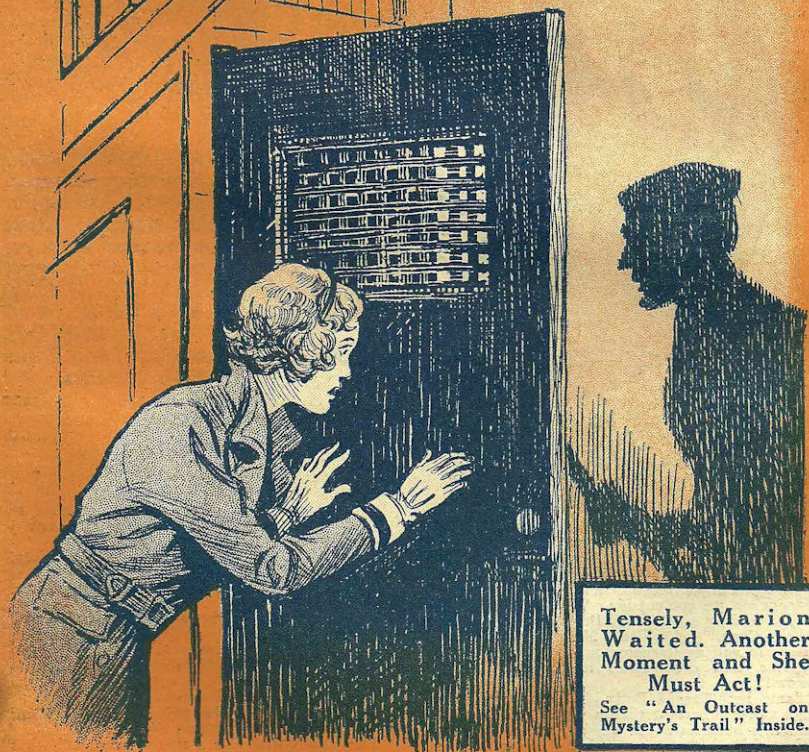


Grand Long Complete Story of Morcove School Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

No. 774. Vol. 30.
Week ending
December 7th, 1935.
EVERY TUESDAY.



Tensely, Marion
Waited. Another
Moment and She
Must Act!

See "An Outcast on
Mystery's Trail" Inside.

Five Magnificent Stories in This Issue

Betty Barton & Co., Celebrated Chums of the Morcove Fourth Form—

MORCOVE'S



KIDNAPPERS!
Haunting Morcove
School! Lurking in
the shadows, ready
to pounce upon an
unsuspecting girl,
with only BETTY
BARTON and
POLLY LINTON
to save her from
their clutches.

Off For An Outing!

"I'm ready, Polly, if you are!"
 "Right, then, Betty; we'll go down!"
 And Polly Linton smiled excitedly.

During the last two minutes she had been waiting in Study 12 at Morcove School for her best chum, Betty Barton, to join her.

"Yes," Betty grinned, quite understanding the reason for Polly's smile, "we've got something to face when we get outside. The other girls are going to chivy us no end, Polly!"

"Let them," chuckled Morcove's madcap. "They can call us slackers; call us all the names they like, and even mean it, for all I care, anyhow!"

"Same here," said Betty. "There are some things more important than a Form match, even—and this business about Biddy Loveland is one of them. But, of course, it is not for others to know that! Even Biddy has no idea of the danger that surrounds her."

"And we mustn't tell her!"

"Goodness, no! If it were possible to tell her, then Biddy might just as well have been told at once—that Miss Gray is really at the school to guard her now that Biddy has come into such a whacking fortune."

Polly, on the way out of the study with Betty, paused to ask in a guarded voice:

"Where is Miss Gray now—do you know, Betty?"

"Somewhere about the school; but she told me that we may see her during the afternoon. Although she's been forced to leave it to you and me to go with Biddy on this motor-run to Exeter—so as to keep her out of danger—Miss Gray herself won't be far away, so to speak."

Polly nodded, and the pair of them walked up the long corridor without saying more.

"Two minds with but a single thought"—that was how Betty and Polly could have been fairly described at this moment. And that thought

—Play a Sterling Part in Protecting Millionairess Bidy Loveland From—

SECRET MENACE!



was all for the safety of Bidy Loveland, a Form-mate who had been fortunate enough to inherit something like a million pounds just recently.

Yet even good fortune may have its drawbacks, and so it was in this case. Bidy's rise to sudden riches had brought danger into her life. The danger of being—kidnapped!

Some day Bidy would know all; but for the time being she was kept in blissful ignorance.

Now, meeting Betty and Polly when they were halfway downstairs, Bidy was a carefree, light-hearted girl, thinking only of the jolly outing she was to enjoy this Saturday afternoon, and playfully impatient with the Study 12 pair for keeping her waiting.

