

"Althea Dillon's Dilemma"
Fine Morcove Story Within

The Schoolgirls' Own Annual
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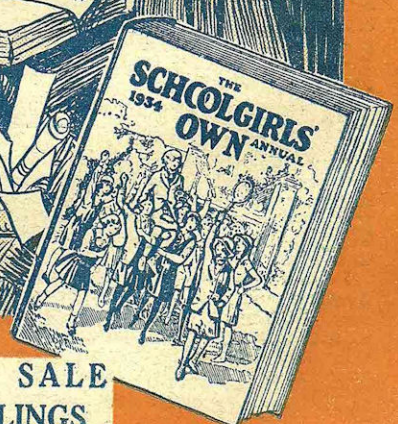
The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



HARD AT WORK
on the
"MORCOVE SOUVENIR"

A happy incident from the gripping complete Morcove School story in this number.

NOW ON SALE
SIX SHILLINGS





*Magnificent Long
Complete Morcove
School Story, Fea-
turing the Chums
of Study 12*

WITH Ethel Courtway, Morcove's ever-popular Head Girl, as the new Editress of the "Fifty Years of Morcove" souvenir, there seems every chance of Betty and Polly being able to "get things done." But Althea Dillon, although deposed, is by no means out of the picture. Here is a fine school story that thrills from start to finish.

"No Admittance"

○ N a certain door in the Sixth Form corridor in Morcove's schoolhouse a notice in large lettering was displayed:

**EDITOR'S DEN.
PRIVATE.**

It may have been madcap Polly Linton, of the Fourth Form, who had added the breezier warning:

NO PARKING HERE.

For Polly was "on the staff." Polly, at this very moment, was clacking away at a borrowed typewriter as fast as she could go.

Clack, clack—clack! Clack, clack-clack-clack, TING! Tr-r-r-r-rurr, crash! Clack, clack, clack, clack, thump!

Polly sat working the machine at a small table near the window of this rather dingy room which Authority had set apart for those girls who were to be responsible for the production of "Fifty Years of Morcove," a printed "jubilee" souvenir, the work of Morcove girls, to be distributed among parents and friends.

At another table sat Betty Barton, captain of the Fourth Form. She also had been "loaned"

to Morcove's head girl for the purpose of assisting with the editorial work.

Yet another small table held a sloped drawing-board and all the materials for black-and-white drawing; but the staff artist of "Fifty Years" was not in evidence at present.

Tess Trelawney, as her Fourth Form school-mates knew so well, was temperamental. She was supposed to be using this room, but was more often to be found at work in her study in the Fourth Form quarters.

Clack, clack, clack, tack, crash, ting! Trurr! Clack, clack-clack-clack—

"Oh, bother!"

"What's the matter, Polly dear?"

"Nothing, Betty! Ribbon gone again!"

It was whilst impatient Polly was fiddling with the twisted typewriter-ribbon that the door was tapped and then opened.

The head of the dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, came round the edge of the door.

"Eggscuse me—"

"Buzz off, you!" exploded Polly.

"Zat articaekle of mine—"

A dictionary was playfully hurled; but Naomer dodged it.

"Bekas, what about ze printed proofs, Polly?"

"Wha-a-t! Your MS. hasn't gone to the printers yet, duffer. Do you expect everything to be done in a day! Allez, tootsweet!"

"Paula ees here—"

"Yes, bai Jove, geals, haow are you pwogwesing?" beamed amiable Paula Creel, drifting into the sanctum. "I thought I would stwoll wound, just to inquire, don't you know."

"Betty," said Polly.

"Hallo!" from Betty, as if she were a great way off.

"We'll have to indent for a chucker-out. They won't keep away!" Polly said in mock fury. "That's right," as Paula subsided into a most comfortable armchair set near the fireplace. "Take the editor's chair."

"Thanks! Bai Jove, most westful, yes, wather! But don't let my intwusion, geals debar you fwom working!"

"Bekas—"

But Naomer saw Polly jump up to snatch at a T-square belonging to the staff artist. Polly flourished it.

"If you don't buzz off!"

"Zen what about Paula?"

"Paula, if you have nothing better to do," said Betty sweetly, "you had better find Tess in her study, and sit to her for a model! She has a head of a girl to draw, illustrating—"

"Duffers We Have Known," Polly jokingly clipped in. "So run along, my pet!"

"That is being extremely personal, Polly deah!"

"My article on 'Duffers We Have Known' is nothing if not personal. Where are we?" said Polly, and she routed out a sheaf of MS. that might well have been the article. "Listen to this!"

And she pretended to read from the pages:

"Yet another case was that of Paula Creel—"

"Bai Jove!"

"This prize ass was not only deficient in brains—"

"As wegwawds. bwains, Polly deah, I twust you have been fair enough to wemawk that we Cweels are more wewnowed for—"

"But," Polly still improvised—"but! She was vain enough to imagine that her looks made up for lack of ordinary intelligence! Whereas," Polly continued, flicking over a page, "the truth compels us to say that a plainer girl—"

"Story!" shrilled Naomer. "Bekas, all zat is not written at all! She is kidding you, Paula!"

Thereupon, Polly took Naomer by one ear and gently led her forth into the passage. She returned and solemnly addressed languid Paula.

"Are you going? Or must I—"

"Bai Jove, I awise with extreme reluctance," sighed the amiable duffer. "A wet halfer, too! Bai Jove, you two geals are fowtunate to— Yowp!"

"Then hurry up!"

"Fortunate!" snorted Polly, after slamming the door upon both evicted chums. "They little know!" she said dramatically. "Betty, I can't believe we'll ever get the 'Fifty Years' printed in time for copies to be handed round at the end of term. There's some work to do, and no mistake."

"Oh, we'll manage!"

"If that Naomer comes back," muttered the madcap inimically, and in anticipation of the further interruption she placed the dictionary nice and handy again.

Clack, clack—

"Ugh, dash!"

"What is it now, Polly?"

"This ribbon! It's printing some letters red and some blue!"

Betty heard this with a laugh. Then, resting her pen, she looked serious.

"Talking of typewriters, Polly dear, I wonder about Althea Dillon! You know she was worrying money out of that aunt of hers, to buy herself a new machine when she had the job as editress. Now that Althea's had the job taken away from her, for inefficiency, I wonder if she has still had the money?"

Betty added pensively:

"I suppose it's not our concern—except that Althea's Aunt Kathleen is a dear. We could tell that she's has to pinch and scrape, and eight pounds for Althea to buy a new machine that she doesn't need now—"

"And wouldn't have needed, even if she had remained editress," said Polly, feeling more reconciled to the "crook" now that she had got the ribbon to rights again. "But half a sec."

And she picked up the dictionary, at the same time looking towards the door, as if expecting it to open again.

Next moment—whizz! went the dictionary. Flump! as it caught an intruder full in the chest.

Then, agape with horror, Polly jumped up.

"Oh, sorry, Ethel! I thought it was Naomer again!"

Polly, in fact, had aimed the dictionary at her own editress—Ethel Courtway, the head girl.

But Ethel was not the sort to be disgruntled. She laughed, bringing a bag of golf-clubs with her into the sanctum.

"Too wet again to-day. Simply can't get a round," she remarked, unslinging the bag to let it flop back into a corner. "So what about a spot of work! Anything," she inquired, sinking into the editorial armchair, "you girls want to see me about?"

There was! Immediately, she had Betty on one side of her and Polly the other side. For ten minutes the "staff" took it in turns to ask: "What about this?" and "How about that?"

Ethel, although so keen on golf and games in general, made a fine editress. When she gave her mind to the work, which she did with an air of carelessness disguising zeal, decisions were brisk and wise.

So, presently, Betty and Polly could retire to their different tables, feeling greatly helped.

Once again, in their hearts, they were thankful to have Ethel as their chief.

They had only to recall the chaotic beginning made under Althea Dillon—although Althea had laid claims to being "literary"—to shudder over the what-might-have-been.

For a while Ethel Courtway read manuscripts, most of them for the second time.

"About this 'Nature Round Morcové,' Betty," she remarked presently. "I won't return it; but I think Biddy Loveland can get more into it than that! She's in your Form; you could see her about it, putting it nicely."

"Oh, yes, Ethel."

"Tell her to pack it, yet keep the nice chatty style. Can't she mention a few birds, and snakes, and snails and things?" suggested the editress with charming casualness.

She threw a lump of coal on the fire and got up.

"And now, you two, I expect you're ready for tea? I asked Naomer and Paula if they'd care to lay tea for me in my study and stop on to have it with us."

"Oh, Ethel!"

The eyes of Betty and Polly alike were a sparkle. "Care to ask Pam and Madge and others to

look along to join us? Not forgetting Tess," added the head girl. "And return later!"

She sauntered out, going round into a main passage off which her study opened.

At this instant another study door came open, letting out a senior to whom Ethel turned with characteristic geniality.

