

“Sunny’s Lost Melodrama” Grand Long Complete
‘Sunny’ Story Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS’ OWN 2^d



**MURIEL'S INSECURE
HIDING-PLACE!**

(A dramatic incident from this week's
enthralling long complete story of
Morcove School.)

Read How a Great Escapade Was—

KEPT SECRET BY THE STUDIES!



By MARJORIE STANTON

Morcove is Mystified!

"NAOMER, do you want a treat?"
 "Ooo, yes, Polly—queek! Where is he?"
 "He 'is' in the kitchen, Naomer—"

"Ooo, splendid!"

The word kitchen always excited Naomer Nakara, that dusky junior who was Morcove's royal scholar.

"You know the way?" Polly asked.

"Yes, bekas, I have: been there millions of times."

"Well, don't go bursting in upon cook—"

"No, bekas, I know what she is. But, Polly, you say, queek! Is she in ze good mood then, this morning?"

"As sweet as a rose, I found her!"

"Hooray! Bekas, sometimes— But, queek, what is ze treat, Polly?" the dusky-one clamoured.

"You'll see!"

And Polly scampered off, having said quite enough for her own roguish purpose.

"Ha, ha, ha, my little joke on Naomer!" she chucklingly informed Betty Barton and two or three others, joining them for a before-breaker run-round in the open.

"You'll hear all about it presently!"

Meantime, it was with thrilling expectancy of a treat from cook that Naomer was tripping kitchenwards.

Naomer, as she approached the school's vast domestic regions, could not fail to detect the same old odour of the same old breakfast

dish—grilled bacon. Still, Polly had seriously implied that as soon as she, Naomer, got to the kitchen she would see what the treat was, and so—

"What ze diggings!" Naomer said under her breath suddenly.

She had reached the kitchen-doorway, stopping dead with surprise.

"Hallo, missy! 'Morning!"

That amiable greeting did not come from cook, who, indeed, looked far too busy at the huge range to have time for visitors: But, at one end of the kitchen-table, sat a policeman of giant girth, helmet off, tackling a substantial breakfast.

It was he who, after arresting a crisp portion of bacon on its way to his mouth, had said that bluff good morning to Naomer.

Then cook turned round.

"Out of my kitchen, you young rascal!"

This, in her very fiercest, from cook, coupled with the formidable presence of a policeman, would have made Naomer turn and flee, but sheer amazement kept her motionless.

"Well, my little lady,"

said the officer of the Law affably, "how goes it?"

"Like her impudence!" fumed buxom cook, whilst she stirred the school's porridge.

"If I've said once, I've said a thousand times, this is my kitchen! Who told you you come here, miss, I'd like to know?"

"I'm very sorry," apologised Naomer,

A great mystery overhangs Morcove—the mystery of a missing schoolgirl, Muriel Garth. One Fourth-Former, Helen Craig, is desperately anxious about her for she alone realises the grave danger that surrounds Muriel, whose relations intend to take her back to Mexico to further their own schemes. Can Helen Craig outwit those who seek to harm Muriel? You will read the answer in this thrilling complete Morcove tale.

with a pretty demureness against which cook's irascibility was hardly proof. "What ze diggings, is zis all I was to see? Bekas, zey said something about—a treat!"

At that instant, four or five girlish faces appeared at the kitchen-window. Naomer knew them all at a glance, and why they held such broad grins. One was Polly Linton's.

"Arrest her!" madcap Polly called in to the policeman. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Then Polly and her equally mirthful companions fled, having moved both cook and the policeman to laughter. As for Naomer, not a little furious at having been "had," she stamped round to dash away—and then, goodness! she very nearly ran full tilt into a second policeman!

Naomer reached the open air a few seconds later, feeling that Morcové School must be swarming with "bobbies" this morning. There must be a whole army of them, taking turns at getting breakfast in the kitchen.

"Well?" blandly inquired the madcap, as Naomer came rushing up. "You had the treat, then?"

"A washout!" seethed Naomer. "I am furious! And cook was not in ze good mood, either!"

"She was—to me!" Polly proudly retorted. "And I felt sure it would seem a great treat, Naomer, for you to go and see a real live policeman, having such a good brekker. It isn't every day—"

"Good job! Bekas, by ze time they are finished there will be no breakfast for any of us, I zink! I have seen millions of them!"

"How many?" asked Betty.

"Two, any old how!"

"Two million policemen," smiled Pam Willoughby. "Yes, well, they ought to find missing Muriel Garth at that rate—easily!"

"Yes, wather, zeals," beamed Paula Creef.

"But it's strange," murmured Betty Barton; and instantly her chums were just as grave as she. "I am sure it means that policemen have been out all night, trying to find the girl. It's why breakfast is being provided for them here at the school, this morning."

"And they haven't found the girl, after all!"

"Can't have done," was Polly's rejoinder to Pam's surprised comment. "Or we would have heard directly we got downstairs."

The talk lapsed. The juniors were each thinking about the missing girl.

"If we had known, at bedtime last night, what sensational things were happening," Polly exclaimed at last, "I, for one, should not have slept!"

"Nor for any of us," added Betty. "Which is just why, no doubt, Miss Somerfield forbade Helen to speak to us when she came up to the dormitory—ever so late!"

"Helen, if you ask me, is pretty offhand about it all, in any case," answered Polly. "And where is she now, by the way?"

"Nobody seemed to know. The last they had seen of Helen Craig, she was hurrying through her morning toilette as if wanting to race them all. It was then that they and others had wanted to bombard her with questions, but she had soon made it clear that her lips were sealed. Only when they got downstairs had they begun to put two and two together."

"Good morning, girls! And how are you all this morning?"

The chums faced round sharply.

"Oh, Madame Garcia! And you, Jose!"

"Yes, good morning, all of you!" Jose Garcia

voiced her own amiable greeting, as she stood beside her mother on the sunny patch of gravel.

The Mexican lady and her handsome young daughter must have been stepping very softly, to come upon the scholars from behind and give them such a violent start. Like Jose, the mother was all smiles.

"It is a lovely morning, girls! I did not know that in this country," said Madame Garcia, "the weather could be so perfect!"

"If only the news were as good as the morning!" Betty exclaimed earnestly. "But I suppose we girls have heard all that there is to be said about Muriel Garth?"

"That depends," smiled Madame Garcia; "upon what you girls have heard!"

"Muriel is still missing!" cried Pearl. "Although Helen Craig had a glimpse of the girl, last night, and on that Miss Somerfield called in the police to make a thorough search. Well, it's a puzzle. Madame Garcia, what can be the reason for your stepdaughter keeping out of your way like this?"

The lady gave an expressive shrug.

"But has it not been so very simple, from the first?" she said strenuously. "Just the silly fancy of a girl to stay in her native country, that is all! Ah, yes, even now I am not angry with my dear Muriel. We forgive her, do we not, Jose?"

