

COMPLETE
INSIDE

“Hidden from Morcove”

SCHOOL STORY
By MARJORIE STANTON

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



AFRAID TO BE SEEN

A Thrilling incident from
the complete Morcove school
story within.

HIDDEN FROM MORCOVE



A Stirring Complete School Story, Featuring Betty Barton & Co.

WHILE Betty and Co. are attempting to fathom the mystery of the Phantom Schoolgirl of Morcove, over at the new Headland Hotel a thrilling drama is being enacted, which, unknown to the Study 12 "coterie," is fatefully linked with those happenings which have so startled the school.

A 'Halfer' in Peril

THEY won't come now, Betty."
"Afraid not, Polly."
"Oh, no; and so this Saturday halfer is going to be a washout for all who were down to play!"

Polly Linton said it with a grimace of extreme annoyance. Normally, Polly was that madcap of Study 12 at Morcove School whose bounding spirits made for morning-to-night jollity.

But Polly, alone in Study 12 at this moment with Betty Barton, the Fourth Form captain, felt "humpy"—and no wonder.

"It's a shame, a beastly shame!" she fumed. "You couldn't have imagined anything nicer than what we had fixed up. And now it's all off—and the time nearly three o'clock. Half the afternoon gone in waiting about—ugh!"

"Anyhow," said Betty, "all the girls will know whom they have to thank for this disappointment. That detestable prefect over at Grangemoor School! He as good as boasted to us, last evening, that he would stop the boys coming over to play the hockey-match."

Polly nodded.

"Harold Sharrow is a cad!" she said fiercely. "What else can you call a fellow who uses his position in a school to make misery for others?"

"I think, Polly, I'll go and tell the girls that it is useless their waiting about any longer. Perhaps we can manage to get up some sort of a

game amongst ourselves, so that the halfer won't be utterly wasted."

Betty was passing out of the study as she finished speaking. No sooner had she gone than another of the study co-tenants came whisking in.

This was that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, who was Morcove's royal scholar from a tiny desert kingdom in North Africa.

"Sweendle, Polly! Bekas—your brother and ze rest of them have not turned up to play us. And now what are we going to do?"

"Betty says, get up some sort of a pick-up game."

"Ah, bah, I am not worrying about ze match being a wash-out. But ze two teams were to go across to ze grand new hotel after ze match. We were to have tea in ze gorjus palm-court, and see what sort of a tea they give you at the Headland. But now—Hi, Polly, what about going to ze hotel just ze same?"

"No!"

"Bekas, zere you are, eef you want to get over ze disappointment of not seeing your brother! Have a good tea, early, zen you will feel better!"

"Thank you, but to go to the Headland would only remind me all the more of what was arranged

By **MARJORIE STANTON**

for this afternoon," Polly said huffily. "Your idea, of course, is to go to the hotel and stuff, stuff, stuff!"

"Not ze bit of eet. I suppose I can have a good appertite, can't I? See what comes of a girl never eating anyzink. Old skinnigalee!" said Naomer, in playful derision of that fourth tenant of the study, Paula Creel, who had now floated in.

"Still waiting, bai Jove, Polly!"

"No. We've given up waiting! The match is very definitely off!"

"Then one may as well settle down to a nice weatful afternoon," said elegant Paula, sinking very readily into the best armchair. "Bai Jove, that's bettah, yes, wather!"

"Better that Jack and the rest have been stepped from coming by that hateful Sharrow prefect!"

"Polly deah, pway don't jump down my thwoat."

"Well, then!"

"I merely expressed an idea of westing until tea-time, and so weserving my energies for some future occasion, yes, wather," said Paula. "In wegard to Hawold Shawwow, upon whom, unquestionably, the wesponsibility wests for this wegwettable fiasco—"

"Oh!" said Polly, casting up her eyes. Paula's rounded phrases always tried the madcap's nerves.

"Boo, for Harold Sharrow!" burst out Naomer. "And eef he were here, I would say so to his face. I shall tell his sister what I zink of him, any old how. Bekas, she is at Morcove if he isn't!"

"Worse luck!" Polly gloomed. "It's all because of Ada Sharrow that her brother has started such a drive against Jack and others, at Grangemoor. Oh, hang!"

And there she stood, over by the window, amovance reaching its climax as she noticed what a particularly fine afternoon this was.

Then, suddenly, her expression changed. Joy chased away the gloom. She was her normal self again—boisterously happy.

"They're here!" she shouted.

"Bai Jove—"

"Ooo, what ze diggings, where—where? Queek!"

"Coming in at the gateway now!" Polly shouted on wildly. "Jack, and all of them—a full team, hooray!"

"Gorjus, yes! Loud cheers!" shrilled Naomer, head out of window. "Pipooray, ze donkey ran away. Ooo, queek, come on, everybody, down to ze field. Paula—"

"Owp!"

"Zen hurry! Get ze jerk on!"

"Theah is no need to claw me, Naomer! Owch, oaf me! My hair, my fwock!"

"But sey are here, I tell you!"

"Yes, wather, but isn't that all the more reason for my presenting a respectable appearance, bai Jove! And naow, look at me!" Paula wailed in vain.

For she was alone in the study. Naomer and Polly—they had already dashed away, like a pair of lunatics, shouting up the corridor:

"Betty, where are you? They're here, they're here. Hi, everybody—Grangemoor is here!"

The Form captain came running out of one of the other studies, with two or three girls at her heels. Tall Pam Willoughby, and jolly Helen Craig, and quiet Judy Cardew—they were sharing to the full in this sudden jubilation.

From one study and another came more girls who had been chosen for this afternoon's team.

In a twinkling, they were all mobbing round the captain, in the corridor, and every tongue was going.

"Hurrah! Splendid!"

"Yes! Everything as arranged, after all!"

"Still time—"

"Oh, rather!"

"Come on, all!"

"And don't forget, as soon as ze match is over—ta at ze hotel!" Naomer yelled, prancing along to the stairs with the rest. "Ze latest grand patent! You go across to ze hotel, and zere you are."

Meantime, the excitable imp almost fell over Paula, who would have been thankful to fall behind in the rush, but Naomer hauled her along.

"Bekas, Paula, never mind how you look!"

"I do mind! Owp—"

"After ze match, you can rest as much as you like in a lovely chair in ze lounge, and listen to ze band, and try all ze pastries, and—Ooo, sorry!" Naomer broke off, her eagerness having caused Paula to miss a step.

- Bumpity, fump, bump! Paula went headlong, with a screeched:

"Yow! Gah!"

Then Polly, as the oft-teased duffer came down almost on top of her, turned about with extreme politeness.

"There is NO need to be in such a hurry, Paula darling! And I wouldn't let the boys see you with your hair all over your eyes like that!"

"I don't want them to!" wailed Paula wearily.

"Betty deah, will you twy to exewise some—owp, ooch!—some contwol!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For the captain was two flights ahead in this mad race to get downstairs. Betty it was who first reached the open air, darting forth from the frost porch with such celerity that she very nearly collided with a girl who was coming in.

Ada Sharrow! Here was that newcomer to Morcove School whose brother Harold, a prefect at Grangemoor, had boasted that there would be no match this afternoon—he'd see to that!

Betty did not trouble to give Ada Sharrow either word or look in passing. But Polly Linton and some others could not miss this opportunity of twitting Ada. They had only to see her looking so nose-in-air as she was, and then:

"What about it now, Ada?" she was asked.

"Yes, Ada!"

"Bekas—hooray! Ze Grangemoor team has turned up!"

"AFTER ALL!" was Polly's own contribution to the outcry.

"I know it has," snapped Ada Sharrow. "But my brother may be turning up, too, just remember!"

Polly turned back at that.

"And do you suppose we care if he does?" she witheringly retorted to the obnoxious new girl. "That for your brother—see?"

With which, and a playful snapping of finger-and-thumb within two inches of Ada's nose, Morcove's madcap whirled on again, crying:

"Come on, girls! They've come to give us a game. Let us give them—a whacking!"

On With the Game

WITH a merry chiming of cycle-bells, the boys from Grangemoor School got down from their machines just past the Morcove gateway.

Hockey sticks were unslipped, and then the bicycles were joyously abandoned beside the car-

riage-way, to look like a glorious heap of old iron.

"But they got us here, anyhow," was Jack Linton's chuckled comment. "In just over the hour—not so bad. 'B' Company, fall in! Number off!"

Whereupon, a few of Jack's schoolmates did a sort of double shuffle, but that was all. Others, not so fond of fooling and secretly shy of meeting a team of schoolgirls, merely smiled.

Here and there a school tie was fingered, as Betty Barton came scampering towards the visitors, with Polly and the rest.

"So there you are, splendid!" sparkled Morcove's Fourth Form captain. "We thought you weren't coming."

"D'you see the time?" Polly witheringly inquired of her brother. "We can play you; but it means missing tea at the hotel!"

"'B' Company—right turn!" Jack jokingly cried. "At the word of command, remount! No tea, no match; I think that's the idea, boys?"

