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"THE CRIMSON SHADOWS" Grand New Series of COMPLETE Stories

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d

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EVERY TUESDAY.



**Their Ruze to
Delay the Plotters**

A dramatic incident from
this week's exciting long
Morcove story.

There Are FIVE ENTHRALLING STORIES In This Issue

Magnificent Long Complete Story of the Chums of Morcove School—

Their Stand Against Schemers



Judy Sees It Through

"GO in there, girl—go in!"

And a violent push accompanied the fierce words, sending a certain Morcove scholar into the presence of the school's temporary headmistress.

"This girl, in case you don't know her by name, is Judy Cardew—"

"Oh, but wait a moment, Madeleine, please!"

So Madeleine Dollond, who was the officious daughter of Morcove's temporary principal, kept silence—frowning in an annoyed way. She could tell that her mother was not at all busy—only flustered.

They were mere time-gaining activities which Mrs. Dollond pursued for a few moments at her lamp-lit desk. Here some papers were shuffled together, there a book was picked up to be put down somewhere else, whilst the woman's eyes took nervous side glances at Judy Cardew.

And, at last, it was in an almost dreading tone that the temporary headmistress voiced a questioning:

"Well?"

"Judy Cardew, here, is one of those Study No. 12 girls! And I myself have just caught her trying to convey help to her friends who are on strike, as they call it, in the clock tower!"

Madeleine Dollond would have liked to see her mother looking very merciless, now that such a heinous offence had been specified. Instead, the temporary headmistress had only another shifty glance for the "culprit."

"Shall I deal with her, mother? Leave her to me—"

"Er—no, Madeleine. At least, I'd like to hear what she was doing."

"She had slipped into Barncombe to buy provisions for those girls—although I had given out before all the school that no one must render any aid! It was almost dark when, just now, she came creeping back, making for the clock tower. But I," Madeleine Dollond exultantly smiled, "was on watch—with the Form captain and one or two others. We caught her—and here she is!"

The temporary headmistress seemed to take a grip upon herself as she faced Judy Cardew, to question her.

"Why—why did you do a thing like that, girl?"

"Surely you know!" was the spirited answer.

"I am in complete sympathy with Polly Linton and the rest of my chums who are over there in the clock tower. I would be with them, only—"

"Only," Madeleine Dollond interposed fiercely, "it has been the artful plan—that is quite evident now!—for some of the Study No. 12 girls to be about in the school, helping those who have shut themselves up in the tower."

"Judy Cardew," said Mrs. Dollond in an ill-at-ease manner, "you are not the only one who has wanted to help those stupid girls."

"It suits you to call them stupid! You know very well they have done a desperate thing, simply because—"

"Now, silence! There is the Willoughby girl—she suddenly went off to her home at Swanlake

without saying a word! And she—less than an hour ago, I understand—came back to the school and—"

"Mother, you don't want to go into all that!"

"Er—no, perhaps not, Madeleine," Mrs. Dollond

The famous chums of Study No. 12 are rebelling, not against tyranny, but against a regime which they are sure will destroy all that Morcove School has stood for in the past.

Betty Barton and Co.

By Marjorie Stanton

ILLUSTRATED BY L. SHIELDS



agreed weakly. "I—I will merely point out to you, Judy Cardew, that you and Pam Willoughby have—have—"

"They have done their best to frustrate our dealing with the strikers in the most humane way!" Madeleine Dollond artfully supplied. "We decided that the most sensible thing to do was to leave them to tire of striking. Yes, and they would have come out of the tower by now, if only—if it hadn't been for outside help!"

Judy Cardew, who was no feather-brain, smiled only faintly and seriously.

"Well, I'm glad that one of us has been able to—"

"You hear this?" Madeleine passionately appealed to her vacillating mother. "Then shall I take and punish her?"

"No; I—I think it will be best if, after all, we let the school see—"

"See what?" glared the young woman who was so given to domineering.

Her mother drifted about the room in silence for a few moments. Then, still nervously:

"The whole business began in folly, and it shall never be said of me that I could not make fair allowance for girlish—folly!"

"But—"

"I—I think it will be better, Madeleine, if you go away now, leaving me to—to deal with this girl—"

"But, mother, surely—"

"Madeleine, please!"

"Oh, all right, then!"

But it was with the worse possible grace that Madeleine Dollond turned away to the door, closing it, after she had made her exit, with an angry—Slam!

Judy Cardew, now left alone with the temporary headmistress, made a point of standing chin-up, offering a fearless face for inspection.

"Girl, now tell me," came that uneasy voice again. "Is the reason for this stupid strike the only—only grievance that exists?"

"We have struck only because you threatened to keep Betty Barton in detention all this week."

"But you Study No. 12 girls were—were not settling down under me before that!"

"We were very unhappy—worried—about the way things were going. But that had nothing to do with our striking. Let Betty off now—and Madge Minden, who has since been put in detention—"

"And you will all promise to give me no more trouble?"

Judy stiffened.

"I don't know about that, Mrs. Dollond," she candidly qualified. "But unless Betty and Madge are let off, as they rightly deserve to be, the strike will go on. I know it will!"

Fearless eyes and fearless voice!—causing Mrs. Dollond to turn away most uneasily again. And this time she drifted to the window, the curtains of which had not yet been drawn against the night.

An early, full moon was rising. By its silvery light the temporary headmistress could see out over the school grounds, beyond the private garden. She could just glimpse that stone tower, where the strikers had shut themselves away.

Some of its ornamental lattice windows were showing candlelight, and Mrs. Dollond must have obtained an impression of everything being quite comfortable for the five girls over there.

She came away from the window, doing her best, as Judy could tell, to hide guilty fears behind a smile of contempt.

"Other girls in this school, Judy Cardew, have shown themselves grateful for the introduction of my methods. Those methods are all founded on kindness. Well, I am going to see if even you Study No. 12 girls are not amenable to generous treatment, after all. Come with me, now."

Judy, next moment following the speaker to the room door, could let a joyful smile pass across her face.

Surrender? All that she and her chums had struck for—achieved? It looked like it!

Outside the private room, she instantly realised that Mrs. Dollond was taking her to the detention-room, where Betty and Madge were.

Only a few steps had the temporary headmistress to go, with Judy at her heels, and the passage-end was reached, with a door that bore the painted lettering:

"DETENTION-ROOM."

Mrs. Dollond unlocked the door and sent it wide open.

She did not enter, but stood looking in upon the two "prisoners," who both stood up.

"Betty Barton—and you, Madge Minden—I have decided; you may come out now."