"So," nodded that girl with a good-tempered smile. "Why should we be angry, when that is all it means! Muriel has been so long away from Mexico, she has forgotten what happiness there can be for her out there. She is just a little—how do you call it? Homesick for England!"

"Although she really had no home in England," was Pam's rejoinder. "We understood that Muriel Garth had simply been in the care of that young lady, Miss Aylwin, who again had no home of her own. The pair of them simply lived wherever Miss Aylwin's employment chanced to be. By the way, Madame Garcia," added Pam, with sudden eagerness, "is it true that Miss Aylwin is likely to turn up at Morcové to-day?"

If a shade seemed to pass across Madame Garcia's handsome face as that question was asked, it was not a thing calculated to puzzle the scholars. They could easily understand that the lady and her daughter could not help the trouble about Muriel ruffling their smiling graciousness, now and then.

"That is so, yes," Madame Garcia nodded gravely. "Jose and I, we also look forward to meeting Miss Aylwin. A very charming young lady; she has our great regard! But we must not detain you girls. The time for your breakfast, is it not?"

The gong had not yet sounded. But Betty and the others, feeling themselves dismissed by madame's pointed hint, went away.

"Helen Craig not with them, Jose!" the Mexican woman muttered, after watching the batch of scholars pass out of sight.

"No, mother, although they are, of all the girls in the school, Helen's best friends."

Mother and daughter looked at each other gravely.

"That Helen! Where is she now—at this moment, Jose? Is it possible that she has slipped away, knowing where to have word with Muriel in secret?"

"I cannot believe it," Jose answered, just as softly as her mother had spoken. "No; Helen Craig cannot know where to find Muriel, or in the night, mother—in the night! That would have been the time for Helen Craig to try and get to Muriel, not now, when all the school is about, surely!"

But Madame Garcia received this with a doubtful shrug.

"To me, Jose, that Craig girl has been the stumbling block all along. Above all, how mad—denying that she was able to save Muriel just in time, last evening. You and Andro—a minute sooner, and you would have caught the girl!"

"Yes, mother," Jose nodded sullenly. "But I am sure of this; they had no time for talk. There must have been just time for Helen Craig to tell Muriel to rush away, and that was all. And so I wonder that the police—"

"Ah, the police—fools!" Madame Garcia seethed. "Look there," she muttered, observing one of Barncombe's portly constables coming out by a side door, and easing his belt. "They can only eat, those pigs of English police. So fat, their cheeks, they cannot see with their eyes."

She added, fiercely:

"And in a few hours Miss Aylwin will arrive at the school! I tell you, Jose," with an angry stamp. "I am mad in my mind, this morning; but it does not do to show it—no! If only Muriel had been found by now! We could have taken her away at once—the instant! There is the good excuse, that already the yacht has been delayed most seriously. But they have not found her—and Miss Aylwin is all the time—"

"Sh, mother!"

Jose was suddenly aware of one of the school's maids approaching briskly.

"If you please, Miss Somerfield has sent me to tell you breakfast is ready," said the maid, "if you don't mind having it by yourselves."

"Oh, thank you; by all means!" cried Madame Garcia, hiding all her raging anxiety behind a fresh smile. "Morcoove School is being very kind; truly hospitable! I owe Miss Somerfield a thousand thanks for letting me, as well as Jose, pass the night here. We have given you all so much trouble! Here, then, my girl—for yourself."

It was a ten-shilling currency note that the Mexican lady suddenly pressed into the parlourmaid's hand.

"Oh, thank you, ma'am, but—"

"And don't forget," laughed Madame Garcia, going in with her daughter through some wide-flung French windows, "if any of the servants about the place discover anything concerning Muriel Garth—let me know!"

Helen is Surprised!

HALF an hour later, Polly Linton was giving a whoop of delight.

Letters were being given out, and the madcap of Study 12 had just opened one from her brother Jack.

"Hooray, cheers! Jack's doing a run over to Morcoove on his motor-bike, bye-and-bye," was Polly's joyful cry. "And he may have Dave Lawder with him, in the sidecar."

"Oh, weally!" beamed Paula. "Why?"

Then Polly, putting the letter away, glared at her fatuous chum.

"Thing to ask—why! Isn't it enough that Jack's my brother?"

"Not to mention that Dave Lawder is Polly's chum," Pam serenely reminded Paula Creel; but Polly tossed her head and said she didn't know so much about that.

"Anyway, I must see how the cubby-hole looks, in case they turn up for tea," added the madcap, trying to extricate herself from the crowd formed by dozens of other scholars, all devouring letters. "Oh, sorry, Helen!" she cried as she bumped into that girl.

"That's quite all right, Polly," came Helen's quiet, but cordial, response.

She was reading a telegram, the confirmation of her phone message of the previous night. Only a couple of moments after her Study 12 schoolmate had scampered away, she herself drifted off.

Letter-reading was still engaging lots of the scholars, and Helen—to her secret relief—was not overtaken on the way up to the studies by any heller-skeltering mob. She reached her own study without being drawn into talk, and there she read again the confirmatory telegram.

Stale news, that was all it was. Only the same message which, conveyed to her by telephone at bedtime last night, had kept her sleepless for many hours afterwards!

And, of all the sleepless hours she had known of late, on account of poor Muriel Garth, last night's had certainly been the worst.



Naorner opened the kitchen door and peeped into the kitchen. Her surprise was great when she saw a burly constable. "Out of my kitchen, you young rascal!" cried cook. But Naorner was too astonished to move.

Hour after hour, the police, she knew, had been ranging over the neighbourhood moor; other men, searching the seashore—leaving no sheltering cavern unvisited! Every likely hiding-place in the district, routed out; and yet—they had not found the girl.

Marvellous, that the youthful fugitive had not been found.

But there the scholar's musings were cut short. She jumped as if an electric shock had gone through her, hearing a whisper—the extremely cautious breathing of her own name.

"Helen! Sh! Helen!"

Then, whilst a cold thrill ran all down her spine, she peered over the study-table, and her dilating eyes beheld the face of Muriel Garth peeping from under a cretonne-covered settee.

She was there!

"Muriel!" gasped Helen. "Oh, good gracious! But—"

Hark! Now the corridor seemed to hold a whole host of scholars, starting to get ready for lessons. Was Pam amongst them?—Pam, co-tenant of this study! But there was no need to give a warning gesture; Muriel had drawn in her head. Nothing was to be seen of her; somehow or other she was lying flat and altogether concealed under the settee. It was one of those lavish pieces of furniture by which Pam had made this study so distinguished. The beautiful art-cover draped down, except at the back, to within an inch of the carpet.

Controlling her great agitation, Helen went round to that side of the room—Pam's side. To the right of the settee there was an exquisite little Sheraton bookcase—Pam's, of course, but Helen was welcome to the run of it. She pretended to be straightening the books.