"But we'll see!" laughed Betty. "If we beat you, perhaps there'll be time, after all, for you boys to stand us girls tea at the Headland!"

"Pardon?" said Jack, with great gravity. "H'm! The fact being that we chaps rather thought we were to be YOUR guests, in any case."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Got any money, Dave?" Polly's fun-loving brother now inquired of Judy's brother. "Just a quid, until I hear from home again."

"A pound is no use at the Headland, let me tell you," sauced Polly. "We're very first-class at the new Morcove hotel. Afternoon tea, per head, three shillings—or something like that."

"Whew!" And Jack made pretence of fainting away in the arms of Dave Cardew. "Well, we must open an account, that's all, boys! Er—who's in charge of this mob?" he inquired affably, meaning the girls. "You've got a captain, I suppose?"

So they pointed out Betty.

"Oh, how do you do?" Jack bowed, as if he had never met Betty before. "You girls—er—play hockey?"

"Occasionally!"

"And you win?"

"Sometimes!"

"Boys of the Old Brigade," said Jack, turning to his following—"and attention when I'm speaking! We'll risk it. We MAY beat 'em; I say we may, boys! In which case they stand us a tea. If we lose, the plan will be," he whispered hoarsely, "seize the bikes and retreat to Grangemoor!"

"Sweendle!" shrielled Naomer. "Queek, girls, let's be sure of their staying to tea by collaring ze bikes now!"

"Hooray!" the Morcove team cheered, and at least some of the boys' machines were pounced upon and made off with.

There was, however, not the slightest consternation in the ranks of the Grangemoor team. Very chummily the boys fell into talk with the girls, during a drifting-out on to the field of play.

"Jack dear, now tell us!" Polly pleaded then, quite seriously. "How is it that you managed to get here, after all? Did they make it only a short detour, instead of a gating?"

His brows went up at that.

"Oh, so you heard that we'd been gated—three of us, that is to say? You heard it through the Sharrow girl, I suppose?"

"Her brother—he was over this way last evening," Polly answered. "Mrs. Sharrow, you know, is staying at the new Headland. We happened to meet Harold Sharrow, and he boasted that he had put a stopper on this fixture for this afternoon, by getting some of you gated. Yet we didn't have any line from you, Jack, to say that the match must be called off."

"If I'd known that he told you girls," Jack Linton frowned, "I'd have rung up or wired not to worry, for we'd be over just the same."

"Although you were gated?"

"That's it," he nodded calmly. "Made up our minds about that straight away, we did. When the time comes, just walk out! And so we did! No—we didn't; we rode! But it means the same thing, I guess."

"It means, I should think, a fearful row by-and-bye!" Betty said with a laugh. "He's a pre!"

"He's a — I can't tell you what he is," Jack sighed. "Words, in such company, fail me! But don't you worry on our account."



"D'you hear me?" bellowed Sharrow. "When I say stop—you'll stop!" And Grangemoor's despicable "pre." took a flying kick at the hockey ball.

"Oh, we're not going to!" sparkled Polly. "You can fight your own battle, we know."

But every one of these boys who had come over to Morcove this afternoon was going to be in Harold Sharrow's bad books now. That was certain—and did any of them care? Not they!

"You see the particularly nasty way Sharrow worked it for the whole team," Jack finally remarked before the start of play. "He guessed that they might come over three men down; so he warned them that if they did—"

The rest went unsaid, for Jack was suddenly aware of Miss Everard's approach, and she seemed to be singling him out as 'being in charge' of the Grangemoor team. It was like the chummy mistress of the Fourth Form at Morcove to have made a point of strolling across to accord the visitors her own welcome.

"But you're very late!" she blandly upbraided the boys, knowing nothing of any underhand work over at the other school.

"We—er—had a little difficulty in getting away," said Jack engagingly. "On the other hand, we can be all the later starting back!"

"Oh, I don't know about that!" laughed Miss Everard. "I shall expect the girls to be back in bounds, after tea at the hotel, by half-past five. You'll probably see me there. Now I must go in the car to Barncombe, and miss seeing the bully-off. I hope you all got a good game. It has been nice to fix up this match."

"It was jolly nice of you to O.K. it, wasn't it, boys?" Polly's brother appealed to his school-mates. "Three cheers for Miss Everard—hip, hip!"

"And that leaves me feeling ashamed of myself," she laughed, when the hearty cheers had died away. "For, quite candidly, I'm not your well-wishers. I'm hoping that my girls give you a jolly good kicking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"She's a ripper!" Jack said heartily to his sister, as soon as Miss Everard was hastening away. "Well, come on, boys! Grangemoor expects every man this day, to do his duty."

The Form-mistress' car was halfway down the drive. She jumped in and had driven out by the main gateway by the time both sides had taken up positions on the field.

Then, when another moment would have meant the brisk bully-off between Jack and Betty, someone came whirring in at that same gateway on a loudly stuttering motor-cycle.

Harold Sharrow!

Only a glance did Betty and Jack give the Grangemoor prefect, and then the two sticks did their lightning work and the little white ball came out in play.

The field jumped to life; but Harold Sharrow, throttling off his engine, swung out of the saddle and hoisted the back wheel on to the kick-down stand. Then he came striding on to the grass, right amongst the players.

"Hey, stop a bit!" he commanded.

No notice was taken. Some Morcove players were doing, just then, excellent team-work with the ball. There was an alertness at the very start of the game that promised a match well worth watching.

"D'you hear what I say!" shouted Sharrow. "Dash you, when I say stop—you'll stop!"

And he ran in upon those who were chivvying the ball. He cannoned into one girl, spoiling her stroke, and then the fellow took a flying kick at the ball, sending it high and far.

Instantly there was a protesting outcry. Players on both sides came running up to mob round the

prefect. Onlookers, of whom a good few had collected, came across to swell the crowd.

"You had better be careful!" Betty said to the prefect hotly. "This is our ground! Go away!"

"These chaps have no right to be here!" Sharrow said loudly. "And they have got to pack up. Come on, you!" he addressed the Grangemoor players. "Out of this, sharp!"

"Not a bit of it," said Jack Linton stolidly. "We are here to play this Morcove team, and play them we will."

"That's so," said Dave Cardew quietly; but calmness did not render the words less impressive. "You can do what you like afterwards," Sharrow—

"And you're not going to worry, is that it—you three who were gated? But what about these others?"

The answering chorus pleased Morcove none the less, because it was what they had expected.

"We don't care either!"

"Maybe you don't realise what I can land you for now—the whole lot of you," Sharrow scowled. "And I will! You others all knew that Linton, Cardew and Merton were gated. Yet you've joined them, knowing that they have had to flout the gating order—"

"Yes, we know all about that," broke in one of the Grangemoor players. "Also, we know that our three chums never should have been gated!"

"Going to tell that to the Head, are you?"

"Rather—if you make it necessary!"

"I mean to make it that, right enough," Sharrow said, with his malicious laugh. "Trust me! You've done for yourselves now, I reckon. Oh, I know what the game is! To get me into a row and get rid of me as a prefect. But it won't come off—no!"

"And we know what your game is," Jack Linton retorted fiercely. "To hit at Morcove through some of us!"

"What? You're potty!"

"I know what I'm saying," Polly's brother spoke on passionately. "You've a sister who has come to Morcove this term—"

"Oh, yes; there she is!" sniggered Sharrow, picking out Ada in the crowd. "Hallo, Ada! Coming across to the hotel presently? When I've finished with—"

"You can finish now," Jack rushed on thickly. "And let us get on with our game. Your game is the one I have been explaining. Just because your sister isn't good enough to be played in a Morcove team, you've set yourself to smash up the match."

"Who says my sister isn't good enough at hockey?" the prefect demanded truculently.

"I say so!" spoke up Betty promptly.

"You!"

"The Form considers I am entitled to my opinion if you don't," Betty said. "Goodness knows, I did my best to put it gently to Ada. She has no right to complain of anyone's treatment of her. As a new girl, she could have had every—"

"It's all rot!" struck in the prefect roughly.

"I know differently. You don't mean her to have a fair showing. You're all for keeping things to yourselves, and as for a newcomer—she can wait!"

"Oh, what fibs!" stamped Polly. "Girls—"

"Shame! Shame!" they dinned. "She's had fair play, she has!"

"I don't believe it."

"Zen jolly well do ze other zing, betas—"

"The girl can't play for toffee!" cried Helen Craig. "I've seen her at praeceer. Lots of us saw her when Betty was trying her out."

"That's quite right!" confirmed others in the crowd.

"But now—I tell you what!" Betty resumed warmly. "If Ada still wants to play she shall play! And if you want to stay and watch her—stay! Is that fair?"

"No, thanks!" Ada Sharrow called out from the fringe of the crowd. "Not after the nasty things that have been said about me."

"No, don't you, Ada!" her brother encouraged her in the sulky refusal. "You can see the idea now. The girls hope to smooth things over so that the boys won't be on the carpet when they get back to Grangemoor, after all. But they will be!"

