

"MORCOVE FOLLOWS THE CLUES": Fine Holiday Tale
Complete Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

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EVERY TUESDAY



THEIR SUSPECT

A dramatic moment in this week's enthralling complete Morcove holiday story.

SPECIAL SILVER JUBILEE ARTICLE INSIDE

Comedy and Mystery in a Brilliant Long Complete Holiday Story, Featuring the Morcove Chums



Morcove Follows the Clues

CHAPTER I.

Praised by the Press

"I SAY, girls! We're in the news!"

"What!"

"Oh, hooray—gorjus! Bekas—"

"Listen to this!"

And Polly Linton—in term-time, the madcap of Study 12 at Morcove School—heaved for breath before starting to read aloud.

She had come bursting in upon certain of her girl chums, flourishing a mid-week edition of the "Brighthampton News and Visitors' List."

Brighthampton being a seaside town, the local "rag" still followed the old-fashioned practice of publishing a list of people staying for a holiday.

"Daring Enterprise by Scholars," Polly read the first headline; and there were loud cheers from her listeners. "Creates Big Sensation in Brighthampton!"

"Good job! Bekas—"

"Good ad., yes! Ha, ha, ha! But go on, Polly!"

So Polly proceeded:

"Much excitement and not a little amusement has been caused in Brighthampton by the very bold venture made by a party of schoolgirls and school-boys at present using Beach House as their holiday hostel."

"Full stop," murmured Betty Barton, who, as a Form captain at Morcove, had an editorial connection with "The Morcove Magazine."

"These enterprising scholars have, almost at a moment's notice, come to the rescue of a concert party which was threatened with disaster," Polly read on. "The Red Revellers had rented the Beach Theatre for their show, but it appears that one member after another has, in the last few days, dropped out."

"Quitted," Helen Craig supplied what she considered the better word.

"Those who remained in the party saw no hope of carrying on successfully, faced as they were with heavy financial responsibilities. However, the girls and boys at Beach House heard about all this just in time, with the result that Brighthampton is now assured of a most varied entertainment on the beach."

"Is that the best they can say for it—'varied'!" grimaced Bunny Trevor. "Pooh!"

"Bekas, what ze diggings!" shrielled dusky Naomer Nakara; "bekas, how about my native dance! Bekas, ze aujence—"

"Half a mo'!" requested Polly. "The paper goes on to say: 'The first matinee, given with the assistance of the girls and boys, gave vast delight to a huge audience.'"

The listeners, feeling that this was better, bowed to one another.

"A 'Brighthampton News' man was present, and was greatly impressed by the talent and versatility of the scholars. Particularly successful was—" Oh, I won't read that."

BY MARJORIE STANTON

"I will!" Bunny offered, and promptly snatched at the paper: "—Miss Polly Linton, acting with her brother, Master Jack Linton, and others, in a screamingly funny sketch—"

"Hooray! Good old Polly!"

"Hi, what ze diggings, though! Bekas, any mention of me?" clamoured Morcove's royal scholar. "Queek—"

"Not a word," said Bunny sadly.

"Sweindle!"

And Naomer, greatly affronted, stamped out of the room, to the accompaniment of mocking cheers.

As, however, the dusky girl encountered Master Robert Bloor in the front hall of the "hostel," she was immediately consoled. She and "Tubby," as beefy Bobby Bloor had been fondly dubbed by his chums, had kindred tastes—principally for things to eat.

It was now an hour since breakfast, so Naomer and Tubby decided to set off for one of the best cake shops on the front, there to indulge in a mid-morning coffee and pastries.

Meantime, Bunny Trevor carelessly tossed the newspaper aside, having read only a few lines more. She knew her chums well enough to realise that they did not seriously wish to hear their praises read aloud. And the "Brighampton News" certainly was full of praise.

"Yes, well," broke out tall Pam Willoughby.

"Shall we get along to the theatre at once?"

"That's the idea!" nodded Polly. "And thank goodness it's fine!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jovo!" beamed dainty Paula Creel. "Wain is the only thing to dweed now, I gathah?"

"We shall find Jack there, with Jimmy Cherrol and Dave Cardew," Betty remarked blithely. "They were going along to see if they could make more room on the stage for the grand piano."

"Come on, then, girls!"

That was supercharged Polly, as she pranced away, causing most of the others to swarm after her. There might, indeed, have been only Judy Cardew left behind in the room; but Betty turned back for a word with her.

"Anything in that paper, Judy, about the quitters?"

"That's what I am looking to see, Betty."

Judy, a level-headed Morcovian whose young widowed mother was "matron" of the Beach House party, had picked up the "Brighampton News."

"Nothing," she commented at last.

"Just as well, perhaps," murmured Betty, rather gravely. "You know, Judy dear, the more I think about that business of all those girls and fellows dropping out of the concert party, one by one, the less I like it!"

"It does seem—strange, Betty."

"Almost mysterious, if you ask me. The first to go was, we were told, a Mr. Harrison. He cleared out, taking with him some of the funds of the party. Well, he was a no-gooder, that's evident! But the others, Judy."

"Yes, it is hard to understand why they made off. The second to go was Eddie Duncan—with his sister Maisie in the party, whom he left behind. Then Harry Norman cleared out, in just the same way—"

"And he left a sister behind, too. Effie Norman—a charming girl, as we all know: so he should have been a white man, you'd have thought"

Judy nodded.

"Next, and only yesterday morning—Daisy Darrell vanished!"

"And last night there was Effie Norman herself!" was Betty's puzzled rejoinder. "She was No. 5 to drop out—without warning, just like the others!"

"As to Effie," pondered Judy; "she may have gone off because her brother had gone. She may have gone to join him somewhere?"

"I can hardly believe it, Judy. There was no sign of her wanting to go after him. She said over and over again that she hadn't the faintest idea as to his whereabouts, and I'm positive she couldn't have lied to us. So what it all means—well!"

For a few moments thoughtful silence prevailed in this bare room of the hostel where only Betty and Judy had lingered in talk, whilst the other girls made for the open air.

"Five of them—gone, one by one!" Betty stressed at last. "It takes some getting over. Madge's Aunt Ada, who is what we might call a survivor from the original touring company, is staggered—and can you wonder?"

"She says that even Mr. Harrison, who went off with some of the funds, seemed to be a perfect gentleman!"

"Leaving him out of our account, Judy; how could those other fellows be so heartless as to go off, each leaving a sister in the lurch! And Daisy Darrell—she hadn't shown any signs of being fed-up. Neither had Effie Norman."