"Muriel!" she breathed down to the hidden girl. "You have not been there all night?"

"No; behind one of the music-room pianos—the upright grand. You said the caves, but I felt I had better not, in case they should get up search parties."

Helen's responsive sigh must have told the girl in hiding that it was just as well!

From under the couch, Muriel whispered again:

"Helen, any news about Miss Aylwin? It's what I am dying to know!"

"There was a message from her last night," breathed the schoolgirl, still fiddling with books. "She is on her way here. But, mind, Madame Garcia and Jose are in the schoolhouse, Muriel!"

"I know. In the night, I think they—"

"H'm, h'm!" Helen coughed, warningly—and then the door opened and Pam, leaving Naomer and Paula to go on to Study 12, came into the room.

"Yes, well, Helen, I suppose it's a case of school, as usual! Although I do think the school might have been given the day off, to hunt for Muriel Garth."

"There are the police," said Helen.

"Everywhere. Such nice friendly bobbies. I do love them."

Pam threw together the books she would want in class.

"And you are coming into school, Helen? You don't know how to play your cards, my dear. As the central figure; as the girl who was kept up late last night, to be questioned by the police; as the one person who has seen Muriel ever since she went into hiding—morning school doesn't seem fair on you. It's an anti-climax."

Bang! The door was pounded by a small fist.

"Steady, there; steady, I said," Pam repeated, as Naomer frisked into the study. "But you may

take all these books down to class for me, there's a darling."

"Pam," cried Polly, showing herself in the doorway, "don't you give Naomer anything out of your corner-cupboard. She's on the scrounge again—"

"What ze diggings—"

"And most ungrateful," the madcap stated solemnly. "Making faces at the brown roll I gave her; throwing it at Paula—"

"Yes, wather; most wude," complained Paula, making one more to crowd out the study.

"One good turn deserves another," Pam argued.

"So Naomer shall have a standby, for carrying my books down to class."

"Ooo, zank you! Here, Paula, queek, hold zese books," Naomer commanded, thrusting her own and Pam's into the elegant one's arms. "Queek, Pam, what have you got?"

"Very little," the Swanlake girl answered, standing at the open larder. "Is it the mice? Things do vanish!"

She handed Naomer a most delicious-looking apple, whereupon the Imp decamped, apparently forgetting the implied contract to carry Pam's books.

"The wascal," was Paula's comment. "It's a great pity she hasn't more principle—"

"And less appetite," smiled Pam, taking back her own books from the laden duffer. "I suppose it is the mice!"

"We have had no mice in Study 12," Polly said proudly, "since I took to keeping the cupboard locked!"

Pam, Paula and Polly hurried out of the room as Betty went by. They left the door open behind them, expecting Helen to follow. She seemed to be rather behind in getting her books together.

When there had been time for those girls to reach the stairs, she went to the study-door and softly closed it.

At that instant, the bell went for morning school.

"Muriel," Helen resumed, in the deepest or whispers. "Can you hear me?"

"Yes, yes!"

"I mustn't speak louder; we must be so careful! Oh, Muriel, if only you can hang on for a few hours longer. When Miss Aylwin is certainly on her way to the school, it will be a cruel shame if—"

"But I shall manage. Helen, you go down to school now—"

"I must go, yes; and yet—" Pausing, Helen sighed heavily. "If only Madame Garcia and Jose were not staying around!"

"They did not catch me in the night," whispered Muriel. "At one time they were prowling all through the schoolhouse, I am certain; but I beat them, Helen—I beat them!"

"And I must hope and pray that you still will beat them, Muriel. I will help you all I can," was Helen's fervent promise, in the same deep whisper. "I know this, Muriel, if they catch you before Miss Aylwin arrives they'll take you away on the instant. They have talked openly of doing that— Sh!"

Again there were the voices and footsteps of girls going by in the passage.

"It's terrible!" Helen resumed the tense whispering with the girl in hiding. "To think that you are here in a school that simply swarms with other girls. Muriel, what are you going to do? You can't stay there!"

"The attics—presently," came the guarded

answer. "I have proved before, Helen, it's safe to make a move when the school is in class. And surely they have done all the searching?"

"In the school itself—yes, perhaps," whispered Helen. "Listen, then. If I get the chance, Muriel, I will try to get to you there—with food."

"But, Helen—"

"Sh!"

There was a footstep just outside the study. And now, as the door opened again, Helen found that it was no schoolmate to whom she had to show a calm countenance.

There in the doorway, looking in with eyes of mingled suspicion and mockery, was the daughter of Madame Garcia.

A Dangerous Position.

"HOW, then," Jose Garcia exclaimed at Helen, "you are not going to lessons?"

"I am going to lessons, at once," Helen stated, with desperate composure. "So I have no time to waste in talk."

She took up her books, to hasten away; but now Jose came right into the room, closed the door, and stood with her back to it.

"We can talk, all the same; I mean to have a little talk!" she declared, the crafty smile keeping her eyes narrowed. "They will excuse you, Helen Craig—you, who were kept up so late last night. And you did not sleep well, I think? I can imagine!"

And she laughed.

"Will you move away from that door, please?" Helen requested icily. "And I should like to know whether Miss Somerfield has given you liberty to make as free with the school as all this?"

"Oh, insolent!" Jose said passionately. "Me, I would like to know whether Miss Somerfield has ever given you permission to help Muriel Garth! For you have been helping her all along! Not last night, merely; all the time, Helen Craig, you have been doing your best for my stepister. And supposing my mother and I tell Miss Somerfield? How then?"

"I would not be without an excuse, Jose Garcia."

"Excuse—bah! You are a fool," the Mexican girl laughed. "Why, even your own headmistress would have no excuse. I tell you, if Muriel Garth were found at this moment, in half an hour she would have to go away with me and my mother, and no one could prevent it—not even your headmistress, let alone a little fool of a schoolgirl! Nor yet," Jose added, with another cruel laugh, "that wonderful Miss Aylwin."

She walked all round the study with a swaggering step.

"Miss Aylwin—ah, you must excuse the laugh; it is so droll! That she is coming all this distance—and ver' likely losing her situation—all for nothing!"



"Helen, do you know where Muriel Garth is?" asked the Headmistress. Before Helen could answer, Miss Aylwin interrupted, much to the annoyance of the Garcias.

"Very well," Helen scornfully remarked, standing over by the door. "I am not going to talk about it. You will please leave this study—"

"I do not think so," said Jose, sitting down on the very settee under which Muriel was hidden. "I like this study. You may go down to your lessons, Helen Craig. I stay here!"

Then Helen laughed. How she managed to do so, she could never explain afterwards; but—she laughed, and it was a very successful laugh, too.

"On the chance of Muriel's creeping to this study presently?" she derided Jose's sitting there.

The Mexican girl jumped to her feet. Her eyes blazed.

