

FIVE MAGNIFICENT STORIES WITHIN

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

Every
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DARE SHE FACE THEM?

See this week's long
complete Morcove
School story—"HER
MASQUERADE AT
MORCOVE."

"PAT—ON TREASURE'S TRAIL": First of a New Series

*The First of an Enthralling New Term Series, Starring All
Your Favourites of Morcove School*



By Marjorie Stanton

CHAPTER I.

Won't It Be Fun!

"HERE, Polly, I want you! I want you at once!"

"One thing at a time, Betty—please!"

And Polly Linton, the madcap of Study 12 at Morcove School, went on dealing with a certain co-tenant of that miscalled Abode of Harmony who rejoiced in the name of Naomer Nakara.

"There!" said Polly, relinquishing a much-rumpled and still cheeky Naomer, after some make-believe severity. "That'll teach you not to throw MY luggage all over the room!"

Polly's luggage—or a good deal of it—was there, along with that of her study mates, because this was reopening day at the famous school and there had not been time yet for a proper disposal of belongings.

"You want me, Betty?"

"She can have you!" sauced Morcove's royal scholar from a certain desert kingdom in North Africa. "Bekas—"

"Kid!" And Polly's inimical look caused Naomer to dodge aside. "You know what I said about this new term! Another word from you; another sound—"

"Oh, come along!" laughed Betty Barton, impatient for Polly's attention. "Just had

some great news, Polly! But I'll tell you as we go along to the station."

"The where! Then I know," said the madcap promptly. "A new girl, and you've got to meet her—"

"Wrong!" And Betty laughed again. She, the captain of the Form, was in a great state of elation. "I want to get hold of Ethel Courtway—"

"But I heard someone say just now, Betty, that Ethel isn't here yet?"

"That, Polly, is why I'm off to the station!"

"Oh, I get you now!"

"She's bound to come in by the next train," was the Form captain's confident belief, whilst stepping briskly with Polly up the long corridor of studies. "And so we can get a talk with her on the way back. Once she is in school, Polly—"

"Oh, you'll not get near her then," the madcap nodded. "Morcove's head girl—and all behind the rest of us in getting back to-day. I do wonder at Ethel!" jested Polly;

"Now if I were head girl—"

"How would you like to be?" chuckled Betty.

"Even less than I'd like to be Form captain," was the grimly spoken answer. "Much too much to do for my liking."

"Ethel, as head girl, is going

**She Came to Morcove
in Another's Name—
and None Guessed
Her Guilt**

to be frightfully busy this term, Polly—from what I've just been told by the Head. So am I. So, for that matter, are you!"

"I am—I?"

"And all the rest of the Form!"

"What on earth do you mean, Betty?" Polly asked. "This is the summer term, I hope they are remembering!"

"You'll get your tennis and cricket, right enough," the captain hastened to relieve the madcap's pretended dismay. "And on top of all that—oh, Polly, it's going to be grand for us! It's going to be—fun!"

"What is?"—eagerly.

But Betty's joyous explanation had to be deferred for a minute or two. On the way downstairs there were far too many encounters with Form-mates—many of them boon companions of Betty and Polly—with whom remarks had to be exchanged with all the vivacity of "first day back."

It was the same out-of-doors, on the way down the gravelled drive that ran between the two playing fields. Girls everywhere! And for Betty and Polly to be glimpsed, meant many a scampering up for a bit of chatter.

So the captain and her best-of-chums, when at last they were clear of the school gateway, had none too much time in hand for the mile walk to Morecove Road railway station.

"Now I can go into things a bit, Polly," was Betty's gratified outburst as they marched together. "Next month, the town is to have a very big day of its own. Barncombe is celebrating its charter, granted exactly a thousand years ago, and, of course, they want Morecove to do its bit. Lord and Lady Lundy are lending Barncombe Castle."

"But," Polly exploded, "how simply thrilling, Betty! How perfectly ripping! Sort of a pageant—is that it?"

A nod from Betty, and the madcap's bonny face expressed the ecstasy due to thoughts of dressing-up, play-acting!

"Yes, the ceremony will, in a way, form part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations."

"Whoopée?" exclaimed Polly. "That is! And no wonder you said—an exciting time for us!"

"I think I said—more of a busy time?" Betty laughingly corrected. "Oh, but it will be exciting, of course! Miss Somerfield has been saying, as captain, I must work in touch with Ethel Courtway. The idea is to let Ethel take charge generally; I won't say 'boss the whole show,' for you can't imagine Ethel being bossy—"

"Ethel's a ripper; we all know that," Polly gaily commented. "And I see exactly how it will be worked, Betty. You'll be answerable to her, but really she is always so sporting, so easy to get on with, not the slightest difficulty there!"

Betty shook her head.

"No. I'll just have to see her now and then, that's all. But I do want to see her when she gets in by this train, for a first talk," Betty rattled on. "She, of course, doesn't know yet. Well, she'll hire a car to the school, and we can ride with her—she won't mind that. And so we can get a useful chat before she gets indoors, to have so many other things to attend to."

Polly nodded, stepping along more jauntily than ever.

"Pity Ethel is arriving late, with this big affair on hand," Betty resumed. "For, mind you, Polly, although it's not until next month, there's not an hour to lose!"

"Gosh, no! Thing to do, get some idea bang

away as to what our part—the Form's part!—is to be."

"Look here, Polly, I've been thinking; as the town's big day deals with the start of Barncombe, so to speak, as a town, how about our Form doing something that deals with the founding of Morecove School?"

Polly was all delight again.

"But that's the very thing, Betty! We could do a scene—"

"You mean, Polly, you could! Start with yourself—you're the Form's playwright!"

"I'm what? But I'll knock up something—course I will," promised the madcap, with youthful contempt for the pitfalls of authorship. "That can be done in next to no time!"

"Yes, it's the rehearsals that come afterwards which run away with the days and weeks," Betty grimaced. "We know something about that, don't we? So, then, shall I put that idea to Ethel—get her to O.K. it bang away, as soon as she turns up?"

"You do that, Betty, and we'll be one up on any of the other Forms." This was an aspect of the matter which obviously afforded Polly tremendous delight, fully shared by Betty.

Nothing, indeed, was likely to give their Form,—THE Form, in their estimation—greater enthusiasm for the project, at the very start, than to know that that start had been gained over other Forms. Particularly the Fifth!

There was a rivalry between the Forms, as healthy and friendly as it was traditional. That the Fifth could ever hope to excel THE Form, over which Betty had the captaincy, was almost unthinkable—to Betty & Co., at any rate.