"I say, Althea—"

"Yes, what?" came brusquely.

"You're going to do an article for the 'Fifty Years'?"

"I? Oh, no, thank you! If I was not good enough to be editress, I'm sure I'm not good enough to write for the thing!"

"You don't want to look at it like that," said the head girl soothingly. "I wish you'd suggest some little thing that you'd like to do. Running to two pages, say."

"I'm sorry; journalism isn't in me," was the lofty answer of this highbrow senior. "I only write stories."

"There's a difference, is there?" exclaimed Ethel, with engaging diffidence. "You surprise me."

"Should have thought you'd have known that!" snapped the one who was disgruntled over her loss of the editorial chair. "Fiction demands imagination. Anybody can write articles about actual facts."

"I know somebody who can't," said Ethel. "I can't! Couldn't, to save my life!"

"And yet they made you editress," sneered Althea, turning to walk away.

"Yes—strange, isn't it?"

Althea's word for it, muttered to herself, was "Madness!" But that was only her jealousy.

In her heart of hearts, as she walked away from Ethel Courtway, this ex-editress felt fatally certain that the gift-book, intended for all scholars, parents and friends of Morcove would be a big success.

It was only a few days since she, Althea Dillon, had been deposed, after a scene with the head-mistress. Since then there had been ample evidence of the will with which Ethel Courtway and her staff were going about the work.

And now she realised that the two juniors had knocked off from work to go to tea in the head girl's study. Betty Barton turned in there, whilst Polly set off towards the stairs, crying:

"I'll fetch the others!"

Something seethed in Althea, causing her to abandon the idea of seeking boon companions of hers for the present. Her mind went back to the end of last week, when she had been having row after row with those two juniors.

Ethel seemed to know how to handle them better than to have to storm at them. "But there, I'm not Ethel"—with a private sneer.

Moodily drifting back into her own study, Althea presently knew that the editress and her staff were at tea together, with sundry juniors to make up a nice party.

Suddenly, then, the impulse came to her to go out on tiptoe and take a peep, on the quiet, at the editorial den.

She did so, and half a minute later she had passed, unseen, round the corner. A nervous pause, and then Althea Dillon turned the knob of the door and sneaked inside the room.

And in her eyes there was a look that seemed to proclaim not curiosity alone had brought her here, in such a furtive way, but a state of mind that meant fear and desperation.

The Hour Will Come

FOR a moment, after closing the door behind her, Althea Dillon held still, sullenly staring at that "comfy" seat at the fireplace which figured as the editor's chair.

There must have been just a nasty pang or two of envy; then she gave her mind more to the motive that had impelled this furtive visit.

She tiptoed across to one of the tables used by the staff. It was Betty's table, and on it were several piles of MSS. that had accumulated in



"You're going to do an article for the souvenir?" Ethel Courtway inferred. "Thank you, no!" Althea retorted disdainfully. "If I wasn't good enough to be editress I'm sure I'm not good enough to write for the thing!"

the last few days. Some of these MSS. were "passed for the press"—accepted. Others had either to be yet considered or would have to be altered or "turned down."

Althea's hand went out to a certain batch of papers, the topmost one of which bore a blue-pencilled "O.K." She inferred that it and all the MSS. in the batch would be going into the booklet.

She sought for, and found, one neatly written MS. that she had wanted to get a look at: "Girls We Are Proud Of!"

Here it was—the fairly lengthy article that Miss Somerfield herself, when it was first suggested, had said must go in!

Althea glanced it through, and she could tell that it had been finally revised—was ready for sending to the printers. "Girls We Are Proud Of!"—and not even the briefest reference to her!

So, then, when Aunt Kath received a complimentary copy of the souvenir, as she was bound to do in due course, she would look in vain for the name of Althea Dillen as being a girl of whom the school was proud.

No mention of her in that article, although she, Althea, had made out to her aunt that she was this and that at the school!

Strange and terrible, this Nemesis that was overtaking one. The lie to be given to all the boasting: and that was awful to contemplate, when one was dependent upon Aunt Kath, who had pinched and scraped so as to be able to afford a school like Morcove.

Nor was this all. Glancing at another MS. ready for the printers, Althea found that it dealt with "Some Morcove Records."

Names of scholars who had established records for the school in the last fifty years in every branch of scholastic life were listed. And again her name was not there!

She set down all the papers, heaving a desperate sigh. Back in the summer term she had thought it safe to boast to her aunt, then at a great distance from the school, that she, her adored niece, had beaten all previous records at swimming and the high jump.

"Aunt Kath will never find out." That had been the over-confident thought at the time. But now there was this dreadful certainty; she would find out as soon as a copy of the "Fifty Years" came into her hands.

With guilty caution the unhappy senior sneaked out of the editorial-room, back to her own study in the main corridor.

She dropped down into a chair looking "whacked."

If only it were possible to frustrate the publication of those particular articles in the souvenir! But one might rack one's brains in vain about that, it seemed.

For hours last night she had lain awake, thinking, thinking. And all to no purpose. Those features of the souvenir were approved for going to press; and go to press they would.

"Althy!" a voice called.

It was a boon companion of hers, just coming to her closed door. The knob turned; the door opened; Lena Grayson sauntered in, entirely carefree.

"Letter for you, Althy! I thought I might as well bring it up."

It came spinning to Althea, who caught it in her lap. Instantly she recognised her aunt's handwriting on the envelope. Postmark—that Cornish resort where her aunt was in cheap winter quarters.

"Say, Althy darling, coming into Barncombe for tea?"

"Oh—er—it's rather wet—"

"What does that matter? Macs! And you know how it will be in the town this wet day; nobody about. We could slip into the cinema for an hour? I do want to see that film they are showing this week."

"I—I must read this first," pleaded Althea dully, setting a thumb to rip open the envelope. "Excuse me just a minute, Lena."

"Oh, that's all right!"

Lena threw herself into an easy chair, leaning back and yawning. Meantime, Althea, skipping the first page of Aunt Kath's letter, which described conditions in the cheap boarding-house, reached paragraphs that increased the secret dread:

"And now, Althea darling, how is the editorial work going on? Splendidly, I am sure, knowing how clever you are with your pen, as in all else.

"You can imagine how eagerly I am looking forward to receiving my copy of the Morcove souvenir. I shall want to show it to all my friends, as it will be largely your work. And, besides, there are bound to be articles dealing with outstanding events in the life of the school, and so your name will occur more than once.

"Althea dear, it will be nice to have such a nice, handsome volume, as I know it is going to be, recording your achievements along with others."

"How is the old girl?" Lena Grayson flippantly inquired, whilst admiring her ankles.

"Oh, she's quite well," Althea murmured, reading on:

"I do hope, dear, that the eight pounds enabled you to get just the right sort of typewriter. It has meant some pinching and scraping, dear, but you know I don't mind that, as it is for your happiness and advancement."

"Well, coming?" asked Lena, as the other senior folded up the letter to put it away.

"Er—no, Lena, I don't think so, to-day. I—"

"Oh, be a sport and come on! Never mind the rain. We'll get an all the better spree because of it, Althy."

But Althea shook her head. Sudden compunction was upon her, and she wanted to sit down at once and write to her aunt, returning the eight pounds. To go into Barncombe with Lena, and perhaps one or two others, with that money in one's pocket, would mean starting to spend it.

"Is it that you're a bit down because you've lost the editorial job?" Lena asked. She was smiling to see Althea looking so dejected. "You're a stupe to care about that, Althy!"

"Oh, I'm not minding that a bit. I'm glad, in fact."

"So you ought to be, I think. The amount of work it is going to be—pooh! I wouldn't be in Ethel Courtway's place for anything."

"Ethel isn't going to bother much," came jealously from Althea. "She will leave everything to those juniors. Oh, well, when it's too late, Miss Somerfield will find out what a mistake it has been!"

"Personally," said Lena, "I don't care whether the 'Fifty Years' ever comes out or not! My name won't be in it, that's certain. It's all very well for those girls who have been frightfully clever and scored records, to have

it all in print for their parents and guardians to read! But you and I, Althy darling, don't come under that heading, do we?"

"No, I—I suppose we don't, Lena."

"Then come on out. Be gay, sweet maid, and let who will be clever!" Lena flippantly parodied the famous lines. "Althy—"

And, reaching down, she took that girl by both hands, dragging her up from the chair.

"Oh, Lena, please—I—"

"You're to come! There's a good film showing, just released! And we're going to see it!"

"Just a moment, then."

And Althea Dillon showed that she only required that moment for the purpose of tearing up her aunt's letter into very tiny pieces.

After Lock-Up

"WELL, zank you very much for a good tea, Ethel! A gorjus tea!"

"Thank you for the way you laid it so nicely—"

"Not ze bit of oot! Bekas I am always ready to help lay a meal at any old time, don't forget! So when you want me again—"

"Phone: One, two, Morcove," chipped in Polly. "Telegrams: Greediness, Morcove!"