"Oh, clear out," stormed Jack, looking ready to off with his coat, "or some of us will set about you again!"

"You try it!"

"This is the Morcove ground, and I'm on the field as captain of the home team," Betty spiritedly cried. "Harold Sharrow, I ask you to leave. Are you going? Or must I run indoors to—"

"I'm going, when I've got all those fellows' names."

The prefect had whipped out a pocket-book and pencil. Now, as fast as he could, he jotted down the names. As Morcove noticed, some of the boys made a point of standing forward, in case they might be lost sight of in the crowd. And the heart of Morcove went out to them—every one of them!

At last Harold Sharrow closed his pocket-book and put it away.

"Right! I'll do the rest at MY school!"

"And very likely do for yourself," Betty rejoined sweetly. "Good afternoon!"

"Bekas—booh!" Naomer hooted him as he turned away to follow his sister off the field.

"Rotter! Booh!"

"Detestable fellow!"

"Insuffowable, yes, wather!"

"Cad!"

"I'm very sorry," grinned Jack Linton; "very sorry that our House owns such a blighter! Great mistake that he was ever appointed a pre., but these things happen!"

"It's to be hoped that the mistake will soon be made good," said Pam Willoughby, smiling.

"Not so sure," grimaced Jack. "But that's neither here nor there at present. The game's the thing. Come on, the Old Brigade! Are we down-hearted?"

"N-o-o!"

"Then come on, boys, and give these girls a beating! Not that they deserve it, but still—we've got to beat them!"

"If you can!" laughed Betty.

Another Girl's Money

ADA SHARROW and her prefect-brother, having passed out by the Morcove gateway, were rather moodily walking together in the direction of the new Headland Hotel. He intended to call back for his motor-cycle later on.

"What I should have done, if there hadn't been this hotel and mother staying there, I don't know!" Ada grumbled. "Oh, it's a beastly school—Morcove."

"You wait, Ada. I'll make a difference for you. It won't be me if I don't. The worse they treat you, the more I'll put the screw on that Linton chap and young Cardew. They're the two for me to keep after; they hang together in their

study at Grangemoor, and they have sisters at Morcove."

"But supposing it doesn't answer, Harold?"

"It will answer, given time enough," he scowled.

"They think they can down me as a pre. They'll go down themselves!"

"Yet none of the boys seemed to be at all windy just then!"

"That's because they don't believe it will ever reach the ears of the Head. They think my bark's worse than my bite. Well, it isn't!"

"You know very well I can play hockey as well as any of them," Ada insisted aggrievedly. "I—I



Mrs. Sharrow drew herself up. "What's your name, girl?" The maid's reply came very tremulously: "Esther Hope."

admit I wasn't in my best form the couple of times I got some practice. But what right has that precious captain to be prejudiced?"

She added, in a snarling way:

"It's what they all are—prejudiced! I was quite willing to be friends with all of them at the start, but they showed that they didn't want me at any price! So now, of course, they can be hanged for all I care!"

"Yes, you don't want to make yourself cheap, Ada. You stick to your grievance. It gives us a stick to beat 'em with. But there'll be a change before long, you mark my words. As soon as I have those chaps fairly squealing, then the girls will be glad to cry peace, if only for the boys' sakes. That will mean their taking you up, if only to please me!"

Ada received this in silence. It sounded all right—in theory. She was not so sure of its working out all right in practice.

Without caring to admit it, she felt that it was like monkeying with so many hives of bees. Both the girls and the boys had shown quite clearly to-day: touch one, and you touched all!

"To change the subject, Harold—mother seems pretty irritable, these days! I can't believe the air down here is going to suit her, after all."

"It isn't that," the brother responded in a lowered tone. "She's worried, Ada. More money gone down—the drain just lately."

"You mean—speculation? Has she said anything to you, then?"

"No. But I know she took up a lot of shares in a certain company, and now it's gone phut! Don't say I told you, Ada. I don't suppose she wants us to know."

Ada, walking on with him in silence to the hotel, looked more pettish than ever.

"The end of it will be," she muttered at last, "we shall all be poor—quite poor! With me having to go out to earn my living—huh!"

"What about me, come to that?"

"You're a fellow, and different!"

"All the same, I don't know that I'm keen to go out into business later on," he scowled. "I always reckoned there would be enough to keep me comfortable."

"It will be disgusting," his sister grumbled, "if I do have to get my own living when I leave school. When there is that Stoddart girl, at home in London, made for life—thanks to the fortune her uncle left her."

"Oh—Mabel Stoddart, yes," he nodded. "She's got money enough, and no mistake. Only, she doesn't know it."

"Just as well, too!" muttered Ada. "Now I can see how wise it was of mother not to let Mabel herself know. We'd only have had her swanking over us! Nice thing—especially if we ourselves are going to get poorer every month! Oh, I'm fed up!"

"The hotel will make you feel better," he predicted. "I only hope the mater does stay on at the Headland. It's fine for you to be able to pop across whenever you like. And I find it jolly to jump on the motor-bike and run over—in next to no time."

"I don't know that I'm to be allowed to visit the hotel as often as I like, even though mother is there," Ada further complained. "The Form-mistress was on at me about that yesterday. Oh Morcove is a sickener, I think!"

"Do you hear from Mabel?" he suddenly asked, when they were almost at the hotel entrance. "Has she written from home since you left for school?"

"No. And I don't wish to hear from her, either! I gave her to understand as much, the day I left home. Why should I have any thing in common with Mabel Stoddart? Pity that mother ever had the bother of being her trustee, I think."

"You mayn't think so in the end," Harold said. Ada looked at him sharply, in a startled way.

It was as if she had read in his remark the meaning that it was meant to convey; a hint as to something about which she must not question him too closely.

For any questionings then there was no time. He and she went in by the revolving glass-doors, and instantly the life of this palatial new hotel rushed at them both.

Under expert management, the Headland was thronged for the start of what promised to be a

very successful winter season. Well-to-do people were here who intended to stay for weeks—months!

This part of the North Devon coast, although so magnificent and romantic, had long needed a palace-hotel offering indoor entertainment—a fine string orchestra, dances, and plenty of bridge for those who liked it—in conjunction with all that could be had out of doors.

The lounges, at this moment, were not so full as they would be at tea-time. Guests had gone out for afternoon rambles and rounds of golf. Even so, more than enough people were in evidence to save the spacious sitting-about places from looking empty.

A liveried hotel-servant came up to Ada and her brother, bowing.

"Mrs. Sharrow, I believe, is in her room. If you would like me to send up a page to let her know that you are here?"

"She may be lying down," Ada muttered. "I don't fancy she is sleeping well. I might go up quietly, Harold?"

He nodded, and lounged away to make himself at home in the palm-court, whilst Ada went up in the lift to the second floor.

"Number forty-five, to the right, miss."

The lift attendant only got an "I know that!" grimace in return for the well-meant remark. Ada was cross to-day, with a feeling that she was going to find an equally cross mother.

On the way down the richly carpeted corridor the schoolgirl encountered one of the hotel maids, whose station was evidently on this floor.

This young girl in cap-and-apron was connecting a vacuum-cleaner to the fitting in the wall as Ada came mincing along. Having to make a slight movement to give flaunting Ada all the passage way that she seemed to demand by her air, the girl looked round, shyly giving the smile that she had no doubt been instructed to offer at all times.

Then, as their eyes met, that smile faded. The reason could have been that Ada looked upon the chambermaid so superciliously. But that girl, from some mysterious cause, became greatly agitated.

In sudden nervousness she very nearly dropped the vacuum-cleaner's nozzle upon Ada's toes.

"Careful!" snapped Ada. "Huh, what a girl to employ!"

Next moment she was at the door of No. 45, rapping softly with her knuckles.

"Come in!"

"It's I, mother. Are you—lying down?" Ada was going to ask as she slowly opened the door; then she saw that her mother was standing at a fine window, offering a grand sea view.

"Harold's here, mother."

"He was here last evening. You were both here, Ada!"

"Oh, well, mother, one must do something!"

Mrs. Sharrow turned round, and sure enough she looked moody—worried.

"I can't see the use of my paying for you at an expensive school like Morcove, Ada, if you're going to live here! Couldn't you get a game or something?"

"I've told you, mother. The girls are all against me!"

"Then I had better send a note to your Form-mistress, complaining."

"That's no good. She's as bad—prejudiced!"

Ada carried on the grossly misleading talk. "Oh, I shall have my revenge by-and-bye. I've got Harold to help me there!"

"How do you mean?"

At this instant—zeeee! Zeeeing! the vacuum-cleaner began to sing, outside in the corridor.

"No!" Mrs. Sharrow stamped. "That I won't allow! When my nerves are in that state—"

"I'll tell her to stop it, mother."

"Call her in and I'll speak to her! I expect it's that girl again—simply asking to be sacked!"

So Ada, going to the door and opening it, called sharply to the busy chambermaid:

"Here, my mother wants you!"

The vacuum-cleaner stopped singing. Briskly the wielder of it came to the bed-room doorway, where Mrs. Sharrow stood ready to glower inimically.

