

"Bunny Comes to Morcove" Fine Complete Morcove
School Story Within

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

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Week ending
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EVERY TUESDAY.



THEIR SECRET SUSPECTED

A powerful incident from
this week's complete Morcove
School story, intro-
ducing Bunny Trevor.

FIVE FINE STORIES INSIDE

Introducing Bunny Trevor—the New Girl Who Took Morcove by Storm: A Fine Long Complete Story



BUNNY COMES to MORCOVE

CHAPTER 1.
Happy Days

"BUNNY! Now, Bunny, what did I tell you

"Oh, it's all right, mother!"

"It isn't all right! If you miss that train——"

"There'll be another!"

"A later train will never get you to Morcove at the proper time, Bunny!"

But this specified drawback, attaching to a later train, went unheard by young Ann Trevor—"Bunny" in the family, as she would certainly be "Bunny" at Morcove School.

There was a certain liveliness about Ann, a suggestion of being always in-and-out, that rendered "Bunny" very apt.

Why Bunny did not hear her adoring mother's supplementary cry was because the kick-starter of a motor-cycle had just then "acklod."

It was not the first time Bunny had taken liberties with her brother's brand-new "speedy," finding it temptingly at hand at the top of a garden-path. But she was still sufficiently inexperienced to find any little stolen ride productive of a thrill—which was what Bunny liked to get out of everything she did.

As something she simply must do, for the last time, before setting off for boarding-school, Bunny now let in the clutch and went churning away down the long garden path, in bottom gear.

"Oh, what a trial she is!" sighed Mrs. Trevor, and yet there was a half-amused expression, guaranteeing a hope that this Bunny always would

By Marjorie Stanton

be just as she was to-day. "And wearing her best things, too!"

To Bunny herself, the being dressed for a journey to Morcove and for entry into that famous school as a new girl, was just what made this final "go" on the motor-cycle extra-thrilling.

Best clothes, in other words, were an extra handicap, a stiffening of the conditions. Fall off this time, and—— Oh, and here was Turtle, the gardener, just at the corner where one had to turn.

"Mind, Turtle, please!" Bunny gaily requested, above the roar of the engine in low gear.

Aproned Turtle skipped into the herbageous border; but his barrow remained as a pot-laden obstacle past which Bunny must steer.

Feeling a slight impact, she said: "Ooo!" Then, hearing a lively crash of flowerpots as they cascaded from the overturned barrow, she laughed deliciously—being still securely astride the machine.

"Sorry, Turtle! And good-bye, Turtle; I'm off in a minute!"

In the other sense of the word, Bunny was very nearly "off" next moment. Merriment found her unprepared at another turn which instantly presented itself. She only just escaped a spill, but having done so, she changed to "middle" for the last lap.

"What can be done with the girl, John!" cried Mrs. Trevor, now that her husband had come out of doors, pipe in mouth. "Look at her"—as Bunny came tearing back by way of another long path.

"But we've already done the only thing that can be done," said John Trevor. "Pack her off to boarding-school."

Then he felt a bit chokey in the throat. Now that he was no longer a clerk in a City office; now that he no longer had to catch the nine-five every week-day morning, but was a man of leisure—a man with a fortune—it did seem rotten to be going to have no Bunny about the place.

Day school—that had been all right; home from the office by half-past one, Saturdays, there had been Bunny to run to let you in, with her: "Dad!" But now—

John Trevor heard his wife saying: "One of these days, dear!" to Bunny, who had, however, escaped disaster at the finish. And he applied the words as balm to an aching heart. "One of these days—she'll be home again."

After all, Bunny was going to Morcove in mid-Term, so that made the time to wait only a very few weeks.

"Dad, you must get yourself a new pipe," Bunny had not the slightest hesitation in commanding him, when presently his good-bye kiss reeked of nicotine. "A good one," she stressed.

Both Bunny and her brother Tom, these days, were vividly aware of their parents' ignorance of the Art of Living. It would be hard to say how many hats and coats Mrs. Trevor had timorously bought herself, in the last six months of abounding wealth, only to be told by Bunny flatly: "Mother, you can't wear that!"

On the other hand, Bunny and her brother Tom had been "going it" lavishly, and parental admonitions being to both young hopefuls as so much water on a duck's back.

"And a taxi—fancy!" was Bunny's amused comment on the hired vehicle which had turned up to run her to the station. "You should see about that car at once, dad!"

"I'm going to, my dear. But—"

"We shan't be here—Tom and I," for Tom also had gone to public school now. "So don't forget, dad, what he advised. A Roysler—it must be a Roysler."

"Fourteen hundred—"

"Well?"

After that, Bunny's loving father could only meekly climb in after her, in the luggage-laden taxi. He would, he had suddenly decided, tapping out his old briar, see her off at the station.

"Bye, mumsie darling—bye!" Bunny called and waved to a mother who was obviously going to rush upstairs for a good cry as soon as the taxi was gone. "Cheerio!"

"Got everything?" Bunny's father asked her, the moment they were off.

"What? Oh, I don't know," was the light-hearted response. "If I haven't, it can be sent on. Oh, look, dad! The Mertons are having the front of their house done up!"

"Ours was painted, Bunny, when we bought it, six months ago."

"Yes, but we didn't have that special colour in green. That's the green I like. You ought to have it done again, dad—"

"But—"

"I wonder, dad, you and mother don't go for a voyage whilst Tom and I are at school? And so the house could be done again, and no trouble to you and mumsie!"

"But your mother and I, in a couple of weeks

or so, want to come down to see you at Morcove, Bunny."

"Yes, there's that, of course. And you'll have got the Roysler by then, dad?"

"Oh, I expect so, Bunny!"

No getting her or Tom to understand; it was so hard to become accustomed to wealth! Here one was, idly driving to the station in the middle of the morning, simply to see one's only daughter off to boarding-school, when for years and years one had caught the nine-five.

With an uncomfortable sense of being merely out of a job—sacked!—John Trevor arrived at the station with Ann.

He stood, with her, on the Down platform, awaiting the train that was even now signalled in. It used to be the Up platform every morning for him, teeming with City-going men. Now, looking across at that platform, it was so amazingly deserted!

"Next time you're up in the West End, dad, shopping, you ought to find yourself a good tailor. I wouldn't," said Bunny, "have any more ready-made. But here she comes!"

"Forward half, Exeter!" the porters were bawling.

"They'll see to the luggage, dad."

To Bunny's horror, her darling father had revealed a meek inclination to help with the luggage. Whereas, of course, the thing for him to do, nowadays, was simply to do nothing—except tip like a lord.

"A diner!" Bunny sparkled, the train having stopped so that she could see in at the extra-spacious windows of the dining-car. "I'll get in here, dad—"

"I don't know, Bunny, that they like you to use the dining-car except for meals."

"But I shall be having lunch, so it's all right!"

As a dining-car attendant was even then politely at hand to take her on board, Bunny could turn to her meek father with a sublime "You see!" expression.

Then she saw the coin that he intended to hand the porter, for putting all the luggage in the van.

"Not a shilling, dad, half-a-crown—"

"Er—yes, of course, Bunny. I was forgetting. Well, good-bye, my dearest girl," John Trevor said throatily. "Have a happy time—"

"Oh, I shall, dad! And you and mumsie—now, mind you both REMEMBER!"