"Yet they went off, of their own accord—"

"You think they did go of their own accord, Judy?"

"Why, don't you, Betty?"

"I tell you, Judy, I simply don't know what to think now!" was the shrugged answer. "But if they'd each been kidnapped in turn, the disappearance couldn't have been more sudden."

"Kidnapped," smiled Judy. "How on earth could they have been kidnapped, Betty! Why should anyone—"

"Of course not! And yet— Oh, we shall do no good by talking," Betty laughed. "I'll get along after Polly and the rest. You're staying back, I understand, to see after things a bit, here?"

"With mother—yes, Betty."

"Chores! Cooking!"

"Mother wants to do her bit, and she feels that she can't help better—to-day, at any rate—than by seeing about the meals. And I, you know, can be of much more use if I stay around."

"The team spirit," sparkled Betty. "Morcove!"

A minute later she was out of the house. Crossing over to the promenade, she footed it briskly to where, just short of the pier, the Red Revellers had their hired theatre on the beach.

The timber structure was a good deal the worse for having stood unused during the storms of winter. As Madge's Aunt Ada and her companions of the original concert party had taken the place just as it stood, there were many jobs calling for the ingenuity of the schoolboys.

Even as Betty came nigh the seashore theatre, she could hear sounds of stage-carpentry. The shabby curtains were drawn across the stage, so passers-by could see nothing of what was going on—except that Bunny's brother Tom was putting out deck chairs in rows, ready for the next performance.

Down some stone steps went Betty, on to the beach, and then a few clashing strides got her to the equivalent of a stage-door at the back of the ramshackle building.

"Hallo Betty—come and see!"

This hailing cry from some of her chums gave promise of a pleasing surprise. So Betty darted into the theatre, and was instantly on the stage, finding it much larger than when she had last seen it.

"But how perfectly splendid," she cried in delight. "You boys have done wonders, really!"

"And to think, chaps," Jack Linton jestingly spoke aside to his fellow carpenters, Jimmy and Dave, "that we came to Brighton for a rest cure. After you with the hammer, Jimmy. Nails, over! You didn't, by any chance, bring along a little lunch for us, Betty? No!" he inferred, and sighed hard.

Picking up a hammer, he made a great show of knocking in a nail. Bang—bang!

"Go it!" laughed Polly.

"I am," he retorted. Bang—bang! "And now I've hit my thumb—wow!"

"You haven't," Polly cried.

"Would you care if I had?" he scowled theatrically. "You, my sister, and yet what do you care! That I, the best boy in the school, have come down to this. Bussing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can always quit," said Polly. "Either get on or get out, anyhow. I see that Madge has just turned up, and she'll be wanting some piano practice. Morning, Madge! All O.K. at your digs?"

Madge Minden, although a member of the Study 12 "chummy," was not staying with the other girls at Beach House. She was in lodgings with her Aunt Ada, at the other end of the town, where also the rest of the "survivors" from the original company were staying—or had been staying until they vanished!

That musical Madge was delighted by what had been done, to find more room for her beloved piano, the other girls could tell. But it was only for a moment or so that her clever-looking face brightened. Then a worried expression returned.

"No," she said tensely, "we are not all right at the lodgings. I don't know what you will say when I tell you the latest; but—Maisie Duncan has gone."

"Maisie has?" gasped Betty and others. "You mean to say, Madge—suddenly, without warning?"

"Just like the others," Madge sadly nodded. "And now there is only Aunt Ada left!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Scarlet Scarf

"CAN you beat it!"

"Amazing!"

"Yes, bai Jove! Incweddible!"

These and other cries of utter astonishment came from the girls and boys. Then ensued the silence of stupefaction.

They were staggered by this, the latest upset. This, the sixth case of sudden "desertion" by one of the original members of the company—so that now, as Madge had said, only Aunt Ada remained.

"Gosh!" Polly gasped at last. "It's the limit. Why, Maisie Duncan was ever so keen to keep the show going!"

"And hopeful, too," Betty rejoined. "Remember the way she talked, yesterday, after we'd given that successful matinee? Then why—why has she cleared out?"

"I'd like to know," Jack muttered, shaking his head like one grappling with a baffling problem. "For, as I see it, there was simply no reason!"



"Excuse me—is this yours?" Betty asked, displaying her own brooch, which she had dropped. It was a daring ruse, for Betty had felt bound to speak to this woman whom she suspected of knowing something about the missing Red Revellers.

"Except that she may have wanted to go after her brother?" submitted Tess Trelawney.

"The same could be said of Effie Norman," put in Betty. "But we've decided that she showed not the slightest intention—"

"Nor did Maisie," Madge added quickly. "I can answer for that! At the lodgings, last night, she said to aunty and me that she would never dream of deserting, just because her brother had cleared out. As a matter of fact, Maisie hadn't the faintest idea what had become of her brother. She said so; and was she the sort for us to doubt her word?"

"Certainly not!" Betty declared, and others murmured to the same effect. "So there it is; she's gone, and no knowing why!"

"How long has she been gone, Madge?" asked Pam eagerly.

"We were up early this morning, at the lodgings; Aunt Ada and I and Maisie. It was a lovely morning after the wet night, so I slipped down to the beach for a dip. When I got back, Aunt Ada was surprised that I had seen nothing of Maisie, who had left soon after me, saying she was going to meet me coming back from the front. She didn't come in, so at last we had breakfast without her."

"And then?" clamoured several of the listeners. "About ten o'clock a telegram arrived for aunty. It was from Maisie, simply saying: 'Good-bye—"

will send for my things when I have permanent address."

"Well!"

"Because, that's practically the same farewell message as Daisy Darrell sent!"

"They've all more or less acted alike," Polly exploded rather disgustedly. "Without a hint in advance! Oh, all right; I suppose they were fed-up—chucked it in because it wasn't proving the life they'd expected. But, Madge, I'm sorry for your Aunt Ada!"

"Yes, Madge—your poor aunty, after this!"

"I know," Madge said emotionally. "If it were not for all of you, she would be in terrible straits. There could be no entertainments, but she would have to meet all the expenses just the same. And they mount up. Oh, I do think it is too bad of those fellows and girls to have served her like this."

"They haven't swindled her, have they?" Jack suddenly wondered. "Got her to find a lot of money in the first instance, and then—"

"Oh, no!" Madge quickly disposed of that possible explanation. "Even now, Aunt Ada is certain that it was a genuine venture. They clubbed together, and her share was no more than any of theirs."