"What did you want to start using that thing for, girl, at this time of day?"

"Please, ma'am, I was told to use it when everybody was out."

"Who's everybody? I'm up here in my room, aren't I?"

"Yes, ma'am, but—"

"Well?"

"All the other guests on this floor have gone out for the afternoon. There was not likely to be a better chance—"

"So I'm not to be considered?"

"Not at all, madam—"

"What!"

"I mean—I—"

"What's your name, girl? It's time I spoke to the manager about you!"

The young chambermaid, looking very pale now, tremulously gave her name:

"Esther Hope."

"Right! You've done nothing but annoy me!" snapped Mrs. Sharrow. "If I stay, you had better go. Don't you dare work that thing again, whilst I'm about."

The girl gave a submissive curtsey, whilst the door was being violently closed in her face.

"Something queer about that girl, I'm sure, Ada! I wouldn't be surprised if they took her on without a reference. She doesn't belong to the neighbourhood. Comes from London."

"From London!"

"You can see she has a Londoner's face. But I know for a fact that that is where she came from, straight to this situation, for I asked her. And I told her to her face, I never like to hear of a servant having to go into a far-away district to get a job."

"I didn't like her looks," said Ada, who never did like any girl's looks but her own. "They reminded me of someone—oh, I know! Mabel Stoddart, at home."

The voicing of that name seemed to irritate Mrs. Sharrow. She shrugged and was significantly silent. When at last she spoke, it was to change the subject.

"I suppose you want me to come down with you, Ada?"

"You needn't, mother. I can stay to tea with Harold, of course?"

"And have it put on my bill again! Oh, very well. I don't think I'll come down to the lounge. I shall rest up here until it's time to change for the evening. I want to be fit for my bridge, by-and-bye."

She turned round, whilst dropping a spot of scent upon a handkerchief.

"Ada, what's this rumour about Morcove School?"

"Rumour, mother?"

"About a ghost—the Phantom Schoolgirl, or some such rot as that!" With a hollow laugh.

"Some of the guests have got hold of a story that's going round. Girls have been seeing a figure by night—a sort of spectre."

"Oh, yes!" Ada panted excitedly. "That is so, mother—"

"But what nonsense! You haven't seen it?"

"No, mother. But, one way and another, it does seem as if there must be something in it. Even a mistress saw the figure, without knowing that it was a phantom. Afterwards, she found out that every girl in the school could be accounted for, and yet she had seen—that figure!"

"It's rubbish! Aren't the girls frightened?"

"Er—no, I can't say they are. But they are very mystified and frightfully keen to get to the bottom of the mystery."

Mrs. Sharrow clacked down the scent-bottle.

"Well, leave me now, Ada. And don't you begin to believe in such stupid nonsense. Phantom Schoolgirl, indeed! By the way, have you written home to Mabel?"

"No, mother; why should I?"

"Only that I can't be bothered to write, that is all."

Ada had crossed to the door. She opened it, and music floated into the room—faint music from the band downstairs. It had just started to play for the tea-time hour.

"To-morrow, Ada, I may stroll across to Morcove School."

"Right-ho."

And the door closed between them.

Tea At The Headland

HALF AN HOUR after this, the revolving doors of the Headland spun round and round, letting through—first of all, the Morcove team of girls, and then the Grangemoor team of boys.

"A tie!" Polly gaily exclaimed. "And now, who pays for who? Great problem!"

"Not at all," smiled Betty. "In the circumstances, we pay for ourselves."

"As we always intended to do," Pam serenely rejoined.

"Yes!"

"But what happens," postulated Jack, "to the fellow who hasn't enough money even for his own tea?"

"He goes without," Polly promptly ruled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But in the case of his having a sister, who has twice as many remittances from home as he has?" Jack further propounded. "In that case, isn't the sister under a moral obligation to foot his bill?"

"No!" said Polly heartlessly.

"Then I must leave," sighed Jack. "It only remains for me to say farewell to the Old Brigade." And he struck a Napoleonic attitude. "Adieu, mes enfants!"

"No, bekas what ze diggings!" interposed Naomer. "I can lend you ze dibs, Jack. And zen you can sit next to me, and eet won't matter how much we eat, bekas eet is my money!"

"H'm!" said Jack, stroking a chin reflectively. "There is something in that. Hooray, boys!" he cheered up. "Squatty-voo, mes enfants! That corner over by the window, with the sea view, looks—"

"Here's Miss Everard!" broke in several of the girls in chorus.

She came across to them all, enjoying their astonishment.

"Well, who won?"

"A tie, Miss Everard!"

"Splendid! I rushed through my bit of shopping in town, and got back here in time to reserve tables for you all. Over there in that corner by the window, with the sea view, would be nice, don't you think?"

Just what Jack had been suggesting, and just what they had all been going to approve with enthusiasm.

"And I want you all, boys and girls, to consider yourselves my guests," Miss Everard carelessly remarked.

"Oh! Miss Everard, no!"

"It's too good of you! We can't let you!" blurted out several of the boys.

"Then you'll be denying me a pleasure," the good-natured mistress retorted lightly. "And I shall pay you out by never allowing another match of the kind to be played!"

"If," said Jack solemnly. "No, boys, I am not going to recite Kipling's 'If'! But if this weren't such a swagger hotel, with so many people about, I'd call for three jolly good cheers for Miss Everard. As it is, ladies and gentlemen, unaccustomed as I am to public speaking—"

"Oh, sit down!" cried Polly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They all sat down, and many a rapturous sigh was heaved over the comfortable cane-chairs and their soft cushions.

Various small tables were already prepared for tea, and now the waiters came along with well-laden trays.

The band played again.

"Gilbert and Sullivan!" Madge instantly named the selection. "Jolly!"

"Bai Jove," beamed Paula, touching her hat and her hair to rights, "theah are times when life seems extwowdinawily good—yes, wather!"

"Gorjus! Bekas look what zey give you for tea! Ooo—"

"Hush, child!" Polly admonished the dusky one. "Remember you are not in Study 12 now."

"Good job; because zis is miles better!"

Betty said softly to Polly:

"Over there in that other corner, Polly; Ada Sharrow and her brother."

"I know."

Miss Everard now noticed the new girl and her brother, and she kept her eyes in that direction so as to give Ada an opportunity of receiving a smile. But Ada very rudely refrained from looking across to her own Form-mistress.

"I must go across, presently, just to speak to them," Miss Everard quietly remarked to those sitting by her. "I don't know that I altogether approve of Ada's brother smoking in public. Even though he is a prefect at his school!"

"And that's the fellow," Jack might have exclaimed bitterly, "who got three of us gated on a false charge of smoking at school!"

But neither Jack nor any of his chums was going to let the proximity of the detestable prefect mar the enjoyment of this famous tea. A treat as novel as it was delightful.

There was a great deal of chatter, skipping from one topic to another. Here and there, out of hearing to Miss Everard, a Morcove girl fell to telling some Grangemoor boy about the great sensation—the Phantom Schoolgirl!

"Not really?"

"Yes!" was insisted, with solemn nodding. "Four times it has been seen! And we can't make it out!"

Grangemoor, politely sceptical, argued that it must be some girl at the school up to tricks. But, no, Morcove would not have that. If one thing had been proved beyond all doubt, it was this; the Phantom had been seen at times when every girl in the school could be accounted for!

Towards the finish of the leisurely and entirely happy tea, Miss Everard got up to go across and speak to Ada and her brother.

Instantly, those two arose from their chairs and sauntered away—pointedly flouting the mistress.

She came back, trying not to look ruffled. Ada and her brother drifted out of sight in the direction of the ball-room.

The orchestra was so stationed that its music not only provided entertainment for people at tea in the lounges; it also afforded a tune, now and then, for people who had a liking for tea-time dancing in the ball-room.

Dance music was now being played, and the juniors knew that several couples had drifted away to go round the floor.

The moment came when Miss Everard looked at her wrist-watch.

"We needn't be in any hurry," she happily remarked. "Would some of you like to look round the hotel? Then you can write home and tell your parents how nicely everything has been done!"

It ended in her going round with the one big party they made. Spacious reading-rooms were peeped into, the palm-court was greatly admired, with its outlook on to a stone-paved terrace, and then they all arrived at the ball-room doorway.

About a dozen couples were taking advantage of the dance-tune that was being played just then. Ada Sharrow and her brother were partnering each other, and Morcove was not so "prejudiced" as to deny that Ada danced beautifully.

"Better, in fact, than she plays hockey," Polly roughly commented.

But the band broke off immediately, and, as it had already repeated that tune as an encore, there was no clapping for a repetition. The various couples went to the walls to find seats, and out came Harold Sharrow's cigarette-case again. He offered it to his sister, who took one.

Then Morcove moved on, and the boys had the good sense to do the same, without any grinning or whispering. Miss Everard's face had become a study in vexation.

"I'll find you at the front door," she very quietly remarked to all her charges, and then went alone into the ball-room.

She crossed the slippery floor, making straight for Ada and her brother.