"Come on, come on!" Bidy gaily upbraided them. "Vera turned up in her mother's car five minutes ago to fetch us. We were a good mind to start without you!"

"Go on; now say the rest," Polly mock-bitterly exclaimed at the schoolgirl millionairess. "Say you wish that Betty and I hadn't hinted that we'd like to seize the chance to go to Exeter, too."

"No!" Bidy cried, going downstairs with her unsuspected "guardians." She was very bright-eyed and flushed—radiantly happy still over her recent stroke of good fortune. "I'm not like that—you know it! Only, Vera is—"

"Vera is Vera, yes," Betty nodded. "Your friend, not ours, and it's jolly nice of her to agree to our joining you both."

But when, ten seconds later, they found Vera Darrell waiting by her mother's car, with the Darrell chauffeur at the wheel, it proved quite impossible for Betty and Polly to make themselves heard to her.

The reason was that a most noisy demonstration was started by a number of Morcove girls just then boarding the school's private bus to be whirled to Barncombe House School, there to play a hockey match with friendly rivals.

As Betty and Polly had expected, they were not to be allowed to go off on the jaunt to Exeter without a good deal of "leg-pulling" by all these other girls.

"Booh, slackers!" the chorus started as the two chums appeared with Bidy. "Booh! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Surprised at you, Betty—and you, Polly!" the bantering went on. "We can understand Bidy Loveland wanting to go joy-riding—"

"Yes, wather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bye now!" Betty cried to all her Form-

mates who were in the bus. "And best of luck over the match, girls!"

"Booh! A lot you care whether we win or lose! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bye, all!" Bidy Loveland waved gaily, before getting into the car. "Sorry to be robbing you of Betty and Polly for the afternoon!"

"You look sorry!" dinned most of the hockey players. "Oh, Bidy, we never thought that you would behave like this! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bidy waved merrily in farewell as the car moved off, then began to chatter gaily with her three fellow-passengers.

"Well, we've got a fine day, anyhow. Terribly windy, but—"

"Oh, the wind!" Vera laughed. "I don't know how many tiles are off the roof at home. But so long as it doesn't rain—"

"It won't do that whilst the gale keeps on," Betty shrewdly predicted. "Vera, perhaps you didn't hear what Polly and I said just now. We wanted to thank you for letting us come."

"Oh, glad you're here," Vera Darrell flippantly responded. "For now I can be more certain of Barncombe House winning the match—without

COMPLETE THIS WEEK

by

MARJORIE STANTON

me. You're not in the Morcove team this afternoon, and I'm not playing for my school, thank goodness; got out of that!"

Vera was a day-girl at Barncombe House and an expert dodger of games. She much preferred home to school, her home-life being free from all restraints. Mrs. Darrell, a woman with a passion for entertaining, liked her "darling Vera" to do just as she pleased. Mr. Darrell was also a most indulgent father, so that altogether Vera had an enjoyable time. But Mr. Darrell, at present, was away in London.

"It's just a week ago to-day, isn't it, Bidy, since you heard about the fortune?" Vera presently remarked.

Morcove's young millionairess nodded.

Betty and Polly were thinking: "And a day or two later, Miss Gray turned up at the school! Sent to keep a special watch upon you, Biddy—and you don't know it! You imagine it is only for the sake of what she can get out of you that Miss Gray has placed herself in your study. And, instead, it is in case of an attempt to kidnap you!"

The car, only slowing at cross roads where the high wind had flung a torn-off branch half across the road, pursued its journey with a smooth rapidity which somehow lulled the girls.

To Biddy and Vera, sitting next to each other, it was only the most blissful silences out of which they roused themselves, now and then, to chatter pleasantly. But Betty and Polly were unable to treat this half-holiday run as being a mere care-free outing.

How could they do that when they knew of strange, sinister things which had happened since Biddy's huge windfall had become known?

A man prowling around the schoolhouse, after dark, the other night; a face at a class-room window, peering in! And a villainous face it had been, sharp-featured, evil-eyed, with one eyebrow mysteriously twisted upwards.

Suddenly the car pulled up. The girls saw that it was quite a traffic block, ahead of them, with an A.A. man taking charge. A small tree had been uprooted and blown on to the road, but it was being quickly cleared out of the way by several farm-hands.

A few moments, and there were other cars lined up behind. Polly, more restless than her companions over the delay, could not sit still, and ended by taking a look out through the back window.

No sooner had she done so than she nudged Betty, who was sitting next to her.

"The car behind us—see who is driving!" breathed Polly.

And Betty, taking a peep out of the back window, saw the face of the man with the twisted eyebrow!

Wits Versus Cunning!