"Then I don't understand!"

"Neither do I!"

"That telegram," Dave Cardew addressed Madge; "where was it handed in by Maisie Duncan?"

"I've brought it with me, so you can see. Here you are," Madge remarked, unfolding the flimsy paper which she had produced from a pocket. "Handed in at the Central Station, nine-forty."

"Just before she caught some train or other," muttered Helen; and Polly nodded disgustedly. "That's about it!"

Dave, as he took the telegram from Madge, spoke in his usual incisive manner.

"I'll go along with this to the railway station."

"Oh," Betty promptly exclaimed, "I'd like to come with you."

A look was his answer. Dave was a fellow of few words. He had a habit of guessing what you were thinking, without letting you know what his thoughts were. And Betty, soon on the way with him to the Central Station, had to do most of the talking.

"I think it a good idea, Dave, to make an inquiry about the tallywag. You're going to ask what the girl was like who handed it in?"

"I am going to ask what the person was like."

"Oh!"

Betty was belatedly realising that Dave had a shrewd reason for his intention to say "person" instead of "girl," presently.

"These sudden disappearances, Dave. It can't mean simply that because one did it, the others have sort of felt it best to quit?"

"No, nothing in that."

The response, as Dave voiced it, was not in any way curt. Nor was Betty left with the feeling that she had better hold her tongue. She knew him—strong, silent Dave, masculine counterpart of level-headed Judy, his sister.

"You know what I'm beginning to think, Dave?"

"Yes, Betty?"

"Well, then—what?"

"They've none of them cleared out of their own free will."

"And is that very idiotic of me, Dave?"

"It's against all the evidence, you know."

"But, Dave—is it?"

"Mr. Harrison went off with some of the concert party's money. The others, turn by turn, have all sent messages after popping off. That suggests they were simply pleasing themselves in the matter."

"But their characters, Dave! I don't say Mr. Harrison—he must have been a bit of a fraud. But the brothers and sisters? Daisy Darrell—wasn't she perfectly nice? Do you, Dave, honestly believe that girls—and fellows, seemingly as nice as that, would ever do such a thing?"

"Now you're asking."

"Well?"

"Character, one way or another, Betty, isn't evidence."

"Oh, isn't it?"—in great surprise.

"No. How could it be? If it were used as evidence, a man might be found guilty of a crime just because he had a bad character."

"Then you think that, nice as those fellows and girls seemed to be, they—they— Dave, do tell me what you do think!" Betty suddenly implored.

But he shook his head, implying the "I'd rather not!" which was so often the attitude he took up—both him! And yet Betty, like the rest of the Morcove girls, would never really have wished him to be different.

The railway station, when he and she got to it, was not at all thronged. Serving a seaside town which experienced bursts of holiday traffic, it had a special telegraph office as well as a grand Information Bureau.

● THRILLING CIRCUS ROMANCE



HERE is a new story, starring a new character! You will love 'Silver Mist,' the plucky Red Indian girl, who joins Moreno's Circus to achieve a great ambition.

This brilliant new tale, by a favourite author, has all the romance of real circus life, all the appeal of a thrilling mystery, all the drama of unusual happenings in novel surroundings.

This is the story you have all been waiting for. It starts next Tuesday, and in order to make sure of reading the first chapters you must order at once your copy of

The Schoolgirls' Own

Betty and Dave entered the former, and she was close beside him when he spoke through a pigeon-hole to one of the clerks.

"Excuse me, but could you or anyone else say what the person was like who handed in this telegram at nine-forty this morning?"

"Eh, what?" Dave was answered, whilst the flimsy went through the pigeon-hole for inspection.

"Oh, aye! This is one I took. Let me see now. Yes! A lady sent it off, rather a posh lady——"

"Not a young lady?"

"Young? No, just middling! Married, anyhow, for I saw her rings. They were the sort to catch your eye; wonderful rings she had!"

"Well dressed, then?"

"You've said it! But why, my lad?"

"Oh, I just wanted to know whether it was the young lady to whom the telegram refers, who sent it off herself, or whether somebody sent it off for her."

"This was a tall woman," the voice came again through the pigeon-hole, perfectly audible to Betty as well as to Dave. "Sort of Grand Hotel touch about her. Scarlet scarf—I noticed that, too, and thought how smart it looked."

"I see! You didn't see her face, then?"

"No. She just pushed the telegram through to me with the money for it."

"Well, thanks awfully! Much obliged!"

And Dave turned away, meeting Betty's now excited eyes.

"Maisie didn't send the telegram herself, then!" she whispered.

"No. A swell, middle-aged woman, with showy rings and a scarlet scarf," Dave specified all that they had to go upon. "Are scarlet scarves the rage at the seaside this year, Betty? Hope not!"

"Haven't noticed that they are. Of course, there's a great fancy for brighter colours, and at the seaside people do come out in such things!"

Dave, receiving this in silence, walked Betty away from the railway station.

"Now we ought to find Madge's aunt," he said at last, tersely. "I wonder if she will be still at their lodgings or down at the theatre?"

"You go along to the lodgings, Dave; I'll hurry back to the beach."

He approved this suggestion with a nod.

"Dave, I'm terribly glad that we made that inquiry about the telegram," Betty added, on the point of leaving him. "You'll agree; there's evidence now that perhaps Maisie, for one, did not go away of her own free will?"

"It could mean that, yes, Betty."

"Then what about all the others?"

He gave one of his "I get you!" nods, and that was all. Next moment he and Betty were going their different ways, and without him or anyone else to talk to, she could only commune with herself.

"Supposing somebody got hold of Maisie, first thing this morning, so that she could not get away! Then, to prevent her sudden disappearance becoming a mystery, that telegram may have been sent off!"

So Betty was saying to herself, whilst she hastened back to the sea front, and inevitably the uneasy thought recurred to her:

"Then what about the others?"

Casting back her mind to each of those other "desertions," she could not recall a single instance where any hint of such shabby conduct had been given. On the other hand—yes! there had been similar messages of a "Don't worry!" nature.

Very nearly, Betty broke into a run when she had emerged upon the sea front. Such sensational fears had now taken complete possession of her mind, in regard to all the apparent "quitters," she felt that not a moment was to be lost.

Let her chums know at once! Besides, Madge's aunt might be at the theatre on the beach, and she, above all others, needed to be told—at once!