"Yes, for that ver' reason!" she flared out at the schoolgirl. "I know! In every study there is food; there are cakes and things for your own teas. And this is your study, Helen Craig!"

"It is Pam Willoughby's also. I warn you—"

"Oh, you warn me!" laughed Jose, running fingers through her jet-black hair. "I could warn you, for that matter. The law is on the side of my mother. The police are looking for a girl who has run away from her mother!"

"Stepmother, Jose."

"It makes no difference!"

Then—a pause. Outwardly so calm, inwardly Helen was trembling. Not merely was this hateful Jose in the very room which concealed poor Muriel; the Mexican girl's every word seemed to stress the uselessness, in the long run, of trying to save the runaway. And all that was being said—Muriel herself could hear it!

"You will be ver' late for those lessons," Jose

suddenly laughed. "I thought you were in a hurry? You do not care to go away whilst I am here, is that it? I can imagine!"

She sat down again. She shook up a cushion on the settee, and made herself more comfortable.

"The poor Muriel," she smiled cruelly. "It must be that she is so hungry by now. If she should come, Helen Craig, I have your permission to let her help herself? Not necessary, perhaps? She already—"

And there the mocking speaker broke off abruptly, paying heed to an approaching footstep.

"Someone coming for you?" she suggested, in further mockery. "Helen Craig, you will be kept in at midday, and that again may be awkward for Muriel? I can imagine! For the girl is in this school!" came with a sudden ferocity that brought the speaker to her feet once more. "It is evident! When all those police have searched and searched, and yet—"

"Miss," interrupted a parlourmaid, after throwing wide the study-door, "the headmistress, please, at once. And you, too, Miss Garcia—"

"Me?" exclaimed Jose, stabbing fingertips to her chest.

"Yes, please. I have been looking for you both," said the parlourmaid, standing clear of the door to let the two girls pass out. "I went to the Fourth Form class-room, Miss Helen, but you were not there."

"But why am I wanted by the headmistress?" asked Helen breathlessly.

"And I?" jerked out the Mexican girl. "But they have found Muriel Garth, is that it?"

"I don't know anything about that," the maid answered. "I only know that I was sent to fetch you both, because—Miss Aylwin has arrived!"

Must Helen Speak?

MISS AYLWIN—here at Morocco!
And now—what was to happen? What was one to do?

Those questions were beating in Helen's brain as she went downstairs with Jose Garcia.

Helen stole a glance at Jose, when they were almost at the headmistress' private door. Excitement had sharpened the Mexican girl's looks. Her eyes were gleaming. But the most significant thing was her undiminished swagger. Helen could not help fearing that it came to complete confidence in Madame Garcia's right to do what she would with Muriel; a right that neither Deborah Aylwin nor the headmistress would be able to withstand!

The next moment they were in the room, and it did not make Helen's hopes rise when she saw that a far from cordial feeling existed between Miss Somerfield and Miss Aylwin.

Madame Garcia was not there, but she was evidently expected. Meantime, it appeared as if there had already been a bit of a scene. Seldom had Helen seen her headmistress looking more testy. Miss Aylwin was obviously travel-weary yet she had either risen during an exchange of heated words, or had refused a seat from the first, on account of some affront.

"Ah, Helen!" exclaimed the headmistress. "I am afraid you do not get much chance to settle to your work. But Miss Aylwin appears to have her own private reason for involving you in this distressing affair, instead of dealing with me!"

"There is a reason, right enough," Deborah Aylwin said gently. "One that you may soon have to be given, Miss Somerfield."

"Oh, I am glad you think that I may have

to be told," the headmistress said drily. "However, here is Jose Garcia, whom you remember, I understand, as quite a little girl in the old days in Mexico!"

"I remember!" Miss Aylwin said, conferring the merest nod upon Jose, who stood an inch taller, smiling insolently.

Then, looking at Helen, the young lady became so emotional, she might have been on the verge of sudden tears.

"Muriel's friend!" Miss Aylwin exclaimed. "You will never regret it, Helen Craig."

"I hope she will never have cause to regret anything," Miss Somerfield said bleakly. "But really, when I have had it pointed out to me, in the last hour or two, how much there is to suggest that Helen has been aiding Muriel Garth—I may be pardoned a few misgivings!"

Helen, whilst she grew confused and red-faced, was aware of another pained look passing across Miss Aylwin's face.

"Miss Somerfield, we are waiting for Madame Garcia, but she does not come—"

"She cannot be long now; I have sent for her—"

"But in any case," Miss Aylwin spoke on tensely, "I would rather not delay explanations a moment longer. Your manner tells me that you feel aggrieved with me, and worse, that this scholar of yours stands suspected of unworthy conduct. But Helen Craig deserves nothing but praise. If she has been aiding Muriel Garth in secret, it was only because that was the right thing to do."

"No!" The vehement word of dissent had burst from Jose. "You will not dare to say that, Deborah Aylwin, in front of my mother!"

"Oh, won't I?" returned the former governess calmly.

And then the door flew open and Madame Garcia strode in.

Slamming the door behind her smartly, she came forward like an actress taking the centre of the stage.

After looking Miss Aylwin up and down, the Mexican lady said with a curling lip:

"So kind of you to come! Now perhaps Helen Craig will be good enough to say where Muriel is? We know that Helen has only been waiting for you, Miss Aylwin!"

The headmistress turned to Helen.

"Helen, do you know where Muriel Garth is hiding at this moment? If so, I must insist that you tell us!"

"One moment, before you give orders that Helen, as a scholar, must obey," interposed Deborah Aylwin gravely. "Miss Somerfield, if Helen Craig does know where the missing girl is to be found, then I beg you most earnestly not to press for information. I want to—"

"You want! You!" flared out Madame Garcia, stamping furiously. "You want to go away and mind your own business, I think! Who are you, to come here—"

"I am Muriel's past protector; her well-wisher—ready to go to any length to keep her out of your hands," Miss Aylwin answered steadily. "She does not want to make the voyage to Mexico—"

"It is not what Muriel wants, you fool!" raged Madame Garcia. "It is what I, her mother—"

"Stepmother—"

"That makes no difference! I have the lawful right to decide the girl's life for her. Miss Somerfield, you would not dispute that right?"

"But why," asked the headmistress uneasily, "does Miss Aylwin speak as if unhappiness awaited Muriel Garth in Mexico? Why does Miss Aylwin—distrust you?"

"Here is the answer; this letter," Deborah Aylwin said, before Madame Garcia could get in a word. "Read it, Miss Somerfield. That letter," as the headmistress eagerly took it and began to read, "was the cause of my returning to Morcove like this."

"It is a letter that Muriel Garth wrote, after going into hiding," Helen supplemented. "I posted it for her! Muriel wanted to get in touch with Miss Aylwin again, and that was the only way—to send a letter—"

"With your assistance!" Madame Garcia fairly hissed at the schoolgirl. "Right! There we have it! Oh, it is a fine school, this! Where the girls do just as they like—bah, and what wonder! When we see what a headmistress there is!"