Betty's Form was the Form rich in talent. Many a school concert had evidenced this. Madge Minden, the best pianist in the whole school! Tess Trelawney, the born artist—a marvel at scene painting! Tall Pam Willoughby, whose home was stately Swanlake—a genius for devising stage costumes! And last, but by no means least of all—Polly Linton, combining authorship with a genius for taking funny parts in her own plays!

The little wayside railway station had been very busy since midday, owing to the return of scores of girls by train. But it was in a tranquil state when Betty and Polly got to it, a few minutes later.

Two or three taxis were on hand, awaiting the arrival of the train now due. If no fares were then picked up, the taxis would be off to Barncombe town, not to come back again. There was not another train until after six, and then it would be only a "local" from the town, unlikely to have any "through" passengers for the school.

"Wonder where Ethel has been spending the hols?" Betty murmured, sauntering to and fro with Polly on an otherwise lifeless platform.

"Her people are abroad, we know. I have an idea that she was going to friends in North Wales; and very likely that is why she has not got in by the usual train. Difficult connections—"

"But here's the train!" Polly gaily interrupted, looking towards an out-of-date locomotive that was fussily drawing only four equally ancient carriages. "All change!" she anticipated the porter's droning cry.

Quietly, except for a lively sizzling of the engine's leaky pipes, the train came to a standstill at the platform, and instantly the door of a first-class compartment flew open.

Betty and Polly flew towards it; then as sud-

denly they checked—even took a few retiring steps.

"The Denver sisters," muttered Polly, with a black look. "Fay and Edna."

"Yes." And Betty's face fell.

When they had joyfully expected to see Morcove's adored head girl alight from that compartment—since no other carriage door had swung open—it was a bit of a blow to realise that, instead of Ethel, two of the Form's most disliked girls were about to jump out.

First came Fay, the elder of the two sisters, casting away a half-smoked "gasper" with studied publicity. She was instantly joined on the platform by Edna, whose showing-off disposition manifested itself in a loud comment:

"Vile train! And this vile place again, Fay! Oh, but honour!" Fay next moment sniggered, taking notice of Betty and Polly. "The cap, to meet us!"

It was like good-humoured Betty to approach the objectionable pair, after all; but Polly, her mouth down at the corners, kept away.

"Hallo, you two," the captain said, just to see if a cordial start could not be made after the holidays. "Had a nice time?"

"We've had a foul journey, we know that," grumbled Fay. "Here, porter—hurry up; we want our tea! Get all the luggage out of the van—"

"And there are things on the hatracks," Edna loftily remarked. She and Fay had not attempted to handle anything themselves. "Much too grand! Morcove—dead-and-alive, as usual; rotten!" was added fiercely.

Betty went back to Polly, who was already going off the platform.

"Sickener, this, Polly!"

"Yes. But where is Ethel, then? Isn't she coming to-day?"

"Oh, must be! Otherwise she would have let them know at the school. Those Denver sisters, Polly; same as ever!"

The madcap's frowning eyes said:

"Don't talk about them!"

She had seen how Betty's well-intentioned greeting had been rebuffed. Now the high-and-mighty pair were behaving most uncivilly to the taxi-driver whom they were hiring.

"And what do we do now?" Betty ruefully smiled. "They won't want to give us a lift!"

"Would we wish for one—from them?" said Polly, far more outright in her dislike of the sisters. "Here, let's get a taxi for ourselves, Betty. We've done enough walking."

"I think so, too!"

But it was not simply for the sake of saving their legs that they taxi'd back to the school. Betty and Polly were all eagerness to join their chums in a rush to the school tables for tea.

Always, on reopening day, girls swarmed to the dining-room for tea. Then, for the rest of the term, it was a case of tea in the various studies, every afternoon.

Such a general sitting-down on the first day of a new term was considered to symbolise that all-round friendliness which Morcove encouraged.

The team spirit! It was at its best in Betty's Form, over whom presided youthful Miss Merrick, by far the most popular mistress in the school. Leave out of account Fay and Edna, and you had a small host of girls whose zeal was for the welfare of the Form.

Hence the wild enthusiasm over what the captain was soon telling them, about a promised share in all the excitement and fun of Barncombe's "Great Day."

Up from tea, the Form flocked away talking about that and nothing else.

Many a bit of unpacking was deferred; many an appointment with matron was forgotten.

Either sitting about in luggage-encumbered studies, or sauntering in twos and threes over the games-fields, girls gossiped joyously.

"We'll show the rest of the school—rather! We'll show those Fifthers!"

As for Betty, if she came down once from the Form quarters, to inquire if Ethel had yet turned up or had sent a telegram, she must have come down a dozen times between half-past four and six-thirty.

The Form was as impatient as all this to "get going," and nothing could be decided until there had been a talk with the head girl.



A compartment door was flung open and Betty and Polly found themselves face to face with Fay and Edna Denver. But of Ethel Courtney, strange to say, there was no sign.

Where was she, then? Why, just because there was this special and urgent need of her, must they be kept waiting until she had come in by the six-seventeen, and had had time to report to the headmistress and see matron, and do lots of things before being able to spare the "cap" a minute?

But it was to be worse than that even for the Form, whose impatience was to be gauged by the fuming state of Study 12.

Back came Betty to that study, a little before seven, to say glumly:

"Coming to-morrow, I suppose."

"Wha-a-at?" yelled the study disgustedly.

"She wasn't on the six-seventeen, and Miss Somerfield has given her up for the day. Yet there's been no telegram or message of any sort."

"How strange!"

"Yes, hai Jove—wather wemawkable, what?" drawled Paula Creel, putting away a pocket-comb and mirror. "I twust nothing sewious has occurred to Ethel."

"Oh, just as if," Polly shrugged. "She's old enough to take care of herself, surely! But what it does mean—delay!"

"Yes, swindle!" shrilled Naomer. "Bekas, what ze diggings, I might have been helping Polly, by now, to write ze jolly old play or whatever eet is going to be!"

"You help me!" the madcap was glowering upon the imp, amidst a burst of laughter, when the trim figure of Parlourmaid Ellen suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"Please, miss, the headmistress said I was to show you this."

"Oh!"

A telegram—"from Ethel, Betty?" clamoured the others, as the flimsy changed hands. "Is it—?"

"Yes," nodded the captain, scanning the pencilled lines. "And she says— But read for yourselves."

And next moment mumbblings of renewed discontent were audible, due to the disappointing message.

Handed in at Shrewston, six-ten. Delayed. Coming on in the morning.

ETHEL COURTWAY.

CHAPTER 2.

"Name Unknown"

A GIRL, lying in bed in a fine house on the outskirts of Shrewston, opened her eyes and beheld a room that was strange to her.