There was a general rising up from the tea-table in Ethel Courtway's study.

"Perhaps, Naomer and one or two others of you would like to stay and clear away?" smiled Ethel. "I don't insist. Fagging is not—"

"Zero is nothing in fagging when you get a good feed for eet, no! I'll stay, wiz ze greatest of ze pleasure!"

"Still raining," Betty commented, after a glance out of window. "So, Polly, what about getting back to the editor's den?"

"Just for an hour or so—yes!"

"I'll be round presently!" Ethel called out to them, for they were already nipping away. "Those two girls," she said to their bosom friends, "are as keen as could be. They leave me nothing to do—nothing!"

With smiles, Pam and the rest took leave to doubt this latter assertion, whilst agreeing with Ethel about the keenness of her "subs."

"Before you go," Ethel resumed lightly; "is there any business to discuss with you girls? Tess, you just carry on! Nothing to say about the 'Fifty Years' to you others—except that I think you, Madge, should try your hand at a bit of music, to be given two pages—"

"Music!" gasped Madge. "They could never print it at the 'Herald' office in Barncombe!"

"I'm sure they could," the editress said carelessly. "He's a most wonderful foreman at the 'Herald' works. And so obliging! You compose a nice two-page piece, Madge, and we'll do the rest. It's allowed for in the make-up."

"What I want to know is," shrilled Naomer, putting the tea-things together for washing up, "when do I see my articackle in print? Bekas I don't want zem to make any mistakes in my spelling!"

Naomer's spelling being what it was, this remark evoked peals of laughter.

"Your article will go along to the 'Herald' works in the morning, by post, with a good wad of other stuff" was Ethel's announcement. "I'm going round to the den presently to get together a batch of stuff for setting up in type."

Meantime, Betty and Polly were already back at their respective places in the den, and the busy clack, clack, clack! of the typewriter warned their chums to keep away.



Seniors though they were, Althea and Lena had to resort to furtive stealth to make their secret entry into Morcove School—after "lock up."

Only for a little more than half an hour, however, were Pam and the rest deprived of the society of the captain and the madeap. Then that blithesome pair came running upstairs to the Fourth Form quarters, a "cease work" having been commanded by Ethel.

"She would make us pack up," said Betty, "although we're certain she herself is settling down for a full evening in the den. But I want to find Biddy Loveland!"

Biddy, in a study with two others, experienced a heart-sinking moment when the captain entered, MS. in hand.

"About your 'Nature Round Morcove,' Biddy—"

"Oh, I was afraid it would be no good!" exclaimed Biddy, the tone betraying mournful disappointment all the same.

"But it isn't turned down—"

"It isn't? Oh!"

"It just needs a bit more put into it, Ethel says. Aren't there some more wild animals you can work in? We can't expect lions and tigers," laughed Betty. "But—"

"I saw a hooded crow to-day. At least, I think it was!"

"Stick it down. 'In the wild weather, towards the end of the year. . . . You know the sort of thing. And if you can let me have it in the morning, all right!" said the "chief sub." of "Fifty Years," going out.

There were one or two other girls to see. Then Betty could retire to Study 12, to take a look at "prep" in company with Polly, Paula, and Naomer.

"LOCKED, Lena!"
"Is it? Oh, bother! Then our being out late has got to be known!"

With the rain dripping from their glistening macs, two seniors stood huddled together at the porch—under cover at last, after a ride home through wind and rain.

"I feel as if I'm soaked," wailed Althea.

"That doesn't matter!"

"Lena, it does. You know, I—"

"Oh, don't talk whilst I'm thinking! We didn't want to be caught over this," muttered Lena. "If we're to get into a row, let it be for something worth while. It was a stupid film, after all, not worth the trouble! Althea, must we ring?"

"We can't stand here all night!"

"That's neither funny nor helpful. I'm meaning—how about climbing in somewhere? The fire-escape?" Lena whispered eagerly. "I have known the doors opening outwards from the house stairs on to the outside staircase to come open at a pull."

"They are not supposed to open from the outside. The push-bar arrangement—"

"I know; but there's just a chance. Here, come round to the back, and we'll see what can be done."

So, once again, the rain pelted upon them as they forsook the porch to go prowling round the schoolhouse walls, questing the iron stairway.

Suddenly, however, Lena Grayson checked sharply, clapping a detaining hand upon Althea's shoulders.

"Bit of luck, Althy! Look!"

Lena was pointing to a class-room window, the top sash of which had been left down a few inches for airing purposes.

"We'll not better that," she breathed joyfully. "Shall I go first?"

"Oh, Lena, but supposing someone comes into the class-room, just as we're—"

"Then we shall be for it, that's all! But why should anybody catch us? The room's in darkness, and you know hardly a soul ever goes to any of the class-rooms during the evening. Anyhow—"

And Lena let reckless action follow the reckless word.

The window-sill was on a level with her chest—no higher than that from the ground. Easily she obtained, first a kneeling position, then an erect one, after which she could pull upwards on the bottom sash.

Very slowly she did this, dreading the screech of uncoiled wheels that took the sash-cords.

As for Althea Dillon, she stood waiting on the sodden gravel in a state of abject misery and fear. Awful disgrace to be caught out over a thing like this! And, in any case, she had just about done for herself in one respect. She had broken into that eight pounds—heavily.

Lena, in Barncombe, had been seized with a spending fit, and that had meant one's frittering away money, if only for appearance sake. Nearly two pounds—gone!

"St, Althy," came the other's whisper out to her from inside the class-room window. "It's all right, so come on. I'll be over by the door, in case!"

Then Althea Dillon clambered in, making a

very clumsy job of it, because she was tired and depressed.

Unlike Lena, she did not allow for the clinging nature of a wet waterproof. Midway through all the wild scrambling to climb in over the sill, she was badly hampered by the drag upon her knees and at the shoulders.

Her reaching the class-room floor at last did not dispel Althea's peevish mood. Lena softly laughed across to her from the doorway, that it was still all right! But Althea, delaying to close the bottom sash very cautiously, felt too "nervy." to be able to treat the escapade as a joke.

She tiptoed across the dark class-room, a few moments later, to find that Lena had already flitted away.

"She might have waited for me!"

That was Althea's irritable mood; a readiness to quarrel with her so-called best friend. Unless she came upon Lena in the coat-room, hastily hanging up wet outdoor things, she would not see her again until the nightly muster in Big Hall. "I want to be alone."

And yet, in loneliness there could only be a brooding over the false position; Aunt Kath, thinking all the world of one who had obtained eight pounds by false pretences, besides all the rest. Oh, hang, what a sickener it was!

She had taken a few wary steps from the class-room doorway towards the front hall, when she drew back sharply, heart in mouth.

Someone coming downstairs—a senior. And, of all seniors, it was Ethel Oubtury. "Dash her! I expect she knows I'm overdue, with Lena."

But the head girl, at any rate, had not come down from the studies for any watching-out purposes. She had only to dispose of a letter that was too bulky to go into the school's letter-box, in the front hall, and so she left it lying just beside the box on a small table.

Then Ethel ran upstairs again, and Althea Dillon was free to dart across to the coat-room and get rid of her outdoor things. Lena was not there. She must have acted with lightning speed, reaching her study by way of the side staircase.

Althea did not go that way. She came out of the coat-room to make for that bulky letter lying upon the hall table.

The envelope was marked for registration, and, as she had guessed, it was addressed to:

"Mr. Blakeney,
Composing Room,
'Barncombe Herald' Office,
Barncombe."

A batch of "copy" for the "Fifty Years." And was there any doubt that it included those two features which were most liable to show her up to Aunt Kath? Why not, then—why not do something NOW; take a chance and hope for the best?

With the bulky envelope held close to her chest, she glanced this way and that. No one! And the time—twenty minutes short of that hour when the school's letters were sent off to the post.

Only twenty minutes. Yet what was there to do to require longer than that? Simply to open this envelope, take out two of the MSS., then seal up the remainder in a fresh envelope of similar size and address it.

Ethel's handwriting; that must be copied as closely as possible. But that would not be any great difficulty. She wrote an ordinary hand.

Althea took the packed envelope away with her, mounting warily to her study by way of the side staircase.

Arrived there, she wedged the closed door with a tilted chair, and then opened the envelope with guilty haste.

As soon as the contents were exposed to view she was taking out those two MSS. that were such a direct menace to her future. "GIRLS WE ARE PROUD OF," and "SOME MORCOVE RECORDS"—she not only removed them from the batch, but tore them up instantly.

Then she found an envelope similar to the one used by Ethel. This was easy to do, as it was an envelope stocked by the school. But she had no blue pencil for making registration lines across the envelope.

There would be one in the editorial den. In a tremble of terror she realised that she must go round to that room. If anybody happened to be still working there—then she would not know what to do! Blue pencils were not common in the school.

But she had burnt her boats now and could only go on.