The insulting remark was doubtless provoked by Miss Somerfield's changing looks, as she paid no heed to the talk, but read the letter slowly, carefully, to the last word.

Then, putting an end to the dramatic pause, she said a gentle "Thank you," whilst returning the letter to Miss Aylwin.

Madame Garcia and Jose looked at each other. They seemed to know what was coming now.

"That letter," Miss Somerfield said to Madame Garcia, "puts a different complexion on the whole affair. I now understand that Muriel Garth had the very gravest reasons for wanting to remain in this country. It has been no case of homesickness. Nor was it merely that she feared she might be as unhappy, in Mexico, as she was in the old days. She speaks in that letter to Miss Aylwin—her only protectress in this country—of your intention to use her as a means to an end!"

"Lies, lies!" stamped Madame Garcia. "You are not going to believe—"

"I am afraid I must believe every word," Miss Somerfield's calm voice checked the raging one. "The whole thing bears the stamp of truth."

"It is the truth," Helen cried out, drawing all eyes upon her. "And do you wonder, Miss Somerfield, that I have done all I could out of pity for Muriel Garth, when I have known from the first that she has not been trying to escape any misery that might be in store for her, but only trying to prevent my father, out in Mexico, from being swindled—yes, swindled by Madame Garcia!"

The mother and daughter burst into shrill laughter.

"More lies!" Madame Garcia cried, in her high-strung way. "Jose, what do you think of it? Ha, ha, ha! Now I am called the swindler! But, no more of this," she raged out again. "Miss Somerfield, you will order this schoolgirl of yours to say where Muriel Garth can be found, this instant!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort—"

"What! You will either do as I say, or be sorry!" cried the Mexican woman. "I will not have another hour wasted. Already there has been a delay of many days. The yacht is lying idle at Plymouth, and she must leave—"

"Then let the yacht leave, as soon as you and your daughter can get back to Plymouth and on board," Miss Somerfield suggested, with supreme composure. "As for Muriel Garth, I will not help you to find her—"

"You will not?"

"No!"

Jose turned to her mother, gesturing wildly, ready to speak volubly; but Madame Garcia waved her away and stood, drawn back a little, staring at the headmistress.

"No," Miss Somerfield repeated, quietly. "And that is final, Madame Garcia."

"You have no right to keep Muriel out of my hands!"



The chums of Study 12 jumped up from the table as Helen burst into the room. "I heard what you said," she cried, "and now I want you to help me. I know where Muriel is!"

"I know I have not. This is the very reason why I will not help you to place hands upon her," was the crushing retort. "When I believed that you were meaning well by the poor girl, I gave you every assistance. It was I who called in the police last night! But now—"

And she pointed to the door.

The mother and daughter stood aghast.

"Please leave the school," Miss Somerfield requested, in a steely tone. "I do not know where Muriel Garth is hiding, and I do not wish to know!"

"But this schoolgirl of yours," madame panted, pointing at Helen, "she knows! And you are content to let her keep silent?"

"In the circumstances, yes. It is a thing I am sure her own father would approve. How could he do otherwise?"

"Well, I am not going, and neither is Jose!" Madame Garcia cried, folding her arms across her chest. "We do not go until Miss Aylwin there goes also!"

Miss Somerfield went to a bell-press and touched the button. There was tense silence in the room until a parlourmaid appeared.

"Ellen, show Madame Garcia and her daughter to the door, please."

"We refuse to go!" the woman cried.

"Ellen," said Miss Somerfield, as calmly as before, "there are plenty of policemen about the place. Go and fetch one, please."

At that, Madame Garcia suddenly caught Jose by the wrist and marched away with her to the door. Pausing there, she looked round, smiling, evilly first at Miss Aylwin, then at Helen Craig, and finally at the headmistress.

"You are right; there are, as you say, plenty of police!" Madame Garcia said, in a fierce whisper. "Well then, we shall use them! Come, Jose!"

And, pushing that girl before her, she went out, banging the door behind her.

At that moment, Muriel Garth was flitting from the study that had sheltered her, to find fresh refuge in the attics.

The Visit to Morcove!

"POLICE trap, Dave!"

"So it seems, Jack!"

"But did you ever see a place so humming with bobbies," laughed Jack Linton, as he kept his motor-cycle and sidecar purring along the last mile of the road to Morcove School. "What's Polly been up to now, old son?"

"Anyhow," joked back Dave Lawder, from the sidecar, "you'll be there to bail her out!"

"I've got no money for bailing out sisters," Jack heartlessly announced, above the sound of his exhaust. "Steady, lad; here's another!"

And he sociably conferred a wink and a smile upon the policeman in question.

"Make's four," commented Jack. "One we saw a mile back, on the moor; two others pow-wowing together over the cliffs. Gosh, and just look there, Dave—at the school gates!"

Dave sat up in the sidecar. It really was enough to make him sit up smartly—the sight of yet another policeman, donning a kind of sentry-go just outside Morcove's great gateway.

Jack sounded the hooter loudly.

"We might be royalty, Dave. All this fuss; this guarding the route. Watch him give me the salute!"

And, sure enough, this fifth policeman did throw up a hand to his helmet as the merry

motor-cyclist and his passenger took the turn-in at the gateway.

"Anyhow, Dave, our papers were in order, if we had been stopped," chuckled the inveterate jester. "A pass until eight o'clock—hooray! It's the stuff. We ought to get some tennis. But tea first. Tea, talk, tennis, that's the idea!"

Whereupon he drew up the outfit at a convenient parking-place on the grass.

With a certain sobriety that was ever the foil to Jack Linton's gaiety, Dave Lawder extricated himself from the sidecar, then rummaged for a small parcel in the forepeak. But Dave was not allowed to go up the school drive with Jack, quite decorously carrying the obvious gift of chocolates for Study 12.

"Hist, we are observed!" Jack said dramatically, as his sister and her chums came galloping to meet them; and he took the parcel, smuggling it under his jacket.

"Jack—Dave! But you're late!" Polly mingled reproof with gladness. "And what on earth is that supposed to mean?"

"Yes, what ze diggings!"

For Jack, the parcel smuggled under his coat, had now pulled his cap over one eye, investing himself with an air of mystery. He held up a finger, invoking silence. He furtively glanced behind him.

"Ha, good," he breathed dramatically. "No one comes! Take this package then," thrusting it into Polly's not unwilling hands; "and when Dave and I are gone open it!"

"Oh, we must have these after tea," Polly demurred. "You two are staying on for a bit, aren't you? Well, we don't mean to let these wait as long as that."

She pulled off the string, opened the brown paper wrapper at one end, and peeped. Naomer, attempting to get a similar peep, was fended off.