Out of her fond love for mother and father alike, Bunny was voicing that final injunction. She and Tom—the last six months had proved it!—knew so well how to do things, now. But dad and mumsie, they did so need telling!

"Bunny," her father burred, as she leaned outwards from the upper step of the dining-car, for a last give-and-take of kisses. "I only hope—Morcove—treat you nicely, dear—"

"Why ever shouldn't they, dad! Well, good-bye, you funny old darling daddie! And mind!—a Roysler—Scotch tweeds, to measure, dad! Bye-ee! Bye!"

The train was moving off.

Bunny lost sight of him, then saw him again, from one of those big windows of the dining-car, she having adroitly made for a seat.

Rapping at the glass, she waved. Old dad, who used to come to the common on Saturday afternoons, to see her and other girls at games. They had to make it the common, because they were only a private Day School, with no playing-field of their own. And now—

"You'll be taking lunch, miss?"

"I shall!" Bunny most decidedly answered the dining-car attendant. "Not the soup," she said,

studying the menu-card. "But the fish, please, and chicken to follow."

At this instant, the unmistakable barking of a dog came from some other part of the train. Bunny poised her pretty head to pay heed.

"In the van, is he?"

"Yes, miss. Doesn't quite like being tied up."
"Oh," said Bunny, promptly rising. "Lonely, perhaps. I must go and see!"

Bunny could never bear to think of anything as being left in an unrelieved state of misery. Returning, presently, she said in a taken-for-granted tone:

"Instead of lunch in here, you can let me have something in the van? Something I can share," said Bunny, "with him, poor dear. I've found a lot of mail-bags to sit on."

"Very good, miss!"

"Thanks so much," said Bunny, dispensing her first tip of the journey.

And, a-stagger with the lurching of the train, she made her way back to that rattling and banging van, where the chained dog seemed to say, at sight of her once more:

"Well, you are a sport!"

CHAPTER 2. Some Other Girl

BY going out of the station at Exeter, to get a look round that fine city, Bunny missed the connection she should have made. Hence this telegram, dispatched whilst she was waiting for the next train on the local line:

"To Miss Somerfield,
Morcove School.

"Arrive Barncombe Junction three-forty; shall motor from there.—TREVOR."

The proper train for her to have caught would have taken her right through to Morcove Road station. But it didn't matter, provided one didn't put other people about. And the telegram had settled that.

So, at three-forty, Bunny got down from a first-class carriage of the afternoon "crawler" from Exeter, blithely intending to charter a car as soon as her luggage should be on the porter's trolley.

Although a junction, this railway station was not a busy one. At the moment, it was so quiet that some bam-bam music, as of a military band, made her think that the staff had switched on the wireless somewhere.

Then she realised that the band meant—something in the town!

"Er—Ann Trevor?"

She faced round.

"Oh, hallo! 'Afternoon!" she gaily answered a girl of her own age who had voiced that cordial inquiry. "Yes, I'm Ann! You sent to meet me?"

"That's right! I say, what have you been doing?" gurgled this other girl. "You were to come to Morcove Road and be picked up by the school bus!"

"I know! But I did send a tallywag—"

"Oh, yes; that's why I'm here." They thought somebody had better meet you—"

"But why! I say, I hope it hasn't kept you from—"

"Only from afternoon school—as if I mind being kept from that!" was the chucked response.

"Polly Linton, my name is. I walked in, as your telegram said something about motoring?"

"Yes, where can we get one? I mean," said Bunny, "I would rather not have just a taxi. And what's that band I hear?"

"Oh, a circus—just arrived, and passing through on its way to the Circus Meadow."

"A—circus? Oh, if we hurry—leaving the luggage—we'd be in time to see it, perhaps? I'd love to—wouldn't you?"

"Come on then!"

"Porter," said Bunny hurriedly, "keep the things on the barrow, and when I get back—I'll see you!"

Then she and Polly Linton hastened away.

"Sort of procession?" Bunny hazarded.

"But it's not our usual circus," said Polly. "I hope it will be a good one."

"The school will go?"

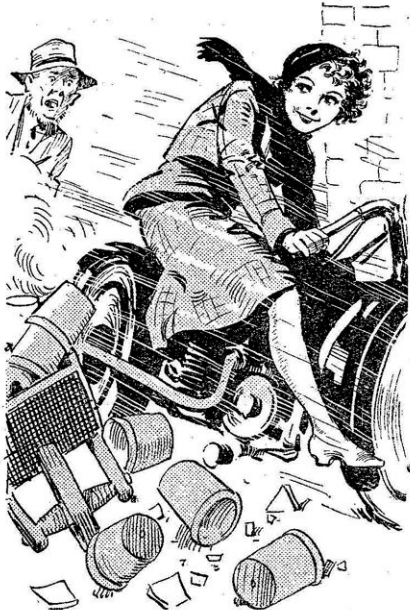
"Those who want to—in parties. And I know one party that will want to go," laughed Polly. "My chums and I!"

"Such fun, isn't it—a circus? And don't you always feel you want to do the things the performers can do? The Girl on the Flying Trapeze, and all that? I know!" Polly agreed. "Wonderful!"

"There was a girl at my other school," Bunny rattled on, whilst they footed it briskly for the High Street; "she was almost as good as a circus turn—the things she could do. If only we'd had a proper gym. But we were just a private school. I expect you've a fine gym at Morcove?"

"Not so bad. Quite good, in fact. Oh, there they go!"

As Polly Linton happened to be the madcap



There was a cascade of flower-pots as Bunny, pursuing an erratic course, collided with the barrow. But that was all part of the fun of this stolen ride! "Bye, Turtle!" she called to the gardener. "I'm off to school in a minute!"

of her Form, she was as lively as Bunny—and that is saying a good deal—in running the rest of the way to a corner of the High Street.

There, amongst other folk brought to a standstill on the pavement, they stood to watch the newly-arrived circus processioning through the town.

The band had already gone past, at the head of the long line of vehicles, blaring to attract attention and so advertise the forthcoming show.

According to what Bunny and Polly now saw, it was quite a good travelling circus. The traction engine hauling several heavy laden trailers was a huge affair, and many of the dual-purpose waggons were spic-and-span, drawn by horses in fine condition.

But one special delight for bystanders was, of course, the team of piebald ponies, and then there was an original stage coach—a six-in-hand, driven by a cowboy.

Came next some more gilded vans, and then an elephant, curling his trunk to right and left in anticipation of offerings from the cheering, laughing throng.

"How lovely!" gurgled Bunny. "I do wish I had been ready with a bun! I love animals."

"So do I. And look—more ponies!"

"Dears!"

By now, Bunny and Polly were in front of the crowd just there—standing at the pavement's edge. So they had a good view! After that further teams of ponies, pattering along so freshly, with bells a-jingle, came several horse-drawn caravans—the homes-on-wheels of the circus folk.

And as fascinating as ever looked each of those caravans, gaudily painted and every bit of brass nicely shined up.

Inevitably, bystanders gave eager eyes to the back of each van, as it went by, and when there was anybody standing at the half-door above the few ladder-like steps, there was waving of hands, the calling out of good-natured remarks.

"It must be fine!" Polly exclaimed. "To have a life like that! Think of the places they go to!"

This was an excitable sentiment with which Bunny should have been in perfect agreement. Yet Bunny did not respond. As Polly did not know the "new" girl well enough yet as a perfectly "live wire," the silence did not surprise her.

