch would have to be left undone on leaving."

"So I've brought you away from tennis, on a wild goose chase!" Madge smiled ruefully. "What a shame!"

"Not a bit of it!" cried Polly. "Judy Grandways must have felt there was some good reason to warn you."

One or two of them stood on tip-toe, trying to see into the laboratory better.

"What a weird place it looks!" commented Helen. "Like a wizard's lair!"

"Only a shack, but people will be flocking to see it some day, Madge!" said Polly. "It will be famous as the place where your father brought off the great discovery that made him a millionaire!"

"Not so much of the millionaire," said Madge. "If dad gets enough for his patent to live on comfortably, that will satisfy him, I know."

They moved on, making an entire round of the place; but the two windows were only on the side they had come to first. What with the blank walls elsewhere, the padlocked door at the porch, and the intense silence, it was all very reassuring.

"The Elswicks' place, too, seems to be deserted this evening!" Madge presently commented. "I wonder what's become of Cora Grandways and the young Elswicks? She had them to tea at the school."

"They went off into Barncombe, I dare say," suggested Pam. "It would be too slow for them at the school."

Their recent fears completely banished, slowly the girls sauntered off by the way they had come. More than once they paused to look back at the moorland

cabin, and all the time their eyes and ears were on the alert. Still there was nothing to cause them alarm.

So, home to Morcove School they rambled, and as the evening was still so young and sunshiny, they scampered to the grass courts, hoping for a resumed game. They had to wait some twenty minutes, then a court became available, and those who took over played as briskly and brilliantly as ever, in spite of that excursion which had been made—all for nothing!

It was much later in the evening when Betty & Co. went up to the studies, pleasantly tired and due for a "refresher" before taking a look at prep. Madge went round alone to the Grandways' study and found, as she expected, Judith all by herself, book in lap.

"Oh, Judy dear, about what you said a while ago," began Madge gently; "some of us went out to the moor, but could see nobody hanging about! Dad's place was all locked up—even the windows fastened."

"He was away, then? Well, I'm sorry if I wasted your time, Madge—"

"Not at all, Judy! It was kind of you. There might have been danger that we girls would have been just in time to stop. Dad's invention will be a very valuable one. And—one never knows—"



"Want anything?" Cora asked Madge insolently. "Not of you, Cora, thank you." "Huff! Then perhaps you'll get out of my study!" snapped the other, rudely.

somebody might be wicked enough to want to steal it, or get hold of papers explaining it. But what's the matter?"

Judith, rising to lay aside her book, was looking very pale.

"I—I've been reading too long, for my eyes," she faltered, passing a hand across them. "But that's why I felt I ought to warn you, Madge; I know the risk there is of your father being robbed. It must be a risk that every inventor runs."

"But tell me, Judy, what sort of people were they whom you saw hanging about the shack? Tramps? Gypsies?"

Nothing could have been more dramatic than the way in which, at this trying moment for Judith, the door flashed open, letting in her sister.

Cora was suddenly in the study, looking worked-up, as if she had been into mischief. But then, she was so often to be seen looking like that, that Madge felt no surprise, and certainly no suspicion.

"Want anything?" the elder sister demanded insolently of Madge.

"Not of you, Cora, thank you."

"Huh! Then perhaps you'll get out of my study! I don't want you coming here, smarming over Judy—doing your best to turn her against me!"

"Oh, Cora, how unjust!" cried out Judith. "Really—"

"Shut up! I know what I'm saying! Look at her!" And Cora pointed a denouncing hand at Madge, who was withdrawing. "Say the cap doesn't fit!"

But Madge's hot flush was, of course, only due to her feeling so insulted. She held her head a little higher as she went out—intending to close the door, but she found Judith coming after her.

"That's right, go with her!" Cora jeered harshly at her sister. "Tell Madge—tell the whole Study 12 gang—what rotters the Elswicks are! I don't care! And I'm sure Sybil and Cyril don't care a hoot, either!"

A high-pitched, almost hysterical laugh followed the outburst. It was due to Cora's wrought-up state and the frightful sense of guilt that was upon her. Even now, she could hear an echo in her mind, as it were, of Cyril's excited whisper, as he handed her something stolen from the shack.

"Here, you take it, Cora; it'll be all right with you!"

And then there had been Sybil's coaxing whisper:

"Yes, Cora; you keep it for the present! Mr. Minden is bound to come across to the camp when he finds out. But he'll never think of you, at the school!"

Now she was alone in the study.

For a few moments Cora stood gasping to get her breath back, as if she had been running for miles. When she had steadied herself, slowly she put a hand into her blazer pocket and as slowly drew forth—a small notebook.

There it was, and she knew—she knew that by being in her possession, like this, it was likely, in the end, to secure for her own father, and the Elswicks, all the fortune that the inventor himself should have reaped.

Cora Grandways pulled open a drawer on her side of the table, then closed it again, without having put the book away. No, not there; not safe enough! When, then—where?

Where could she hide it for the time being?

A wild, anxious, searching glance around the study, then she darted to the bookshelves. It was

as safe a hiding-place as she could find; behind that bookstand, between the back of it and the wall!

She dropped the thin notebook down behind the stand and heard it slide safely out of sight.

Done!

And when, a minute later, Judith came back into the study, Cora was humming gaily as she set out her books for prep.

Mr. Minden returned at nightfall to the moorland cabin, finding nothing amiss. He was in excellent spirits, and was resolved to order himself the same amount of walking exercise after tea each day. He would not always need to tramp into Barncombe for supplies, but a "hike round" would keep him fit.

It set him smiling, as he lit his paraffin lamp, to think of the time—not far distant, he hoped—when anyone as lonely as this could have electric light at lib, after an initial outlay of only a few shillings!

For a time he fiddled with his experimental apparatus, trying to overcome just one difficulty that had made things get out of hand during last night's trial. It was nearly midnight before he could feel satisfied with his patient task. But at last he believed he had tackled the difficulty, and it seemed as if this meant success with a capital "S."

Tired out though he was by then, he thought he would make a few notes before getting down to his bunk. Unfastening the hasps of the attache-case, he threw back the lid and fumbled under some papers for his notebook. And it was not there.

Gone! The little notebook containing a full description of his invention, details intended for the Patent Office, notes for any lecture he might be called upon to give—all gone, stolen!

Suddenly he was like a man in a frenzy. He hurled the attache-case to the floor, so that its remaining papers strewed the place. He ran fingers through his hair, and then held both hands up to his head, as if the awful shock were too much for him.

"Stolen!" he breathed, and then, in a loud, frantic voice: "STOLEN!"

Glaring around, only then did he notice that the laboratory window was unlatched. He had opened the living-room casement when he returned, at nightfall, but had not touched this sash-window.

And so he knew how the cabin had been entered, in his absence. A thief—a thief had indeed been here, robbing him of the book. And that thief—who was it?

His thoughts flew to the Elswicks—his neighbours across the hollow. But if he thought of Morcove School, it was only to think of his dear daughter, and how she must suffer as much as he by this. He never once thought of a certain scholar who was the daughter of Josiah Grandways.

Nor, perhaps, would suspicion ever fall upon the very girl—and she a Morcovian—into whose keeping the stolen secret had passed!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Is this to be the end of all the hopes Madge's father has built up on his invention? Or will Madge, when she hears of his loss, suspect Cora and set to work to regain the stolen secret? You must read next week's splendid long complete Morcove story to learn. It is entitled "SISTERS DIVIDED," and is a story you will love from first word to last.