"Shouldn't wonder if Miss Fontayne decides to call in the police," ran Betty's excited mind, as she hurried along the promenade. "Why on earth there should have been a conspiracy to kidnap all those members of the original concert party, I just can't imagine. But——"

And there Betty's self-communings changed, sharply, to one great mental "Goodness!"

Suddenly, amongst the strollers on the promenade, she had noticed a woman wearing a scarlet scarf.

A tall, smartly dressed woman she was, well into the thirties. She was companionless, and at this moment she seemed to be ending her morning stroll on the Parade, for Betty saw her go to the kerb to cross over.

A clever idea seized Betty. She must do more than follow the woman; must get a word with her somehow!

Quickly Morcove's as-ute captain, as she crossed over to catch up with suspect, unfastened a little gold brooch of her own. Then, with a sharp little run along the pavement, she overtook the woman.

"Excuse me, but is this yours?"

A very haughty turning-about was followed by a stare as haughty.

"What did you say?"

"This gold brooch, please—did you drop it?"

"No; a thing like that isn't mine!"

"Oh, then it belongs to someone else," Betty stated the obvious. "Sorry! Lovely morning, isn't it?"

"Not so bad." The woman was going to saunter on, but suddenly she decided to give Betty a closer look.

"Er—are you one of the schoolgirls who is mixed up with that beach concert party?"

"That's right."

"Funny way of spending a holiday, isn't it?"

"Oh, there's plenty of fun, certainly!"

"I should have thought those who have charge of you girls would know better, that's all!"

And then the woman walked on.

"Nasty!" thought Betty.

Never in her young life had she felt a greater dislike of a woman at the first encounter. She dawdled along, keeping her suspect in view on the thronged pavement; but after a couple of hundred yards the shops gave place to the imposing frontage of the Grand Hotel, with terraces to right and left of the great entrance.

Betty saw the woman strike aside to go up the broad steps and so into the hotel. A liveried doorman saluted her.

"Staying there, then? And just as well to know that, too!" Betty said to herself.

But now—she could do no better, she felt, than revert to her intention to rejoin her chums at the beach theatre. Another scamper took her in that direction again, and next minute—such a surprise!

Not only were all the deck chairs set out in front of the stage. Parents with their children were even now finding seats, whilst a crowd was mustering to stand and look on.

And, even if Betty had been in any doubt as to

what this meant, there was a big hand-printed bill pasted in front of the stage, announcing:

THE RED REVELLERS.
Special Morning Performance
for the
KIDDIES!

CHAPTER 3.
Coffee for Two

DOWN the flight of stone steps to the beach rushed Betty, hardly knowing whether to be glad or sorry about what that notice proclaimed.

The decision to give a morning performance must have been suddenly arrived at after her going away with Dave to make that inquiry at the railway station. She would have been in sheer delight, only—

What about certain investigations—amateur detective work—which now had to be undertaken? And that, too, without a moment's delay!

"Hallo, Betty!" she was gaily hailed by Polly and others, at the back way in to the theatre. "See what we are going to do?"

"Yes!"

"Gorjus!" capered Naomer, who had returned to the fold with Tubby, well energised by cakes and coffee. "Bekas, ze more performances we give, ze more money we take!"

"Don't listen to her," Polly advised Betty, with the usual pretended scorn for the dusky one. "As a matter of fact, the idea is to wash out evening performances. Madge's Aunt Ada was here just now—"

"Oh, she was?" Betty exclaimed eagerly. "Where is she now?"

"Gone along to Beach House to have a talk with Mrs. Cardew. It's Miss Fontayne's notion that regular evening performances will take too much out of us—keep us up too late."

"Anyhow," chimed in Bunny, "Tom says it will rain again this evening, and we know what that means. He says storms often come back at the same hour next day, and the glass is none too good."

"I reckon morning performances will answer splendidly," Betty hastened to say. "But, look here, all, Dave and I found out something at the railway station!"

Those who now listened to what Betty had to report comprised chums of hers—girls and boys alike—in various stages of dress and make-up, for the stage. She had no need to add that the fact that Maisie Duncan had not herself sent off the telegram was a very suspicious circumstance.

They all realised what it might mean—not merely in regard to Maisie's "desertion," but as something that gave a new aspect to the other disappearances.

"Gosh, boys, and I'm all dressed up for the show!" Jack ruefully exclaimed.

"So am I—and I!" grimaced others.

"Bother!"

"We can't cancel the performance, that's certain," Betty ruled. "Look here, though; I haven't changed, and you can easily do without me. I'll slip along to the digs and catch Miss Fontayne and Mrs. Cardew there."

"And we'll send Dave after you, when he turns up," said Polly.

"Right-ho!"

Jack, in pierrot dress and with a whitened face, gave a commanding flourish.

"Carry on, Morcove; carry on, Grangemoor!"

And Betty, before she had reached the promenade, in her hasty setting-off for the "digs," heard Madge Minden striking up on the stage piano.

Every seat taken—and such a fine crowd, once again, standing around!

In spite of the urgency of her errand, Betty had to halt for a moment, on the "prom," to look down upon the little theatre and the audience in front of it.

Madge, behind the curtains, was playing the right sort of overture for the "kiddies." She had got them singing away at the various choruses provided by a "switch."

But suddenly all the shrill singing changed to shrieks of laughter. Portly Tubby was being chased across the stage by Jack, in front of the curtains.

It was only a bit of impromptu buffoonery by the two boys—to gain time for the rest of the Revellers, Betty guessed. But how the tiny tots of the audience loved it!

She went on again at a brisk pace, smiling to herself about the nonsense her chums were likely to provide, whilst her mind still busied itself very gravely about the mystery behind all the "desertions."

For a mystery there was, now.

No longer could it be believed that, one after another the original members of the concert party had simply dropped out, because they thought they could do better in other directions.

Even Mr. Harrison, the first to vanish, could now be regarded in a different light. In his case, it had looked as if he must have been a thorough scamp, unscrupulous enough to decamp with some of the funds of the party. But perhaps it had been only by chance that he had the money upon him when he himself was—kidnapped!

As Betty knew, all her chums back there at the theatre were inclined to this view now, and she was soon to hear both Mrs. Cardew and Miss Fontayne expressing a similar belief.

"That woman with the scarlet scarf, Betty dear—you saw her go into the Grand Hotel?" Judy's mother said at the end of a ten-minute talk in the Beach House kitchen. "Is she staying there, and if so, for how long?"

"Yes, we ought to find out. That's why I came along in such a hurry," Betty cried. "Could any of us go to the hotel at once?"