Leaving the new envelope safely out of sight in her study, she went round to the editorial den. The passage round the corner was very dim, yet she could not see any light along the bottom of the door.

In the belief that the den was deserted and in darkness, she turned the knob and opened the door—and Ethel Courtway was there in the room, reading MSS. by the light of a shaded lamp!

"Yes, who is it?" asked Ethel cordially, without breaking off from a bit of reading that evidently delighted her.

"Oh—er—er—"

Then Ethel slewed round in her chair.

"Hallo, Althea! Want to see me?"

"Er—no, Ethel. At least—er—about that thing you asked me to write for the 'Fifty Years,'" the flustered girl found herself saying, to account for the intrusion.

"Oh, yes?"

"I— What sort of thing do you want me to do, then?"

"I thought you would prefer to make your own suggestion. But look here; you were explaining that you are an authoress, not a journalist to write articles," said Ethel, looking faintly amused at the pedantic distinction. "Why not do a short story? I can give you—let me see," hastily rising to refer to her "make-up" book, "two pages!"

"Er—all right."

"I tell you what; it needn't be anything to do with Morcove, unless you like," the editress said accommodatingly. "I will put it in as a sample of work by that gifted writer, Althea Dillon."

"Oh, don't be sarcastic!"

"Athea, I'm not being sarcastic. You have the gift, haven't you? Well then! And I'll reserve those two pages for you. Let me have it as soon as pos. My word," Ethel laughed to herself as the other senior withdrew, "not much space left now!"

The girl who had gone out, closing the door behind her, looked wild-eyed; frantic. She had not got that blue pencil! Instead, she had committed herself to writing a story for the souvenir—and she couldn't write stories. She knew she couldn't!

In a vain, rash moment, she had cribbed little stories from out-of-date magazines rummaged from obscure shelves in the library, and had shown the MSS. round as being her own composition.

The waves of heat and cold were going through her again alternately. Where would all this end,

she was wondering crazily. There was a sense of going over the brink into a vortex of trouble.

But the urgent thing was that blue pencil. Would there be one downstairs, in a class-room, on a mistress' desk? That seemed to be the only chance of obtaining one in a hurry.

She ran down to the ground floor and made for the Sixth Form class-room. To her intense relief she did find a blue pencil there, and back she rushed to her study, to do the rest.

Ding-dong! the school chimes were ringing out, as she sat at her table, copying Ethel's handwriting as she wrote the address on the fresh envelope. By those chimes she knew that only five minutes or so was left to her.

Last of all, she marked the envelope for registration precisely as Ethel had marked the original envelope.

Then Althea Dillon sneaked downstairs yet again, this time to leave the stoutly-filled envelope where the other had been left.

Done!

The deed was done, and perhaps—yes, more than likely—she would profit by it!

A great hopefulness was replacing the dire desperation. She could imagine the two stolen MSS. as being treated, finally, as lost at the printing works.

Not for some days, very likely, would their disappearance become known. Then there would be too much of a rush to see about having them re-written. Something else would have to go into the souvenir in place of them.

Now that she was drawing breath, as it were, after the desperate deed, she felt less panicky about the expected story from her own pen.

After all, she had done it as often as that before—cribbed several little stories and shown them round as being her own. Why should she be found out this time? It was simply a case of digging up an old enough magazine.

"And Aunt Kath will see something of mine in the souvenir, after all," she further reflected. "Something quite in a class by itself. Oh, it's no use worrying. I shall save my face somehow!"

THE official editress of "Fifty Years at Morcove" was still at work in the den when the bell went for Big Hall.

A little tired then, and inclined to draw fingers under her eyes, she was yet as cheerful as ever, mingling with schoolfellows on the way downstairs.

Before going to her place in the Sixth Form line she sought a certain parlourmaid.

"Oh, Ellen—"

"Yes, miss?"

"I left a letter to go by registered post—"

"Yes, miss, and it went off all right. The receipt is spiked."

"Good! I thought I had better make sure. 'Night, Ellen!"

"Good-night, miss!"

And a minute later Ethel Courtway was with all the rest of Morcove's scholars in Big Hall, where the organ would soon be pealing, leading the girls in an evening hymn.

Printers' Proofs

"HOORAY! Polly dear, just look at these!"

"What? Oh, joy! My goodness—"

"Yards of them!" laughed Betty, who had burst into the editorial den, draped in streamers of printers' proofs. "Yards and yards—and still more yards!"

"So now for something to do!" chuckled Polly.

"As if we haven't been busy enough these last few days. Whew, come in handy for a paper-chase, Betty, after we've gone to press!"

"Ethel handed me the whole batch of them, saying that you and I could look at them. She is going to give up the whole of this Wednesday afternoon to proof-reading."

Polly let this go unanswered. She was now handling some of the yard-long proofs in a puzzled way.

"They want some sorting out, I fancy," said Betty.

"They do! I was just wondering, too, what does this word mean at the top of the column?"

Betty looked at the "word," which was something like "PRSSTGGYMMMLFLGM."

"Goodness knows! They've all got it!"

"Sounds like the name of a Welsh railway station," grimaced Polly. "I suppose it's something to do with the printers!"

"Hi, you two!" requested a shrill voice at this instant. "Bekas—"

"Run away!" Polly roared at a certain dusky face showing round the edge of the door.

"No, bekas, what about my articackle? Ooo, ees zat a proof for me to correct? Bekas—"

Flump, bang!

But the door came open again.

"Bekas—"
Flump, bang; once more, followed, this time, by a fearful squeal, strongly suggestive of Naomer's falling back upon Paula Creel, in the passage.

"We're going to be mobbed, I suppose," was Polly's mock groan. "Now that it is known that the printers are sending in proofs—at last! And high time, too. They have been a whole week—"

"Bai Jove, geals, is it wight that pwoofs hev awwided?"

"Bekas—"

"Betty!" was the appealing shout from yet another excited contributor at the doorway. "Is my article amongst them?"

"And mine, Betty?"

"Betty! Polly! What about—"

"Now, look here!" stormed Polly, flourishing the T-square. "Allez! There's a lot to be done before we—"

"But why can't we be—"

"Out—side!" requested the fiery member of the staff. "No admittance except on business!"

"But this is business—"

"Yes, wather!"

"Bekas—"

"Owp! You're squashing me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Healp!"

"Police!" one member of the crowd finally called out jokingly.

"You might," said Polly, "just as well beat it, all of you! If you saw what these proofs look like, you wouldn't be so eager. As for me, I'm going to put in for a rise!"

She had got the door shut by now.

"What a life, Betty!"

"I suppose another batch will be along by the next post, Polly? I don't see 'Girls We Are Proud Of.' Ner yet 'Some Morcoove Records.'"

"What! Whew, I hope they haven't mislaid the 'Records' at the works. Helen Craig spent I don't know how long, digging up all the information for that article. It couldn't be done again."

The madcap suddenly lapsed into a state of stupefaction, staring at one lengthy proof.

"My hat, Betty!"

"Well?"

"Here's Naomer's 'At Morcoove As a Queen.' We reckoned to give it a page, didn't we?"

"Yes."

"It's run out to about two pages and a half! Oh, to goodness," groaned Polly. "But we'll have to cut it, that's all. Yank out a foot and a half."

Next moment her face brightened.

"No, I'm wrong, and it's all right—hooray! There's half of another article got mixed up with it!"

"Good! We'll manage!" Betty was beaming, when she saw the door open in front of—Althea Dillon.

"Er—Ethel Courtway not here?" Althea commented flusteredly. "Er—it doesn't matter. But I'll leave this MS. of mine. It's the little story that she asked me to do."

"Oh, right-ho, Althea. Thanks!" said Betty, taking it from the senior.

"Proofs are coming in, then?"

"Yes, at last! This stuff went to the 'Herald' works a week ago. And even now," Betty remarked, "they haven't sent proofs for all the first batch."

Althea Dillon pretended not to be interested. But in secret she was quaking with dread. At any moment now it might become known that those two MSS. had never reached the printers.

"I say, Betty," broke out Polly as soon as they were alone together again. "Here are a lot of lines upside down! What do you do with lines that are upside down?"

"Oh, just mark 'em. The printers will put them right."

Then Ethel came in.

"Going to be a most lovely halfer," she predicted gaily. "You girls are not to stay in this afternoon. The office will close at one pip-summer! Even I," she smiled, "must get a round of golf."

"About these proofs, Ethel—"

"Horrid things! I looked at one, and thought my eyes had gone wrong."

"And, Ethel, here is an MS. that Althea has just left with us."

"Oh! I'll read that straight away."

So there was silence in the den until Tess Trelawney came in to submit another pen-and-ink sketch for the souvenir. Not that Tess made much, if any, commotion; she was more inclined to slip in and then slip out again without a word.

If there was anything wrong with the sketch, she would rather hear about it from the editress through Betty. If there was anything to praise—she would rather not be told about that at all!