Judy, looking over the woman's shoulder, saw Betty and Madge turning to each other in great excitement. They also had instantly realised—Study No. 12 had won!

"Don't mistake this for weakness, girls," Mrs. Dollond hastened to add. "When it is simply a generous gesture on my part—"

Oh, was it! They knew all about that! But

Betty and Madge were never ones to be cheeky. It was like both girls to refrain from smiling. Considering their youth, they showed a dignity which did them great credit.

"Thank you, Mrs. Dollond," Betty said. "Our chums in the tower, though—how about them? Are they to be punished if they come out now?"

"You may tell them from me—no! I—I wish the whole affair to be forgotten, that is all. But mind! I shall expect every one of you to show—your gratitude!"

Mrs. Dollond, hastily turning about so that her uncomfortable look might not be studied by Betty and Madge, found herself face to face with Judy Cardew. She gave a flurried sign to that girl to do as she pleased, and let a quick step take her back to her own private room.

Even as she pushed the door shut, she was aware of all three scholars flitting by in the passage.

Then the door came open again and her own daughter re-entered, looking furious.

"Mother! You mean to say you have let them go?"

"Yes, Madeleine. I—I—"

"Oh, madness—cowardice—"

"Now, Madeleine, you must not—"

"But it's too bad of you, mother! You'll be sorry! Giving in to them like this—"

"I had to give in!" Mrs. Dollond pleaded abjectly. "You know very well what happened an hour ago has compelled me! We have been relying upon hunger compelling those girls to come out of the tower. But they received all those fresh supplies. They could hold on until the end of the week, unless we chose to use force—"

"Then we should have used force—"

"Madeleine, you yourself advised our relying on waiting for them to get hungry and miserable. Anyhow, I—I couldn't stand it any longer. I have made the attempt to—to win them over," quavered Mrs. Dollond. "If it succeeds, then a little humiliation will be a small price to have paid for what we stand to gain."

"And supposing the attempt doesn't succeed?"

"Then—I fear, I very much fear we shall be beaten—altogether."

Although it was her own mother who had spoken like this, Madeleine Dollond curled a lip scornfully.

"You fear! I don't believe in being afraid of anybody—least of all a pack of mere kids!"

Yet, during the silence which ensued, a look crept into those hard eyes which seemed to suggest that this might be the moment for her starting to fear—after all!

Victory I

"THAT new lot of oil seems to suit the jolly old stove, girls!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

"Bekas, nice and snug, zis evening—gorjus!"

"Different from last evening, anyhow—"

"Just a bit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five of them there were, sitting round that oil stove whose excellent behaviour, on this the second evening of the great strike, had just come in for delighted comment.

It stood, dispensing ample warmth and a certain amount of light, in the very centre of the small room which Polly Linton and her four companions had chiefly used as strike quarters.

Just underneath, at ground level, there was another chamber of the clock tower to which they had access. But it was there that they had

had to dump a lot of odds and ends to make more room for themselves up here. So there was nothing much to be done with "downstairs," except use it as a handy place for keeping the reserve supply of paraffin.

"Can't get over it, girls!" Polly Linton suddenly gurgled. "The way Pam managed, after all, to stock us up again! It was a scream—"

"And zey didn't catch her, either, don't forget!" piped in that dusky Morcovian, Naomer Nakara. "She is home again by now, at Swan-lake, enjoying a late tea, I shouldn't wonder. Which reminds me—"

"I thought something would soon remind you," Polly mook-grimly explained. "Hungry again!" And it's not ten minutes since you had a big slice of cake!"

"What ze diggings, how much had I had to eat all day, before Pam turned up with those things? Zere wasn't a crumb left, as you jolly well know!"

And Naomer, with a perfectly good conscience, got up from her deck-chair to seek a tasty snack.

The strikers' sole furniture had been—deck-chairs. There was one for each, and it was in nothing better than a deck-chair that each was expecting to sleep through a second night in the tower, with smuggled-in blankets as their covering.

Bunny patted back a yawn.

"No need for any of us to keep awake, on watch, by-and-by?"

"Not it!" was Polly's hearty answer. "What could anybody do—without making enough noise to wake us all up?"

"And there is this about it, too," Tess Trelawney soberly grinned. "What could we do, supposing the Dollonds did start to get us out?"

"They won't," was Polly's emphatic opinion. "For the simple reason that they—"

"Bai Jove, though, geals—hawk!" Paula Creel rather gasped, sitting bolt upright. "Surely theah are sounds now, as if— My gwacious, yes, wather!" she palpitated, floundering up in greater alarm. "That's someone, now, outside!"

"Well, if it is," Polly snorted, bounding up from her chair, "don't get windy!"

"It won't be the first time someone has knocked—without coming in!" laughed Bunny.

"Oh, well," shrugged Polly. "Bothered if I'm going to stick my head out of the window, this cold night, to hold a parley with Madeleine Dollond or catty Fay Denver."

But now there came some halloings which took sensational effect upon all five strikers. Mouths fell wide open; eyes goggled under lifted brows. Naomer, for one, was so electrified that she let fall a biscuit tin that was crumpled of fresh provisions—and never stooped to recover any of the scattered eatables.

"Bekas—what ze diggings—"

"Gee!" yelled Polly. "It's Betty! It's Betty!"

"And the others!" Bunny just as excitably shrieked. "Oh, hurrah—"

"Yes, bai Jove! Gweat welief, geals, what? Wow, weally—"

"Quiet! Listen!" jerked Tess, whilst she whipped open the room door.

A continued medley of girlish cries came up to them, louder and clearer.

"Girls, come on out of there! It's over—the strike is over! You've won—you've won!"

"Hear that!" Polly dinned at her companions as they rushed out after Tess on to the cramped landing. "It's over—and we've won! Hurrah!"

"Gorjus! Bekas, now to cellerbrate, with a

grand spread in Study No. 12! Ooo, queek, out of ze way, Paula—"

"Owp! Ow, not so wough, kid—"

"Along the line the signal ran," Bunny said, stooping to turn out the stove. "All over, bar shouting."

She puffed out two candles and floundered away from the darkened room. There were only Naomer and Polly to blunder into, on the landing. Polly and Tess had already dashed down the winding stone stairway.

So thoroughly had they all barricaded the locked outer door, it took them a full minute, working with frantic speed and energy, to remove the stacked obstacles. All the while, they were answering jovial cries which came into them from their waiting chums outside in the moonlight.

Then Polly could snap back the bolts, turn over a big key, and drag open the massive door.

"Girls! Hurrah!"