But no wondering exclamation: "Why, what? Where am I?" came from her parted lips. Only a wrinkling of her fair forehead suggested that that might be the puzzled state of her mind. This must have been the first coming-round after some great shock which had taken serious effect upon all her senses.

Very faintly, as if from weakness, she sighed to herself—then let her eyes close again.

Nor did she make the slightest movement, but failed to give even a fresh quiver of her eyelids, when someone came in, treading very softly.

An elderly lady it was who came to the bedside, obviously in great concern for the sufferer.

The windows of the room were open, letting in a gentle, summer-time breeze which had picked up all the fragrance of a sunny evening in the garden; the scent of the mown lawns and of all the flowers in their cared-for beds.

But the blinds had been drawn down to render the room both cool and dim, and there on the

bed, by a light as dim as this, the lady saw the girl lying mute and still.

"You poor dear," murmured the lady, looking inclined to cry. "What a cruel thing it is—"

The pitying words awakened no response from the stricken girl. An awful stillness was ended by a sound coming up from the lovely garden; the smooth purr! of a first-rate mowing-machine, going over one of the emerald lawns.

"Ah, but I must stop that," was the lady's immediate decision. "I must tell Hawker; never mind the grass at present. There mustn't be a sound."

As she glided away to the door, to give the order that would ensure complete silence, she glanced back to the bed, and something in that white, upturned face arrested her.

She turned back to gaze down at it afresh. "Awfully like Agatha, in the looks! But I imagine—a far better disposition, from what I have found out about Agatha."

Then this elderly lady, whose own refined features were in accord with her gentle, compassionate nature, passed from the room. With a slight start of surprise, she found the "Agatha" of whom she had been speaking, just then, hovering above on the landing.

"What is it, Agatha?"

"N-n-nothing, Miss Rosely!"

"You look very jumpy."

"I'm sure I'm not," came from Agatha Drew, with a shrug. "Only—wondering about that girl."

"We may well do that, of course, Agatha. It is a mystery who she is. Fancy our not having been able to find out anything about her, since she was brought in. You would have expected her to have a handbag, or something in her pockets, to help identification. But I thought you seemed to be—frightened?"

"Nothing of the sort, Miss Rosely; why should I be?" the gentle voice was answered sullenly. "Er—is there any change in her?"

"Not that I can tell. But the doctor will be back any minute now. He is bringing a nurse. I won't have the poor girl taken to hospital. Our hospital is crowded out, I know, and here I am with this home of mine and all my means. I regard it as a duty, Agatha."

There must have been a bad streak in Agatha Drew's nature, that she could treat this tender-hearted remark with a faint smile.

"You won't have me, though, Miss Rosely."

"No, well—that is one of the disappointments in life that might embitter one, Agatha, but I refuse to let them do so. I know now that kindness has been thrown away upon you. That will never deter me from showing kindness to others. But go down, now, please, and tell Hawker in the garden to stop his mowing-machine."

Agatha Drew received this request with the half-impudent air of an employee who is thinking: "Shan't have to take orders from you much longer, anyhow!"

She went downstairs and out to the spacious garden, catching Hawker when he was doing another run across a wide lawn with the machine.

"Here, you've got to stop that, Hawker," Agatha said curtly. "Too much row."

"I'm sorry, miss. I hope the mistress isn't—"

"Oh, YOU won't be getting the sack!" Agatha laughed mirthlessly.

Honest Hawker looked at her reprovingly; but it was not for him, he felt, to say what he thought of the recent "sacking" of this eighteen-year-old girl who, had she proved worthy, might have gone

on for many a day as the paid companion of wealthy Miss Rosely.

"I wish you'd tell me, miss, how the young lady is now?"

"Bad," was the pessimistic opinion, delivered with scant feeling. "My belief, it's more serious than they imagine. Or she wouldn't be in that state—just as if there were concussion. Her mind was a blank, when she did come round for a minute or two, a while ago."

"Aye, but there was no wound to 't' head, miss, that I could see, when you fetched me to her, just outside on the road."

"No open wound, but that's not everything. She must have been rolled along by the car that knocked her down—"

"I wish I knew its number!" Hawker said fiercely. "Coming at such a lick round that corner of ours, out there—as they're always a-doing on! Miss—excuse me—"
Agatha, haughtily sauntering away, looked round.

"Well?"—distantly.

"Don't you know who she is, yet?"

"No."

"Well, now, that's a rum go, that is!"

Hawker, rather than make a noise by trundling the lawn-cutter to the tool-shed, picked up the machine to carry it there, whilst Agatha Drew returned to the house.

Ascending a broad staircase hung with old family portraits, she sought the privacy of her own room.

A beautiful room it was, and she might have continued to enjoy it, as she might have continued to enjoy all the refinement and luxury of the wealthy home, only she had not behaved herself. There had been a mistress to serve whose right-mindedness Agatha could not live up to.

She turned the key in the door. Why? And why, again, was there such a guilty nervousness in Agatha's pulling open a top drawer of her dressing-table, to take out something which had lain hidden under odds and ends?

A girl's handbag!

She opened it and began to examine the contents—not for the first time, apparently, for some of the objects it contained she could now ignore. But there was some money, in currency notes, and there was a railway ticket—or rather, a written voucher for a through journey.

The writing, in ink, on the voucher, said:

"Behathla to MORCOVE, via Shrewston and Bristol—"

"Behathla—some place in Wales, I suppose," Agatha said under her breath to herself. "Some out-of-the-way place—must be. *All the better!*"

She meant these words in relation to herself. Nothing was to the good, ever, in the opinion of Agatha Drew, unless it served HER purpose.

And what a daring purpose was hers, at this time. Already she was committed to it; had burnt her boats. Had it been otherwise, no telegram would have been sent off by her, little more than an hour ago.

"*Delayed—coming on in the morning.—ETHEL COURTWAY.*"

So the telegram had said, which this girl and not Ethel Courtway had handed in at Shrewston post office, at six-ten this evening. But now—

Why wait until the morning?

That was the question which Agatha Drew had ample reason for pondering, at this moment. At

any rate, get away from Shrewston—from this house—to-night! There was every reason for doing so, none for staying on—except that the notice to leave had still a few days to run.

From Ethel Courtway's handbag, Agatha had fished out two or three cloak-room tickets, relating to luggage handed in at Shrewston Central Station. Not for the first time, she nodded understandingly.

Yes, the theory she had formed, in regard to the victim of the accident outside Miss Rosely's house, a little after ten this morning, still held good.

A well-grown schoolgirl arrives at Shrewston Central, with an hour or more to wait before going on again. She deposits her luggage and receives cloak-room tickets for the various articles, and then goes for a ramble round the town.