They each, standing up, removed a cigarette from the lips.

"Ada, you must know very well that no Morcove girl is allowed to smoke. And in public, too!"

"But my mother is staying in this hotel!"

"That cannot be allowed to make any difference. Would your mother be pleased? In any case, I am not. Now you had better say good-bye to your brother and come back to the school with the rest of the girls. Come on!"

"But why? I don't see why I should!"

"Hang it all, Miss Everard—"

"Oh, please, don't you say anything!" the Form-mistress icily cut short Harold Sharrow. "I wonder you are not ashamed! Ada, either you will come with me now, or I shall find your mother and speak to her about this. Which is it to be?"



"You had better say good-bye to your brother and come back to school with us," Miss Everard suggested. Said Ada, with a toss of the head: "But why? I don't see why I should!"

The girl stood lip-between-teeth for a moment or two.

"It's a shame," she said under her breath at last. "I come here to get away from a hateful lot of girls at the school, and then you—"

"I will not allow you to malign your school-fellows like that, Ada! You remember the talk I had with you! Be at the door in two minutes from now, unless you want me to interview your mother."

So saying, Miss Everard walked away. Ada and Harold, glancing at seated couples in the hope of receiving sympathetic looks, were disappointed. These other dancers, whether old or young, were all too well-bred to be anything else than contemptuous.

"Oh, you'd better go!" mumbled Harold. "We don't want mother to be dragged into any scene. Confound it, my bike's at the school."

"Then you come with me, Harold. We'll walk together. I'm not going back with the others!" Ada raged. "I won't—I simply refuse!"

"All right, let's do that." So, next minute, he and she marched, nose in air, past Miss Everard and all the hockey-players at the exit, into the open air.

"Where are you going now, Ada?" She turned round.

"Back to school! My brother is going with me." Her look added: "So see!"

"Very well." As Morcove and the boys could tell, Ada had hoped that the Form-mistress would say "No!" In which case, a real grievance could have been paraded. But Miss Everard was not like that.

The Grangemoor "bikes" had all been wheeled across by their owners, on the way here with the girls. So good-byes between the two teams were exchanged outside the hotel.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," said Jack, with his unflinching mixture of fun and chivalry,

"unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I do think that the moment has arrived for me to propose a vote of thanks to Miss Everard."

"Hear, hear!" dinned his comrades.

"And we're in this, too!" cried Betty.

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

"Bekas—he was a gorjus tea! And nuzzingk to pay!"

"A Company," barked Jack to his schoolmates, "shun! B Company—shun!" to the girls. "And now, boys, let her rip! Three cheers for Miss Everard, hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip—"

"Hurrah-h-h!"

"Come away, all of you!" laughed the Form-mistress. "Before the management sends out to ask us to go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And so the Morcove team, at the end of its entirely successful "halfer," went its way, whilst the visitors vaulted up to cycle-saddles and went whirring off in tip-top spirits.

Back to Grangemoor School for them, and even though Prefect Sharrow certainly meant to "fling his weight about" as soon as he got back—what cared they!

But it was to be all right.

Miss Everard, thinking it over, would presently decide to ring up Prefect Sharrow's Housemaster—with whom she was well acquainted. Without mentioning names, Miss Everard would ask: Did Authority at Grangemoor think it quite in order for a senior to smoke in public and to encourage his schoolgirl sister in doing the same?

Accordingly, by the time Harold Sharrow did get back to Grangemoor, he would find a notice on the board, calling attention to the matter.

No names mentioned. All the same, Prefect Sharrow would decide that this was NOT the time to "carpet" Messrs. Linton & Co., for having broken bounds this afternoon. And so—best to let it drop!

Once Again

THE quietude of a Sunday evening was upon Morcove School.

Study 12—a rare silence, even there!

Betty Barton sat on one side of the table, getting off a long letter for home. Polly Linton sat in her usual place, writing pages to Jack at Hoangemoor. Naomer, ambitiously, had embarked upon an article for the next issue of the Morcove Magazine, entitled:

Faks and Theories about

THE FANTOME SCHOOLGEL?

By ONE WHO NOSE!

As for Paula Creel—ah, blissful hour for Paula, this! If only Study 12 could be always so peaceful, so restful!

Paula reclined in the best armchair, looking prettily dreamy. She sighed, lazily realising that even when this idle Sunday evening had run its course, still a night's repose before the awful infliction of Monday morning.

"Kid, you're shaking the table!"

"What ze diggings, Polly, can't I put in a full stop when I like! You do your letter, and let me feenish my articackle!"

"Cackle's right! Let's have a squint, anyhow," requested Polly, getting up to go round to Naomer's elbow. "As I am assistant-editress of the M.M., it may save you wasting further time."

"You won't get a better contrarybution than that, I know!" boasted the dusky one, holding up the very blotchy MS.

"I say, Betty, do look here! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go on, zen, Betty, and zen say eef Polly isn't jealous, bekas she laughs!"

With which challenge, Naomer resorted to the corner cupboard for a "refresher" in the form of clove cordial. Cold, but it warmed you up, "just ze same as eef he was hot!"

"Hit is not evry gel who has had the luck to see the Fantome Schoolgel," Naomer's article began. "But I am 1 of the lucky wuns, anso I am going to derscrib this famous spekter? Which has frittened lots of gels but not me, bekas—"

"Utter drivel!" scoffed Polly. "Oh!"

"But let's see some more!" pleaded Betty; and so they read on together:

"I'll begin by derscrib the goast as well as I can. Alzo her cloathes look real, I dont see myself how they can be reel, bekas nobuddy to wear them? Bekas zat is where ze goast comes in, no buddy, no bobby nor arms nor legs nor mussels like we have, so how can it be anyzingk but a goast, anuzzer zing, her face? Bekas he is all sivery white, like ze silver paper they wrap round chocolates!!!"

Those three notes of exclamation proved too much for both readers. Betty staggered away, laughing. Polly, casting down the MS., collapsed into the nearest chair, regardless of the fact that it already held Paula.

"Owp! Theah you go!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Sorry, Paula darling!"

"Sowwy, bai Jove! Naow look at me! A week, a wuin!"

Then suddenly the study door flew open. A girl whirled in—it was Madge Minden—and she

looked so scared, her chums all voiced a startled:

"Why, what, Madge—what?"

She closed the door behind her hastily. Then she stood heaving for breath.

"Oh!" Madge panted. "It gave me such a turn!"

"What did—what?"

"Yes, queek, you say, Madge!"

"The Phantom Schoolgirl!" came in a whisper of awe. "I've just seen her!"

"You have!"

"Howwows! Ow, just when we were all going on quietly, too!"

"In this corridor—actually!" Madge whispered on hoarsely. "A moment ago! I had just come upstairs, after a half-hour in the music-room. As I turned into the corridor—"

"Yes, what?"

"She was THERE! She brushed past me—was gone before I could get over the shock and call out or do anything!"

"Went right past you?" Betty exclaimed incredulously.

"As close as any one of you might pass me in the passage," Madge nodded. "Her clothes didn't touch me; but she flashed by me so that I felt a sort of—sort of cold wave of air."

"Urr!" Paula shuddered, and flopped back into the armchair. "Ow, dweadful! No more, Madge, pway!"

"There is no more to tell, girls—"

"But there is plenty to do!" was headstrong Polly's rejoinder. "Oh, come on! See if we can't solve the mystery!"

"I'll add one thing," said Madge. "After my experience just now, you'll never get me to believe that it is one of the girls playing some stupid prank."

"The face—what did it look like to-night?" questioned Betty.

"Just as you others have described it. Silvery white."

Polly, opening the study door, found Pam Willoughby and one or two others on the point of entering.

"Just in time!" Betty said. "Feel like a ghost hunt, girls?"

"Why, has—has somebody seen—"

"Madge has, yes!" And the newcomers were hastily given details.

"Er—I'd wather be excused—yes, wather!" wailed Paula, retaining her seat. "I—I wish you all success, geals, and greatly admire your intwepid conduct, bai Jove! But—to-mowwow being Monday—"

"Boo, bekas cowardy!" cried Naomer, levelling the finger of scorn. "But I'm not afraid, if you are, no!"

And then—unaccountably, the lights went out!

"I SAY!" gasped Polly in the doorway. "They've gone out in the corridor, too!"

"Ow, howwows! Oh dear—"

"Queek, bekas I don't like being in ze dark!" said Naomer with a little caper of alarm.

"But what's happened?" wondered Betty. "A fuse at the main? Or—or what?"

"Goodness knows! I say, the whole floor's in darkness!"

Polly said it as she became aware of study doors opening all up the corridor, without letting forth a ray of light anywhere.

In the darkness, wondering cries from bewildered juniors made a serio-comic babel.

"Our lights have gone out!"

"So have ours! Oh, but there's no light in the corridor, either!"

"Wow! Look out for the ghost, girls!" one skittish junior yelled; and then Madge whispered her chums:

"That girl little knows, or she wouldn't joke! But don't say anything."

"No!"