And she became the first to fling herself upon Betty and hug her, transferring herself next moment to Judy, and then to Madgo, and last of all to Helen Craig.

Bright moonlight illumined a scene of the greatest joy and excitement. Never had there been a more joyful reunion of Study No. 12 girls. Over and over again they dined at one another:

"We've won, we've won!"

Not one circumstance was attending this ending of the never-to-be-forgotten strike, to minimise the sense of complete victory. Betty herself had been allowed, with Madge and Judy and Helen, to come out and make the news known—all by themselves!

That fact alone showed how abjectly the opposition had collapsed.

So at last they set off towards the schoolhouse in a manner befitting—victory! They marched, as it were, with colours still flying. At any rate, Polly carried that banner, bearing the Morcove coat of arms, which had lunged out of a tower window whilst the strike was on.

As for Naomer, she came along at the tail end of the small procession, staggering under a load of hastily collected eatables.

"Bekas I don't see why such gorjus stuff should be wasted!" had been her shrill cry.

Polly put herself even closer to Betty.

"How do you feel, Betty?"

"Fine! And you girls—"

"Grand!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

"We shall have to let Pam know," Betty carried on the eager chatter.

"Might ring her up? It's my belief, we are going to be given plenty of rope now—and that's just where we must be careful!"

Polly and others nodded. They knew what Betty meant by that.

"Never mind what the Form thinks," Betty added. "I quite expect there won't be more than four or five of the girls with sense enough to see our reason why, if we still refuse to eat out of the Dollonds' hands!"

"And we needn't expect to be handed any bouquets when we get indoors—need we?" Polly dryly laughed.

Sure enough, when presently the chums turned into the long corridor serving the Form studies, they found it lined with girls whose attitude towards them was one of scornful silence.

The captain and her sister had evidently instigated this demonstration. Every girl was alike in being stonily silent, treating the chums as they went by to a look of withering contempt.

Just a few familiar faces were absent. Betty and Co. did not see Etta Hargrove, Biddy Loveland, or one or two other girls taking part. But this only meant those girls' habitual dislike of "demonstrating." That it might mean something else—a private belief that Study No. 12 was, after all, striking for the good of Morcove School—the chums could not believe.

And now here they were, after all this time, at the door of Study No. 12 again!

Betty went in first, simply smiling calmly. Polly and Bunny, inevitably elated over the triumph, bounded in together, waving wildly. Paula, feeling suddenly languid with the reaction from recent "stwin," drifted to the best armchair and flopped down.



The temporary headmistress opened the door and paused on the threshold. "Betty Barton—and you, Madge Minden—I have decided you may come out now," she told the "prisoners." The two girls stared at her, hardly daring to believe that Study No. 12 had won such a wonderful victory.

Madge and Tess, Helen and Judy—they flocked in, with smiles of supreme delight. Last of all came Naomer, staggering with a load which she discharged joyously, in one grand shoot, upon the study table.

Slam! went the study door upon the outer world.

But a few seconds later that door was thrown open. Fay Denver, wearing her captain's sash—a thing Betty had very seldom done when she was captain—stood in the doorway with a sneering expression.

"Huh! So you've given in, have you?" "Have we?" Betty returned blandly. "Who told you that?"

"Pooh! As all the Form knows—" "Not all of it," Polly corrected. "We, don't forget, are still part of the Form!"

"A part we others aren't proud of, I can tell you that! You've done yourselves no good—"

"No; well!" said Betty. "So long as we manage to do the school a bit of good!"

"Conceit!" snapped Fay. "Idiots, the lot of you! When all Morcove, except for you, thinks the Dollonds are wonderful! If you expect sympathisers—"

"Oh, but we don't!" laughed Bunny. "None so blind—"

"Pweicely!" said Paula, shaking up a cushion. "And the sooner you wemove your offensive pwesence, Fay Denver, the more agweeable we shall—"

"Remember this, anyhow!" the captain again snapped. "One of you to fag for me in the morning! I was given permission to have a fag, and—"

And there she broke off—had to make way for Madeleine Dollond, who had suddenly come to the study's threshold.

Those of the chums who were sitting down at once stood up. Not that Madeleine looked inclined, to fly at any who might omit such a customary politeness. Betty and Co. were far from being surprised—but Fay was, very!—at Madeleine's amiable mood.

"Now, girls," said the headmistress' daughter sweetly, "if any of you would like a bath at once?"

"Thank you," Polly said, with an angelic expression. "We would."

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

"And get to bed early, for a good night's rest?" was Madeleine Dollond's further amiable suggestion. "Very good! Er—Fay Denver," turning to that astounded scholar, "I think you were saying something about a fag?"

"Yes, Miss Dollond! You remember—"

"Quite! But I don't want any of these girls to fag for you—for a few days, anyway. We must all get back to normal! The headmistress has very wisely decided to treat recent happenings as pure folly, about which, the less said now the better!"

Betty hoped that none of her chums had started to grin. She herself was keeping a perfectly straight face as she met Madeleine Dollond's smiling eyes.

"Other girls are all so pleased with the way the school is being run! See if you, who have been so tiresome up till now, can't be the same! Come away, Fay!"

And the door was gently drawn shut by Madeleine herself, leaving the chums of Study No. 12 all to themselves again.

"You see?" Betty spoke at last, ending a great

silence. "That's the game now. Anything, to win us round."

"Anything," Polly muttered fiercely, "to get us to stay our hand! Well, we are not having any!"

"We won that first round," Bunny said. "We will have a good try, anyhow, at winning the next!"

"The next, yes," nodded the ex-captain. "Hoping that it will be the last!"

"For Sale!"

ONE afternoon, a few days later, Betty and Polly got down from their bicycles at a quiet spot, about two miles from Morcove School.

There was a reason for their having none of their chums to companion them.

All were as united as ever. But there are times when, in connection with a bit of private inquiry work, a good rule can be: "The fewer the better!"

No one was in sight—or Betty and Polly would never have pulled up when they had. Both girls had glanced about very warily before they jammed on their brakes, to alight.

Quickly they wheeled their machines off the quiet country road, to hide them behind some of the close-growing larches which belted the highway for a half-mile.

Then they picked and wriggled their way between the larches, so that they were going in line with the road without being upon it.

They did this until the entrance to some private grounds, on the other side of the road; was in view. Then they checked.

"Dash!" Polly instantly expressed annoyance. "That 'For Sale' board is still up, Betty!"

"Yes. Yet Pam was told by the auctioneers that the property had been sold: Can't make it out," frowned Betty. "It's the custom to paste a 'SOLD' notice across the announcement. Such a good advertisement for the agents."