"For me!" said Polly. "You will have one—a hard one—when the time comes! Well, Jack, I'd say it's rather sweet of you; but I suppose Dave bought them. Dave, you shouldn't waste your money on us. Put your cap straight, Jack. Remember where you are."

"Morcove, so it is!" said Jack, like one coming out of a dream. "Hallo, Betty—Paula; how are you! And you, Madge. And is that Naomer—?"

"What else do you zink I am," retorted the dusky one, "if I am not myself?"

"Sorry; it's I who are not myself at present," pleaded Jack. "Keep on having—visions. Policemen. Hefty great bobbies. Makes me wonder that you haven't all been pinched."

"Oh, the policemen!" laughed Betty and two or three other members of the Co. "Ha, ha, ha! Now we understand!"

"It's more than Dave and I do," complained Jack. "Has there been a burglary, or what?"

Polly, however, was impatient.

"Do you want some tea or not?" she cried. "Then scoot along and report, and sharp about it, too! If you don't show up in Study 12 within five minutes, we shall begin."

So Jack and Dave sprinted ahead of the girls, to get indoors and go through the simple formality of reporting to a mistress. They hoped that it wouldn't be Miss Massingham; but it was! Instead of the cordial permission which the headmistress herself could always be relied upon to grant, Jack was to obtain only a fussy, grudging permission from the Form-mistress, for him, and friend, to have tea with his sister, and friends.

"Have you proper exeats from your school?" Miss Massingham questioned. "I would like to see them. Thank you! But what is this scribble on these scraps of paper?"

"That's the captain's writing, Miss Massingham," Jack explained cheerfully.

"He should learn to write better! But you may have permission. By the way," and Jack and Dave, in the act of marching off, returned stiffly to attention; "you came across country from Grangemoor? You did not see anything of a girl—not a Morcove scholar, but an ordinary girl—wandering at large?"

"No," said Jack. "Oh, no—did we, Dave? But why, Miss Massingham?"

"I merely wondered," said that lady, with provoking reticence.

But there was enlightenment for Jack and Dave as soon as they rejoined Betty & Co. in Study 12. As fast as girlish tongues could tell the whole story of missing Muriel Garth, that story was told!

By the time the cups had been filled and the meal had started, Jack and Dave knew as much as the girls about the strange affair.

Nothing was suppressed, although Betty & Co. did not exactly enjoy having to wind up with the candid admission that Madame Garcia and her daughter Jose had nicely deceived them all!

"Oh, well, if you were taken in, so were others, it seems," was Jack's consoling comment. "Miss Somerfield included, just fancy! But how's it all going to end then? I mean to say, things are just about as exciting as ever, aren't they?"

"I should think they are!" answered Polly.

"Yes, bekas—"

"They mean to find Muriel; and that," said Betty, "is why the police are still swarming around."

"And really," chimed in Tess, "I don't see how the poor girl stands an earthly! Supposing she were hiding in the school—but we don't believe that's possible—she couldn't get away uncaught. On the other hand, the moment she comes out of any hiding place round about Morcove—well, they've got her!"

"Cruel position for the geal to be in," Paula lamented feebly. "When one realises, even Miss Somerfield could not protect the geal!"

"And the same applies to all of us—to Miss Aylwin as well," Betty glumly remarked. "Miss Aylwin has even gone back to Scotland—proof that she saw how useless it was to stay around at Morcove!"

Then Dave Lawder spoke—to some purpose, as was always the case with him.

"You take it to be proof of that, girls? You don't fancy by any chance, that Miss Aylwin's return to Scotland is a blind?"

The chums stared. They hadn't thought of that!

"Phew!" gasped Polly.

"Bai Jove—"

"Yes, bekas— What ze diggings, we are wondering all ze time if Helen Craig knows where Muriel is!" jerked out Naomer. "And perhaps Helen does know—"

"And is going to smuggle Muriel off to the railway-station!" Polly carried on the wild idea.

"After dark—"

"She can't," declared Betty despairingly. "It will end in disaster if she tries, anyhow. Police everywhere! Bound to be watching all the local stations."

Polly, although tea was only half over, suddenly

pushed back her chair and jumped up, to pace about the room.

"It's riling!" she fumed. "Of course, if Helen does know where Muriel is in hiding, we know quite well why we are not being told: Helen doesn't want to get us mixed up in it all. Yet, surely, since Miss Somerfield has shown that she'd be glad to hear of Muriel's safe escape, we can all join in now! Isn't it as plain as—as my face—!"

"A good deal plainer," struck in Jack, paying his sister a surprise compliment; "as head-mistress, Miss Somerfield must wash her hands of the whole thing. But, ex-officio—"

"We don't want any latin!" Polly interrupted tartly. "Look here, all of you! What we do want is to have in Helen now, this instant, and get her to see! The time has come for her to let us help!"

"I know it has!" rejoined a voice, with dramatic promptitude; and there was Helen Craig herself, already closing the study door after her sudden entry.

The tea-table rose en-masse. "Helen" was the excited cry—and then, because of her wrought-up look, a tense silence followed.

"I was just coming in when I heard what you said, Polly," Helen exclaimed at last. "You are right. The time has come for me to see if you cannot help. I know where Muriel is. She is in this school!"

The listeners stirred excitably, but were still tongue-tied.

"Half an hour ago," Helen spoke on, in a guarded voice, "I said good-bye to Miss Aylwin at the railway-station. There was a policeman on the platform. You know, there are police everywhere! Yet Miss Aylwin's last word to me was this. If only I can get Muriel safely out of the district, she will do the rest! If only I can do that—and how can I?"

She changed to a wistful, beseeching whisper.

"But with your help! Betty—all of you—for we know that Miss Somerfield would never be down on us, afterwards! She will turn a blind eye upon anything we may do, knowing that it is for the best. What can we do, then—what can we!"

"I know!" was Polly's inspired cry. "Ah, I've got it—yes, splendid! The motor-bike!"

She gave a sudden little joy-dance.

"Girls, don't you see? Jack—Dave! The sidecar! Muriel as a passenger—in disguise!"

"In disguise!" echoed Betty and others softly.

"Yes—"

"Gorjus!" breathed Naomer, beating her hands together, applaudingly. "Ooo, queek—"

"Am I right?" asked Polly, although her lit-up face showed that she would stand no opposition. "We disguise Muriel as a Morcove scholar! Jack drives off with her. Right under the eyes of the police, he rides away with her!"

"Miles and miles," interjected Betty. "Takes her to a station miles down the line beyond Barncombe! You can do that, Jack—you have time?"

Polly laughed before her brother could answer. "Why ask Jack! When we say that that's what Jack's got to do—he's jolly well got to!"

"You hear that?" he grinned.

Then, with the laugh going against her, Polly paused on her headstrong way to the door, to make an atoning remark.

"And when Jack says he'll do a thing, he does it! Don't you, Jack?"