Shrewston is a picturesque, historic City; there is much for a girl to see. The ancient castle is the attraction which brings her to that outlying part of the town where Miss Rosely has her lovely home.

Suddenly, the sauntering girl is struck down by a car, which fails to stop after the accident. She is found by somebody, half a minute later, who is just returning to Miss Rosely's home.

Once again, all the agitating happenings of that fateful half-hour this morning repeated themselves in the mind of Agatha Drew.

It was as if memory had filmed everything at the time and were now projecting the motion picture upon the walls of her brain.

She saw herself coming upon the lifeless-looking figure on the quiet road—just at the corner. She saw herself suddenly checking in the instinctive rushing away to get aid, because the victim's handbag was lying beside her on the tarred road.

No handbag there when at last Agatha Drew had fetched Hawker, the gardener out to the road!

"I'm under notice—don't know what's going to become of me now. I could do with—*money!*"

So, at first, that had been this unprincipled girl's first intention—merely to purloin the bag, because of the money it held. Easy to say afterwards that she had seen no bag on the road.

But the state of the victim, when carried into the house, had been such as to keep her from regaining consciousness.

A doctor, hastily summoned by telephone, had diagnosed concussion. A very serious, complicated case; a pure toss-up, he had seemed to think, whether the poor girl would live or die. Could her parents or any other relatives be fetched?

No! With a cunning smile, Agatha recalled the utter dismay of those who had found it impossible to discover who the victim might be.

There was nothing upon her, at the time of the accident, affording the slightest clue—so the doctor had been informed. And Agatha herself, with purloined handbag even then stowed away in her own dressing-table upstairs, had said nothing.

To retain the bag for the sake of the money alone—that had still been her only idea, during the first few hours after the accident. But, as the day wore on, more than one duty put upon her, by Miss Rosely, had taken Agatha Drew to the half-darkened room where the victim lay.

Whether it had been at the first or second visit, her agitated mind could not now clearly decide, but suddenly she had been struck by the injured girl's likeness to herself.

After that, she had never gone to the room without being more and more impressed by the extraordinary resemblance of looks. And suddenly an

inward voice had seemed to whisper the suggestion:

"Supposing she never recovers!"

An educated girl—"And so am I!" Then: "A girl who is my very double, in looks—and I've got her handbag!"

From this, how swiftly there had been a leap of the mind to more alluring thoughts:

"Her luggage is at the station, and I can claim it. They don't know who she is, and perhaps the only people to miss her will be those at her school. And here am I, got to shift for myself in a few days' time. Why shouldn't I become—Ethel Courtway!"

The "film" which memory had made of this fateful day in the life of Agatha Drew went on projecting itself before her mind's eye. She saw herself suddenly hurrying away to a post office, to send off a telegram.

"Why not? Any rate, if I get found out after a while—I'll have had my fling! But I know, by letters in her handbag, I stand a chance—"

Suddenly the bed-room door was tapped softly.

"Miss Rosely wants you, miss."

"Oh, all right!"

Doubtless the maid who had been sent upstairs with the message was not surprised at Agatha's failure to come from the room at once. Ever since she was put under notice, Agatha had been in a flouting mood.

But there was guilty nervousness, now, as well as an inclination to be impudent, to keep Agatha hanging about in her bed-room. She stood in front of her dressing-table mirror—after putting away the stolen handbag—trying to rid her face of its "jumpy" expression.

At last she went downstairs, to find Miss Rosely alone in the lovely drawing-room.

"Well, Agatha, this is a very, very serious business," the doctor says. Far more serious than he at first thought. But he has found me a nurse

"Oh, that's good!"

"Yes, and between us all, let us hope—"

"But don't count upon me, Miss Rosely!"

"Agatha!"

"I've made up my mind to leave—"

"How do you mean, Agatha? Before your time?"

"Yes—this evening," with a growing impudence dictated by the rashness of her intention.

"Now!"

Miss Rosely got up, dignified, calmly scornful.

"You will not see your time out, Agatha Drew, although it means leaving me when I am placed like this?"

"That's right."

"And you are not ashamed?"

"No, why should I be? You needn't have saddled yourself with the girl. She could have been taken to hospital."

"I have said, Agatha—"

"Oh, all right. And I've said that I don't feel like staying on, just to be fagged about more than ever because of your silly fancy for turning the place into a hospital."

"Girl, you have grieved me enough; say no more, but since you want to go—GO!" exclaimed Miss Rosely, pointing to the door. "But you will please leave word where you can be got at, in case—"

"Oh, I'm not going to leave any address. I shan't be troubling you for a reference, so why should you ever—"

"The police, Agatha, may require you as a witness. If that poor girl dies—"

"I've my living to get," Agatha flared out, turning away to the door. "It's all very well for you, with all your money, to talk like that. But I—I tell you, I'm going!"

And in less than an hour she was out of that house, and out of the town itself—"Ethel Courtway," due to turn up at Morcove School tomorrow!

CHAPTER 3.

"She's Here!"

"It is half-past three, girls. So—pens down."

"Loud cheers!" whispered madcap Polly Linton, casting down her own pen and at the same time slapping shut a class-room primer.

"Seest!" to attract the attention of nearby Betty.

"You won't wait until after tea, will you, Betty?"

"Polly Linton, you are talking!"

Most indignantly Polly looked towards her mildly reproving Form-mistress. To call that talking—the idea!

"Books away, girls," Miss Merrick next commanded, with an even greater mildness now that classes were over for the day. "And when I say dismiss—can we have a little less noise than was the case this morning? Thank you! Dismiss—Naomer, go back!"

"What ze diggings, bekas—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sweundle," mumbled the dusky one, realising that she was not to be first out of the class-room after all, but must start, so to speak, at scratch. By a very menacing look, however, she warned Paula Creel, for one, not to get in her way when the race should come off.

"Quietly, now—and remember, girls, prep must not be left until the morning. Dismiss!"

The Form-mistress, fond of her charges as she was, felt quite pleased with the rapid exodus which took place. Seldom had they gone out with so little commotion.

True, an all the greater hubbub seemed to be starting, now that the girls were past the doorway. But it was Miss Merrick's habit to draw a sharp distinction between disorder in the class-room and disturbances elsewhere.

Besides, she knew that the last hour in school, this afternoon, had been a trying one for the Form. The head girl was back—had arrived in a taxi from the station at half-past two, to the great disturbance of mind of all the juniors. There had been, first, a good deal of peeping out of window to put down, and then a great amount of excitable whispering.

Free at last, the Form mobbed around its captain in the front hall, instead of being off out to games instantly. Betty, without the slightest intention of being dilatory, found herself being urged on by more than a score of schoolmates.