"Mrs. Dolland may have asked the agents to leave it up," Polly put in thoughtfully. "Let's see if anyone's about."

Some peeping to make sure that the road was empty, and then they hurried across it. The entrance-gates to the drive were hooked back, one of them bearing the name of the property in faded gilt lettering:

"SOUTHMOOR."

Polly, as she and her chum went in by the gateway, was in the mood to frown fiercely at sight of that name.

Southmoor! And how long, perhaps, before it had become "Southmoor School"—for girls! Mrs. Dollond's own unfair venture! Unfair because if, indeed, she had acquired the property to turn it into a school, then it was certain that she meant to do her best to "steal" girls from Morcove!

The curving drive led Betty and Polly round to a wide sweep of gravel in front of the dilapidated house. There was not a soul about. All front doors and windows were closed.

"Let's go round to the back of the house," Betty murmured. "There may be a gardener at work; and we may find out something from him."

But the several acres of ground lying behind the empty building were deserted. As the intruders noticed, no start had been made to take in hand all the long-neglected borders, patches of

kitchen-garden and lawns grown as rough as meadowland.

"Polly! Hark!" Betty suddenly exclaimed. "A car—turning in off the road!"

"Gee!" And Polly rubbed her hands together. "The Dollonds perhaps?"

The great house was between them and the carriage-way up to the porch. Plainly, however, they could tell that there was a car, whining round the curving drive. It stopped with a little scream of the brakes, and then they heard the slam of a door.

Two persons at least had alighted, for the listening girls heard voices.



As Mrs. Grandways and Cora commenced to descend the stairs, Betty and Polly darted into the cupboard. At all costs they must avoid discovery—now!

Then they heard a key being rattled into the lock of the porch door.

Betty turned to her chum.

"I didn't recognise Mrs. Dollond's voice—did you?"

"No—nor Madeleine Dollond's! It's a lady, though—and a girl, I fancy. Come with an order to view?"

"I wonder!" Betty breathed. "If they have—then the Dollonds have NOT bought the place! It must be still in the market. Oh, Polly darling, if only—"

"Here, let's dodge round and see if we can't get a peep at these people. I expect they have left the front door open behind them."

"But look out for a chauffeur, Polly, standing by!"

There was, to their huge relief, no chauffeur with the car. As they crept towards the porch, taking good care to keep out of sight of any windows, they noticed that it was a very grand car.

Two minutes later they had slipped past the half-open porch-door, into the bare front hall.

Once before had Study No. 12 done just such a thing as this. That was when Betty and Pam, one fateful day only a week or so ago, had stolen into the empty house whilst the Dollonds were inspecting it.

And now, as then, the voices of two persons who had started to go over the house came hollowly to the listeners in the hall.

That the lady and her companion were strangers to the place, making a very thorough first inspection, was soon beyond a doubt.

They had proceeded to an upper floor and were going in and out of rooms, voicing their opinions very freely. The emptiness of the whole house caused every remark to be plainly audible to Betty and Polly—the more so as both visitors seemed to be given to speaking loudly.

What with the super-magnificence of the car outside and such grandly drawing talk, the two schoolgirls soon began to suspect "swank."

And then, suddenly, they heard the lady address her youthful companion by her Christian name. It was just as the inspection upstairs was taking the pair across the main landing.

"Well, I wonder what your father will say, Cora?"

That was the name, the utterance of which caused Betty and Polly to start violently. Cora!

Their eyes met, and each knew what the other was thinking:



"Cora Grandways—who used to be at Morcove!"

The Danger!

THE staggering surprise made it impossible for the two chums to remain just there, keeping silence.

Instantly they tiptoed back to a place where it would be quite safe for an exchange of whispers. "It's Cora Grandways!" Polly was the first to whisper. "And her mother!"

"Just fancy—yes! But what do they want with a place like Southmoor? It can't be for their

own use!" Betty tensely breathed. "Not nearly grand enough."

"Mrs. Grandways mentioned her husband just then. I say! He's a—financier, isn't he?"

"Oh! Polly—"

"What, dear?"

"Nothing—at least, no time now. Let's creep back. We simply must hear more now. It's frightfully important!"

Seldom had Polly known her best and shrewdest chum to be so plainly excited. It was with trembling eagerness Betty had already turned back. Together they took their stand once more at the foot of the main staircase, hearing Mrs. Grandways and her pampered daughter still wandering about on the floor above.

But, most disappointingly, all further remarks picked up by the listeners only referred to the size of various rooms, their outlook, and so on.

Suddenly, too, Betty and Polly realised that mother and daughter were coming down—perhaps to take just a look round the grounds before driving off.

Easily, the two girls could have tiptoed out of the house, but that, most likely, meant missing a last chance of being within earshot. There was a cupboard under the first flight of stairs. In the selfsame instant both girls acted on a daring impulse.

Betty, darting to the cupboard door, opened it and went in first. Polly slipped in after her, and then, with the door drawn shut, they stood very still, scarce daring to breathe.

The footfalls of Cora and her mother, during the descent of that first flight of stairs, sounded just above the concealed girls' heads.

"What do you think dad will decide to do, mother? Find the money?"

"If he does, Cora, it won't be for the sake of going the Dollonds a good turn, you may be sure!"

"More for the sake of giving Morcove a nasty knock—eh, mother? But can't dad find the money at once? Supposing somebody else nips in, and buys the place?"

Mother and daughter were going close by the cupboard door now, on their way to the hall door.

"Your father will be down from Town, joining us at the Headland Hotel in a day or two. That, I expect, will be quite time enough."

The voices died away. But, in the cupboard, Betty and Polly still held themselves motionless, even after the front door had been closed a dull slam!

"Now I understand everything, Polly, and it's more serious than ever!"

That was Betty's first whisper in the darkness of the cupboard.

"Mrs. Dollond has had to find someone to finance her venture."

"And it's—Cora Grandway's father!"

"Yes, Polly. We know he dabbles in everything; does a lot of money-lending. Mrs. Dollond paid a deposit on the property. That's why it was quite true what Pam was told by the house agent. Mr. Barnes honestly believed that the property was sold. But Mrs. Dollond hasn't been able to find the balance of the purchase price by the appointed time."

"Then—it really isn't hers yet!"

"Oh, no! You heard Cora Grandways say just now; anybody else might yet nip in. But anybody would have to be pretty sharp about it."

There came, at this instant, the faint slam of

a car door. Then they heard the dying-away swish of tyres on the gravel.

"Gone, Polly. Let's get out of this."

"But what to do?" clamoured Betty's fiery chum as they floundered clear of the cupboard.