Jack pulled her hair in return for the compliment.

"When you girls are ready, I am," he said gaily. "As for you, Dave old son, you look like having to walk back to Grangemoor this evening—a nice twenty miles or so, do you mind?"

"I don't mind," said Dave, as seriously as if that trying prospect were really in view.

But quiet Dave was to play a bigger part than that, before another hour was out!

Now or Never!

FIVE minutes after that outburst of exciting talk in Study 12, Helen Craig came alone to one of the attic-doors of Morcove School.

She had crept up from the floor below carrying a small bundle. Opening the door just wide enough to admit herself, she slipped into the dark attic.

"Sh!" she whispered. "Muriel? It's all right! And now, Muriel—now there's a chance for you!"

Helen switched on an electric-torch, and a moment later the girl-fugitive was advancing from some pitch-dark recess, to let the strong ray shine fully upon her.

"Get into these, as fast as you can, Muriel," the Morcove scholar whispered on, setting down the bundle. "You are to wear these clothes as a disguise, and so we'll be able to get you safely away. It's all fixed up. You're to be saved, after all!"

"Oh, Helen!" faltered the poor worn-out girl. "But you are running terrible risks, I am sure, all for my—"

"Sh! Not a word; there isn't time," Helen urged, under her breath. "Only do as I say, and go with me when you are ready, and it will be all right. I've got others to help me. Polly Linton's brother Jack, and a chum of his—two such splendid fellows, Muriel!—they're in it all. They've got a motor-cycle and sidecar. Hurry, then; make haste!"

She added, in the same deep whisper, whilst Muriel Garta agitatedly obeyed the dramatic entreaty:

"Jack Linton will drive you miles and miles across country. You can take the train from there. By this time to-morrow, you will be with Miss Aylwin—and the Garcios none the wiser!"

The trembling haste with which Muriel rushed on with the task of disguising herself bore pathetic witness to the desperate hope which Helen's words had suddenly held out.

Another minute and Muriel was getting into the regulation day-frock of a Morcove scholar. Stockings, shoes—nothing had been omitted to render the disguise complete. By the strange light of the electric torch, the hurried change was effected, Helen helping with the finishing touches.

Then Muriel's own discarded clothing was bundled together and put away in a remote corner of the attic.

Helen took out her purse.

"Money for the journey, Muriel; take it—"

"Oh, Helen!" the other almost sobbed. "It is more than I ought to—"

"Nonsense! When you have suffered as much as all this, simply on account of my father, out there in Mexico. Besides, this isn't all my money," Helen added, smiling with pride in the way her chums of Morcove had risen to the need. "Study 12 had a whip round!"

"They've made up several pounds!" gasped

Muriel, as she examined the contents of the purse. Oh, how good of them! And I shall not be able to thank them—"

"Someday, Muriel! But now—are you quite ready? Then come on!" urged Helen. "Careful, as you follow me! We're going down by the side staircase."

The torch was clicked off. On tip-toe the one girl crept after the other—out of the attic, down to the dormitory-floor, and so along to that secondary staircase which, being only used by the housemaids, promised an unnoted descent at this late hour of the day.

Meantime, having been entertained to a very nice, if hasty, tea in Study 12, it seemed that Jack and Dave were anxious to repay Betty & Co. by giving the girls little trips on the sidecar.

Polly was the first to jump in and be given a run-round by her brother. Then Naomer shrilly demanded her turn. Jack made it a specially lengthy run for the dusky one, even taking her out on to the main road and along it for a quarter of a mile, before he turned back.

A policeman was still loitering near the gateway. He had grinned as the famous outfit went whirring by on the outward run, Naomer waving gaily; he grinned broader than ever when Jack and his dusky passenger came whirring back.

"Corjus!" yelled Naomer, back on the school drive at the end of the trip. "Ooo, I would have liked to go on and on for ever!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Next, please!" sang out Jack, as he handed her serene Highness from the sidecar.

At this instant, Helen Craig and another girl came running up to join the high-spirited group.

Plenty of other Morcovians were out and about on the games field, and for that reason hearts were beating all the faster! But it was all right. Muriel, in the dress of a scholar, could not be easily recognised as a stranger from a distance. In a few moments, Betty & Co. were making it doubly safe for her, by crowding around.

"Quick, in with you!" urged Polly. "And good luck, Muriel!"

"Yes, wather!"

"And don't forget to write!" was Naomer's thrilling whisper.

Helen seized Muriel's hand and wrung it, after the girl had hastily settled herself in the sidecar.

"Good-bye, Muriel! See you again, someday!"

"Yes! Good-bye, good-bye, all!"

Jack punched the motor-horn, then kicked off.

"Any more for the Skylark!" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then, as the outfit glided off, Dave Lawder nimbly leapt for the luggage grid and seated himself thereon. He gravely waved to all the laughing scholars.

"Ha, ha, ha!" they pealed. "Good-bye-ee!"

Jack accelerated. Down to the gateway whirred the motor-cycle combination, Muriel in the sidecar, Jack driving, Dave riding safely astride the luggage-grid. Study 12 cheered and waved. Now for that policeman!

He was still there. In full view of the scholars, he again saluted as Jack drove past. Here was another girl scholar, the policeman must have thought, who would soon be brought back after a two-minute joy-ride. Well that was just where the policeman was mistaken!



Dave Lawder struggled furiously with Andro Garcia. To Muriel, sitting beside Polly's brother in the sidecar, it seemed that she was destined to fall into the hands of the Garcios after all, and, with bated breath, she watched the two boys grappling with one another.

Away went the speedy combination—straight along the Barncombe road, past the cottage-home of Dolly Delane. Dolly was in the garden. She waved, recognising Jack and Dave, and thinking that the girl in the sidecar must be one of her chums of Morcove.

Then, suddenly, they were whizzing past—Jose Garcia.

There was she, hanging about on the Barncombe Road, as if she and her mother had felt that it was not good enough to rely entirely upon the retained help of the police.

Did she recognise the disguised girl in the sidecar? But in any case, what did it matter? Whirr—whirr, on flew the motor-cycle and sidecar. In a flash she seemed to be left far behind.

Thus, in a few minutes they came to a branch road, leading over the lonely moors. "To Grangemoor," and places even further south, the signpost said. Jack turned the machine on to that lonely by-road, and on again they sped, still licking along in spite of many pot-holes.

"Hold tight, Dave!" was the driver's laughing advice. Muriel, in the sidecar, looked round and up at Dave, bumping up and down on the luggage-grid. He smiled his grave, reassuring smile.

"You ought to catch the seven-ten from Brenton down to Exeter, and so be all right for the express to London," he spoke down to her calmly.

"Brenton—how far is that from Morcove?" she asked.

"Oh, half-way to Exeter!"