"Get after her now, Betty!"

"Yes, Betty, go on!"

"Bekas—"

"She's had an hour, to get settled in, Betty! And so—"

"Oh, anyway, she won't mind your looking her up, Betty! You know—"

"Such a sport, Ethel is!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! A weal wipper, what?"

"So, Betty—look sharp; hurry up—"

"Yes, queek, queek!"

"I'm going," Betty laughingly attempted to quell all the clamour. "So you needn't make all this row, girls. I'll find you on the field, presently—"

"But, Betty—"

"Here, buzz off," she good-humouredly requested, finding half the Form starting to swarm after her. "Polly—Pam—take 'em out to the field, do!"

"Come on, then, all!" cried the madcap, whipping about to head a prancing dash for the open air. "Hooray! Somebody bowl for me!"

Cricket was in high favour during the summer term at Morcove, and there were batting nets in one or two corners of the games field. Polly's boisterous cry hinted that she did not expect to have much time for batting practice after to-day. The "O.K." from Ethel Courtway—and that was likely to be obtained within the next ten minutes—and then, what a lot there would be to do!

All the seniors' studies were on the first floor of the vast schoolhouse, and Ethel Courtway, as head girl, deservedly occupied one of the very

"Well, Ethel, if you don't mind, I would like to have just a word with you about the Barncombe Festival business? Of course, you've seen Miss Somerfield, and she must have told you—"

"Oh, yes! Yes, she did say! Er— If you could come back later, though—"

"But can't you make it just a minute now, Ethel?" pleaded Betty, thinking of the Form's feverish desire to go ahead. "The girls are frightfully keen, and we've decided what we'd like to do. All we need is to get you to—"

"Yes, I know, but— H'm!" the elder girl coughed. "My getting my feet wet in the hols— up in Wales, you know—must have affected my voice. It hasn't been the same ever since."

"Why, Ethel, I thought it sounded different," Betty exclaimed, and advanced a step or two out of concern; but the "senior" moved round to the other side of the table. "A chill?"



"From Ethel, Betty?" clamoured the chums, as the parlourmaid handed the telegram to the captain. "Tell us—what does she say?" All were as eager as Betty to know why the Head Girl had not yet returned to Morcove.

best. It even had a mahogany door, like the headmistress'!

Betty, however, arriving at that door, was not seized with awe. Too often had she tapped, like this—Ethel responding with a genial: "Come in!"—to be at all nervous now.

"Come in!"

Hallo, what had happened to Ethel's voice during he hols? It sounded deeper, almost husky.

In went Betty, to have only a back view of the study's occupant, for the senior girl was at the window, looking out to the playing fields.

"Afternoon, Ethel; so glad you're back at last—we all are!"

The girl who had sent off that telegram from Shrewston yesterday faced round. The strong light was behind her.

"Hallo?" she said, forcing a smile. For Betty's words and manner had made it clear that a cordial greeting was expected. "What can I do for you, kid?"

"Oh, it was nothing! I'm all right!"

"You don't look—quite yourself, Ethel! I say, how rotten if you are going to be—"

"Oh, don't you bother yourself about me, kid," came with a testiness that took Betty aback. "I'm tired, that's all—the journey was terribly trying. Missed a connection yesterday, and found I couldn't get through in the day. Had to stay the night at Bristol. You must look back later."

"I'm sorry, Ethel. But perhaps—after a cup of tea," Betty was going to say, when the door towards which she was retiring opened to let in several seniors, just out of class. Gaily they offered chummy greetings.

"Back, then, Ethel! Hallo, Eth, how are you? Slacker, taking an extra day," was one playful accusation. "My word, though—"

And Betty, unable to get past, saw how agape several of these seniors had become at sight of the head girl's face.

"The hols haven't done you much good, Ethel! What have you been doing up there in Wales?"

"Oh—only getting lost on a mountain, one day, and then having to flounder across sopping ground," was the feebly laughed answer. "Er—d'you all mind calling back? I—I—"

"Why, busy with Betty here?" inferred quite the jolliest of the visitors. "The play's the thing—is that it? Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, I'm going," Betty said hastily.

Way was being made for her at the door. As she passed to it, she cast a last glance of concern at the senior whom she had hoped to consult. It would not be Ethel Courtway, Betty felt, not to give her at least a parting nod and smile of affection.

But—how strange! No such display of the old good fellowship was made. Instead, Betty had to pass out, unglanced at again. Of course, all those other seniors had butted in—and they were some of the head girl's intimates. Yet Ethel was not rushing into talk with them. No mistake, she was, "hot and bothered"—wishing even her best friends out of the way!

What did it mean? Was it only the after-effects of a chill, taken during the hols? Or had Ethel, even though she WAS the head girl, come in for a blowing up from the headmistress for not getting back yesterday? If the latter, then it was no wonder Ethel was feeling a bit upset at present. She had always stood so well with Miss Somerfield.

Such a possibility as this almost induced Betty to hang about and go back before many minutes were sped. She loved Ethel Courtway—as how many other girls did!

To feel that there was a row on, and Ethel, of all girls, in disgrace—it was enough to make one want to run back to her.

"But, no, I'd better not," Betty reluctantly decided, and let a very dawdling step take her to where she would find her Form-mates. "In fact, I almost think I had better leave everything until the morning. Dash, the girls won't like it when I tell them— Oh, boundary!"

She had run clear of the porch just in time to see Polly make a hit that, but for the nets round the cricket pitch, would have been a "four."

But the madcap was to show no more of her prowess with the willow. Away she cast the bat, for anyone else to snatch up, and came galloping across the grass to meet the captain. Others followed, and from various parts of the fields came still more juniors, full pelt.

At first Betty could not be heard for all the clamour to be told; then disappointed mummings and mock-groanings became the accompaniment to her disappointing remarks.

"Sickener, this!"

"Yes, rotten!"

"Bekas, after waiting since yesterday—sweeidle!"

Naomer's particular disappointment demanded an instant adjournment for tea—in Study 12. She certainly felt better after a liberal raid on the varied fare—cake and tinned sardines; and jam sandwich and Swiss-roll—which the corner cupboard yielded up.

The spirits of other girls also revived, and out of its old love for Ethel Courtway the "chum-mery" felt far more sorry for her than for itself.

All the same, as soon as tea was over, Polly jumped up to go away and find that old type-writer which she was accustomed to borrow for literary work.

She came noisily stamping back with it—some forty pounds of complicated machinery—and whacked it down upon a table from which the tea-things had been whipped away.

"And now, some of you, clear out—allez, pronto!" she requested grimly. "With the Form waiting for me, I can't wait for Ethel."