"We'll get back now and talk it over," Betty determined. "We'll manage something."

Recovering their bicycles from the hiding-place, they made full speed for Morcove—not that they had been out of bounds during a forbidden time. Since the ending of the strike, Study No. 12 had come in for most easy-going treatment by the Dollonds. The chums could do nothing wrong!

It was, of course, a policy intended to win over Betty and Co., as they had realised, and so they were taking good care not to accept indulgences for which they were not prepared to make the expected return.

Their own policy was to do exactly as they would have done had Miss Somerfield and their own Form-mistress been at their posts.

But although the chums' attitude was one that did them credit, it was yet doing them no good in the eyes of other girls.

Study No. 12 was being treated with ever-increasing scorn by numbers of its Form-mates, who were egged on by Fay Denver and her sister.

And so, this afternoon, Betty and Polly came in for another demonstration.

Passing in at the school gateway, at the end of their return ride from Southmoor, they met a big bunch of their Form-mates, including Fay and Edna.

At sight of Betty and Polly, the hostile girls made exaggerated signs of disdain and scorn. The two chums had to ride between a split-apart crowd which pointedly gave them a wide berth. Chins were tilted; eyes were turned away.

And Betty and Polly—they simply pedaled on past the scornful pack, answering neither by word nor look. They were not going to let a thing like that upset them. What did give them a bad turn was to find, presently, the Grandways' car standing at the school porch!

A bad sign! Obviously Mrs. Grandways had called to see the temporary headmistress, and very likely Cora herself was at this moment under Morcove's roof again.

Up to Study No. 12 raced Betty and Polly, to find that tea had been kept about for them by their chums. As usual, the excitability of impish Naomer took up the first minute or two. But at last the saner element could be told the latest, and Study No. 12 went into conference.

"Not the least doubt," Tess glumly commented; "you've got it right, Betty. That Southmoor property is going to Mrs. Dollond as soon as Mr. Grandways turns up."

"Cora and her mother are sure to urge him on," Madge pointed out. "For that one reason—spite against Morcove."

"Bai Jove, abominable!" Paula expressed herself most indignantly. "With Mr. Grandways finding most of the money—"

"It will make it worse than ever for poor old Morcove," put in Polly grimly. "He'll have paid the piper; he can call the tune. And you may be sure it will be a tune to which Morcove will have to dance—like a cat on hot bricks!"

No one laughed. Far too much of a tragedy for the dear old school was implied by Polly's queer-sounding remark.

"Well?" she suddenly flared out. "Can't something yet be done—can't it? Gosh, if only I had the money! I'd buy the place myself—I would! Just to keep Mother Dollond out!"

"If only my people were at home," Pam said very quietly and steadily, "I would go over to Swanlake and beg and pray them to buy Southmoor—whilst there's still a chance!"

"This next day or two," Betty muttered. "If only somebody could—for Morcove's sake!"

"Dad, I am sure, would do it if he were not abroad," Pam nodded on. "As it is—"

Bang! came a sudden mock-polite knock upon the study door. Then it opened, and every one of the chums saw Cora Grandways standing there at the threshold, wearing the same wide grin of other days.

"And how," inquired Cora Grandways with an insolent chuckle, "is Study No. 12—since I last saw it?"

Morcove at Stake!

"NOT the captain now, Betty? So I'm told! How did that happen?"

"No, I am not the captain now," Betty calmly answered. "If you want her—she is Fay Denver, and I fancy you will find her at the Headland."

"My word, what changes!" sniggered Cora. "Yet Morcove is still going on quite well, isn't it? Or isn't it? Without a rival—so far, eh?"

"Anyway," Polly flashed, "you don't appear to have changed. Which means that you're no more welcome at this moment than you were before you were turned out of Morcove."

"And good riddance to ze bad rubbish, too! Bekas—"

"Oho, that's you, is it, kid!" Naomer was derisively singled out. "Who smacks your head for you now, kid? But I see I have called at a bad time! A bit worried, all of you; a bit under a cloud! Study No. 12 stock under par, eh? Well, sorry to have tr-r-r-roubled you!"

And, smiling as insolently as could be at one and another of the glaring girls, she backed out, bowing.

"Mother is chatting with the temporary headmistress. Oh, but don't be alarmed. It doesn't mean that I am coming back to Morcove! Mrs. Dollond is all right. But I'd rather wait until she has—a school of her own!"

The closing door stopped down Cora's last mocking laugh. They heard her going up the corridor, whistling—"as if she owned the place!" Bunny disgustfully muttered.

"Hateful girl," Polly stamped. "She always was and always will be! Oh, if it isn't the worst possible luck, for Morcove, that the Dollonds have turned, of all people, to the Grandways!"

There were murmurs of agreement from some of the other girls. But Betty was one who stood tight-lipped, keeping anger under restraint.

"And now there is this awful sense of time running out," Polly fumed on. "As soon as Cora's father comes down from Town—"

"To-morrow, perhaps," winced Pam. "If not, the next day—"

Betty, who had been standing deep in thought, suddenly emitted a startling:

"Girls! I have it!"

"Oh, what, Betty—what? An idea?"

"Yes—"

"Zen, queek, queek—say ect! Bekas—"

"Barncombe Castle," Betty spoke on crisply.

"Lady Lundy—"

"Oh! Ooo—"

"Bai Jove, yes, wather!"

"Bekas—"

"She is a governor of Morcove School," the

ex-captain continued. "We don't know—can't be certain, but it's our only hope now. I must get hold of her and do my best to make the danger clear to her. I feel I ought to go off now—this very instant—"

"Then why don't you, Betty?" she was urged by all her excited chums. "Not a moment to lose! Go on—now!"

"Shall I go with you, Betty?" suggested Madge. "My dad is agent for Lord Lundy."

"But of course! Come on, then!"

Those who, during the next two hours, were being left to wonder how their two chums would succeed in this latest attempt to ward off Morcove's danger, were inclined to be very hopeful.

Apart from Lady Lundy's personal interest in the school, the girls could rely upon Lord Lundy getting busy as soon as he had been apprised of the game that was being played. He owned nearly the whole of the Barncombe district.

But, at dusk, Betty and Madge came in with disappointing news.

Lord and Lady Lundy were both away—not expected back until the day after to-morrow. Madge's father had been told everything, and he appreciated the danger. But he himself could do nothing until his lordship had been consulted.

"And the worst of it is," Madge added, "dad can't get in touch with Lord Lundy. They're motoring home from Scotland by easy stages, without keeping the castle informed of stopping places."