Betty groped back to the study-table, pulled open a drawer, and found what she, with great presence of mind, had thought of.

"Here's a pocket-torch, girls! Oh, but the battery's nearly run out—bother!"

But the feeble light from the tiny bulb was better than nothing. She went with it into the now-thronged corridor, and even if, there was some facetious cheering, there was also some secret relief.

With Polly and one or two other intimates, the captain worked along the passage. Betty had not said so, but she wanted to get to the main switch controlling all the lights on this floor.

She knew where it was—affixed to the wall on the landing.

Progress was slow when the whole Form had turned out of its studies to enjoy a mock panic in the corridor, with much playful jostling and pushing about. But Miss Everard had not yet come upon the dark scene when Betty and her chums won through to the landing.

Up wavered the feeble ray of light from Betty's pocket-torch, until it shone upon the brass-handled switch. The metal work gleamed brightly in the dull beam of light.

Betty gasped her amazement.

"That's queer, girls! The main switch for this floor is pushed up."

"Does that mean, switched off?" cried Polly amazedly.

"Yes, it's always down to give current."

Betty tried to reach up a hand to the switch, but it was placed too high for her. Only a tall person could reach it.

"Who turned it off, then?" Polly asked blankly. "But let me climb on your back, Betty, and I'll do the trick!"

It was done in a few moments. Polly, nimbly mounting the back that Betty made for her, pulled down the brass-handled switch, and on came the lights everywhere.

More cheering!

"Hooray! False alarm! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we didn't see the ghost, after all!"

Loud laughter in the Fourth Form corridor, although Paula, in a palpitating state, was exclaiming:

"Gweat welief, bai Jove! For, weally, after being told by Madge—"

"Sh!" Madge herself whispered. "The less said the better, Paula."

"Oh—er—wight-ho!"

Miss Everard had now come upstairs, with a quickness that could be expected of her. What had not been expected was that a certain study door would suddenly open, letting forth Ada Sharrow—and her mother!

But it was only a momentary surprise. Then the girls understood that, this being Sunday evening, with nothing much to do at the hotel, Mrs. Sharrow had come across to spend a few minutes with her daughter.

"What's the trouble?" inquired Mrs. Sharrow irritably, as she came out with Ada into the thronged passage. "One of you fooling about with the lights?"

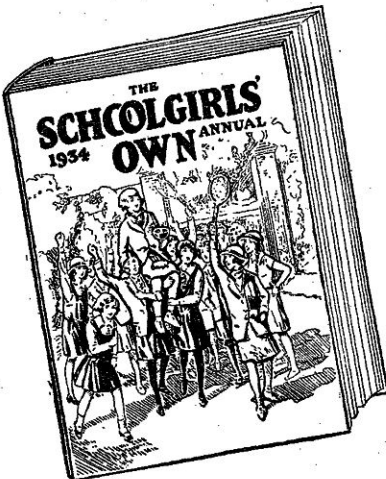
"No!" was the chorus of denial.

"A very ill-behaved lot, I think!" commented the mother of the girl who smoked in public. "Ada, if you are going to see me off at the door, come along."

At the landing, they found Miss Everard holding an inquiry in regard to the main switch. As Betty was just then explaining that she had found that high-up switch turned off, the Form-mistress was too concerned to do more than merely bow to Mrs. Sharrow as that lady brushed past.

Downstairs went mother and daughter, and at

(Continued on next page.)



STORIES : A PLAY : ARTICLES

THIS is the very book for Morcove "fans." Included among its fine features is a thrilling long complete story featuring Betty Barton and Co. of Morcove School, a delightful play starring the Study 12 coterie, and a vivid complete tale introducing the Grangemoor chums. These three features are by Marjorie Stanton. There are also numerous fascinating Morcove articles.

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**NOW ON SALE
SIX SHILLINGS**

the ground floor Ada began to mumble in a wheedling way;

"I suppose I can't put on my things, mother, and come across with you to the hotel?"

"No! You were there yesterday."

"It's so dull here, mother."

"It's just as dull at the hotel, to-night, for me."

"But there's the band, isn't there?"

"Band! When you know I'm no music-lover."

"But I like to sit and listen—"

"Well, you can't! Just look at the fog that's come on!" exclaimed Mrs. Sharrow, now that they had the schoolhouse door open. "How I hate the autumn, with its raw, foggy nights! Mistake to have come across to the school, Ada! But I felt I must. Good-night."

"Good-night, mother. I hope you'll be able to find your way all right."

"Why shouldn't I? It's straight down the drive, and then along the road. Ada, one last word. No one behind you, is there?" was asked in a cautious whisper.

"No, mother."

"Then tell me; are you absolutely positive that you've never said a word to Mabel, up there in London, about the money that was left her?"

"Positive, mother!" the emphatic answer came.

"Then be sure you never do say anything—if you should be writing."

"I am not likely to write to her!"

"Very well. Good-night again."

Away into the fog drifted Mrs. Sharrow. It enveloped her instantly; yet Ada kept the porch-door open and remained looking out, although there was nothing to see. Her mother's retiring step soon died away; and still Ada Sharrow stood staring out dully—at nothing, except foggy darkness.

If ever she had been a moody girl, she was moody to-night. Schoolmates were bound to think so when at last she returned upstairs. Miss Everard, too, coming down now that the mild scare over the electric lighting was at an end, thought to herself: "How moody the girl is!"

"Ada Sharrow—"

"Yes, Miss Everard?"

"Come back a moment."

So Morcove's new girl returned sulkily to the extent of a few stairs.

"Why so moody, Ada?"

"It's the dullness."

"Dullness? You have just had your mother to see you, haven't you? Come, pull yourself together, Ada. The last thing any of the other girls would call Morcove is—dull!"

"They're all right; they've got their friends!"

"You could have friends enough by now, Ada, if only you had not been your own worst enemy. It is so," insisted the Form-mistress, with more pity than condemnation. "I gave you good counsel at the start, I am sure, but you would go your own contrary way. But now—let me see what I can do for you."

Miss Everard, putting a scholar's happiness before all else, gestured that she would return with the new girl. In silence they mounted to the Fourth Form quarters, and the Form-mistress took Ada right down the corridor to Study 12.

"Betty—all of you—"

Up from their chairs rose Betty & Co.—a good roomful of them—now that their mistress had appeared.

"Here is a girl who complains of being dull!"

"Bai Jove, extwaowdinawy!" gasped Paula.

"Dull, when it is as much as one can do to get a moment's peace—yes, wather!"

"Bekas—dull?" shrilled Naomer incredulously. "When eet is not ten minutes ago, since Madge saw ze—"

"H'm!" Polly coughed.

"Have a chair, Ada," the captain suggested, with genuine cordiality, guessing that Miss Everard relied upon Study 12 to stretch a point or two.

"Oh, thanks, but I—"

"Now, Ada, when these girls are ready to be sociable!"

"Not to mention zat we are zinking of having ze usual hand-round!"

"Oh, indeed!" laughed Miss Everard, affecting surprise. "I don't know about these nightly raiding of cupboard shelves!"

"Zen you stay as well, plis, and see how nicely ze hand-round goes off!"

"I think I will!" And the chums, as Miss Everard seated herself, expressed unmistakable delight. There was only sullen Ada to mar the harmony.

"Do sit down, Ada," pleaded Polly. "And make your miserable life happy!"

"Bekas—what about zis!" cried Naomer, coming away from the cupboard with a cherry-cake on a platter. "And some of ze grand patent clove corjool—just a jiffy."

"Well, well, well!" laughed Miss Everard, as glasses and a jug of water and the bottle of "grand patent" came into view. "And this takes place every night?"

"As regular as ze clockwork, yes! Eet is how we keep fit, Miss Everard!"

The merriment increased. Authority had always winked at private larders, so Study 12 was in no fear of Miss Everard's banter being a cloak for secret disapproval. Too good a sport, for anything like that—their adored Form-mistress!

"And zere you are, with ze complements of Study 12, and good health!" said Naomer, who had claimed the privilege of being the one to prime a glass for Miss Everard. "You taste zat."

Miss Everard did so.

"Not at all bad! In fact," sipping again, "quite nice! Perfectly harmless, at any rate!"

"Ada?" said Betty, offering the new girl a sample of the clove cordial.

"Yes, bekas eef zat doesn't cheer you up, zen nuzzling will!"

"Such good company should suffice to cheer Ada up," remarked Miss Everard. "And from now onwards we'll hope that she will settle down happily."

"It's what we would like to see," said Betty. She was aware of Ada tossing her head.

"Honestly, we would."

"Yes, wather! Stwife in the Form—most wegvettable."

Miss Everard stood up, returning an unfinished glass to the table.

"You don't want me any longer. But Ada will stay for a chat. Thank you, Pam."

Tall Pam had opened the door to let the Form-mistress pass out. Before there had been time for the door to close again, Naomer had snatched up Miss Everard's unfinished "refresher" and was drinking it down.

"Bekas too good to waste!"