But Ethel, lolling in the easy-chair near that cosy fire which Authority sanctioned in the den, was just at the end of Althea's short story.

"Let's look, Tess. What's this for? I forget!"

"You said something about a tailpiece for—"

"Oh, of course! How beautifully you have done it, Tess. I can't think how you do it! By the way, could you illustrate a story?"

"I'd have a shot at it."

"I wish you would. But I can't let you have the MS. now. I'd just like Polly to read it, as she understands these things. Polly—coming over!"

And the MS. went fluttering across the room to be caught by the madcap.

"The editress will now go to lunch," announced Ethel, getting up. "The staff, ditto! Leave a nice fire, girls! I admired that little story of

Althea's. Like a penknife—a sharp edge to it, and closing with a snap. Isn't that the golden rule? I don't know!"

And thus belittling herself, she sauntered out. Just for fun, Betty and Polly let Naomer have one of the proofs—they were all in duplicate—"At Morcove As a Queen."

They handed it to her Royal impishness on the way into the dining-hall, and it became Naomer's plea that she must "Make ze good dinner, bekas of having such a lot to do after-the-wards!"

From the dinner-table, presently, Naomer rushed upstairs to Study 12, there to sit down, to the thrilling task of correcting a printer's proof. She had dropped several drops of ink on the lengthy strip of paper by the time Betty, Polly and others came swarming in.

"How are you getting on, kid?"

"Rotten! Bekas, what ze diggings, zey have called my articackle 'Fzzziggumfumph,' or something like zat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But zey have, I tell you!"

"Take no notice of that line of letters," Betty counselled. "It's something to do with the printers."

"Zen all I can say ees, zere is something wrong with ze printers! Anuzzer thing—"

"And a n o t h e r blot," chuckled Helen as a lovely one fell from a hairy pen.

"Bai Jove, perfectly widiculous," chortled Paula, shaking up a cushion in the armchair. "Far bettah leave Betty or Polly to cowweet your pwoof, Naomer."

"Why?"

"For the simple weason— And theah is no need to look like that, either! No offence— Owp! No off— Ooch, ow, wowp!"

"Zen don't you try to make out that I can't spell, bekas I can! Zere is nuzzingk wrong with my work; only this pen, and ze ink, like mud, and —"

"Leave it," cried Polly, "and come on down to hockey with the rest of us!"

"I zink I better," the dusky one decided. "Bekas I don't like ze look of that proof. What ze diggings, zey have got a bit of ze middle at ze beginning, and a bit of ze beginning at ze end."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I zink I better leave him until after I have had a good tea!"

"I would," said Betty. "Hockey, girls!"

"Whew," cried Polly, starting to fly about, "I've forgotten what a game is like!"

"The Editress Regrets—"

DOWN they all went, a few minutes later, in great good spirits.

This was the first fine "halfer" in the last week or two. All Morcove was going to be out

of doors this afternoon. Betty & Co. noticed Althea, cycling away with Lena Grayson.

"Shall I run and tell her that Ethel liked the short story, Polly?"

Betty said it, out of her abounding good nature. Then she wisely decided:

"No, better not, perhaps. Althea might think it cheek on my part."

"Not to mention that I haven't read the story yet and given it my blessing!" jested the madcap.

With a pardonable sense of professional judgment, Polly took up the M.S. to read it, directly she got back to the den, early that evening.



"Bekas, what ze diggings," Naomer hooted; "ze printers have made a muddle of my articackle!" Her chums' mirth certainly did not help to appease Naomer's indignation.

Betty was to come along as soon as she had seen to a few captaincy matters. The Fourth had beaten the Fifth at hockey, that afternoon, and one little thing the captain had to see to was that such a glorious victory was duly reported.

The fire had stayed in, and Polly had it burning cheerily again as she sat reading Althea's M.S. Coal fire, reading-lamps, Turkey carpet—not so bad, being a member of the "Fifty Years" staff, with a room like this to work in!

But suddenly Polly's spirits seemed to go "phut." There was an unhappiness about her that Betty noticed on entering the Den.

"What's the bother, Polly?"

"This story—"

"Althea's? Oh, yes—"

"That's the bother," said Polly grimly. "It isn't Althea's story. She's put her name to it, but somebody else wrote it."

Betty's brows went up. Her mouth formed a round-O of amazement.

"Polly darling, are you sure? Think what you're saying!"

"Betty, I'm positive. But I can soon prove it, too. She has simply sat down to copy out a story that appeared a long time ago in a magazine that is now dead."

"But that," gasped Betty, "is terrible!"

"I think so. Perhaps I'm a bit touchy on the point, but I hate cribbers. It's cheating. I would rather somebody picked my pocket than took a story of mine and claimed it for her own work."

Betty went back to the door and closed it. She still looked aghast.

"You remember," said Polly, "back in the Easter term, when we were doing some amateur theatricals, I happened upon an old volume of that magazine in the library one wet day that had a very good article about school plays and how to get them up."

"We had that old volume in Study 12, knocking about for some days."

"Yes, and at odd times I read some of the stories."

Polly flourished Althea's MS.

"This was one of those stories, Betty. She has given it a different name, otherwise it is almost word for word, I reckon. At any rate, I remember how it began—just like this."

"Whew! Oh, Polly, what an awful thing!" Betty deplored. "I thought Althea was so 'literary'—found it easy to write stories. She's been showing them around of late. Miss Somerfield saw one and praised it, didn't she?"

"Althea may be able to write stories. She hasn't written this one," Polly insisted fiercely. "She has lifted it. That old magazine—she thought it safe to crib from it, see?"

"Where is that old volume now, Polly? Would it be in the life?"

"Is it likely?" shrugged disgusted Polly. "Althea has taken good care about that. The last I saw of it, the volume was back on the shelves. But we'll look in vain for it now, of course."

"Then there'll be only your word for it, Polly."

"Only my word for it, that's all."

"Ethel will never doubt it. But if we tell Ethel, won't she come down on Althea like a ton of coals? We must, though—we simply must keep Ethel. Or how are we to get the stolen story kept out of the souvenir?"

"It can't go to press," Polly said flatly. "It would get the school into a fearful row with the publishers who used to bring out that mag. They're still a big firm in London, and somebody would be bound to write up, having spotted it."

"Shouldn't wonder," Betty nodded glumly. "It's curious how these things do get spotted. I remember—"

She broke off as the door opened, letting in Ethel Courtway.

"Nice fire! And do you know that I holed out in one this afternoon?"

"We'll put it in the 'Fifty Years,'" jested Betty.

"I'll see that you don't. I merely mention it," said Ethel charmingly, "to account for my extraordinary inclination to put in a good evening's work. Hallo, that's Althea's story, Polly. What did you think of it?"

"A gem," said the madcap. "But Betty and I don't see how we can use it."

"You don't? Why?"

Then they told her. She heard both juniors out in complete silence.

"There is only my word for it," Polly stressed

at the finish. "The old volume could be hunted for, of course, but we can't hope to find it."

Ethel Courtway gave a nod in agreement.

"Althea hasn't simply borrowed the idea in that old printed story? She has actually copied it out?"

"Practically word for word," Polly insisted quietly. "I remember some of the bits of humour so well; the way the story began, and the last lines—"

"Right," the editress nodded. "If I keep silent about this rotten business, will you two girls do the same?"

"Of course, Ethel!"

"Very well. We must think of the school, and then there is Althea's own Aunt Kath, who dotes on the girl, we know. If this got about, Althea would be the scorn of the school."

Nothing more was said. Ethel Courtway was closing the debate by sitting down to put the MS. in an envelope, along with a brief note.

Five minutes later she absented herself from the den for a minute—to take the returned MS. to Althea's study.

Althea was not there. If she had been, Ethel would simply have put down the envelope in front of her and walked out without a word. But Althea, just then, was enjoying herself in Lena Grayson's study.

Just lately, somehow, Althea was finding it quite easy to go all out for pleasure with Lena Grayson and one or two other seniors. She had given up worrying, having come to the conclusion that she belonged to that lucky class of people who never get found out.

Also, the balance of Aunt Kath's eight pounds had proved a nice means of "making a splash."

Too often in the past had she felt humiliated by not having as much pocket-money to fritter away as had Lena and the rest. Now Althea could keep to any pace that those giddy spirits were likely to set.

She came away from Lena's study presently, finishing a laugh over some flippancy. There was to be another getting-together by and by, and there was even a daring idea of having a rubber of bridge after lights out. Meantime, evening work must be tackled.

Althea entered her study, and instantly the remnant of her reckless smile faded. She stepped quickly to the table to pick up a foolscap envelope.

Tearing it open, she took out her MS. and a note:

"The editress regrets that she is unable to make use of the enclosed story for the 'Fifty Years of Morcove.'"

That was all. Nasty! Not even a "Dear Althea, I am very sorry, but—"

But, of course, Ethel had intended to deal her this blow, even when she asked her to submit a story!