Indeed, Polly was much too taken up with the passing show to pay any attention to her future schoolmate, imagining that girl to be simply too spellbound for speech.

Spellbound Bunny was, at that moment, but not by mere general interest in the procession.

She had eyes only for someone who was looking out from the back entrance to a living-van just then going by.

A girl it was upon whom Bunny's eyes were fast-fixed; a girl of school age only, who seemed—most strangely—to have picked out Bunny's face in the crowd as if it interested her.

So, for the next few moments, the one girl was looking full and steadily at the other. Bunny, at the kerb, was slightly agape, like one who might be finding it hard to believe the evidence of her own eyes.

Gradually the distance increased between herself and the caravan: and yet, as she still stared, she was aware of the young circus girl gazing back at her with what seemed to be an ever-increasing wistfulness.

Polly, of course, had not let that particular van go by without taking special note of so young a girl, poised there in its doorway. Afterwards, when the whole procession had ended in an anti-



climax of mere fodder-laden lorries and "fit-up" stuff, Morcove's madcap exclaimed to Bunny:

"Did you notice—in the yellow and green caravan? Such a pretty girl, no older than you or me—yet: I suppose she does her turn in the ring!"

"Yes, I know the girl you mean," Bunny nodded. "And I—I felt sorry for her."

"Oh, why?" Polly wanted to know, because she liked to be second to none in showing sympathy where it was needed.

"Oh, can't exactly say!" shrugged Bunny.

"And now, Polly—"

"Yes, I was just thinking; at this rate, we could get a cup of tea before going on to Morcove? Did you have a proper lunch?"

"Matter of fact, it was a rather scratch affair," Bunny smiled, and explained about the dog. "A lovely chap; I wanted to snoop him," she concluded merrily. "But he was very special and going to a good home, I'm sure."

"Otherwise, you would have—snooped him?"

"I might have!"

This delighted Polly. Oh, here was a fine girl who had come to Morcove to-day—or who, at any rate, had got as far as this, on her way to Morcove!

"The Creamery—we always go there," Polly said, promptly conducting Bunny to the portals of that famous cakeshop, with its dainty tea-rooms at the back. "Now I think we might just as well wait for the four-five to Morcove Road—"

"Oh, no; a car!" Bunny insisted. "What a jolly place," now that they were passing between tempting counters to the quiet tea-rooms. "That table in the corner?"

Polly thought so, too, and in a few moments, at that chosen table, she was saying to the new girl: "You must have something substantial! Eggs on toast—"

"Well, will you?"

"I don't mind!"

"Eggs on toast for two, please, miss," sparkled Bunny, "and some cakes and—oh, you know the sort of thing! I suppose," to Polly, after the

waitress had retired, "if it were a half-holiday, this place would be packed out with girls from Morcove?"

"Oh, rather! And sometimes we get a few of the fellows from Grangemoor——"

"From where!" jerked Bunny. "Grangemoor? But that's the school my brother is at, now."

"It is? Never! Why my brother Jack is there," cried Polly. "And a chum of mine—Judy Cardew—she has a brother at Grangemoor."

"Fancy!"

"But how absolutely jolly! What House is your brother in, Ann?"

"Er—he did tell me. Ch——"

"Challenor's? Then he's with Jack and Dave and others who are often over at Morcove. Oh, good!" Polly exclaimed.

"Tom hasn't been there above a few weeks, and so——"

"Tom; I like Tom as a boy's name. And Ann——"

"But people don't call me Ann. It'll have to be that now, I suppose, and it'll seem funny—after being Bunny Trevor——"

"It'll not have to be Ann," dissented Polly heartily. "Bunny! Oh, Bunny is—Bunny's YOU, of course it is! And look here, if you like, I don't see why you can't be in Study 12——"

"With you? I'd love that!"

"There are snags, I warn you! One is, Naomer—a wild little thing from North Africa; really, a sort of queen in her own little kingdom. And Paula Creel—always in the best armchair!"

"Anyone else?"—with smiling eagerness.

"Why, as it happens—no," Polly answered. "Study 12 was, you know, the captain's study. She made a fourth in it, you see. But a rule has just been made that each Form captain is to have a study to herself. Betty Barton—one of the



Some of the girls felt a bit anxious as "Lottie, the Live Wire" began her daring stunts. But Bunny—she was thinking of other things, wondering how she could help this girl whom she knew so well.

best, she is!—hasn't liked the idea at all, but it had to be. So now she is all on her own in another study—but quite handy."

Polly added:

"Talking of snags—I may be one myself! But if you like to chance it in Study 12——"

"It's for you girls to decide whether you'll have me," said Bunny. "About that circus, Polly? Does it mean waiting until Saturday, say? I'd like it to be to-morrow."

"To-morrow's a halfter——"

"Then we will!" Morcove's new girl decided. "Why, do you see! They sell tickets here!"

"Yes, they always do!" nodded Polly, whilst Bunny jumped up to go closer to the Circus bill which the Creamery had displayed in the tea-room.

"How many shall we be?" Bunny called across, a few moments later. "Four—five—six? Oh, but I know what to do."

And she did it, there and then, returning with a strip of pink tickets for the best seats, for to-morrow afternoon just as the poached eggs on toast arrived, and tea, and cakes, and cream buns.

CHAPTER 3.

Living the Life

"SUPER!" Polly Linton chuckled, during the setting down of this array. "Sort of spread that Naomer would go crazy about. Awful one for stuffing! But you must be really hungry, Bunny——"

"Well, I am!"

Polly, for that matter, could now show a very good appetite. After the brisk disposal of the eggs on toast, both girls indulged in a more leisurely course of fancy cakes.

Leisurely was the very word for this second stage of the repast. There was, so to speak, a toying with dainties from the cake-platters and an unhurried conversation enabling each to get to know all about the other. Time, of course, was getting on, but that did not trouble either girl in the least.

"Now," said Polly, when at last they required the bill, "you must let me——"

"I shall do nothing of the sort!"

"Bunny——"

"Polly, just as if! You've been put to the bother of coming to meet me——"

"Oh, yeah!" chuckled the madcap. "And it was, of course, French this afternoon! But——"

"Miss! My bill, please!" Bunny cried, hoping to end the friendly wrangle; but Polly argued on:

"There are those circus tickets, too——"

"Oh!" said Bunny. "Look here!—Thank you," said Bunny, to the waitress, and slipped her a shilling. "And now, to save having to walk back to the station—can a car pick us up here, please?"

It could be done—by 'phoning to the Barncombe Garage. So, Bunny being on the gold standard, done it was. And Polly, as there was to be a car, took the opportunity of laying in stores for Study 12's corner cupboard.

From the windows of that car Bunny presently had her first sight of Morcove School, and she slapped her knees delightedly.

The huge and stately-looking schoolhouse, and other fine buildings lying close to hand in the grounds, loomed nearer as the car did its final rush along the road from the town, to Morcove's own gateway.

Then they were speeding up the drive, with a

playing field on either side. School was over for the day—except, as Polly remarked, for a spot of prep by-and-bye—and both fields teemed with girls, some at games and some roaming around in chummy batches.

Bunny's impression was that all Morcove was out of doors; but there proved to be many more girls on hand in the Front Hall, when she herself passed inside with Polly.