"Day after to-morrow, you say, and they'll be home," Polly exclaimed. "Gosh, if only Mr. Grandways doesn't turn up till then—we may beat him and the Dollonds yet!"

So, most fatefully, it had become a neck-and-neck race, as it were, and the stakes—the future of Morcove School!

No wonder Study No. 12 went to bed that night in the greatest state of suspense. No wonder Betty and Co., next day, took all possible steps to find out if Mr. Grandways had turned up!

He had not done so at a little after midday. Afternoon school, under the Dollond "regime," was over at three o'clock.

Then some discreet inquiries by the chums resulted in the joyful discovery that Cora's father had still not arrived!

Cora herself came to tea at the school—at the invitation of Captain Fay Denver, who "threw" a very grand party for the occasion.

The festive gathering was attended by all those girls who, taking their lead from Fay, were openly scorning Betty and Co. And so some special demonstrations against Study No. 12 were provided, for the amusement of Cora.

That she enjoyed them greatly, goes without saying. That Betty and Co. had a great deal to put up with, will also be inferred. At the same time, they came in for secret compensation.

It was during all the hoydenish deriding of Study No. 12 that Cora herself threw out jeering remarks which really gave great comfort to Betty and Co.

Thinly veiled hints, meant to set Study No. 12 squirming, enabled the chums to guess that Mr. Grandways was expected some time to-morrow morning.

Neck and neck still! But, at any rate, the position had grown no worse—as it might so easily have done by this time.

Another long evening of acute anxiety for Betty and Co.; another bed-time, with all the chums feeling so desperately anxious that they knew they were in for hours of lying awake!

Morning again, and class to be attended—schoolwork to be got through somehow, whilst minds were thinking all the while of Mr. Grandways, on his way by train now, and of Lord and Lady Lundy, on their way by car.

Study No. 12 was facing the tormenting fact that both parties to the fearful race might now get in at the selfsame hour. In such a case—which would act first?

At "break," Madge managed to ring up her father at his office at the castle.

It was a telephone talk, obtained unbeknown to Madeleine Dollond or anyone else in authority at the school, which brought Madge back to her chums in a state of undiminished anxiety.

"He can't say when Lord and Lady Lundy will arrive. He only knows that they are expected round about lunch-time."

"Dash it!" Polly stamped. "And we know the train Mr. Grandways will come by. It gets him to Barncombe at half-past twelve!"

"Cora and her mother may be there to meet him with the car," Betty pondered aloud, frowning heavily. "They may all drive out to Southmoor at once, for him to see over the place."

"Yes, and then they will drive back to Barncombe, to complete the purchase with Mr. Barnes!" Bunny sighed. "Mr. Grandways will write his cheque—and the thing will be done!"

Then Betty spoke with that calmness which was always hers in a crisis; a calmness that so often quelled the raging anger of chums in their helplessness.

"At the dismissal, I shall take my bike and ride to Southmoor again," Betty steadily announced. "To see if the Grandways do turn up. Then—I don't know, but—"

"I must come with you!" Polly burst in. "I must! I can't stay here, feeling that we are to be whacked after all! Morcove must be saved—it must be!"

And so, for what it was worth, those two set off on their machines as soon as morning school was over.

As if to prepare the girls for a tragic inability to do anything at the very last, the Grandways' car overtook Betty and Polly before they turned off the road to the town, to make for Southmoor.

Mrs. Grandways was driving—going to Barncombe Station, it was evident, to pick up her husband.

Cora was not in the car. Quite likely, thought the Study No. 12 pair, the hateful girl was calling at the school again, knowing that Fay and others would be free until two o'clock.

The belt of larches opposite the Southmoor entrance served to conceal Betty and Polly's bicycles once more. Once again these two girls entered the Southmoor grounds, to find the whole place as desolate as ever.

But they had not waited many minutes in hiding when the Grandways' car came purring up the weedy drive.

With fast-beating hearts, the chums watched Mr. and Mrs. Grandways get down at the porch and let themselves in at the front door of the empty house. Mrs. Grandways had perhaps retained the key since her previous visit.

There was a fleeting glimpse of Cora's wealthy father, full of his usual swagger—his usual air of being able to "buy up" anybody or anything! Betty, turning to Polly after they had seen husband and wife go into the house, found her looking as black as thunder.

"He won't be five minutes making up his mind," was Polly's grim prediction. "What does

he care whether it's a good investment or not! There is the grudge against Morcove to decide him."

Betty nodded and was silent. Never in her young life had she felt her love for the dear old school so acutely as now. Now, when it seemed as if that same love could do no more!

She glanced at her wrist-watch. "Round about lunch-time"—when Lord and Lady Lundy were at least due at the castle! But even now Mr. Grandways was taking that hasty look at the property which was all he would need to do, before coming out to the car again, to drive away—back to Barncombe, most likely, to the house agent's office.

Polly spoke suddenly in a very wrought-up way. Another minute had passed.

"I can't stand it!" she ejaculated. "If only he had missed that train! An hour's delay—half an hour, perhaps—might have saved the situation. Might have saved—Morcove!"

"Polly—"

"Yes, Betty, what—what?"

"I'm going to do something desperate. Whilst they are still in the empty house—there is just one last chance! As you say, even half an hour's delay—"

"What, then, Betty—what?"

For answer, the Form's ex-captain tiptoed clear of the sheltering laurels, making for the car that stood unattended at the porch.

Polly eagerly stepped with Betty, who, a few moments later, was at the car's bonnet.

"You keep watch, dear," Betty whispered. "I want to see if we can't drain off all the petrol. Ah, here's the tiny tap I thought there might be!"

And next second she had turned it on!

Crisis I

"**B**ETTY! A brainwave! They'll be stranded!"

"But come away now—quickly!"

They both flitted back to the shrubbery, through which they picked their way—without making a sound—out of the Southmoor grounds. A minute later and both girls were mounting their recovered bicycles.

"To Barncombe now, Polly!"

"Oh, rather!"

"We'll pop into a call-box at the post office and get on to the castle," Betty spoke as they pedalled away. "To ask if Lord and Lady Lundy haven't turned up by now. I don't know—we may, after all, have done some good."

"The Grandways will be stuck for a bit, anyhow," Polly exulted, riding head-down to the handlebars.

"Unless a car happens to go by that can give them a lift into the town."

"Oh, Betty, don't—don't think of such a thing! There is such a chance still—if only nothing like that happens!"

"There's very little traffic past Southmoor, anyhow."

"And we—how long is this ride going to take us, Betty?"

"Fifteen minutes?"