Fury seized Althea Dillon. She crushed up the formal note into a ball and hurled it into the waste-paper basket. Then, with the MS., she flung out of her study, going round to the editorial den.

Throwing open the door, she stood glaring in upon Ethel Courtway, who calmly voiced an inquiring:

"Well?"

"I want to see you!" panted Althea.

"Oh, right-ho! Betty and Polly, you might just leave."

"They needn't go! I'd rather they stayed! Of course, they know that you have turned down

my story? Then let them hear what I think of you!"

"Close that door, will you?" requested Ethel, getting up from the editorial chair.

Althea slammed it shut behind her, then advanced to the extent of one furious stride.

"You only asked me to do a story so that you could have the paltry spite of rejecting it!" she panted. "What's wrong with that story, I'd like to know?"

"There is nothing wrong with it, Althea, except that it isn't your story."

Althea fell back as if smitten across the face.

"No," Ethel said very steadily, "and you would have done better, Althea, to take the rejection quietly, thinking yourself lucky to have been spared exposure."

"Who—who says it isn't my own work?" blustered Althea wildly.

"Polly there—"

"Then Polly is a liar. It is simply her envy, her jealousy—"

"Oh, that will do, Althea."

"It won't! Can she prove it—can she? I dare her to show me that story in print, anywhere!"

"You say that, having taken good care, of course, to destroy the old volume from which you copied the story," Ethel Courtway remarked with annihilating contempt.

"I never copied the story! It's a lie, I say!"

"Althea, now listen," requested Morcove's head girl sternly. "You had better be careful. You are making one big mistake, and that is, to imagine that that old volume was the only one that could be available for reference. Now, then! Do you still accuse Polly of bringing a false charge?"

"I do, most certainly!"

"You still claim that the story was your own work?"

"Of course I do!" Althea almost shouted, with a dreadful sense of rushing to greater disaster than ever.

"Very well. Polly has been able to give me the year for which that volume was published, as well as the name of the magazine. The firm that published it is still in existence. They are certain to have their own office copies. Such files of printed matter are never destroyed."

Althea stood reduced to silence.

"In any case," Ethel Courtway added, "I understand there is always the British Museum for reference. That was a good-class magazine; it would be there."

Such a dramatic silence followed this, even the falling of a tiny cinder from between the bars sounded loud.

"Do you take back your accusation against Polly?" the head girl quietly repeated. "Do you wish to be spared everlasting disgrace? Or am I to go to the Head now—as I will, Althea! I am not going to have Polly or any other girl called a liar when she has spoken only the truth."

Again that intense silence.

Suddenly Althea Dillon made a dramatic movement.

She started to tear up her MS., retaining the pieces in both hands.

Then, with a few flashing steps, she reached the fireplace and flung all the pieces of paper into the heart of the fire.

"Now say to Miss Somerfield or anybody else that I copied a story!" she laughed at Ethel in violent defiance. "What is there to prove it—now?"

Overheard....

Phyllis : I say, Murie, that looks a jolly book.
Muriel : It IS a jolly book ! It's the GOLDEN ANNUAL for 1934. Aunt Joan sent it for my birthday.

Phyllis : Do let's look ! I say, that seems an exciting story . . . and what spiffing pictures ! And there's a tale by Muriel Holden—

Muriel : Yes, and one by Ida Melbourne. She's my favourite author. And I'm just dying to read Joan Inglesant's story.

Phyllis : Oh, I simply MUST get a copy ! How much, Murie ?

Muriel : Well, I'm not really supposed to know, as it's a birthday present ! But—I'll just whisper . . .

Phyllis : Only three and sixpence ! Why, it's worth twice that !

Muriel : Yes, and it's greatly enlarged this year, too !

Phyllis : Cheers ! Well, I'm off to get a copy directly after school !

Follow Phyllis's Wise Advice—
and Secure Your GOLDEN
ANNUAL at once

"Nothing."

"Aha! Clever, aren't you? But you aren't quite so clever as I am, Ethel Courtway—even though they have made you editress!"

And with another triumphant, laugh Althea marched out. She took care to bang the door behind her.

There was a sort of wild exultation in her looks as she went round to her study. As soon as she was alone in that room she laughed to herself.

Safe, after all! Another instance of the "luck" that she had felt so certain was hers. That fool of an Ethel Courtway, to have returned the MS. so that in a moment it could be torn up like that—burned behind the fire!

Safe. And so she would be—something seemed to whisper the assurance—in regard to all the rest.

IN the den, Betty and Polly saw Ethel Courtway staring at the last flicker of flame caused by the burning of those scraps of paper.

"Once a cheat, always a cheat," Ethel said at last. "But there is plenty to do, girls, and I propose that we get on with it."

"Once a Cheat—"

MORE jubilant cheering by the "staff," a few days later.

This time, it was on account of the arrival of "pages" from the printing works.

A bulky envelope had arrived, addressed to

Ethel Courtway, who had no sooner looked through the contents than she was ready to pass them on to Betty and Polly.

There was no neglect of editorial supervision in this, on the part of the editress. It was simply an example of a good-natured desire to let her helpful "subs" enjoy this latest thrill without delay.

Betty and Polly were thrilled, right enough. There they were, alone together in the den, looking at one complete page after another.

These sheets were still only "proofs," to be read for correction; but they showed exactly what those particular pages would look like in the finished book.

"Naomer's article!" chuckled Polly, coming upon it in page. "And do look at Tess' illustration for it!"

"A scream," said Betty. "That's Naomer, to the life."

"So is the spelling! What a mistake it would have been to edit Naomer!"

"My word, we're getting on fast now," came Betty's rejoicing comment, a minute later. "Soon be passing for press, Polly!"

"Yep! But, Betty dear—they still don't send along those two articles from the printers."

"You mean, 'Girls We Are Proud Of' and 'Some Morcove Records'? It is strange," Betty agreed. "We haven't had them even in rough proof yet."

"How about ringing up Mr. Blakeney at the works?"

"We could do that, Polly. I think I'll do it now, just to make sure."

Betty, turning to run away down to the 'phone, almost collided with Naomer in the doorway.

"Hi! Bekas what about my articackle! Queek, bekas Ethel Courtway says he is—"

"Out—side, kid!"

"What ze diggings, be ze sport, Polly, and let me have ze squint!"

"May I intvude, Polly deah? Theah is a wumour that my twifing contvibution is in page, and—"

"Polly!" was the sudden clamour from a whole mob of juniors, just arrived at the doorway. "Oh, do let us see, Polly!"

The madcap invited all would-be intruders to see, instead, that T-square—how menacingly she could wield it.

Meantime, Betty was already at the telephone, downstairs, waiting to be put through to the composing-room at the "Herald" office.

"Hallo, hallo! Mr. Blakeney? Oh, good-morning, Mr. Blakeney; this is Morcove School—the 'Fifty Years' speaking. I say: We are still waiting for rough proofs of 'Girls We Are Proud Of' and 'Some Morcove Records.' Pardon! Right; I'll hold on!"

Five minutes later Betty ran upstairs again. She slipped through a going-away crowd of girls and rejoined Polly in the den.

"They say they have never had them!"

"What!"

"Those two articles—Mr. Blakeney says they could never have been sent along to the works."

"But they were! Ask Ethel!" cried Polly.

The editress, as it chanced, came in at this instant.

"But it's absurd," was her immediate comment on what the staff told her. "Those two articles were in the first batch to go to the printers. I can tell you when; just a sec."

She tugged open a table-drawer and pulled out a foolscap sheet, headed: "MSS. Sent To Printers." Her finger came to rest under two lines in the list.

"There you are, and the date. So Mr. Blakeney, nice man though he is, is wrong!"

"He says they keep a note of all stuff as it comes in to be set up. Those articles are not on his list," Betty amplified gravely.

"Um!"

Ethel was taking two or three moments for reflection.

"Well, I know I sent them! There's my record! Do you know, I think you two girls had better go along to the 'Herald' works, in Barncombe, and have things out with the worthy Blakeney."

"Now?" said Betty. "They close from twelve to one."

"Go now, and get some lunch at the Creamery," the editress decreed. "Then the works will be open again by the time you're ready to look in there. I'll make it all right for you this end."

"Hooray!" Polly cheered. "Come on, Betty!"

Lunch at the Creamery certainly promised to be a compensation for all this sudden anxiety, not to say mild panic, over the missing MSS. Betty and Polly could not have kept the delight out of their looks, whilst getting ready for the jaunt, even if they had seen any need to do that.

Accordingly, Naomer and others in the Fourth Form, were for pulling long faces.

"Bekas—sweendle!"

"Yes, booh!"

"Bekas first zey give you a coal fire and a Turkey carpet, and zen zey stand you lunches! What ze diggings!" shrilled Naomer. "I am disgusted!"

"Same here. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you two geals, you are wather fortunate, what?"