There the life of the place rushed at Bunny. For a minute she enjoyed rapturous delight over some immediate introductions, productive of much vivacious talk and laughter.

Then Miss Merrick—oh, and what a ripper!—came upon the scene, apparently quite satisfied now that she, Bunny, had turned up at last, and never mind about the train she should have come by!

"I think, Ann, the headmistress will be free, if we go to her now. This way."

Bunny, then, was ready to assume a more sedate expression. But it was like Polly Linton, who had come indoors with all her Creamery purchases, to let one bag of rich pastries escape her overladen arms.

This happened, because the madcap was starting a dash for upstairs. The dropped bag burst upon one of the first stairs, and sundry doughnuts came bowling down into the hall, where, amidst great hilarity they were promptly "fielded."

Taking in all this with her backward-glancing eyes, Bunny was seized with an uncontrollable fit of giggling. Miss Merrick was not unamused; all the same, Bunny took out her handkerchief as a means of cramming back laughter, and retained it in case of any fresh paroxysm.

As a result, without being aware of it, Bunny was taken in to be presented to her headmistress with a long strip of circus tickets hanging half out of a side pocket.

"Ah, there you are, Ann Trevor," Morcove's adored principal greeted her very cordially. "Ready for tea, eh. Well, I only just wanted to look at you now! You must come to me before school in the morning, Ann. Er—bless the girl—"

"Eh? Oh, these!" said Bunny, discovering what had claimed Miss Somerfield's surprised attention. "Yes, there's to be a circus in the town, and so I got some tickets, for to-morrow afternoon."

"Indeed, Ann?" was the rather drily smiled response. "You didn't think it would be as well, perhaps to find out first if you'd be able to go?"

"Oh, I felt sure you'd let us," Bunny said cheerily. "Everybody loves a circus! You do, don't you?"

The headmistress had to laugh along with Miss Merrick.

"I suppose I do! There, run away now, Ann, and get freshened up after your journey—"

"Why? Don't I look all right?"

"I am thinking how well you do look, Ann!"

"I mean to say, I don't want to let down the school in any way!"

"Ah, I don't think you are the sort to do that," was the answer that left Ann giving a scholar's bow, before acting on the smiled dismissal.

Outside the room, she flashed along the passage as if she had been whole terms at Morcove. A tremendous elation was upon her. She had, she felt, come to the right place for a jolly time. "I can tell!"

Yet it was Bunny, half a minute later, pausing on a half-landing to look out of a window very steadfastly, so that passers-by on the stairs went up and down all unnoticed.

From the staircase window, she could see across several miles of open country, as far as the brown-tiled buildings of ancient Barncombe. Just this side of the town she could make out a meadow into which the circus had drawn. Caravans had taken up their stations; offloading had begun.

All day, Bunny Trevor had been manifesting that joyous, carefree disposition which was hers. Now, whilst she gazed towards the distant cluster of lorries, waggons, and caravans, there came a self-whispering which told of a nature quick to feel for others—and as quick to want to help.

"That girl," was Bunny's serious whisper to herself. "That Agnes, just fancy—I'll have to get a word with her to-morrow, for at present—I don't understand!"

CHAPTER 4.

She Is "Morcove" Now

"RESERVED seats, this way! Now for the front seats and the best seats, this way—hi!"

The man who had stationed himself at one entrance to Jennigo's Circus, with the idea of luring hesitant patrons, had to bawl to make himself heard above the blaring of a brass band.

"This way, I say, this way—hi! Now, ladies and gentlemen, step along! Reserved seats, front seats, all wait—ing!"

"Then it's this way in for us," gaily inferred one of several Morcovians who had swarmed across the trampled grass. "But where's Bunny, with the tickets?"

"Yes, what ze diggings! Bekas—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" others went off into peals of laughter. "What's become of her then!"

"Goodness knows! With us a moment ago, and now—my word," Polly chuckled, "talk about me for doing mad things! She's the limit!"

"And yet, I like her!" said Madge Minden, with that staid smile of hers, causing Polly to snort.

"Did I say I didn't? But here we've come along with her from the school like a house on fire, all because Bunny Trevor was in such a fury to get away, and now— Oh, goodness," Polly groaned, mock-tragically, "I believe I know what it means! She has come without the tickets, after all!"

"Howwows!" gasped Paula, who was always easily "kidded."

But there was Naomer to say excitedly: "No, bekas, I tell you what! I zink perhaps she has gone to buy some choccs, just to hand round during ze show—gorjus!"

"No, she hasn't," laughed Betty Barton, who had managed to join the half-holiday party in spite of pressing captaincy work. "Because, here is Bunny, coming back now!"

"Oh!" And a general turning to face Bunny, as she coolly sauntered up, ended in another burst of laughter. It was all right about the tickets, anyhow; she had the whole strip of them ready, even then, to submit to the man who still shouted:

"Hi, hi, roll up! Just a-going to begin—hi! Yuss, Missy," to Bunny, as she tendered the tickets; "anywhere in the fust row—hi!"

"And any re-admission?"

"Wot? Oh, ay, that's orlri! I'll know you agen, young ladies!"

"Where did you get to, just then, Bunny?" clamoured the madcap, but if any answer was returned she did not heed it, for Naomer, at Polly's heels, fell over just inside the tent—"as of course you would do!"

Bunny, whatever might be upon her mind, was never one to fret or fidget. And so a certain private anxiety, this afternoon, did not prevent her from enjoying the levity with which her schoolmates floundered down a grass gangway to the front row.

She was disposed to feel some pride, too, in being with such a jolly batch of girls—from Morocco! They belonged to one of the finest schools in the kingdom—and so did she, now!

All in a row they settled themselves, laughing to find their position one of splendid isolation. Doubtless these best seats would be filling up rapidly, in a minute or two. Meantime, the cheaper benches at the back were already nicely packed.

Nor perhaps was Bunny mistaken in thinking that a good many folk in the back seats were giving "Morcove" more than one interested stare; gossiping, too! There being nothing to see in the arena, at present, but grass and sawdust, Barncombe's homely folk were indeed inclined to study the Morcovians.

"Sh! Yes, dear," a fond mother would be whispering to some tiny tot, "they're from the school—the big school, you know. Morcove!"

Naomer, who was never caught without sweets, passed some along in their carton.

"Bekas, don't be afraid, we can get some more in ze interval," the dusky one encouraged her chums. "Ooo, isn't it a big tent—enormous!"

"Right in the front, we are," Polly exulted.

"So long as the elephant doesn't—"

"Naow, Polly dear!" protested timorous Paula.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunny, are you quite comfy there?" the Form captain called along to her. "Why sit at the end?"

"It's quite all right. I may be going out," was the light-hearted response. "In fact, I think I'll slip out now, if you'll just keep my place for me, girls? Thanks!"

Very astonishing, this, to Betty and the rest! Expecting someone to turn up, for whom she wished to keep a look-out up to the last moment? Her brother Tom, perhaps?

Such was the theory to which the girls were resorting, whilst Bunny slipped away to the open air; to the brilliant sunshine of the meadow, where all the noise and movement seemed greater than ever, after the subdued light of the tent and of an audience itself a little subdued.

"Right-ho, missy!" the bawler at the tent-entrance said to Bunny, who turned aside to be out of the way of people flocking to take their seats.