"Oh, not as much as that, surely! Come on—harder, harder!"

But Betty's estimate, although it had seemed to Polly such an outside one, proved perfectly correct.

Furiously they rode, tackling the two or three hilly bits with real breathless effort, and yet the town hall chimes were ding-donging the quarter-

past one when both panting cyclists pulled up outside the central post office.

Betty rushed inside to do the telephoning, whilst Polly waited on the High Street's pavement, minding the two bicycles.

The office of Messrs. Barnes & Co., house agents, was just across the way. Polly watched the door anxiously but no one came or went.

Betty came out of the post office. It was significant of her intense anxiety that she glanced up and down the High Street, to see if either Lord Lundy's car was in sight, or—some vehicle, rushing the Grandways to the spot!

"Number engaged, Polly."

"What! Oh, hang!"

"I'll try again in a couple of minutes. No sign of—of the Grandways yet?"

"No, but—when!—I never was in such a stew! It's no use," Polly despairingly sighed. "They'll be here first, after all! Lord Lundy, even if he is at the castle by now, won't realise that it is a matter of moments! He'll be having lunch

"My dear young people," laughed the earl, "that's all right—don't worry any more! I have an appointment with Mr. Barnes for one-forty, made over the 'phone just now. He's expecting me."

"Oh—thank goodness!" gasped Polly. Then she laughed. "Betty!"

"Come away," smiled Morcove's far calmer ex-captain. "We can leave the rest, I'm sure, to Lord Lundy."

"And get back to school, both of you, with the news?" was the smiling rejoinder with which his lordship passed into the building.

They took the hint. He did not want them to hang about. It had been a case of "first here gets it!" And his lordship was first! Now to speed back to Morcove and tell their chums the glorious news!

They were just clear of the High Street when they beheld a butcher's delivery-van coming along at a great speed.



Betty whipped open the door of the handsome car. "You're just in time, Lord Lundy!" she gasped. But even then, she was wondering if the schemers had not beaten them in the desperate race.

first, then another talk with Madge's father—"

"No, he won't!" was Betty's sudden interrupting cry—one that was charged with joyful relief. "Look, Polly, look! Here comes—Lord Lundy!"

Across the quiet High Street darted Betty and Polly, realising that the familiar cream-coloured car was going to pull up outside Messrs. Barnes & Co.'s office.

Three seconds later, the chauffeur would have got down to open the door for his lordship; but Betty herself whipped open that car door, with its tiny coat of arms.

"Lord Lundy!" she panted. "You—you're just in time, but only just!"

"Good!" he genially smiled; but Polly jerked out:

"Unless Mr. Barnes is at lunch, sir! Oh, do let us come in with you, to—find out whether

Then Betty and Polly saw—as the van almost bounded past them, the roundsman-driver keeping the horn going.

Mr. and Mrs. Grandways!

There they were—that fat, swagger, overdressed pair—squeezed together beside the van driver.

Their goggling eyes were doing their best to watch the road through a section of the wind-screen, which section was adorned with a pasted-on label:

"BEST BEASTS ONLY!"

Cheers!

MORCOVE'S chimes had just struck the quarter-to two, and in Study No. 12 there were girls anxiously awaiting the return of Betty and Polly.

Suddenly the door opened and Madeleine Doland looked in upon the waiting chums.

"Not back yet?"

"No, Miss Dollond!"

"Well, it's to be hoped that they have got themselves some lunch in Barncombe. As I said just now," spoke on Madeleine Dollond, with that sweet smile which belonged to the "winning over" policy, "I am not at all cross! But I don't like the idea of their coming into class, presently, if they have missed dinner altogether. Just tell them so, will you?"

Such sweet words, like the sweet smile which had accompanied them, only left Pam and others looking all the more unhappy, as soon as they were alone together again.

"It makes one feel that the Dollonds don't care a scrap now, that Betty and Polly may have been out on that Southmoor business," Madge murmured. "It's almost as if the Dollonds have no hitch to fear!"

At that instant the study door was tapped.

The chums were inclined not to answer the knock, feeling sure that it was merely preliminary to some further bit of teasing by some of the many schoolmates who held them in scornful derision.

But after a moment the door opened and Etta Hargrove entered with Biddy Loveland, and both girls looked most unhappy—worried. Etta held a newspaper.

"Have you seen this morning's 'Barncombe Herald'?" she asked the chums. "Well, here it is—something in it about a new school to be opened in the district."

"Oh?"

"Yes," Biddy quavered, "and I, for one, don't like the sound of it!"

"Neither do I," Etta rejoined, whilst several of the chums read together a certain marked paragraph in the paper. "It's to be at Southmoor, and, although the paper says nothing about

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My Dear Readers

THIS week we are going to be very mysterious and secretive again. There will be some crazy-looking sentences on the Chat page, and those readers who aren't "in the know" will think their eyes are playing them tricks or something.

Now, keep it dark, here's some news for our Secret Society members, those people who creep stealthily about in long, clinging robes and cowls—doing good (I hope).

One of my readers, an ardent Society member, wrote to me suggesting that the different branches send me messages in the code which can be published on the Chat page from time to time. These messages will be for every branch to decipher and take note of, and if each band of members will give their little company a name of some sort, I can print the message with the name of the branch who sent it.

T LPCI PWW OEPNCURD IB NBCDTSRE
IUTD TSRP PCS WRI ZR XCBL LUPI IURJ
IUTCX.

Now, you new readers, don't sit puzzling over this queer message which looks as if it is the language of some newly discovered people in the heart of the African jungle. It is only a sample of the special SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN secret code, and if you would like to know what it all means, write to me and I will tell you how you can join our famous Secret Society.

Meanwhile, I am very anxious to read all the "reports" of the different branches, for, as your "chef," I am always greatly interested in the activities of the various members.

If any of you have some more ideas for the S. O. Secret Society, please write and tell me. Quite possibly I shall be able to make use of them.

Cuthbert is busy racking his brains to think of some mystic sign by which members of the Society can greet each other. He has several

times succeeded in tying his fingers in knots, but so far the secret sign has not materialised.

Of course, if I read in my newspaper that great anxiety is being felt on account of the number of otherwise quite normal people who have suddenly been seized with a desire to make strange and unintelligible signs with their fingers, I shall know that my Society members have thought out their own secret signs!

Now for some more news! This time of the stories in next week's SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN.

Betty Barton, Pam, Polly, Naomer, Paula and all the other famous members of Morcove's Study No. 12 "clan" will feature in another long and thrilling story, the first of a new series entitled: "The Girl Who Kept Silent."