"Not at all," dissented Polly sweetly, drawing on her hat. "You'd never imagine—the strain!"

"What about ze strain when I wrote my articackle? Do zey stand me a lunch for zat?" yelled Naomer. "Not even a snack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All this, of course, was good-natured banter. It was left to Ada Sharrow to comment, nastily, as Betty and Polly hurried away to get their bicycles:

"Wind up! Oh, that will be a lovely souvenir by the time it does come out. If—if ever it does!"

She turned to Ursula Wade, who had just appeared upon the scene.

"Now they've lost a couple of the MSS., and are going to blame it on to the printers!"

To which Ursula responded with the equally unfair sneer:

"They would!"

THIS was the very quietest time of year for the Barncombe Creamery, on the café side of its business.

Even at tea-time, few tables were in demand, except on those half-holidays when Morcove girls could be relied upon to swarm in. A hot luncheon was served daily to meet the very variable demands of folk who might have come in from a good way out in the country to do their shopping.

Betty and Polly stalled their machines in that

recognised parking-place, the bakehouse yard. Then they made their way through the shop to that room which served, at this hour, as a restaurant.

No one else was there. Healthy appetites seemed to warrant the half-crown luncheon.

The place was so quiet, inevitably both scholars were aware of somebody else coming in at last—a very quietly dressed woman, with a shyness that made her hesitate about coming to any of the tables that were laid for luncheon.

The two chums heard her explain to an attendant:

"Just a cup of tea and a scone and butter—if I might have that?"

"Yes, ma'am. Will you go through—"

"Oh, I can very well sit in the shop, as I am not lunching. And I wonder," the timid voice continued, "could you recommend some place where I could stay for to-night? I want to be as near Morcove as possible."

"There is the new Headland Hotel at Morcove—"

"Oh, nothing so grand as that!" laughed the shy lady. "A boarding-house, at the Morcove end of the town? But perhaps"—wistfully—"there isn't one?"

Betty suddenly whispered Polly.

"See who it is, Polly? Althea's Aunt Kath!"

And Polly, after another look, gave a hastily suppressed:

"Crumbs!"

Her timidity dispelled by the smiling invitation of a waitress, Aunt Kath came on into the restaurant, after all. Then she noticed Betty and Polly, and beamed.

"Why, surely—yes, it is!" she exclaimed, briskly approaching the two juniors, who stood up. "The same girls whom I met when I paid my flying visit to Morcove School, a week or two back! Althea's editorial assistants! How

are you, my dears? And how is my dear niece? I had a letter; but that was some days ago."

"Althea is very fit, I'm sure."

"The dear girl," purred Aunt Kath, when Betty had said that. "And the wonderful souvenir—the 'Fifty Years Of Morcove'? I hope Althea isn't finding it too much for her!"

So, then, Althea had not told this aunt of hers that she had been replaced in the editorial chair.

"And you, my dears! How proud you must feel, acting as editorial staff. You find the new typewriter useful?"

Polly turned uncomfortably to Betty, who floundered into evasive speech.

"Er—we are in town now about the souvenir; have to go round to the local newspaper about the printing. They're doing it for us, you see, and—er—we really ought to be off at once, if you'll excuse us?"

"My dears, certainly! But, before you go, would you do me one little favour? Not tell Althea that I am in Barncombe, please! I mean to call at the school and see her to-morrow. But I shouldn't like her to know that I am staying the night in this town, and not asking her out for the evening. If I could afford to give her some little treat—but just lately—my expenses—"

"Oh, we quite understand," Betty said, rather emotionally. "There was something quite touching in this dear soul's cheerful candour about strained circumstances."

"I shall drop Althea a line that she will get in the morning," Aunt Kath pursued. "You see, my lawyer wrote that he must see me, and that has meant going up to London for a day or so. I can ill afford to break my journey, as I have done; but I felt I must make it a chance to see my niece again. I am so fond of her—and so proud!"



There was no mistaking the figure of Aunt Kath. Panic-stricken, Althea turned and fled. "She must never see me here. . . ."

Those last words were to send Betty and Polly away from the café in an embarrassed and rather miserable state. Fond of Althea! Proud of her!

"And that," seethed Polly, "is the girl who stole a story and tried to pass it off as being her own. She's a fraud, an utter fraud! And that dear old soul has yet to find out—"

"The money for the new typewriter, Polly," sighed Betty. "We know that Althea has never returned the cash, nor did she buy a new machine. Poor Aunt Kath—when she does find out!"

What Does She Care!

THE printing works of the "Barncombe Herald" were not exactly one of the architectural glories of the quaint old Devon town.

But, in miniature, the schoolgirl staff of "Fifty Years of Morcove" were soon seeing the "how-it-is-done" of periodical printing.

For the first time in their young lives they stood amongst printers and printing-presses. Whilst that obliging foreman, Mr. Blakeney, had another investigation in regard to the missing MSS., Betty and Polly watched a linotype operator, whose machine, in its wizard-like operation, filled them with awe.

Then there were men working at cases of type, setting up "copy" by hand. There was one very short and very stout worthy getting out a "contents bill."

But the thing that thrilled the juniors most of all was when Mr. Blakeney, coming back to report that those MSS. really couldn't have been sent to the works, took both girls to look at pages of "Fifty Years," in the printing "chases."

"How funny it looks, everything reading backwards!" laughed Polly. "And there's Naomer's portrait, the wrong way round!"

"It'll come out right in the printing, missies," chuckled Mr. Blakeney. "At least, we hope so! But about those two features. I hope you'll understand; we couldn't have had them!"

"Then it's a lickie what has become of them," Betty said. "Lost, anyhow; no doubt about that now!"

"And time is getting on!" added Polly.

"Like something else to go in in their place, young ladies?"

"Oh, we don't know; we must see the editress about that," Betty answered. "Just as it happens, those two articles cost the writer a lot of trouble. She had to look up such heaps of information."

Mr. Blakeney glanced at a wall-calendar, some of the dates on which were weirdly marked.

"Last day for passing your pages for the press, Friday of next week," he commented rather solemnly. "Well, young ladies, you'll see what you can do!"

He escorted them to the way out into a yard, conferring a handful of type as a "souvenir" of the scholars' visit.

"Nice man!" said Betty, riding away with Polly. "And so obliging. But we've got to keep to the time-table all the same."

"Friday of next week," Polly said with mock grimness. "Black Friday!"

"Oh, we'll manage, dear!"

But, to get back to school and have to go straight to the class-room without seeing their chief, increased the sense of getting rushed for time. At the half-past three dismiss they simply streaked away in quest of Ethel.

There was such haste to find the editress, it resulted in her being met by Betty and Polly as she came away from the Sixth Form class-room with all the other seniors. And one of those other seniors—Althea Dillon—hearing talk of the missing MSS., contrived to keep within earshot.

"Lost, anyhow, as you say," she heard Ethel Courtway ruefully summing up to the two juniors. "And I suppose I'm to blame, although I really don't see how! You saw my list of stuff sent to be set up, and those two articles in the first batch. But there it is, and now—"

"The articles can be done again, Ethel."

"Oh, that seems to be very hard on the girl who got them out in the first instance," demurred Ethel. "Put in something else? And yet—they were going to be such fine features!"

"The 'Fifty Years' won't be complete without them," Polly declared. "Dash it all, Betty and I'll go at them again, ourselves, if Helen Craig can't! But she will—you see!"

"I want to see Helen," said the editress. "You're right; those two articles must appear. You find Helen, Polly. And you, Betty, come upstairs with me to the den."

Every word overheard by Althea! No wonder she drifted away, quaking with dread once more. Those two features would be re-written.

Fool, fool that she had been to rely on some wonderful run of luck. There was still time, and there was the Morcove spirit of determination! So she was no better off than before. Oh, with what a dreadful certainty was the Day of Reckoning coming, after all!

"Althy, I say!"

She wheeled round. Lena Grayson was running to overtake her at the foot of the stairs.

"It's all right, Althy," was whispered gleefully. "I mean for this evening—you know! Passes for the four of us."

"But, Lena, I don't know that I feel like—"

"Oh, rubbish, Althy! Now what are you in such a hump about?" was the impatient murmur. "If you miss this chance you'll be a goop." Then, with a titter: "I could hardly keep a straight face when I was getting permish from Miss Somerfield herself. She did so hope that we'd enjoy the lecture—he, he, he! Althy, we are going to get away at once, and begin our spree with a tea at the Creamery. You be ready in five minutes, will you? The others know."

"Right-ho!" responded Althea dully.

She had to go up to her study to dump some books used during afternoon class, and whilst there, with the door ajar, she heard Polly go by with Helen Craig, making for the den.

"Of course I can write the articles again, Polly," the other junior was saying. "I don't mind what trouble I take over a thing like this!"

Then reckless desperation swept through Althea once more. Dash it all, if she had destroyed the original MSS., then surely she could destroy the same articles, when re-written! Simply get to them, in the den, and tear them up—burn them! Then there simply wouldn't be time to have them done again.