"Greedy!" snorted Polly. "And now I suppose you are going to eat the slice of cake that Miss Everard declined? That's right—go it!"

"The geal, bai Jove, is simply a— Owp! Gerrow, off me, Naomer!"

"Zen what am I? You say queek!" requested

the dusky imp, mangle Paula whilst eating cake.

"I— Yowp! It was morely wemawking— Oooch. Betty speak to Naomer!"

"Kid, stop it!"

"No, bekas—"

"Ru-ler!" cried Polly, looking about for it. Whack! on the table edge. "Naomer, another sound, and— Whack! again.

All this might have been expected to seem mildly amusing, at any rate, to Ada Sharrow. But she put on her superior air and shuffled her feet, as if she would like to be off.

Betty and several others, however, made it a genuine attempt to appeal to some better side of the new girl's nature, and it did them credit—the way in which they engaged her in talk and tried to win her round.

She remained proof against all such efforts, and there were many heavy pauses. They couldn't be helped! She chose to be silent, often when remarks from her were being awaited.

During one such silence it was that Study 12 came in for its second thrill of the evening. Suddenly Tess Trelawney, who had looked round the edge of the window-blind, to see what the night was like, exclaimed:

"Hark!"

Next second she was letting the blind fly up, so that the window could be opened.

"I heard a cry," she explained. "Come and listen!"

Her chums all flocked to the window, and promptly Ada went out of the study, rather enjoying showing rudeness. She hoped that they would notice it, but they didn't, for now they all heard—a wailing cry of distress, away on the fogbound moor.

A Cry For Help

"SOMEBODY lost!" Betty Barton whispered excitedly. "We know what the moor is on a foggy night."

"But that must be a girl calling out!" was Polly's astounded comment. "Judging by the voice. I say, I think we ought to call out in reply. That would guide her this way, and then she would be all right?"

"Not so sure," demurred Pam. "Supposing she has fallen and hurt herself? There are gravel pits, remember, to say nothing of all the rabbit-holes."

"Some of you give her a hail, anyhow," Betty suggested, "and I'll slip down to let Miss Everard know."

Breaking clear of her chums, most of whom were head and shoulders out of window, she crossed to the door. An encouraging "Halloo!" was being bawled from the study window as



Esther Hope was the only passenger for London to-night, and so the booking-clerk noticed her particularly. And perhaps he sensed how pale, how agitated she was.

Betty sped away. Less than a minute later she was tapping at the door of Miss Everard's private room.

"Come in!"

"Miss Everard—"

"Oh, what is it now, Betty?"

"There is someone out on the moor, in the dark and the fog, calling for help."

"What!"

"We answered from the study window. But it occurred to us—supposing she's injured or exhausted?"

"She?"

"The voice sounded like a girl's."

Miss Everard closed a book and laid it aside. Stepping to the window of her own bright room, she peered round the edge of the blind.

"Gracious, what a night! Betty, are you game to put your things on and come with me?"

"Yes, rather. And Miss Everard—may the others come?"

"Not too many, then; say, Polly, and just one or two more. I'll meet you downstairs."

"Right-ho, Miss Everard!"

Nodding eagerly, Betty flashed away. Upstairs, then full pelt down the long corridor, and so into Study 12 with the news.

"Polly—and you, Pam, and I think Tess should make another. Out to the moor, with me and Miss Everard!"

"Really! Oh, come on!" Polly was delighted at the promising bit of excitement. "Whoever it is

out there, she hasn't answered our cry. You'd have thought she would?"

"Unless she's too far gone."

The chosen four scampered away together. Downstairs, they snatched outdoor things from coat-room pegs, and put on the hats and jackets whilst hurrying to the front door, where the Form-mistress was waiting.

She carried a hurricane lantern.

"More reliable than electric torches," was her faintly smiled comment. "Electricity plays tricks at times. But I am inclined to believe that somebody played tricks with our electricity, a while back. Switches don't go off on their own accord!"

"No," Betty agreed. "That's what we've been saying!"

But the matter was not discussed. Plunged into foggy darkness by their closing of the hall-door, they had to give their minds to what they were about.

The hurricane lamp gave only a sickly gleam as the Form-mistress dangled it before her. A garden-path running between dripping evergreens received them, that being the shortest way out on to the moor.

At the boundary hedge there was a high wooden gate to let them through—one that was seldom used at this time of year. It was supposed to be bolted on the inside at dusk; but it was unbolted now.

"I suppose, because it is Sunday, and the men forgot," muttered Miss Everard. "Something else to inquire into in the morning! But now—can we hear anything?"

They had passed through the gateway, and before them lay the fog-screened moorland—all lumpy land, with dying bracken and trailing brambles. At a standstill for a moment, they heard nothing.

The girls peered behind, thinking to see the upper part of the schoolhouse above the top line of the boundary; but the fog completely screened the building, and would not let through even a glimmer of light issuing from the windows.

Nor was there any more calling out by scholars from the Study 12 window.

The dreary silence of the raw cold autumn night was complete, except that far from out at sea came the faint moan of a ship's foghorn.

"You had better advise me, girls, for you heard the call for help; which way?"

"More to the left, rather than straight ahead, I think," Betty suggested, and the others murmured in agreement. "That's why we felt so alarmed; it was a cry that came from a good way from the road."

"We shall only go a little way," said the Form-mistress, stepping out with her four girls; "and then, if we don't get an answer, we must conclude that the person, whoever it was, has managed all right."

The words were no sooner said than one of the girls gave a thrilled: "Sh!"

"There's someone close at hand even now," was the whispered conviction. "There again—you heard that?"

Yes, they had all detected the sound that had come just then—a faint swish of feet through all the dead stuff that matted the ground.

Miss Everard held the lantern high.

"Who's there!" she called out. "Why don't you answer?"

Next moment, mistress and girls alike ran sharply forwards. They all felt certain that the unknown was trying to slink away, and that did not seem good enough!

A dozen rushing steps they took, and then the dim lantern-light enabled them to discern a girlish figure, still trying to elude them. She was looking behind in an alarmed way as she ran on, hoping to outpace them. But they overtook her, crying:

"Stop! You must stop!"

And then she obeyed, looking ready to drop because of a shaking dread that was upon her.

The Form-mistress shone the light upon that white young face.

"Well, what?" she demanded. "Was it you who called out?"

"Yes, miss," came the faltered answer.

"We have gone to the trouble of coming out in case you should need help or guidance. Who are you, then?"

"I—I'm sorry. I got lost in the fog. I'm not used to a wild spot like this—"

"That we can understand. But who are you?"

"A—a servant at the new hotel, miss," the voice faltered again. "A chambermaid."

"And your name?"

"Esther Hope."

Her Secret—What Is It?

SO here, strangely enough, was that young servant of the hotel whom Mrs. Sharrow was so fond of bullying.

"It was my Sunday outing," she quavered, "and I'm a stranger to this district, so I—I had no friends to go to."

"Been walking about, have you? You poor thing!" exclaimed Miss Everard. "But now, for another time like this, let me tell you. At Morcove School there are plenty of maids who will be glad to welcome you, so that you can pass a pleasant time, not have to waste your outing."

"Thank you, miss. That is very kind of you."

"Not at all. Now we must see you to the hotel. I suppose you wish to get back?"

"Oh, yes; but please don't trouble. I think, now that there's a foghorn going out at sea, that will guide me."

"We mustn't let you take any chances. You might go over the edge of the cliffs, a night like this."

"Would you like my arm," Betty offered as they set off, "if you're tired?"

"That is kind of you, too, miss."

Helped by the lantern, they soon floundered across the half-mile or so of the rough ground, and then came out upon the road. Miss Everard and the girls saw Esther Hope safely to the back entrance to the hotel, and wished her good-night.

Another hour was still her own to do as she liked with; but she chose to make for what was known as the "service-room," on that upper floor of the vast hotel where she took duty.

Here, she and other members of the staff allotted to this floor could rest at slack times during working hours. Esther's job was made up of rushes at certain times of the day, and before dinner.

Guests were now downstairs, and it was very quiet up here at present. She had found one fellow-worker sitting about, in case a bed-room bell should ring, and Esther offered to relieve her.

"Oh, well, thanks!" said the other maid. "If you're going to be here, then I may as well slip down and get a bit of supper. I don't suppose anyone will ring. There's a concert in the lounge. No. 45 came up a while ago, and I fancy she's still in her room; that's all."

"Mrs. Sharrow?" said Esther.

"That's right. And why look so scared of her! I'm not afraid of her, if you are!"

"But I'm not afraid of her, come to that," Esther remarked quietly.

Next moment she was alone in the comfortable service-room. There was an electric kettle-boiler, and she made herself a cup of tea, then sat down to drink it, looking very pensive.

Her mind must have been going over recent happenings to herself out there on the foggy moor, for she retained a very upset expression.

Anybody, knowing what had occurred, could have guessed when her thoughts were of the Form-mistress and those four scholars who had come out into the wretched night on such an errand of mercy, for then Esther's look became a very emotional one.

Suddenly: Tr-r-r-ring! An electric bell rang its imperative summons above her head.