"It's what some of us must do," Mrs. Cardew nodded, whipping off an apron. "Judy darling, you can see after things here?"

"Oh, yes, mumsie!"

"And I can stay with Judy, to lend a hand," Madge's Aunt Ada eagerly offered. "As I belonged to the original Revellers, it would be a mistake, perhaps, for me to go to the hotel."

"Betty and I—that will be best, I'm sure," remarked Mrs. Cardew. "I must just make myself respectable, Betty dear—shan't be a mimte."

A quarter of an hour later the pair of them were sitting down to mid-morning coffees in a spacious lounge that was open to non-residents.

"Jolly place, this, Mrs. Cardew!" sparkled Betty.

Judy's mother, glancing about, seemed to think so, too.

"You and the others are not giving any show this evening," she presently murmured. "So I think I would like to bring you here—to dinner. I see there is a dance to-night."

"It would be lovely," said Betty. "But—supposing there is—er—something more important for us to do?"

Mrs. Cardew smiled, as if to say: "I know what you mean, dear!" Perhaps it would not have been wise of her to make vocal response.

For, at this moment, a very attractive woman, wearing a scarlet scarf, came sauntering across, to drop down into a low wicker chair close to where they were sitting.

CHAPTER 4.

Morcove Dines Out

MORCOVE & CO. had come down to Brighthampton fully prepared to "rough it" at the so-called "hostel."

But this did not mean that they had come away for Easter without nice things to put on for any gala occasion.

Seven o'clock that evening found Mrs. Cardew—herself in a most charming ball-room dress—conducting her charges to the Grand Hotel, for dinner, and some dancing by-and-by. And very daintily were some of the Morcove frocks; extremely pretty did all the girls look as they sauntered along the pavement.

In between two heavy showers they enjoyed walking to the hotel along the front, carrying light wraps that could be put on for the walk home later on. A wet night, and of course, they would return by taxi.

The boys, too—in their "boiled shirts" and dinner jackets—formed a very suitable batch of potential dancing partners for Morcove.

Jack had filled the old house with his usual hollow groanings and complainings about having to dress for the evening; but really he looked as fine a young squire as any of them.

As for Tubby Bloot, somehow he was at his best in a dinner jacket.

There was a portliness about Tubby which rendered him, when dressed for a really "posh" affair, quite impressive. He looked then like a West-End clubman, seen through the wrong end of an opera glass. His rotundity, took the large, starched front of the shirt comfortably; no crumpling where Tubby was concerned.

The Grand Hotel was well filled; but it was going to be all right about a table for so large a party. Mrs. Cardew, before leaving the hotel with Betty, this morning, had interviewed the head-waiter.

That pompous individual was, accordingly, ready to come forward when Mrs. Cardew and her party passed in at the great entrance to the truly vast restaurant.

Bowing low, the head-waiter said a "Good-evening, madam!" and then wheeled round to lead the procession to its allotted table.

It was a good one, in a big window-bay overlooking the Parade. So Morcove voiced an approving:

"Quite nice!"

"Topping!"

"Awfully jolly!"

"And let's hope ze dinner is like ze restourant —gorjus!" said Naomer, eagerly seizing one of the printed menus. "Bekas, whilst we are here, we may as well do ourselves well!"

And very likely the rest of the chums were of similar opinion, even if a good dinner was not the prime motive for this evening out.

If all went as they hoped, there would be a chance later on to improve upon that slight acquaintance with the woman in the scarlet scarf which had started that morning.

She and Mrs. Cardew had got into talk with each other, as holiday-makers are accustomed to do, during that odd half-hour in the lounge before midday.

The lady's name, it had transpired, was Mrs. Sinclair, and she was not certain how long she would be staying at the the Grand.

This latter piece of information had been carelessly supplied, in a bored tone that was possibly intended to make the remark sound all the more plausible.

As a matter of fact, Morcove was quite ready to believe that Mrs. Sinclair would be off at any moment—and for no good reasons either!

Rapidly, whilst Mrs. Cardew and her charges worked through the dinner of many courses, the restaurant filled up. Most of the people who came trailing in were staying in the hotel.



It was a great and pleasant surprise for Betty to see the giant placard, announcing a special performance for the kiddies. "What a topping idea!" she thought. Somehow, Morcove would carry on, despite the mystery!

A string band played, and there was just sufficient chatter at the various tables to render the whole scene as jolly as it was brilliant.

The Morcove table was, of course, all vivacity; but suddenly Bunny Trevor, sitting between Betty and Polly, murmured a thrilled:

"I say, girls! Do you see?"

Mrs. Sinclair had just come in—not alone. With her, as she passed between the tables, was a middle-aged man in faultless dress clothes.

He was handsome, but the girls could no more take to his looks than could they admire Mrs. Sinclair for all her loveliness.

She was certainly the best-gowned woman in the room; and she came to the table for two—close to the Morcove table—with a graceful languor that drew many eyes upon her. But her own eyes were hard, and her habitual expression a shallow, heartless one.

She noticed Mrs. Cardew and the juniors after sitting down, and spoke across, smiling insincerely.

"My husband has come down for a few days."

"Then," Bunny said to herself on the instant, "Sinclair is only an assumed name!"

She was the only one in the party who could jump to that conclusion. Had Madge's aunt been here, it would have been otherwise. Aunt Ada would have known "Mrs. Sinclair's" husband by quite another name—Mr. Danby.

But Aunt Ada had discreetly kept out of the way this evening. Madge had left her at their lodgings, and so there was only Bunny Trevor to recognise "Mr. Sinclair" as that Mr. Danby who had watched yesterday afternoon's matinee at the beach theatre.

Unmistakably it was he! Bunny remembered how she had been standing with Madge's aunt, in the wings, and had heard the lady express sur-

prise at seeing Mr. Danby, whom she knew, in the audience.

Still more surprised had Aunt Ada been when he suddenly went away, without having come round to the back-door of the stage to speak to her. For she had thought he would feel it only fitting to do that.

Hence an excitement on the part of Bunny now which she could not allow herself to manifest to the rest of the dinner-table. It seemed to her that things were getting intensely thrilling.

"Mrs. Sinclair," as the woman with the scarlet scarf, had sent off that telegram this morning in Maisie Duncan's name. And this same "Mrs. Sinclair" had a husband who, only yesterday, had been recognised by Aunt Ada as a certain Mr. Danby.