But now, suddenly, and just where this by-road was at its narrowest, they all three saw someone standing about, looking ready to challenge them, if only because, they were coming from Morcove: It was no burly policeman; but Jack and Dave had the instinctive fear that this fellow meant trouble even before Muriel gave the half-suppressed cry:

"Andro Garcia!"

Then the two lads knew for certain.

Like his sister, Andro had taken upon himself to hang about in the vicinity of Morcove. The motor-cycle and sidecar, coming away from Morcove—and with a girl passenger—it had excited his suspicion. Now he was snaking signs, whilst he stood right in the centre of the narrow road, for the driver to pull up.

Jack slowed, changing into middle-gear. For the life of him, however, he did not see how he was going to dodge past this human obstruction.

"Stop!" shouted Andro Garcia excitedly. "You have got to stop, do you hear! That is Muriel—I recognise her! So I do not let you pass!"

"All right, Jack," called out Dave—and he nimbly jumped down from the luggage-grid. "I'll see to this beggar."

Then, when it had seemed to Muriel that another moment must find her falling into her stepbrother's hands, she saw Dave Lawder rush ahead of the crawling outfit and simply hurl himself upon Andro.

They closed. They struggled furiously—the calm, sturdy British schoolboy and the savage Mexican youth. At first the desperate conflict went on in the road, right in front of the motor-cycle; then the combatants fought each other off the road, trampling the bracken.

Jack sat at his machine.

"Don't look, Muriel. It's all right," he said cheerily.

But she had to look. She leaned forward in the sidecar and watched, fascinated, whilst Jack slowly drove on with her. For a moment or two longer she saw the two youths battling together as furiously as ever. Then they both crashed to earth, one on top of the other, seemingly, and the bracken hid them.

She was looking back now, whilst Jack kept the outfit crawling along in middle gear, when she saw Dave leap up—alone.

He came sprinting after the crawling outfit. A minute and he overtook it, scrambling breathlessly back to his perch on the luggage-grid.

"Go ahead, Jack!"
 "You all right, Dave?"
 "Yes." He sucked a gory hand. "Chap bit me. But I left him all right too."
 "You did?" asked Jack, accelerating.
 "Tied his hands behind him, with my hanky."
 Jack nodded, keeping his eyes upon the road. They were flying on again.
 "Don't look like that, Muriel—don't cry," said Dave. "What is there to cry about? We shall do it—now."
 And do it they did!

About half-past eight that evening Polly came into Study 12, all smiles, after being fetched down to the telephone.

"It's all right, girls!"
 "What! Oh, hooray, hurrah!"
 "Gorjus!" shrieked Naomer.
 "Jack and Dave put her on the seven-ten from Brenton. There was not the slightest trouble. No one took the least notice. She'll travel all night and be with Miss Aylwin some time to-morrow."

"Then she's saved!" was Helen's fervent cry. "I know, from what Miss Aylwin said, it will be all right, once they are together again. Even if the Garcios could stay on in this country any longer, they would never get hold of Muriel now."

"Gweat wejoicings," beamed Paula. "Most gwatifying, yes, wather!"

Betty smiled across at Helen, whose special personal relief was getting beyond vocal expression.

"Wouldn't your father, out in Mexico, be glad—if he knew, Helen! For it's put a stopper on Madame Garcia's little game, once and for all."

"And Miss Somerfield—wouldn't she be glad, if we told her!" chuckled Polly. "But do we tell her, girls? Better not, perhaps, for a bit?"

"Well, perhaps—better not!" Betty agreed.
 So the wonderful way in which Muriel Garth had escaped, after all, from the hands of "the

enemy" became a secret for two of Morcoove's studies to share. Study 12, and that other study shared by Pam and Helen—they kept what they knew to themselves!

All the same, it was their happy conviction that the headmistress, if ever she should find out, would be anything but displeased.

To this day, the juniors cannot say for certain whether Miss Somerfield ever did find out. But they do know that whenever Jack and Dave have been over to Morcoove again on the famous twin-cycle and sidecar, she has seemed to regard those two lads with more of an affectionate interest than ever!

And it is quite likely that, although the wise headmistress has never mentioned the matter, she did have a letter from Miss Aylwin about it all. Just as Helen Craig, a full month after the thrilling "escape," heard from a very happy Muriel.

She was still with Miss Aylwin, travelling about with that young lady, whose employer—a woman of ample means—had become all the more sympathetic for Muriel herself.

The Garcios, it was known, had returned to Mexico, and so Muriel could now rejoice in the thought that she was quite safe—for ever!

"And I am sure I owe it all to you and your chums," ran the closing lines in her joyful letter. "You were a good chum to me, Helen, during that trying time! All Morcoove—how good it was to me, especially on that last exciting day. Shall I ever see you all again, I wonder?"

There was a postscript:
 "And Jack and Dave—remember me to them, very gratefully, please. For I shall remember them as long as ever I live!"

THE END.

If you have enjoyed these stories dealing with Helen Craig and the unscrupulous Garcios, be sure to buy next Tuesday's **SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN** and read the first of a series dealing with popular Tess Trelawney, who, on account of her brother, Tom, has to face a big crisis. This splendid long complete story is entitled: "Her Brother—the Outcast!"

YOUR EDITOR REPLIES

In Brief to Some of his Readers' Letters.

MARY & Co.—Thank you for your letter. Pam has not been at Morcoove long enough to feature in the "Library" tales. She will be doing so later on, though. So glad you like the Annuals.

"S." (Watford).—If you look at the beginning of each chapter in my paper, you will see the headings. These are to take the place of numbers, and I'm sure they are much nicer. Write again, won't you?

"ALSO A MADCAP."—How could I think you "nasty," after writing such a nice letter to me? I will make a note of the story you would like, but cannot say that we will be able to have it yet. Thank you for all your good wishes. You will write again, won't you?

K. SMITHARD (Leicester).—Glad to know you have such a high opinion of my paper. How are you enjoying all the new features in **THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**?

ROSE WHEATLEY.—Delighted to welcome you as a new reader of my paper, Rose. I hope you will write to me quite often from time to time,

telling me what you think of the various features in **THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**.

"A REGULAR READER." (Llandudno).—The answer to your question is "No," dear reader. You must write to me again, telling me your opinion of my paper.

ROSEMARY (Aberdeen).—Thank you for your enthusiastic letter, Rosemary. How are you enjoying all the present features of **THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**? Write again as soon as you like.

SHEILA WALLACE (Edmonton, Canada).—Here is your name in print, Sheila! How do you think it looks? Glad to know you think so highly of my paper, **THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**.

"BLUE-EYES" (Brighton).—So pleased to hear from you again, dear reader. Are you thinking of having your copies bound? How did you and your sister get on in the music exam?

"ANIMAL LOVER" (Sudbury).—Thank you for your letter and good wishes. Delighted to hear that you are still enjoying your work with the dogs. You must write to me again when you are not too busy.