This brought a troubled look to Betty's face. She did not like the idea of Polly slaving away upon an idea that had not yet been submitted, let alone officially approved.

"Look here, then, Polly dear, shall I go along and find Ethel again?"

"No!" shouted the madcap, already reeling, a sheet of paper between the rollers. "Don't bother her. It'll be O.K. Has she ever been so unsporting as to put us about?"

Clack, clack, clack! the keys started their bombardment, with impatient Polly muttering "Hang!" and "Dash!" as she found she was typing this for her title:

THE FOUNDING OFF MOWGOVE Skschool?!
Then suddenly the door opened, and there was the very girl whom Morcove knew as its head scholar.

CHAPTER 4.

No Going Back

"O H, Ethel!"

"Bai Jove—wealcome, Ethel; come in, yes, wather!"

"Bekas—zis chair!" shrielled Naomer. "And I will get you something, queek, from ze corner cupboard; something to cure your voice—my patent! Lemon juice and sugar, and—"

"Oh, don't you girls worry about my voice!" laughed the girl who was posing as Ethel Courtway; but she passed fingers about her throat, implying that it was still a little inflamed. "Glad to see you all again!"

"Thanks, Ethel! Another term! Going to be a good 'un, too!" Polly heartily predicted.

"Bekas—Ethel, hi! What about ze grand special jubilee in Barncombe! Well, Naomer stamped, as some laughter went up, "you know what I mean!"

"Yes, I know what she means," the unsuspected impostor nodded and smiled to Betty and others. "And I thought I'd just look along to say; your kids do just whatever you like about your Form's part in the great day."

"Hooray!" the chums cheered. "That's like you, Ethel—thanks! You're the one, Eth!"

"But whilst you're here, Ethel," the captain pursued blithely. "It won't take a moment to explain. Our idea is for Polly to write something for us that we can perform on the day. 'The Founding of Morcove School'—"

"In a couple of scenes, with songs and dances all complete," Bunny Trevor jested. "Absolutely true to history, of course; but plenty of Polly's comic stuff!"

"Yes, bekas, zat is where I shall come in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see," the impostor nodded and smiled again, feeling still more at ease.

After a first and successful mingling with the very friends of that senior whom she was personating, it seemed to her that these "mere kids" presented no danger at all.

"Right, then; you just carry on on those lines," she threw out with studied amiability. "By the way—"

"Yes, Ethel?"

"Er—you'll have to have a whip round in the Form, for expenses, won't you? Costumes, and so on? I think I ought to be treasurer—don't you?"

A sudden silence; a lack of response, due to vast surprise!

"If you, Betty"—for the impostor knew the captain's name by now—"if you do the collecting, and let me have the cash, then I can do all the settling up afterwards."

A knitting of Betty's brows evidenced an inclination to demur.

"How do you mean, Ethel? Not pay for materials at the time, but get credit at the shops?"

"I think so—yes; much the better plan!"

"But we've never—"

"No, but I think, in this case, we will. Anyhow," the impostor added, feeling emboldened to air an authority which she imagined Ethel to have wielded, "that's what I would like, and my word goes. Understand?"

They looked at one another. No, they didn't quite understand this changed attitude! Nor did they like it.

"But, Ethel—"

"Oh, I can't argue," Betty was cut short; and next moment "Ethel Courtway" was gone, drawing the door shut behind her.

The captain turned round, her lips making a round O of mute amazement.

As for Polly, she very expressively treated the battered typewriter to a shove that sent it almost off the table. She got up.

"Well, I'm—hanged! I can write the play; you, Betty, can collect the money; we can just carry on—with all that it means we'll have to do! As for Ethel, so long as she is 'hon. tress.'"

"Oh, but she's not herself to-day, girls—can't be," Betty deplored. "I told you."

"I do think she might have asked for a few details whilst she was here," Judy Cardew murmured. "Just to show friendly interest."

Polly returned to the table and thumped the typewriter into position again. She sat down.

"You'd better go collecting, Betty," she said ironically. "As for me—"

And her fingers dropped over the keyboard once more. Clack, clack, clack; dub, clack—ting! crash! the carriage went back. Clack, clack, dub, thump, bang!

"Good gracious, Polly dear!" the languid one of the chummers was moved to exclaim.

"It's how I feel!" said Polly. "So clear out, all of you!"

Betty, in any case, would have gone away now. As captain, she was supposed to enjoy the exclusive use of a small study, just round the corner. But that was an innovation of last term which she had never really liked. She was more often in Study 12 than in her own sanctum.

Only when she had need to put on her thinking cap did she seek the supposed dignity of that private room.

For a long while she was all by herself in there, deep in thought. But the batter-batter of the typewriter was going on all the while. In Study 12, telling her how given up was Polly to the fury of composition.

This fine, sunny evening out of doors! And supposing, after all—supposing Ethel "downed" the whole thing, after Polly had gone to the trouble of writing it? Not to want to be "bossed" by the head girl was one thing; not to be sure of her knowing exactly what they were to be at—that was another matter altogether.

Tap, tap, clack—tap, tap! Batter, batter—thud.—ting—crash! Tap, tap, TAP!

Suddenly Betty hitched back her chair and rose. She went from her own little study to do a determined scamper up the corridor and then downstairs, in quest of Ethel Courtway. Most

likely, being tired and a bit below par, the senior was resting in her study.

For the second time that day Betty tapped at the mahogany door.

Instead of a genial "Come in!" she was kept waiting, although she could hear movements—a restless stepping about the study. She tapped again—and then the door was whipped open, and it was an irritable look which came with a snapped:

"What do you want?"

"Is this bothering you, Ethel?"

"Yes, it is! Can't you give me a bit of peace? But what is it, kid?" the impostor asked, forcing an altered tone.

"I've been thinking, Ethel; I don't like the idea of your not knowing exactly what we mean to do. Polly's pushing on now—working hard. I know exactly what she has planned to write. It won't take a minute to explain. Can I come in?"

"No, you can't!"

And the door was almost banged in Betty's face.

EVEN as the unsuspected impostor turned away from the door, after banging it so rudely upon the would-be interviewer, she was shaking her head over the mistaken action.

Never do—to go on like that! The girl in whose shoes she stood had been good-tempered, accessible at any time, more than popular—adored. Of all that had been made manifest to her, Agatha Drew, in the last hour or two, nothing had stood out clearer than that.