The bandsmen were getting down from the cart that had served as their open-air bandstand, and Bunny noticed also that performers who had been displaying themselves were now drifting round to what might be termed the "stage door."

She saw them go in at a canvas-hung opening to a lot of rigged-up cover, adjoining the circus tent. A cowboy or two, a negro, some girls in spangled tights—these and others vanished from sight like this. Then Bunny saw someone come from one of the living-vans who appeared to be quite a "star turn."

This was a tall young woman, very beautiful in a foreign way, with a lithe, feline movement across the grass. She was richly cloaked, proudly using the cloak to hide what else she wore from the public gaze—at present. Her raven-black hair had a red rose in it; her dark eyes would look neither to right nor left, self-importance dictating a haughty aloofness.

The wonder was that Bunny did not smile,

noticing such suggestions of vanity. Watch the woman intently, Bunny certainly did—from a little distance, with many other people jostling around her.

Then, when the proud beauty had glided in at the artistes' entrance, Bunny turned quickly to hurry towards a certain caravan. It was as if she were seizing an opportunity to do something daring.

The caravan, drawn up in a remote corner of the meadow, showed a closed back-door above the few steps by which it was reached. But Bunny had her own reason for believing that the little home-on-wheels was not as deserted as it appeared to be.

She mounted the steps, having to remain upon the topmost one whilst giving an announcing rapping of the knuckles upon the upper half of the closed door.

"Agnes!" Bunny called softly, eagerly, as she rapped. "Agnes—you in there?"

What was the faint sound, audible a moment since, which had now been checked? A faint whimpering, had it been; someone crying to herself as if in utter heartbreak?

"Agnes," Morcove's new girl repeated imploringly. And then, with her mouth to a key-hole:

"It's I, dear. It's Bunny!"

CHAPTER 5.

Tinsel and Tatters

FIRST the upper half of the caravan-door came open, showing a quite young girl only from her waist upwards.

Her face, thus revealed to Bunny, was white and tear-stained. Her eyes were red-rimmed, and it must have been unutterable sorrow which had been banished from them, to give place to a look of mingled surprise and joy.

"Bunny!"

"Yes, dear. Here, let me in quickly!"

"Oh, but no, Bunny! I can't—I daren't!"

"It's all right; she won't be coming," Bunny hastily supplied the calming assurance. "I know where she is. Open, Agnes—let me in! We must have a word—sh!"

It was a cool insistence which took bracing effect upon one whose nerves, perhaps, were in rags.

Another moment and the girl belonging to the circus had unlatched the lower-half of the door, and Bunny was with her in the caravan.

At that same moment, the band struck up in the big tent. The bam-bam of the overture proper was one of the many sounds which were excluded when the girl Agnes hastily closed both sections of the caravan-door.

That done, she turned and faced Bunny in the dim light that such tiny windows provided.

"Now," Bunny briskly resumed; "what does it mean, Agnes? This life—for you?" incredulously. "And only a few months ago you were at school with me!"

Tears came again to the circus-girl's eyes, and it was evident that she would be unable to give any coherent account of herself for a few moments yet.

Waiting for her to speak, Bunny noticed the midget stove beside which Agnes was standing, close to the doorway, and also realised that the girl must have been going to change into other clothes when the knock came. At present, she was scantily clad.

Then Bunny's roving eyes saw a wretchedly old and faded costume, such as a young girl might have worn in the circus ring. Its tatters were more noticeable than its tinsel, as it lay there.

"You left Grange Road School because your father and stepmother were leaving the neighbourhood," Bunny said, to help her former schoolmate to find her tongue.

"Yes, and we'd no sooner moved than father was killed—"

"Oh, Agnes!"

"In a street accident," the orphaned girl nodded on, bravely keeping a sob out of her voice. "That left me alone with—with my stepmother, and you know what she is—"

"I know that she was never kind to you, even when he was alive—you poor dear!"

"And he knew it too, Bunny," came the rejoinder, in a rather choked voice. "It had made him awfully sorry that he and she had ever married; but there it was—she turned his head. And besides, she could be so very sweet to me, before the marriage."

Bunny received this with a nod of understanding and great compassion. During the brief pause that ensued, the band-music found its way into the caravan again, and then came, faintly, all the audience's shouts of laughter over some first comic-turn taking place in the ring.

"But why, Agnes—why have you both come to this?" Bunny pressed gently.

"She took to the circus, sort of in desperation," was the quavered answer. "They wouldn't have her any more on the halls, or at the cabarets. I suppose it really means that she wasn't good enough; but if she guessed that that is my opinion—"

"Oh, I can imagine, yes!" Bunny put in, softly and swiftly. "And so now she is in the ring, and you, Agnes—do you do something too?"

"I'm being made to, do it, but I feel it's unfair to the public to make me appear until I've rehearsed more. I—I'm supposed to be an acrobat. That's because I was a bit good at gymnastics—"

"Yes, dear, I remember."

"And she's Eldrida, the dancer—tango, and things like that, from the Argentine."

"Well, your stepmother doesn't have to rehearse her turns, I'm sure," Bunny commented. "It's where she came from, didn't she—the Argentine?"

Agnes nodded, and then—in returning dread of an interruption—she tried to say much in the shortest space of time.

"It was the surprise of my life, Bunny—I may call you that, still?—when I saw you in the High Street of this little town, yesterday afternoon. I saw that you recognised me, and I— Oh, I hope it wasn't wrong of me, but I did hope you'd find me! Somehow, I felt you would. You always were so—"

"I was at that other school with you, Agnes; good enough!"

"And now—where are you, Bunny? At some school down here?"

"I've just entered Morcove—got there yesterday, in fact. What a shame it is, Agnes. Life's gone so well with me lately, because my people are well off now, whilst you have come down to this. I don't mean that it's anything to be ashamed of, the circus life; but—"

"It's hateful, I know that," Agnes broke in fiercely. "What goes on in the ring, and what goes on behind the scenes—you don't know the difference there is. You see this?" suddenly snatching up the tawdry frock. "In the ring I suppose it looks fine on me; and yet it's really a rag of a frock, dirty—that's what I hate about it, dirty! Past cleaning, for I've tried and tried."

"Agnes," Bunny faltered, feeling lumpy in the throat herself, now. "But never mind, dear; now that I know, something can be done—"

"About me?" panted the unhappy girl, staring. "You mean, my being got away from her? It can't be done, Bunny. She's told me so, dinned it at me, as if she knew how I've been thinking of—running away. She will have me, to make me bring in money, and so she is always there to rehearse me, and sometimes she hits me. Oh, no, she'll never let me go to anyone else—never."

After listening to such pathetic words as that, what a mockery it seemed, to Bunny, to hear the roars of laughter coming once more from the big tent. Something funny still going on in the ring; and behind the scenes—this!

"So you must go, Bunny, and I—I must just go on getting ready," the heart-broken voice resumed. "I wonder, though; oh, I wonder, Bunny, if you could—"

"If I could do what, Agnes? I'll do it—course I will!" was the eager response. "What then, dear? Money—"

"No, not that—"

"I've not much on me now, Agnes; but I shall be—"

"Bunny, it isn't money I want," the other whispered tensely. "But if—if you could take care of something for me? Could you, if I let you have it now, to mind for me?"

"Of course! Quickly then—what is it, dear?"

Instead of answering, Agnes became finger-tip as she turned aside to the door, to bolt it.