What was it she had heard that junior saying just then?

"I don't mind what trouble I take—"

"Nor do I mind what risk I take—now!" was the senior's wild thought. "Oh, let me get out of here and forget for a bit, anyhow!"

On the point of leaving her study, she heard the three juniors going by, evidently seeking their

own quarters for tea. They were quite happy-hearted.

"Oh, we'll manage!" was Betty's old slogan.

"You won't!" said Althea to herself fiercely. "I'm going to watch that!"

Ten minutes later she rode away with Lena and two other happy-go-lucky seniors, "on pass" until half-past nine.

Great was the merriment on the part of Althea's companions over the way the special leave had been "wangled." This evening at seven o'clock there was to be a lecture at some small mission hall in Barncombe on "The Future of the Mission Field."

The speaker was to be a returned lady missionary—one of those splendid souls who give up their lives to the noble work in far-distant lands. Lena it was who had pitched a tale to Miss Somerfield, laughing up her sleeve the while, about wanting to hear this particular lecturer. "She has had such a wonderful career, they say."

As seniors, those who wished to go could be trusted to do so without an escort, of course. "I would have liked to see more of you wanting to attend the lecture," Miss Somerfield had remarked. "It is certain to be most interesting."

But not so interesting as this week's show at the Barncombe Cinema! In mirthful furtherance of this belief, Althea's three companions were soon comparing the small blue bills advertising the lecture with the flaring coloured posters of "Serpent's Trail," that stupendous new "release," featuring at least six film stars.

The half-wintery afternoon was already declining towards darkness when the four seekers of stolen pleasure marched into the Creamery for tea, after some shopping along the High Street.

Lena was the one for letting the café waitresses realise that fun was afoot. But if Lena took the lead in making that tea-time in the otherwise quiet café a very ill-behaved affair Althea was by no means the least indecorous of the four.

By now Althea was in one of her plunging moods. What she had spent at the shops, a few minutes since! More of that eight pounds gone. Never mind! Aunt Kath would never find out about that, anyhow!

And why, after all, worry—worry about all the rest? There was still that chance. Those two articles, re-written, could be destroyed again! They could hardly be re-written a third time. Too disheartening, and, in any case, would there be time?

"I can't believe there will be!"

As for any outcry about the dastardly action of some person or persons unknown—pooh, what would that matter?

"Althea's cheering up!" laughed Lena. "What gave you the blues, Althy, just before we started out?"

"Nothing! I'm all right!" she declared in a highly strung way. "And I'd like another cup—there!" as she upset the cup in passing it, spilling dregs over the cloth. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall be turned out," giggled one of the others. "My word, Althy, if your Aunt Kath saw you now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Althea laughed along with her cronies.

"Girls We Are Proud Of!" she flippantly quoted the title of that intended feature for the Souvenir. "Ha, ha, ha!"

THE HAMPER

BY IRIS HOLT

I'd like to pack a hamper
And send it to my chum.
I'd put in lots of happiness,
I'd put in lots of fun.
And parcels full of wishes rare,
And sprigs of memory,
Then mark it "This side up with care!"
To dear old Rosemary.

I'd like to pack a hamper
And send it off to-day,
With sachets full of laughter
To chase dull care away;
And little beams of sunshine,
And bags of sympathy,
And seal it and address it
To my chum Rosemary.

I'd like to pack a hamper
With luck, and hope, and mirth.
And fragrant bits of friendship
The sweetest thing on earth.
I'd line it with affection,
In happy memory
Of schooldays, jolly schooldays,
With my chum Rosemary.

At that moment, in the Fourth Form corridor at Morcove School, Helen Craig was parting company with some of her best chums, who had come away with her from Study 12.

"I must turn in here, girls," said Helen, turning the knob of her own study door, "and start in upon that re-writing."

"It is a shame," Betty sympathised. "Sure you don't mind, Helen?"

"Oh, not a bit!"

And a minute later, seated at her table, she dipped a pen and wrote the words, in title style, across the top of a sheet of foolscap:

"GIRLS WE ARE PROUD OF!"

A Scare for Althea

HELEN CRAIG, at work like that in her study starting it all over again—and here, in the darkened cinema, the girl who meant to seize and destroy the duplicated MSS., as she had seized and destroyed the originals.

And was Althea Dillon troubled by any pangs of conscience? Not she! "Every girl for herself."

The great talkie drama reeled itself to a finish, and the lights went up for a brief interval. Replacing incidental music, the cinema's own much-advertised organ trumpeted away in a manner that sent Lena into convulsions. And so an open box of chocolates fell off her lap, to be lost upon the dusty floor—another "scream" for all four girls.

"Here you are," bleated Althea, producing a

fresh box of chocolates. "Have some of mine. Or, I say, here's a girl coming round for orders. Miss," she called across two rows of seats to the cinema attendant, "got any ices? Bring four, please."

They arrived, and Althea's production of a half-sovereign note that the attendant would have to change produced a showing-off altercation amongst the seniors.

"Althea, you paid at tea-time!"

"Doesn't matter. I ordered these—"

"But it's not fair—"

"Oh, don't be silly! But I've nothing less than this note," Althea grandly informed the cinema girl.

"I'll bring you the change," was whispered, as the lights went down again.

"I wonder you didn't tell her to keep the change," tittered Lena. "You're going it, Althea, lately!"

"What about you others? Besides, why shouldn't I spend if I've got it?"

Althea was almost letting a kind of wild rage replace levity as she said that. It was good fun to be out like this with these girls. But, dash them, why must they make remarks about her spending? As if they feared she couldn't afford it, when she could. The eight pounds was not nearly all gone yet.

But it was going, fast.

A "comic" came on, and Althea was in that state of hysterical excitement she had tears running out of her eyes as she laughed.

"Look at Althea!" tittered Lena, nudging the two other members of the party. "Mustn't bring you again, Althy—he, he, he!"

"We won't be coming again," she laughed breathlessly. "Next time we can wangle an evening out we'll make it the Headland Hotel. Dancing!"

"Althy!" breathed the others, pretending to be scandalised. "But that would be a great spree, wouldn't it?" Lena added. "Expensive, though!"

"Oh, hang the expense!" swaggered Althea. She felt very exultant after that. Aha, these other girls were having to consider expense, were they? "And I've still got three pounds left."

"I tell you what," she said to them recklessly, as they all four scrambled their way out at the end of the show; "if you girls can arrange it safely I'll pay for all."

"What?"

"You mean—the hotel idea?" gasped Lena. "Althy!"

"Oh, don't be like that!" she felt snappish again. "I can spend as I like, can't I?"

"Of course, Althy, if you've got it."

"Well, I have got it, so there!"

Her companions, as she noticed, exchanged glances, and suddenly she had one of those hot-and-cold turns. Good heavens, were these cronies of hers suspicious about her affluent state? Or was it simply that they thought her a bit too strung-up, and that it was time for her to calm down a bit?

They themselves were becoming circumspect, as they passed out into the lamplit High Street. A hint to her? But she had better lead them to think that anything she had said was only due to a fondness for pleasure. She mustn't appear suddenly abashed.

"Not such a hurry, girls!" she laughed after them loudly. "I say, let's go along to the—"

And there she broke off as if a stunning blow had come. In the glare of light from the cinema foyer, amongst the flocking-away crowd of cinema patrons, a staid figure, somehow familiar. But how could it be? Yet it was, for now the face was turned this way.

Aunt Kath!

It took Althea Dillon a moment or so to fight off a swooning sensation. Then she ran, as if pursued by some avenging fate!

"No more to-night, Helen!"

"Oh, Betty—"

"Please!" said the Form captain, with smiling insistence; and she came forward from the study doorway to take the pen from Helen's hand, and then gather together the several sheets of MSS.

"Bekas time for a hand-round, Helen, in Study 12!" shrilled the dusky one, showing herself with Polly and others in the doorway.

"Is it as late as all that?" sighed Helen. "Oh, dear, and I have only done those few sheets! It is going to take me just as long, I do believe, as it did the first time."

"I'm sure it will," said Polly. "But you've got until Monday next. After that, if anything happens—well!"

Betty laughed.

"But what can happen? The two features are not going to get lost a second time, surely!"

"Better let me do some spare anticakles, in case," offered Naomer. "Bekas you never know."

The captain rumped the dusky one's head lovingly.

"One thing I do know," said Betty. "We've all done enough for this evening. So come along!"

And they trooped to Study 12.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

The Fine Long Complete
Morcove School Story in
Next Tuesday's Number is
Entitled:

More Daring Than Ever



BY MARJORIE STANTON

Having carried deceit so far, unable to escape from the results of her own wrongdoing, and yet wildly hoping that she will never be found out, Althea Dillon plunges recklessly from folly to folly. But Althea's daring avails her nothing . . . as you will see when you read next Tuesday's powerful tale.

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