Nor was that all. Aunt Ada had only known him as Mr. Danby, because she had met him before at a certain village where the Squire had hired the original company of Red Revellers to give their show. Mr. Danby, according to Aunt Ada, was the Squire of Rabbletree's private secretary.

None too soon for Bunny, when all this was revolving in her mind, the withdrawal to one of the lounges took place, for coffee. At last she could let herself go!

"Sinclair isn't her name at all," she declared in a guarded voice to a ring of eager listeners. "She says she is his wife—and his name is Danby."

"What!" breathed Madge, staring. "Not the Mr. Danby whom Aunt Ada—"

"The very same!" Bunny insisted. "I know, because I was with Aunt Ada when she took offence, yesterday afternoon, at his not coming round to speak to her. I got a good look at him at the time."

"Gee, boys," Jack said under his breath. "We are on to something, then, right enough, about all those desertions. Didn't Aunt Ada explain that Mr. Danby was at Rabbletree, where the original Revellers gave a performance?"

"For the benefit of the villagers, at the Squire's expense—yes!" Betty nodded. "We were all told about that, yesterday, by Madge's aunt."

"Then the question is," Polly exclaimed, "have all those disappearances something to do with Rabbletree?"

"It begins to look like it!" muttered several. "Where is Rabbletree? Does anybody know?" wondered Helen Craig.

"I looked it up on the half-inch map," came quietly from Dave; and the rest gazed at him very attentively. Trust him to be able to say something helpful, if he said anything at all!

"About fifty miles from here," he supplemented. "On a branch line from Loberton. You go to Loberton and change."

"Huh!" said Jack. "I'm beginning to feel that I would like to go to Loberton and change!"

"Same here," Polly rejoined grimly. "But one can't be in a concert party on the beach and yet go off for—excursions."

"We'll manage it!" Betty declared softly. "That is, if it seems—"

And there, needing none of the warning looks which others gave her, she changed to talk about the jolly evening they were having at the hotel.

"Mrs. Sinclair" and her husband had come away from the restaurant, to find seats in the lounge. So Morcove was going to "dry up"!

Why, when there were so many chairs as yet untaken, did the lady and gentleman favour a couple within talking distance of Mrs. Cardew

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and her charges? Anything husband and wife might have to say to them all—could it be ascribed to a purely sociable feeling? Definitely not! was the unanimous opinion of the juniors.

Presently they intentionally allowed some idle chatter to lapse. The ruse succeeded. "Mrs. Sinclair" first glanced aside at them, then smiled.

"I was surprised to see you here," she remarked. "I thought you would be giving a performance on the beach!"

"Not this evening," responded Mrs. Cardew gently. "They have given two successful shows to-day. Miss Fontayne and I have to see that these young people don't overtax themselves."

"Miss Fontayne—who is she, then?"

What a pretence it was to ask such a question! How could this woman be unaware of the existence of Madge's aunt, when that lady was certainly known to "Mr. Sinclair"!

"Oh, Miss Fontayne was one of the original members of the concert party, you know,"



answered Mrs. Cardew calmly. "The only one left now."

"Really!"

"Yes, the rest have all—dropped out. What with one thing and another, Miss Fontayne did not feel inclined to join us for dinner this evening."

"I see!"

And "Mrs. Sinclair" let the conversation drop, sitting straight again to take coffee with her husband. As soon as they had drunk it, they got up.

"Are the girls and boys dancing presently? My husband and I will be looking in at the ball-room. But we are first going to take a little stroll along the front, as there is no rain about at present. I'll just get a wrap, Will."

"All my-eye," muttered Jack, as soon as the swagger pair had drifted away. "It must suit their little game, or they wouldn't be quite so sociable towards us."

"The woman wasn't at all pleasant to me this morning, I know that!" Betty grimaced.

Dave stood up.

"I feel like taking a turn along the front——"

"Then I'll come with you!" offered Judy promptly.

"Well, don't get kidnapped, both of you," jested Polly. "What!", as Madge also rose. "Are you another—quitter?"

"I think I ought to get back, to be with aunty at the lodgings," Madge said, with her usual staidness. "It must be dull for her. So, good-night, Mrs. Cardew, and thanks ever so much for having me."

"Good-night, my dear," came very affectionately from Judy's mother, and a kiss was exchanged. "I'm not going to persuade you to

Shadowy hands gripped Madge and before she could struggle, she was dragged into the darkened theatre. "Quiet!" hissed a woman's voice, and

Madge realised that she had been trapped!

remain, for I know you're happiest when considering others. Judy and Dave might go along with you to the lodgings?"

That was exactly what the brother and sister had already made up their minds to do, and so Madge had them for an escort when, five minutes later, she passed down the front steps of the hotel to the pavement.

"Night, Madge—night!"

"Good-night, all!"

For several of her chums had come as far as those front steps with her, to see her off with Judy and Dave.

Some rain-clouds had banked down and the moon was rising over the sea. Across the way, holiday-makers were flocking along the "prom." With all the lights of the sea front coming on in the dusk, it seemed, as gazing Bunny murmured:

"Almost a shame to be indoors!"

They all went back, however, to Mrs. Cardew and the others, and ended up in the ball-room, just as the band played its first number.

People came in, and a very crowded floor made

the whole scene colourful and joyous. For half an hour the girls went without a moment's sitting down.

Once Betty got way to where Mrs. Cardew was in solitary state; but Jack and Tom instantly skated up and threatened to fight each other for the honour.

So Betty, for the sake of peace, gave that dance to Jack and promised Tom the next!

But Bunny, for one, began to feel the room was too hot for her at last.

She slipped away to get a breath of something fresher than that heavy-scented atmosphere. A glimpse of the lovely night that it was, out of doors, caused her to stray on to the canopied terrace which overlooked the lamp-dotted parade.

Jolly time for everybody! That gentle, rhythmic crash of waves along the shingle—it called one across to take a look at the heaving sea in the light of the risen moon.

Bunny slipped away to find the wrap which she had brought along from the "digs," donned it, and then returned to the open air.

CHAPTER 5.

Someone to Talk To

UNHEEDFUL of passers-by who turned to give her an interested glance, Bunny crossed over to the promenade and went down to the beach.

Her dance shoes clashed into the loose shingle below the promenade, where nobody was about. The sudden change from the crowded ball-room to the quietude of the moonlit shore proved strangely satisfying to a schoolgirl who was reckoned to be such a "live wire."

Bunny, at any rate, thought it "awfully jolly" to be sitting down on a seashore bench which she had all to herself, watching the sea's shimmering pathway to the moon.