That done, she darted past Bunny to the inner end of the caravan, where she and her stepmother made up sleeping bunks at night.

Down on her knees there, Agnes rummaged out a small box which was corded up.

There were knots that she must untie, and Bunny, standing a little way behind the kneeling girl, found herself becoming infected with a sense of desperate urgency, so that she put herself on the alert for any warning sounds outside the van.

But her straining ears only picked up the general hurly-burly of the circus-ground, with an underlying roar, at one moment, like that of a tide on the beach—more applause for performers in the ring.

The cord bindings fell away from the box, and Agnes threw back its lid. The hand she thrust in found what was wanted instantly; drew it out as quickly—a flat package, done up with brown paper and string.

The poor light, which was only just enabling Bunny to observe big blobs of sealing wax on the paper wrapping, went feebler still of a sudden, and she and Agnes both looked aside to one of the tiny windows, aware of its having been darkened by something coming in front of it.

Then they saw—a face at that window, peering in; a face distorted by its expression of savage rage.

And it was the face of the circus girl's stepmother—Eldrida the Dancer!

CHAPTER 5.

Ordered Off

THE face dropped away from the window, as if Eldrida herself had dropped back to the grass from a perching position on one of the caravan-wheels.

The light came again through that window; and Bunny thought how ghastly it was rendering the face of Agnes now. Livid!

"Come on, then—quick," was Bunny's quick-witted entreaty. "Mind this for you?" She was snatching the package from nerveless hands. "Right! I'm off. But, Agnes—"

"She saw!" that girl whispered, looking

ferrified. "Hark!—there she is, at the door. Oh, you'll never get away!"

"Won't I!" Bunny smiled.

Pulling at the neck-opening of her frock with one hand, with the other she thrust the package down the opening, to let it lie snugly against her own beating heart—safely hidden.

Then, with a calm: "Bye, Agnes—see you again!" she moved to the door, undid its bolts, and instantly found both halves of the door being driven in by Eldrida.

Even then, Bunny kept her head—smiled.

"Hallo, Mrs. Barnard! You remember me, of course—at the same school Agnes used to go to?"

Virago-like, the South American woman took a stamping step that brought her across the threshold of the home-on-wheels. Her eyes blazed upon Bunny, then flashed at her stepdaughter, then came back to Bunny.

"Get out!"

The curt injunction came with a furious stamp and a dramatic gesture.

"Or I thr-r-ow you out!"

"Think so?" Bunny demurred, calmly passing to the ladder-like steps. "You'll be making a mistake if you try."

"You make-a da mistake, not me," the woman panted, passionate rage accentuating her foreign accent. "I not know you!"

"Yes, you do."

"And my daughter—"

"Your stepdaughter; be correct!"

"Pah, it is all da same thing," the dancer stamped. "And what I do, she will do—yeah! I shall not know you any more, and she will not know you! She finish at school, she finish with you—so get out!"

Bunny, being eager to get away—because of the package she had been given to take care of for Agnes—went down the few steps to the grass without another word. As she descended, she was aware of Eldrida turning upon her stepdaughter to torrent abusive words.

There was even the menacing raising of a clenched hand, as if to strike Agnes, and that caused Bunny to run up the steps again.

Then she saw Eldrida lower that threatening hand, whilst Agnes stood cowed, in a corner of the van. Bunny came down to the grass once more, and walked away.

Upset? Well, just a bit! It was so awful to have to think of Agnes living alone with such a stepmother.

But Bunny's nature was all self-reliant optimism. Never any use to admit helplessness! She'd see about all this.

Meantime, she calmly returned to her front seat in the circus, rejoining a batch of schoolmates whose opinion of the show was a slightly derisive one. Not nearly so good as the circus that usually came to Barncombe! Up till now, the disposition

had been to give the various turns a clap, just to encourage them.

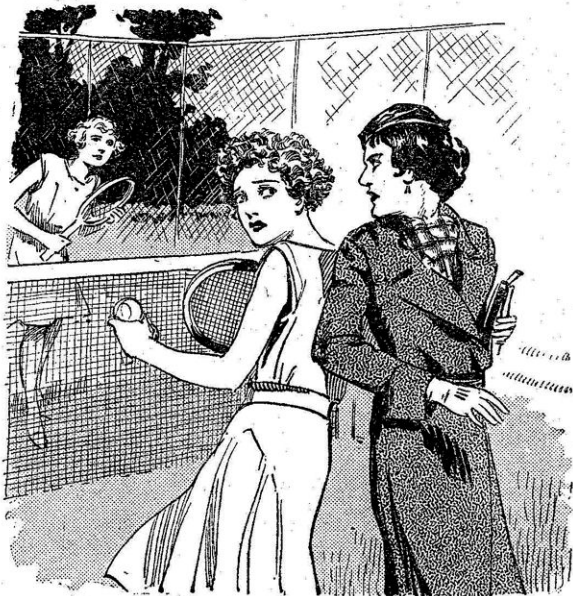
"Eldrida the Dancer—she ought to be good, anyhow," said Polly, who had a programme.

"And who is Lottie, the Live Wire, I wonder?"

Bunny had a sudden fancy that Lottie the Live Wire would prove to be—poor Agnes, struggling through an act that she was quite unfitted to perform.

For the entrance of Eldrida, presently, coloured lights were played upon the ring, and the band did its best to render music of the right South American type.

As soon as the zither-like music started, with



Suddenly Bunny found herself colliding with someone who had rushed on to the court. And it was Eldrida, the dancer. "You give me what Agnes gave you this afternoon!" the woman hissed. "I shan't do anything of the sort," said Bunny calmly.

some panted notes from an accordion to help it out, Polly for one began to dance her feet about as she sat next to Bunny, and to "shimmy" her shoulders. Evidently, Morcové's madcap was now feeling that Eldrida, like the rest of the show so far, would be "not so good" after all.

Nor was she. Others in the audience might be feeling captivated by what they saw; but Morcové soon felt that here was another turn only deserving of complimentary applause.

Eldrida had been given all the benefit of lighting effects, and the band was not playing so badly, yet the best she seemed able to accomplish was a display of vanity.

"Thinks enough of herself, doesn't she?" Polly muttered, losing patience. Conceit was always

reckoned by Morcove to deserve annihilating scorn. "Oh, this is awful."

"There's one thing," Bunny murmured back. "If she were better, she wouldn't be here."

Come down to this, after being given better chances elsewhere—and failing! That was what it meant, Bunny knew, and she could imagine that Eldrida still thought such a lot of herself, simply because she had performed, at one time, on the London halls even.

The failure to make good there—how it must have soured the woman, really! So Bunny thought on to herself, and pictured the dancer in bad-tempered moods of ever-increasing frequency. And Agnes—tied to her.

To the accompaniment of a final mad bleating of accordions and twanging of stringed instruments, Eldrida did her last dance—a crazy affair of wild stamping, most of it, and of throwing herself about.

Then, in changing lights, she whirled away, and Morcove good-naturedly clapped along with the rest of the audience.

Back came the ring-master, cracking his long whip, and some girls came into the ring, on pony-back, providing a really good act at last. Morcove liked that! The whole thing went slick, as if girls and ponies had been at it for years.

At the finish, there was Polly's emphatic: "Jolly good—bravo!" at the top of her voice, to mingle with similar expressions of admiration.