The pretence at a journey's end weariness, and a hoarseness resulting from a recent chill—it had helped tremendously. No one, as yet, had the slightest suspicion. Headmistress, fellow seniors, all those juniors—guiled! But "Ethel Courtway" would be expected to be more her true self in the morning. Careful, then—for one slip now—

She dropped down in a half-collapsing way into a low chair. Nerves! Too late now to wish herself back at Shrewston, living out the last few days of her notice, with no other job in view. She had burnt her boats; must simply go on—until found out. "*How could I have been so mad as to do it!*"

For, this evening, she was without any of the cool audacity which had been hers this time yesterday. She might know a sort of rebound by the morning; but at present she was all—nerves. The strain of these first few hours at Morcove had told upon her heavily.

A thousand terrible possibilities had started to haunt her guilty mind. Yesterday, she had been all for taking certain things for granted—things that would be all in her favour. But now—

How was it with the girl in whose shoes she stood? What if, at this very moment, some statement was being made by the real Ethel Courtway, away yonder in Miss Rosely's home at Shrewston? A statement to the police.

Ding, dong! the school chimes presently floated in at the open window, and twice more the bell went. A quarter to six.

Suddenly, then, it came into the impostor's mind that police messages and SOS's for relatives of people lying seriously ill, were often given out in front of the news bulletin, on the wireless. The "first news" was at six o'clock. And Morcove had its wireless-room—she knew where to find it.

A few minutes longer she hung about in her study, then went down to listen in at the school's main set.

To her intense relief she had the wireless-room to herself. Scholars were not going to come indoors, these lovely summer evenings, simply to hear the news. As for the mistresses, they no doubt had their own private sets.

The girl who was posing as Ethel Courtway switched on the wireless, and in a few moments the announcer's voice came through:

"There is one S O S before the news."

Ah, now for something!

"It has been found impossible to establish the identity of a girl, aged about seventeen, who yesterday was knocked down by a car, which failed to stop, on the outskirts of Shrewston. She sustained certain injuries which may yet prove fatal. After a period of unconsciousness, she again rallied, and then appeared to be still suffering from loss of memory . . ."

The heart of Agatha Drew lost something of its wild pounding, whilst an exultant: "Good!" all but passed her lips.

" . . . Will any parent, guardian, or other person, anxious as to the whereabouts of a girl answering to the following description, please communicate at once with the Shrewston Police. Telephone, one-two-nine. . . ."

A sudden rush of light feet, bringing more than one Morocco girl to the open doorway, caused "Ethel Courtway" to look round.

She saw two girls who were excessively pretty, in tennis "whites." There they stood, just inside the doorway, twirling rackets whilst they indulged an obvious desire to hear the news, on the way to the courts.

Except that, by their age, they belonged to Betty Barton's Form, the impostor had no idea who they were. They were only two out of some hundred girls and more whose names she must find out—without letting them know that she needed to find out!

She conferred a smile.

"The weather report is just coming on now."

"Yes, but—listen," one of the juniors entreated with a put-on concern that seemed to amuse the other. "He's describing—some girl. An S O S, is it? Oh, I know, Fay—"

"Yes, Edna," said the elder Denver sister, at the same time paying heed to the announcer's voice. "That must be the girl we read about in this morning's paper. I say, Ethel, you came through Shrewston yesterday, didn't you?"

"Er—yes; that's where I muddled my trains."

"Is it a nice town, Ethel? I suppose you—"

"Oh, I'm listening to the weather! Shut up, both of you!"

Then, once again, the impostor could have bitten out the tongue that had voiced such snappish words. Not like the real Ethel to be so irritable! But, oh, how hard it was to keep unflustered.

As soon as the weather forecast had been given, she sauntered away. In a moment, the two juniors came out after her, and she was aware of their repressing titters as they overtook her.

Then, changing from their mincing steps to a sudden dash for the open air, they both looked round at her; gave her a rude stare, and sped on, letting out their laughter.

"Impudent beasts!" the guilty-minded girl said to herself fiercely. "Now, don't let a thing like that send you to pieces. It's the sort of girls they are, I suppose—cheeky, that's all."

So she drove off the fear that had rushed at her just then, only to have it swooping upon her again less than a minute later. She emerged upon the front hall, and the voice of a parlourmaid

said: "Oh, Miss Ethel!"—as if a "You're wanted!" were coming.

But it was only a registered letter, to be signed for in the usual way. The evening delivery had just come in, and the parlourmaid was sorting out scholars' letters.

A pencilled "E. C." was all that the sham Ethel Courtway gave, by way of receipt. The real Ethel's style of signature was known to her by now, but she was afraid to imitate it. There was another pitfall—handwriting. Already a letter had come that would have to be answered.

She opened it, and such was her love of money she almost forgot her guilty fears at sight of a pound postal-order, folded with a missive which began:

*Willard's Hotel,
London, W. I.
(And the date).*

My Dear Niece,—Now that I am the only one belonging to you in this country, your dear father and mother being in South Africa, I am arranging to come down and put in a long stay at the Headland Hotel—nice and close to Morocco!

If there had been any scholars to see this sham Ethel Courtway, a moment after those lines had met her dilating eyes, they would have run to her in alarm. It would have been "Ethel! Oh, what's the matter—bad news?"

She could not read on for the moment. A palsy terror had almost let the closely written sheet flutter away from a nerveless hand.

Panic was upon her.

"I was crazy!" she was thinking in regard to yesterday at Shrewston. "I'll have to clear out—or I'm done for!"

Someone—a near relation of the real Ethel—coming down to Morocco!

CHAPTER 5.

The Police are Here

AT last she returned her frightened eyes to the letter.

. . . I see by the papers that Barncombe is going to hold a grand festival, and that Lord and Lady Lundy are lending the castle for the great day. Oh, Ethel darling, how enchanting! I do hope Morocco School is going to take part, and that you'll have a lot to do with the arrangements.

And now, dear—although it is early to talk of such things—what will you say to a voyage to South Africa and back for the summer holidays, when they arrive? I thought we might both go out together, and then come back with your dear parents, who will be due to return about that time.

Spare a minute to write to me, won't you, dear? And soon I will be down at Morocco to see you again—after such a long while, isn't it?

There had come a sudden change in the impostor's looks as she read that paragraph about the voyage. Gone was the hunted expression of her eyes. And then those significant words at the bottom of a page: "See you again, after such a long while!"

She read the letter to its end, and then felt like crumpling it up and batting the ball of paper away. "I'm all right! Nothing to fear—nothing!" ran her mind now.

This aunt of the real Ethel's was coming to Morocco; let her come! Ah, and how grandly that idea about the voyage during the summer

holidays could be turned to one's own crafty purpose. By that time, it would be highly expedient to disappear. Well, she would disappear—when she got to South Africa!

A new country for her, out there; thousands of miles from the Homeland, where, if she remained, the police would get her in the end.