The series deals with a newcomer, Zillah Raine, whose advent at Morcove does not altogether bring happiness to Betty and Co.

Then, again, you will meet plucky Joan Siddons, fighting to make good at the Langley Academy of Dramatic Art, striving not only to become a "star," but to save "The School for Stage-Stars" from ruin. You must not miss any instalments of this new and exciting story of stage and school life with famous actresses in the making.

Muriel Gordon, heroine of "Her Fugitive Friend of Mystery," is plunged into a series of breathless adventures and puzzling mysteries in the search for "Her Fugitive Friend of Mystery"; while our "Imperial Imp" will be up to her tricks again, blandly upsetting all English customs in her great desire to be thought an English girl.

Then the mysterious Crimson Shadows will be featured in several pages of thrills and mystery, and so I think that you will agree with me that next week's SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN is well worth ordering in advance; you would feel so "out of it" if you missed an issue and had to read the following week's copy without knowing what had happened the week before, wouldn't you?

May your Editor ask a favour? Please don't miss a chance of bringing "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN" to the notice of your friends, especially those younger friends who have now just reached the age when they will revel in its fine stories. You will do this for me, I'm sure.

With all good wishes,

Your sincere friend,
YOUR EDITOR.

Mrs. Dollond—Southmoor was the property Betty had in mind, wasn't it, when she made those charges?"

For a few moments no one answered. The chums were reading a news item inserted at the moment of going to press. The "Barncombe Herald" had been given to understand that a new school for girls was to be opened by a wealthy syndicate which had bought Southmoor for the purpose.

"Yes, well," Pam said at last, handing back the paper, "now I hope you see! According to that paragraph—it's too late!"

"Too late!" Bunny echoed tragically. "And so Betty and Polly might just as well have stayed in bounds—getting some hockey, getting dinner; doing anything, instead of—"

"Instead of what?" jerked Biddy.

"Instead of trying, by one last effort, to save Morcove from what is going to happen after all!" Madge emotionally exclaimed. "Oh, it's no use you two girls looking like that now—"

"But—"

"We warned you," Pam said to dismayed Etta and Biddy. "We have seen the danger from the very first. And you must have seen how we've all been treated by the school; must have heard the names we've been called."

"The paper speaks of a wealthy syndicate. I hope you realise," Tess said sternly, "that really means—Mr. Grandways!"

"What!"

"Oh, yes!" Pam nodded. "It's why Cora Grandways and her parents have suddenly turned up again. If only the school had listened when Betty first made her charges against the Dollonds—"

"But the Dollonds said it was all nonsense!" Biddy cried out wildly. "They gave explanations that—that seemed—most satisfactory, I'm sure!"

"Of course they did," Pam nodded again. "That was their artfulness. You've all been taken in—dazzled—spoiled for school life as we knew it under Miss Somerfield. And now, as soon as this new school opens, you see, there'll be lots of girls worrying their parents to transfer them."

"Exactly as you were all warned—by Betty!" added Bunny.

A big pause followed. Etta and Biddy were looking acutely distressed now.

"I'm terribly sorry," came Etta's candid admission at last. "I admit I did feel that you Study No. 12 girls had only found a mare's nest."

"So did I," Biddy mumbled. "But now—"

"Oh, but something can be done, can't it?" Etta wistfully exclaimed. "Will Betty and you others start some sort of appeal to the school—and we'll back you up?"

"Pity you didn't back us up before, isn't it?" Bunny submitted. "When Betty first spoke out, the whole mischief could have been nipped in the bud. But now—she can't, you know, be expected to work miracles! Girls have had long enough to become, as Pam has said—spoiled."

Again there was silence in the study, and perhaps Etta and Biddy would have ended by turning to go away, without another word to say. But suddenly some hasty footfalls were audible from the corridor, and the girls knew that Betty and Polly were back at last.

The two came whisking into the study, and to their chums' utter amazement they had smiles of complete triumph!

"Girls!" they breathlessly shouted; and then checked, surprised at the presence of Etta and Biddy.

"Oh, Betty," Pam said steadily, "and you too, Polly; we have just been shown a paragraph in this morning's 'Barncombe Herald.' According to that—the Dollonds have got Southmoor?"

"What!" laughed Polly, snatching at the paper. "Rabbits! The Dollonds have NOT got Southmoor—"

"They haven't!" was the yelled chorus. "Oh!" "Lord Lundy has bought Southmoor in the last half-hour," Betty gaily announced. "We know it for a fact!"

"And as for anything in this old paper," Polly said, dropping the local weekly into the waste-paper-basket, "it will have something quite different to say next week!"

Betty laughed on.

"I can tell you why that paragraph appeared. The Dollonds—or perhaps Mrs. Grandways—felt so sure last night, they passed the word to the editor. There's nothing in it. Morcove is saved from— Pardon, Etta?"

"Nothing, Betty," faltered shame-faced Etta Hargrove; "except that here are two of us, anyhow, who—"

"Yes, Betty," said Biddy, very red-faced, "we know now. And so—"

"Betty," gulped Etta, "will you come along and collect the Form before school, to tell them—"

"Be blown if I do!" laughed the ex-captain. "You can do that quite well, Etta Hargrove—with Biddy to assist you! Polly and I want a bit of dinner, don't we? So we are going downstairs to get it!"

Betty and Polly got their belated dinner; took their time over it, too!

After school had started, Form captain Fay came to them from the class-room, to say that Madeleine Dollond insisted upon their immediate appearance. Evidently the Dollonds now were going to be done with beguiling words and sweet smiles.

But not until half-past two did the errant pair calmly enter the class-room.

As they did so, a sensational uproar started.

And bad-tempered cries from Madeleine Dollond were quite lost in the loud cheering which came from more than half the Form—led by Etta and Biddy.

And so Study No. 12 could be quite sure; plenty of Morecovians had already become "wise after the event"! Plenty, like Etta and Biddy, were sadder and wiser girls now.

Would it lead to a clamour for Betty to be given back the captaincy?

Very likely. The Dollonds would probably decide not to stay their time out at Morcove School.

In any case, Betty and Co. had now no fears for the future of Morcove School.

For the rest, it would not be long before Miss Merrick was out of hospital, fully recovered from the effects of her motoring accident. She would be in charge of the Form again, whilst every passing day would be bringing nearer that happy time when Miss Somerfield herself would be back.

Nor were Betty and Co. to remember it, in bitterness, how they had had to do and bear so much without any of that support which they had been entitled to expect.

Soon enough would they forget, like the generously forgiving girls they were, that their final triumph had even been achieved at a time—when the school scorned them!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]