"And so, we can have another sweet all round," Naomer cheered up. "Bekas, I zink zey get better and better as zey go on."

"The best turns, kept to the last—quite likely," nodded one of the other girls. "Who next, now? Oh, Lottie the Live Wire. Oh—look!"

"Bai Jove, geals—" "Bekas, gorjus!" And Naomer, with a chocolate in her cheek, clapped furiously, now that Lottie had shyly appeared in the ring, bowing this way and that.

A couple of coachman-like attendants brought in a long ladder, and other accessories required for Lottie's act.

A trapeze was already hanging some twenty feet from the ground, in the centre. And if anyone in the audience was feeling a sort of sickening pang of anxiety, Bunny was!

Agnes—there was Agnes, one's schoolmate of the old days, dressed to look all a-glitter and fairy-like now. Yet what was all that she wore but the miserable medley of garments she had seen in the caravan; old, tattered, mended and mended again—"dirty beyond cleaning!"

Suddenly the band, that had played Agnes into the ring, crashed into louder music, and then Bunny realised that someone else had grandly strolled into the ring, to partner the girl for her act. A woman—Eldrida again, but changed into a different costume.

Bunny, seized with an inclination to shut her eyes, said: "Don't you be such a fool!" to herself. And from that moment she was not merely the most eager beholder in the entire audience; she was definitely aware of being ready to jump over the low wooden surround, into the ring, to be the first to run to Agnes, if—if anything happened.

Nothing did happen—thank heaven!—in the way of an accident. The worst Bunny had to endure, as she watched, was an agonising knowledge of Agnes being much less proficient than anybody else in the audience could suspect.

Agnes was the girl who had certainly been a clever gymnast at the school where Bunny had been her chum. But Agnes, as "Lottie the Live Wire," was being called upon, now, to do hair-raising things with the ladder, with the trapeze.

Nervous! In fear all the time herself of coming to grief and so upsetting the audience—Bunny could tell! And there was the woman—to the audience, such a sweet-tempered, fond assistant. Eldrida, who, if anything did go wrong, would most certainly "take it out" of Agnes in the privacy of the caravan, by-and-by.

"Oh," Bunny heard Madge Minden exclaiming, under her breath. "I wish she wouldn't! It's—it's too risky!"

"Jolly good," Polly declared heartily. "Clever, that!"

"Bekas, how would you like to do zat, Paula?" "Hownows!" shuddered the timorous one.

A few seconds after that, "Lottie" slid down the pole, to make retiring steps, bowing to right and left. Her turn was over, and the band could not blare loud enough to make any difference to the audience's storm of applause.

"Bravo, bravo!" was the roar that came, along with tremendous clapping. "Bra-vo!" Clap, clap, clap! "Bravo!"

"Bekas, jolly good—wonderful! So where are ze sweets?" inquired Naomer, who believed in putting each interval to its proper use. "Queek, before ze everlant comes on!"

"You know, Bunny," from Polly, sitting next to her, "that woman she had with her was the same one who came on as a dancer, just now. Her mother?"

"Something like that," Bunny agreed with the madcap's interference.

"Well, the girl was a thousand times better than the woman, anyhow! And now I'm just wondering—would the woman be inclined to be jealous of the girl? She looked the sort who might be."

Bunny nodded.

"Just what I am wondering, too!"

CHAPTER 7.

Bunny "In-and-Out"

BUT there; worrying would do no good. And so Bunny, back at Morcove School with Polly and the rest, had no-sooner found a safe hiding-place for the package entrusted to her, than she was ready for a spot of tennis.

Dad had given her the brand-new racket with which she went out to the courts; but Bunny herself had chosen it. She knew all about the best makes, and dad didn't!

Neither dad nor mumsie had even known about Morcove School, when the question arose as to what school she, Bunny should be sent, now that the family was so wealthy. Whereas Bunny herself had always known that Morcove was the school of schools; had seen bits in the papers about it, often!

The worst of parents, that; they never seemed up to the minute. Other girls said the same. So that Bunny, thinking about the sad case of Agnes Barnard on the way to the courts, could not imagine either dad or mumsie being of any use. "They'd be afraid—I know!" smiled Bunny. "Fancy dad trying to tackle that awful woman about her treatment of Agnes!"

Bunny could remember that even the woman's husband had been afraid of her at times. He must, of course, have been mad to have married her. But there it was!

His first wife—the devoted mother of Agnes—had regarded him as a genius. But it was a very different word that the dancer had had for him, shortly after he had allowed his infatuation for her to lead him into the second marriage.

"Game and!" the cry went up, as Bunny reached that court where she hoped to get a game.

"Hallo, Bunny! Will you take on?" Pam Willoughby inquired, ready to continue with fresh opponents.

"I'll do anything," said Bunny. "Doubles?" "Shall we," asked Helen Craig, "take on those two?"

Bunny looked at "those two," over the net; tall Pam was one, serenely efficient, and Betty the other, likely to be hot stuff too.

"I don't mind—yes!" said Bunny, and put on her eye-shade. The evening sunshine was strong. Good to be alive, an evening like this! At Morcove, where you could be no sooner back from a circus-matinee, and tea in town, than you were out to games! Bunny had some such thought as that, as she took her place on the court.

"Oh, good shot!"
A hot one back to Pam, straight away. "In!" and Pam had missed it! "Ha, ha, ha!"

As the game continued, onlookers increased. "I say, do come and see the new girl at tennis," was the advice which, acted upon, caused more and more girls to turn up, often just in time to swell the cry of:

"Shot!" or "Out-side, ha, ha, ha!"—with the laugh against Betty, who should have done better.

Came the change over, to make it fair about the sun; and Bunny, discarding her shade, served. She threw up a ball and leapt, with a held-high racket. "Ooo!"—just over the net and a miss for Betty, left with a "where-did-that-one-go?" grin.

But, next time, Betty was ready for the way Bunny served, with that spring into the air to gain a few inches for a down-driving whack! Betty popped back the ball; and instantly it was returned again, putting Pam to a rush to get it. Pam got it! And now—

"Oh—shot!" A rally, this. See how Bunny had taken that one!

"She's fine, girls!"
"Yes, wather! A cwasher, what?"

And then suddenly the game was dramatically stopped. Bunny, springing to make a lightning return, was aware of a startled outcry. Then she found herself colliding with someone who had intruded upon the court. And it was Eldrida the Dancer!

The woman, with her fierce looks, made such a threatening rush at Bunny, many girls cried out in alarm.

Then they saw that Bunny herself looked quite capable of dealing unaided with this virago. The sharp alarm even gave place to amusement when Bunny smiled a cool "Hallo!"—as if they were old acquaintances.

But the dancer raged out:
"Now, you give me what Agnes gave you this afternoon!"

"I shan't do anything of the sort," said Bunny. "Listen to me," hissed the infuriated woman, striking a clenched fist into the palm of her other hand; "if you do not give me those papers now—"

"But I'm not going to, so there!" And Bunny, as she said it, harped upon the strings of her tennis racket as she might have done during some scrap of friendly talk with a schoolmate.

As calm as that was Bunny! And Morcove, crowding around, thought: "What a nerve!"

"Where are those papers?" demanded the woman wildly.

"Where you can't get at them! It's all right, girls," Bunny smiled at two or three who seemed inclined to intervene. "Now I've told her that, she will go away—have to!"