Such thoughts as these brought the old audacity tiding back to her. She laughed at herself for having been a fool—to be so "junpy." Not found out to-day, after a first encounter with so many of the real Ethel's former associates, why should she be found out ever?

But there must be no more nervousness. That did not help her to be, outwardly, the amiable head girl from whom no one ever expected a cross word.

The impostor of Morcove went, on a sudden impulse, upstairs to the junior quarters. As she came to a certain corridor of studies, she heard the busy clack of a typewriter. A few seconds later she sauntered into Study 12, surprising the only girl who was there—Polly Linton, still crashing away at the machine.

"You ought to be getting some tennis, kid!" said the sham Ethel genially. "Is that the thing for Barncombe's Big Day?"

"Yep, Ethel."

"May I see?"

It might have been the real Ethel, the way her impersonator picked up a first sheet or two of typed MS. and scanned it, letting Polly see an appreciative smile.

"How on earth do you know what to write, kid? I mean, this deals with the actual history of the school!"

"Oh, I've read it all up, in the lib."

"Well, it's awfully good—would be; your doing—"

"Nice of you to say that," Polly retorted, delightedly sensing a big improvement in the head girl's spirits. "Feeling better, Eth?"

"Oh, rather! Here, come on down now and find the others on the field, with me. I must get some exercise. A spot of batting practer? I'll bowl to you, if you like?"

"Then I'll pack up for now!" Polly cried, shuffling sheets of MS. together. "Shall get on twice as fast to-morrow, now that you've had a squirt at the opening and think it's O.K."

They went downstairs together, and the bigger girl was humming a tune when she was not chattering affably with the junior. It seemed to Agatha Drew that the immediate future presented no difficulties at all.

She had only to keep her head and take care to live up to the real Ethel's reputation for good



"You'll have a whip round for expenses, won't you?" the bogus Head Girl blandly inferred. "And I think I ought to be treasurer." The Study 12 chums were silent; but one and all were thinking: What a strange change had come over Ethel Courtway!

comradeship, and she would be "as safe as houses"!

Betty and others were on the field, and it became their turn to experience Polly's recent relief and delight at the head girl being quite herself again. Instead of batting practice, they got up some French cricket—a light-hearted game, allowing for lots of fun.

Right up to the twilight "Ethel Courtway" stayed with the juniors, finding it no effort to appear quite at ease. Then, in a moment, came a terrible blow at all her imagined security.

She was told that the headmistress wished to see her at once; and—the parlourmaid who brought this message remarked that a police inspector was with Miss Somerfield.

The police!

Such was the impostor's secret state of panic, she felt inclined to go off at once, rather than face an interview. Something was known—all was known, perhaps! She was to be denounced—arrested!

Only the despairing sense of being totally unprepared for flight caused her to obey the dread summons.

"They'd have me, anyhow!" was her gloomy reflection. "There's no chance to get myself disguised, and I've not enough money."

The headmistress' private room was in twilight

when the guilt-stricken girl entered; but immediately Miss Somerfield switched on the lights. And then the tall police inspector who was present took his first good look at her—Agatha.

It was as if the lights had been switched on to enable him to scrutinise her closely.

"Ethel, I'm sorry, but Inspector Trevick, from Barncombe, wants to ask you a few questions."

"Oh, yes?" the impostor smiled, fighting a secret battle for composure.

"On my information, miss," said the inspector, after a deferential cough, "I think you travelled down to Morcove School from a place in North Wales?"

"Quite right!"

"Breaking your journey at Shrewston?"

"And Bristol—yes."

"Then I'd like to ask you, miss—your headmistress having given permission—did you, on the train, anywhere between Shrewston and Morcove, see a young lady about your own age?"

"No! Why?"

"We are anxious to find that young lady—name, Agatha Drew, lately in the service of Miss Rosely, of Shrewston, as a lady's companion. In fact, there's a warrant out for the girl's arrest."

The girl who had stolen the identity of Ethel Courtway, head girl of Morcove, felt her forehead going icy cold.

"A very shocking thing, Ethel," interposed the headmistress. "It appears that this Agatha Drew was under notice to leave, having caused Miss Rosely great distress. The girl suddenly packed up and left—yesterday. Since then, Miss Rosely has discovered how the girl must have been robbing her for months. So, in the public interest, she felt bound to inform the police."

"Aye," nodded Inspector Trevick. "It don't do to let a girl like that clear out, only to start the same tricks elsewhere, victimising kind-hearted folk. So you mustn't let it upset you, miss—"

"Oh, I—I understand," the sham Ethel ex-

claimed, forcing a smile as she nodded. "No, of course, it would never do!"

"The Shrewston police got through to us, to make inquiries this end. In case, don't you know, you might have seen a girl on the train. It's reckoned she must have travelled—"

"I'm sorry, but— Oh, wait a bit, though!"

"Thing to do! Give them some false information to go on with. "Now I remember, I did see a young lady—"

"Ah, did you?"

"Yes! It was when I got out at Bristol. I think she came from the train that had brought me from Shrewston. She walked away in a hurry, and looked—nervous."

"Could you describe her, miss?"

"Well, no, not particularly. It was dark, you see, except for the station lights. She wore something—dark. But I really can't describe her, so it's no use!"

"This is helpful, though—that it is," came the inspector's gratified comment. "Bristol! In a hurry, and nervous. That sounds like her! So, maybe, now the Bristol police can get busy. I'll let them know."

"And there's nothing more you want to ask me?"

"No, young lady, thank 'ee! Greatly obliged."

The false Ethel Courtway gave a slight bow, then conferred a farewell nod upon the inspector, and sauntered away to the door.

"Good-night, miss, and much obliged!"

"Good-night!" she responded sweetly.

Safe! Still safe! Nothing in it, after all!

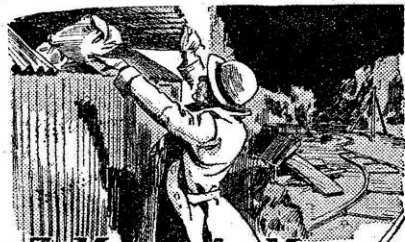
BUT, when she had returned to the privacy of her own study, she was glad to stand at the open window and take revivifying gasps at the fresh air. "I wonder I didn't faint, just then!"

And, even now, whilst she laughed that word again: "Safe! Safe!" A voice within her seemed to whisper:

"You are not!"

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

COMPLETE NEXT TUESDAY



A Menace to Morcove

IN "A Menace to Morcove," the long complete story which appears in next Tuesday's number, you will read how Agatha Drew continues her daring deception—a deception which is destined to plunge the scheming girl into a whirlpool of adventure.

Betty Barton and Co. feature in this fine tale, which will hold you enthralled from first to last.

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