She was roused out of a dreaming state by the grinding steps of somebody else, coming over the shingle to the bench.

Glancing aside, Bunny saw that the newcomer was only a girl, not much older than herself, in ordinary day attire.

"Nice evening," the girl said, as soon as she had sat down.

"It is—perfect! The rain, I, think, has even helped it to be so lovely."

Bunny was not going to rebuff this stranger, who seemed to be in a dejected state.

"I know what you mean—such a clean air, and all that; so fresh—after London," the girl murmured listlessly. "You, having a grand time, I dare say? Staying at the hotel across the way, are you?"

"Oh, no; but I've been to dinner there, with friends. Are you feeling a bit run down, perhaps?" Bunny good-naturedly asked. "But the sea air will soon set you up!"

"It isn't that," sighed the other girl. "I'm strong enough. But now I'm beginning to wonder what possessed me to come down here. There's nothing doing."

"You mean, in the way of—a job?"

"That's right,"—shifting a little closer to Bunny on the bench. "I'm in the entertainment line, you know—"

"Oh, are you!"

"Yes. And I did hope that I might join up with a concert party, or something like that, now the seaside season is coming on. But the Pier Pavilion lot don't want me. I went to them. And as for the Red Revellers—"

"Be careful what you say about them!" Bunny laughed. "I belong to the Revellers—the new lot!"

"Oh, do you, miss! Just fancy! So, you are one of those schoolgirls who have sort of taken over the show?"

"The idea was," Bunny smiled, "to give the original Revellers a helping hand. We had a special reason for wanting them to keep going; but they've dwindled and dwindled, until now—well! There's only one of the originals left!"

"Just fancy! So will you girls and boys keep on?"

"Can't say, I'm sure! We may carry on until there has been time for Miss Fontayne—the only one who is left of the original lot—to get hold of fresh talent. But—"

"Wish I could get a look-in there!" exclaimed Bunny's listener, in a much brighter tone. "By the way, my name is Askew—Elsie Askew. I wonder, miss, do you think, if I got an interview with Miss Fontayne, there might be something doing?"

"Shouldn't wonder!" Bunny said, glad to be able to make it a hopeful response. "No harm in asking! Look here, I must go in now, or the others will wonder! But if you like, why not call at the beach theatre to-morrow morning?"

"And see Miss Fontayne? Oh, if I might!"

"Nothing can be done about it all to-night, I'm afraid," Bunny added, rising to go away.

"But in the morning—"

"I will, miss, and thanks ever so! Somehow, I felt you were a good sort, directly I came and sat down! But I never imagined that you could be one of those girls that all the town's talking about! Good-night, miss, and thanks once again!"

"Good-night."

"I must be getting back to where I lodge," said Elsie Askew, and next moment Bunny found her going the same way—to the concrete steps leading up to the promenade.

"If only I could get taken on by your Miss Fontayne" came wistfully, as they got to the top of the steps. "I mean to say, you and your chums wouldn't mind, would you?"

"Just as if! 'Night, again, and I hope you have luck."

Bunny had no sooner said that, than she found herself face to face with Judy and Dave, who had evidently returned along the promenade after seeing Madge to the lodgings.

Both had changed into their everyday clothes.

At first, Bunny attributed a very startled look on the part of brother and sister to surprise at finding her out here on the sea front and saying good-night to someone they didn't know. But she was to find that there was more in it than that.

"That girl?" Dave said quickly, after he and Judy had looked closely at Elsie Askew as she sauntered away. "What made you speak to her, Bunny?"

"She spoke to me first, and—well, I felt sorry for her," was the light answer. "Rather funny; she's in the pierrette line—out of a job, too."

"What!" gasped Judy, so that Bunny's brows went up in return.

"Why, what's wrong with that?" brother and sister were blandly asked. "She's not so bad, I'm sure! Anyhow, I felt I must—advise her to call at the beach theatre in the morning, to see if we can put anything in her way."

"But—" Judy gasped afresh, and then turned to Dave "Tell Bunny, Dave!"

"It's like this, Bunny," he clipped. "It's less than half an hour since we saw that girl in talk with 'Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair.'"

Dave never supplied notes of exclamation to anything he said. But his quiet utterance did not diminish Bunny's amazement. She echoed slowly:

"Saw that girl—in talk with 'Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair'? My goodness then! The girl must have been acting for them when she seized the chance to scrape acquaintance with me! And I— Oh, botheration!" Bunny said ruefully. "I invited her to look along in the morning—"

"Let's hope she turns up," Dave said calmly. "We can do with her, by the look of it."

"What on earth does your brother mean now, Judy?"

"First," Dave continued, for Bunny's benefit, "Judy and I want you to know that there is not the slightest doubt. That very girl was in talk with the hotel pair, farther along the front."

"We overtook them whilst going with Madge," nodded Judy. "The three of us went along the prom, as it was such a nice evening. Suddenly we saw 'Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair' in front of us. They appeared to have stopped to talk with someone they had just met—that girl. They didn't see us. Dave was not for letting them see us, in case they should think we were shadowing them. We turned off into a side street, and saw Madge to her door."

Bunny, in her bewildered state, found the chatter-chatter of passers-by too much for her.

"Here, let's get back to the others," she sighed. "And see what they have to say about it all. Oh, won't they want my scalp, when they know that I've asked that girl to call at the beach theatre in the morning! To give her a job in the show—fatal!"

"Think so?" demurred Dave.

"What else could it be—if she has only wanted to get taken on so as to spy, to find out what we think of all the 'desertions'?"

"A spy in the camp is only dangerous when you don't know that he or she is—a spy." As calmly as ever he was letting his shrewd remarks fall. "When you do know—it can be a big bit of luck, Bunny."

"You mean— Oh, I get you!" she panted, halting at the kerb with him and Judy. "Wait a bit; if I cross now, I shall get run over—I'm

so excited. So, Dave, you'd be for taking on this Elsie Askew girl—letting her mix with us? And so, perhaps, through her we would find out—everything!"

Dave nodded.

"You take it coolly, I must say," Bunny reproved him. "When it's such a thrilling idea! How do you feel, Judy? But you're the same! Personally, I feel hotter now than I did in the ball-room. So come on now, and I rather fancy—an ice!"

CHAPTER 6.

By the Light of the Moon

MADGE MINDEN and her Aunt Ada, chatting together in the sitting-room of their modest lodgings, were suddenly interrupted by a tap at the door.