She looked up at the large indicator, giving all the numbers of the bed-rooms on that floor. Forty-five was wanting something!

Esther set aside her half-finished cup of tea, and rose with an air of having to nerve herself for a coming ordeal.

Along one of the richly carpeted corridors she hastened, hearing faint music from downstairs. At the door of No. 45 she tapped, then entered.

"You rang, madam?"

"Yes! I am going to bed early, and I hope there won't be any banging of doors! Call me at seven in the morning, girl."

"And a cup of tea then, madam?"

"Of course! Seven, to the minute, mind! I have to catch an early train up to London. I must go up to town for a few days—to my home in the West End—on business. What's the matter, girl?"

"Nothing, madam." But, oh, how the heart of Esther Hope was pounding now!

"I am not giving up this room, as I may be back after a day or two."

"Very good, madam. Nothing more?"

"No!"

"Good-night, madam."

Mrs. Sharrow was not in the mood to condescend a return good-night. Once again this door closed between her and the young chambermaid, who went only a step or two away from it, and then stopped, putting a hand to her beating heart.

From there, that same hand suddenly went up to her forehead. Shakily she swept fingers across her forehead, like one whose brain is reeling under a shock.

Drifting back to the service-room at last, she stood still for a full minute in an undiminished state of dismay. Her tense expression showed how she was racking her brain—trying to think: What to do NOW!

An idea must have come to her, for suddenly she stepped to the house-telephone and asked to be put through to the hall-porter.

Even as Esther held the receiver ready for conversation, she could hear the band music coming through on the telephone.

The slow music to the drama of her anxiety-ridden life, it seemed to her.

"Yes, what is it? Reception-office speaking!"

"Could you tell me, please, if there is a train up to London to-night?"

"Hold on a moment."

The music continued eerily on the telephone, whilst she was kept waiting during the handling of a railway timetable.

"There, miss? Nine-fifteen, Sunday nights, from Barncombe; the last train up. Gets to

London at five in the morning, so it's not a good one, you had better explain!"

"Thank you."

She returned the receiver to its hook. She glanced at a clock, ticking away on the wall. The time now, half-past eight.

Three-quarters of an hour in which to get to Barncombe Junction, on foot. Could she do it? And then, an all-night crawl right across country, and arrival in London—whilst London still slept!

"But I must do it—I must!" she whispered to herself desperately. "Fatal, if SHE gets home and I'm not there!"

On the other hand—make the great journey, at a moment's notice as it must be, and then discovery might yet be avoided.

And what that would mean to Esther Hope—only Esther Hope knew.

Her own secret, hidden from Morcove as it was hidden from all the world!

"So I'll do it!" she muttered with a decisive nod. "I'm sorry to have to slip away like this. The hotel people have been nice to me, and—the place was answering my need. But SHE must never, never know. I am sure it would be—fatal!"

The night was thicker than ever, when she came out to it again. Along the unlighted country road she hurried, through darkness and blinding fog, now running, now having to walk only as fast as her spent breath would let her.

At the last moment she caught that London train—the only passenger to be going right through to the Metropolis.

When she breathlessly asked for her ticket, in the booking-office, the railway clerk quizzed her through the pigeon-hole in surprise. What, somebody booking through to London a night like this!

Nor would that railway-clerk fail to remember the incident, and the girl's pale, agitated looks, when all Barncombe should hear the news in the morning.

A robbery at the grand new Headland Hotel; a guest the poorer by the loss of money and jewels—and one of the chambermaids MISSING!

Monday at Morcove

"BAI Jove, geals—"

"Now what's the grumble, Paula?"

"No gwumble at all, Polly deah! I was merely going to wemark—Monday morning again!"

"And if it is?" cried Study 12's madcap virtuously, whilst she slammed books together for class. "You come to Morcove School to work, don't you? I know I do!"

"Ooo, I like zat! Bekas—"

"You!" Naomer was rounded upon witheringly. "We know what you live for—food! Breakfast, only an hour ago, and already—look at her, girls!"

"Bekas an apple a day keeps ze doctor away!"

"It isn't apples only; you know it isn't! What's that, just gone into your pocket?"

"Only a packet of chocolate, fer in class!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The geal weally is a— Yowp! Groogh, off me!"

"Zen don't you be so free with calling me names, Paula!"

"I didn't— Ow! I merely wemarked— Ow! I merely expressed the— Ooch! Betty deah, speak to Naomer!"

"It's no use speaking to her!" cried Polly. "Ruler! Whack! 'See this!'"

"Booh, to you!"

"I say, I say!" laughed Betty, for now there was a positive din in Study 12. Paula, with her usual ill-luck, was involved in this little dust-up between madcap and imp.

"You three will kindly put the study straight," requested the captain, "before leaving! I'm going down!"

Sauntering up the corridor, she encountered Ada Sharrow. That girl was coming along from the stairs, reading a note that appeared to contain disturbing news.

"Anything wrong, Ada?"

"Oh, nothing to do with you!"

"I see. I only thought you looked a bit-upset."

"If you must know, this is a note from mother at the hotel. All her plans have been upset—"

"I'm sorry."

"She meant to run up to town to-day, but first thing this morning she found that she had been robbed."

"What!"

"Money and jewels—stolen from her bed-room at the hotel."

"Good gracious! Hear this, girls?" Betty cried, turning to various schoolmates who were starting to crowd round. "Nice thing for the new Headland! A guest robbed!"

"When? How?" the clamour started.

"Ada's mother—"

"She thinks," Ada spoke on loftily, "that the theft was committed last evening, whilst she was over here seeing me at the school. She went to bed almost as soon as she got back to the hotel, and so she can't believe that the thief entered her room any time after eight o'clock last evening."

"But how shocking!" cried some of the scholars.

"Anybody suspected, Ada?" asked Betty anxiously. "Any theory?"

"A young chambermaid on mother's floor—a girl named Esther Hope."

"That girl!" gasped Betty. "The one we found lost in the fog last evening! But she was ever such a nice girl!"

Ada Sharrow curled a lip.

"You think so? Anyhow, she is missing this morning."

"Missing?"

"And is that why they suspect her?" Pam inferred.

"Well, isn't it a clear case?" Ada Sharrow retorted. "She was last seen at the hotel a little

after eight, last night. She was not under notice to go. But she has gone, like that—and mother's valuables have gone with her!"

Ada heeled away again, and this time she went her way, leaving at least a dozen schoolmates in an astounded state.

"That girl, the thief!" Betty exclaimed in a shocked tone. "And we thought her such a nice girl, too!"

"She was a nice girl, and is," Pam insisted quietly. "And I don't care what anybody says to the contrary."

"Only, why—why she should have taken it into her head to run away from her job," Polly fumed—"that beats me!"

"I suppose she'll be caught somewhere?" Tess frowned. "The police have got her description by now, you may be sure. She'll be taken up for the robbery, whether she did it or not!"

An appalled silence followed this. Even those juniors who had not encountered Esther Hope, last night, were acutely distressed by the idea of someone so young being arrested.

But this was Monday morning, and school had to be thought of. The bell for first school would soon be ringing. By ones and twos the crowd disappeared, until Betty was left with only a few intimates.

Then they drifted up the corridor together.

"Hallo, Dolly!"

The chums' sudden cry of greeting held as much surprise as affection. Dolly Delane, Morcove's only day-girl, very rarely arrived at school in time for a run up to the Fourth Form quarters, although she was always welcome to do so. But here she was now, very much out of breath and full of excitement.

"Betty—and you others!" she panted. "Got a moment? I—I'd rather show you in Study 12."

"Show us what, Doll?"

In growing wonderment—for she left that eager question unanswered—they went back to Study 12, taking her with them.

"This!" she said, starting to wriggle something out of her school satchel.

And then they saw—a paper mask, such as might be sold for Guy Fawkes' Day. It was in a pappy state, as if it had been exposed to rain.

"I say, Dolly!" gaped the madcap. "Where did you find that?"

"Eekas—oo, what ze diggings—"

"Silvery white!" Madge broke out hoarsely.

"Silvery white!"

The mask had come into Betty's hands. It was not a grotesque mask, and if it had been flesh-coloured it might have had a very real and even pretty appearance. But, as those who now examined it could tell, it had been given a coat of silver paint.

"Where did you find it, Doll?" Polly repeated in greater excitement than ever.

"On my way to school just now. You know I often cut across the corner of the moor to save time." Her home was on the Barncombe road. "Suddenly the brightness of the thing made me notice it, lying in the wet grass."

"But—extwaordinaww, geeals! Who would wear a mask like that!"

Betty looked up.

"I can tell you," she said slowly. "The Phantom Schoolgirl!"

"But," cried out Polly wildly, "who IS the Phantom Schoolgirl?"

"I can tell you the answer to that also, I fancy," Betty said as slowly as before. "The girl—Esther Hope!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

MORCOVE'S GREATEST MYSTERY



A thrilling drama of school-life by Marjorie Stanton, featuring the famous chums of Study 12

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