"I will not go away!" stamped the circus-woman. "I have come for the papers—"

"Now look here," Bunny said flatly. "I'm not to be bullied, see? If you don't like the answer I've given you, go across to the schoolhouse and complain to the headmistress."

"I will not go to your headmistress—"
"Then go to Timbuctoo instead. You can't stay here, making scenes—stopping our tennis. Off this court, please!"

"Bunny, shall I find Miss Merrick?" the Form captain offered.

"Oh, no, Betty, thanks! This person knows she has no right here at all, really!"

"That is a lie!" panted the dancer. "I make-a you pay for this; you, a girl no older than my Agnes—"

"She isn't your Agnes! And neither are those papers yours—"

"But I say they are mine!"
"And I'm sure they are not! They can't be, or Agnes would never have given them to me to take care of. Is there anybody in the world Agnes is in terror of, but you?" was Bunny's final crushing contention. "That's got you, I think?"

"R-r-right!" ground out the woman, with a flinging about movement that scattered the crowd. "I shall know how to get what I want, all the same. Yes, I know!" nodding, whilst a fierce smile bared her teeth. "Agnes will write to you to send back those papers, that is all!"
"Think so?" laughed Bunny. "R-r-right!" she mimicked.

It seemed, then, as if the baffled woman, in a fit of rage, would rush at the girl again, this time striking her.

Dangerous sort! Morcove, if bewildered about much else, had no doubt about that. There ran in her veins, the scholars were certain, the blood of a foreign race which still believed in the pistol in the belt, the dagger in the garter.

"Look out, Bunny!"
"Oh, it's all r-r-right," said she, as coolly as ever. "I am not afraid of her."

"No," the dancer scowled. "But Agnes is—you understand? I have made her! So—bah! What does it matter, this! Ha, ha, ha! All r-r-right, my girl! Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh was a wild one, as the impassioned woman strode away. Some of the girls scattered to let her pass, as they might have scattered before a runaway horse. Bunny was aware of Naomer even shinning up a shade-tree, as if to be out of harm's way; but that was only the dusky one's little joke, and Bunny could chuckle very appreciatively.

"Sorry, girls; better start again, had we?"
"But, Bunny! Do you feel fit to go on playing?"

"Fit? Why ever not?" Betty was blandly answered.

"Who is Agnes?" asked two or three girls, following Bunny about as she raked up tennis-balls.

"Oh, it's a lot to explain now," was the shrugged response. "If I want your help, girls, I'll ask it."

"She's gone, I see," Polly commented, in allusion to the woman; and Bunny nodded a cool:

"Course she has!"

Then the game was resumed, and Morcove's new girl was as good as ever. It was for those who looked on to be in a continued state of uneasiness about "that circus dancer"—for the woman had been recognised by some at least as being Eldrida of the circus. As for Bunny, she seemed not to be giving the woman another thought.

Nor did the Form, when the set ended, get a chance to draw its new girl into talk about it all.

One minute, Bunny was enjoying an orangeade with a few thirsty chums; then she slipped away. Subsequent discovery that she must have gone off on her bicycle caused a minor panic amongst her study mates. It seemed idle to raise the question: "Didn't she know how late it was?" Polly and others were bound to feel that it was a case of knowing—and not caring!

By the time that mild scare was occurring in Study 12, Bunny herself was getting down from her machine at the entrance to the Circus Meadow.

A very important reason had occurred to her for turning up here almost as soon as Eldrida was likely to have got back from Morcove. Leaving the bicycle to take care of itself, Bunny hurried for the living-van which Agnes and her step-mother shared, in its far corner of the field.

The evening performance would soon be starting, and crowds of people were on the ground—a great many more than would be actually drifting into the big tent. Bunny recognised some young folk who had been to the afternoon show and were back again simply to hang about, fascinated by the camp life of "Jennigo's."

Also, she noticed a few kiddies who were getting a free treat by peeping at the circus ponies in the canvas stabling, and watching the giant steam-tractor making the electric light.

The last of the daylight had not yet gone from the meadow, but Jennigo's had switched on everywhere, creating a sensational blaze of lamps.

In the glare Bunny saw the pinched and wistful faces of children who were never to have the treat of going in to see the show—that was certain. And her heart went out to them. Urchins of the town they were—poor kiddies; as if that were their fault!

"Here!" she suddenly called one bunch away from the panting steam-engine.

The sight of this well-dressed girl getting out a purse caused the few ragamuffins and their unkempt sisters to fly to her.

Bunny had reckoned that five-pounds which dad had given her when she left home, yesterday, would last at least a month. Not longer than that, because there was no need to be "mingy." She

now realised that in two days she had got through a couple of pounds—pretty good going! Still—"Look here," she addressed her collection of urchins, "if I pay for you to see the show, will you run home first and get permish? You know what I mean?"

"Yuss, miss, that's orlright!"

The yelled chorus rose above the noise of the steam-engine and dynamo, and was followed by an ecstatic: "Coo!" as Bunny supplied the money.

"Twelve threepenny seats, and a few pence over for sweets," she specified lightly. "Ta-ta, all!"

"Coo! Fanks, miss!"

Bunny, passing on, laughed to herself. Happy kiddies they were now, careering away to fulfil her stipulation that "permish" to go to the circus must be obtained.

Incidentally, it never occurred to her that she had not asked permission to come here this evening. If there had been anybody to remind her about this, she would have said an astonished: "Why? What am I doing? Only seeing about Agnes!"

Suddenly it gave Bunny a bit of a shock to see a policeman coming away from the very caravan for which she was making. He was pocketing a notebook, as if there had been some taking-down of information. But, after the first throb of alarm, Bunny found herself experiencing a just-as sudden hopefulness.

It had flashed upon her that perhaps Eldrida had so "gone" for Agnes, the policeman had been called in! If it were so—fine!

Then, in the deep dusk away from the glaring lamps, Bunny had the burly policeman stalking past, giving her a surprised stare.

"Evening," she said coolly. "Is anything the matter?"

"Only that one of the circus performers has run away, miss," was the gruff response. "Why?"

But Bunny, without saying why, only proclaimed the very keenest interest by means of a gasped:

"What! Run away—who has?"

"A young gel that belongs there," said the policeman, jerking a thumb towards the caravan. "Let me see, how do they call her, in the programme?"

"Not 'Lottie'—"

"Ay, that's it, of course; Lottie the Live Wire! I've just been fetched to the van by her mother

"Stepmother—"

"Well, stepmother then. She got back just now, to find a note left by the gel, saying as how she was sort of fed up and was going to run away, so as not to be found agen. Which is silly of her, of course," added the policeman, "for we shall find her—"

"Oh, no, you won't!"

"What do you mean, miss, we won't?"

Bunny preferred not to answer. She turned to make her way out of the circus meadow as quickly as possible. Recovering her bicycle, she mounted and set off along the homeward road to Morcove, then realised that it was lighting-up time, and hopped down from the saddle.

"No matches—duffer!" she said. "But I had better walk, in any case, for perhaps—perhaps I shall then see something of Agnes; perhaps be able to do something for her!"

Agnes—gone, flown! And jolly good luck to her, for having struck out for herself, like that!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

● Next Tuesday's delightful long complete Morcove School story features Bunny Trevor in a daring escapade. It is by Marjorie Stanton, and is entitled:



BUNNY Keeps Them Guessing