It was honest Mrs. Hudson, the landlady, who had climbed the steep stairs to have word with aunt and niece.

"If you please, I've just taken a message for you on the 'phone.'"

"Oh!"

"They want you both to go round to the beach theatre at once, please."

"What, at this time of night—past ten!" cried Aunt Ada. "Madge dear, how can this be right?"

"Who was it rung up—do you know, Mrs. Hudson?" asked Madge uneasily. "Pit: you didn't hold the line, so that I or aunty could have come down to speak."

"But the young gentleman said I needn't trouble to fetch you down. I was to give the message."

"Young gentleman? Do you mean—"

"Quite a youngster, miss, by the sound of his voice. He said he was Jack Linton—"

"Oh!"

The faces of Aunt Ada and her schoolgirl niece could clear now.

"Of course, Madge dear, now that we know it was Jack—"

"Yes, aunty, it must be all right. But I wonder why we are wanted, all of a sudden? At the hotel—I could have understood their wanting us to go round to them there, for a sort of con-

(Concluded on the next page.)

NEXT WEEK'S STORIES—By Your Editor

In the limited space at my disposal, I must briefly mention next week's special programme of stories, for I know that none of my readers even in the midst of so much excitement in connection with the Silver Jubilee, will want to miss her favourite paper.

Firstly comes Morcove, represented by a really thrilling story, entitled:

"THE 'HIKER' DETECTIVES,"

in which the chums of Morcove and Grangemoor get to grips with the amazing mystery overshadowing their seaside holiday.

Then I must call your special attention to the opening chapters of a wonderful new serial of circus life contributed by ever-popular Muriel Holden, the title of which is: "Silver Mist' of the Circus."

The heroine is a fascinating Red Indian girl, and you will love her from the first moment of meeting her, just as you will love her pet performing bear, Hon-ee, the cutest little chap you have ever encountered.

I am quite sure that the names of Silver Mist and Hon-ee will be on the lips of all schoolgirls before many weeks have passed, so on no account must you miss the opening chapters of this delightful new story.

Further chapters of "The Caravan Wanderers," and fine complete stories of "Kathleen's Quests in Secret" and "Amber the Adventurous" complete a memorable number, which, to avoid disappointment, I would advise you to order now.

With every good wish,

YOUR EDITOR.

ference. There may easily have been a sudden development. But—

"The theatre on the beach is all locked up, isn't it?"

"Has been ever since we left, after this afternoon's performance," Madge nodded. "But Jack or somebody else would have the keys."

"At any rate, as that is the message, Madge, we must go along."

"Oh, rather! I don't see how we could first get them on the 'phone. The theatre isn't connected, and I suppose they are all there."

"Would you like me to stay up until you get back?" good Mrs. Hudson offered, standing ready to withdraw. "I can if you like."

"Oh, no, thanks. We have our own latchkey."

"Then I'll wish you both good-night."

"Good-night, Mrs. Hudson!"

Madge and her aunt were even then putting on outdoor things. Barely had Mrs. Hudson effaced herself than they were passing to the stairs.

From their street door they had only to hurry through one or two side streets, and then they were on the sea front.

Crossing over to the promenade, they hastened along it together.

The moon was now riding high above the night-bound sea, and parade lamps still bejewelled the darkness. But all the coloured lights of the pier had been put out, and only a few courting couples were still sauntering up and down.

Over the way, upper rooms of boarding houses and small hotels showed lighted windows, now that so many holiday folk had turned in after a happy, tiring day.

"Mrs. Cardew, I know, intended all of them to be back at Beach House by this time," Madge murmured when she and her aunt were almost at the beach theatre. "But some of them are down there, right enough, aunty. You can see a light going."

"Yes, dear. And so I wonder what they want us for."

From the fast-emptying parade, they went down

Thrilling developments crowd next Tuesday's brilliant long complete Morcove holiday tale, which is entitled:



The HIKER DETECTIVES

By Marjorie Stanton

to the shingle by way of the concrete steps which were just there. Eagerly they clashed over the loose pebbles to the booth-like building, making their way round to the "stage-door" at the back—that is to say, facing the sea.

It was a closed door when they got to it, and although some tiny windows had let them see that at least one light was switched on, no voices sounded within the building.

Madge had become accustomed to twisting the brass knob of the stage-door to let herself in with the freedom of a member of the party renting the place. But now, vaguely, she felt inclined to hesitate.

The silence, except for the mournful plunge of a wave along the shore, seemed to hint of danger. She was remembering how seldom were the chums together, without keeping up lively conversation.

If all or some of them were inside, why could not one hear a single familiar voice? Was it possible that they had talked themselves out, whilst awaiting her and aunty?

"Madge dear—"

"Yes, Aunt Ada?"

"I—I wouldn't go in—at least—not without—"

"Why, that's just how I feel!" Madge whispered back. "It occurs to me, they knew the way we would come, and so I wonder some of them didn't stroll along—to meet us," she was going to complete the remark, when the door in front of her was suddenly whipped open.

Too late, by a half-second, was Madge's alarmed, retiring step. An arm had reached forth, and a hand had seized her.

Before she had time to cry out, another hand closed over her mouth. Before she had time to see clearly, in the moonlight, who it was had caught her like this, she was being dragged into the building.

"Quiet!" a woman's voice hissed; and Madge found herself being shaken as well as hustled, so that her very brains seemed to rattle. "A sound from you, my girl, and you'll pay for it!"

In mercy's name, what did all this mean! Still prevented from crying out for help, Madge was confusely aware of her aunt being hustled in after her by somebody else. Not a sound from Aunt Ada either!

Then the electric light went out. Only some moonlight, finding its way in at a tiny window or two, illumined the scene.

A scene, as it happened, staged in the very theatre where Madge and all her chums of Morcove and Grangemoor had provided entertainment for Brighthampton's holiday crowds!

She and Aunt Ada—they were on the very stage of that little theatre now; the one as tightly held as the other.

Caught, both of them—kidnapped! What other word was there, for what had been done to them, when each was having her hands tied behind her—instantly!

Nor were Madge and her aunt at the mercy of only those desperate characters who had pounced upon them.

A gang, or at least a part of a gang, must have taken secret possession of the locked-up building, by means of a skeleton key. Several figures loomed around.

In the silvery radiance of the moonlight, Madge saw someone advance, to stand threateningly before her.

"I warn you both," said a fresh voice, "not to make a sound. If you do—"

But the threat was left unfinished!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]