"HE and his wife must have followed us from Barncombe, Betty!"

"Yes—and they have a girl with them, too. Wonder who she is?"

"A daughter, perhaps?"

The Study 12 pair, sitting next to each other in the car, were whispering as the journey was resumed. Biddy and Vera were chatting together on the opposite seat, and were not likely to notice the absence of general conversation.

"Polly, don't be surprised at what I am going to do," Betty whispered a minute later. "Those Hawker people are still following, and I want to see if we can't serve them a trick that will stop their game for to-day, anyhow."

How was Betty going to do this? Polly was still wondering when Betty suddenly addressed a smiling remark to Biddy Loveland.

"Biddy dear! Like to do someone a good turn—you, with all your money!"

"Of course!"—eagerly, for Biddy was nothing if not good-hearted. "How do you mean, Betty?"

"Can't we take in Bulverton on the way, and then you could stop at a cottage I know of, about a mile past the village, where a dear old dame sells real hand-made lace. Buy a piece from her, Biddy, and it will do for one of your Christmas presents later on, and the money will be so welcome to her, I'm sure."

"I don't suppose she's getting any customers for her lace at this time of year," Polly put in. "She's not on the main road. I know the old woman Betty means; Pam has often talked about her."

"I'd love to!" Biddy gaily fell in with the suggestion. "Vera—"

"Oh, bother it!" shrugged that girl. "Why not stick to the main road! It means losing half an hour of the afternoon, I suppose!"

"Not nearly so much as that," Betty pleaded. "We are coming to the by-road to Bulverton now. Do let Baxter run us that way!"

Baxter was the Darrells' chauffeur.

"Oh, all right, then!" grimaced Vera, for she saw that Biddy would be unhappy if she did not carry out the suggestion.

So Vera informed Baxter of the change of plan, and they forked left on to a very lonely stretch of road. Bulverton, when presently they drove through it, proved to be a tiny, lifeless-looking village.

"Awfully quaint, though!" Betty murmured, looking through the back window again, as if to go on viewing the village that was being left behind.

Then she secretly nudged Polly, who also twisted round to see out by the back window.

Polly nudged in return. The other car was still following! Nor had the Study 12 girls the slightest doubt that when their car stopped at the cottage, farther along the road, that other car would find some pretext for stopping also.

Sure enough, in the very moment that Baxter drew up outside the lonely cottage, the car behind drew in to the side of the road and stopped.

It was at a standstill several hundred yards down the road, where Betty and Polly, alighting with Biddy and Vera, could see the occupants of the other car getting out of their motor.

An astonished remark came from Vera:

"Fancy them getting out here! Do they want to admire the scenery? And get blown to bits in this wind! Hardly worth it, I'd have thought."

"Oh, but I know!" Betty quickly suggested. "There are the ruins of Bulverton Manor out this way—of course! They may be going to get a peep at them."

Polly nodded.

"Looks like it."

For Mr. and Mrs. Hawker and the girl were already walking away from their car towards a nearby gateway, through which could be seen masses of grey masonry—portions of that long-abandoned and ruinous manor-house of which Betty had made mention.

"And now I feel I'd like to see the ruins!" Betty exclaimed.

"I wouldn't!" Vera said very flatly. "Hurry up, Biddy, if you want to get something at this cottage. Then perhaps we can push on again."

The door of the old ivy-covered dwelling came open and the old lady herself pattered out, her wizened face wearing an inviting smile.

"Like me to show you some of my own hand-made lace, my dears? Come in then, and welcome!"

Biddy, making haste to pass inside, knew that Vera was close upon her heels, and she took it for granted that Betty and Polly also were going to crowd into the cottage, if only to be out of the wind.

But this was the moment for Betty to tell Polly, by a meaning glance, that they must stay outside.

"You don't want us, Biddy!" Betty called out lightly. "Polly and I are going to take a look round!"

"What? Oh, all right!"

Biddy, as she called back over her shoulder, was even then across the cottage threshold. Next moment the door was closed against the howling wind, which offered to blow Betty and Polly down the road to where the Hawkers' car was standing.

"I hoped for a chance like this!" Betty chuckled. "It's just splendid. Now, Polly, we'll let down a tyre or two, and prevent the Hawkers from still following us when we go on again. You must keep watch whilst I do the trick."

"There's not a soul in sight!" Polly exclaimed. "Baxter is sitting at the wheel of our car, and he's not likely to put his head out to keep an eye on us. As for the Hawkers—they've been awful enough to pretend to be viewing those ruins over there!"

"Shows how cunning they are," Betty muttered, walking briskly towards the Hawkers' car with her chum. "It's up to us to put a spoke in their wheel—give them a flat wheel or two, anyway! If we don't, we may find things taking an ugly turn somewhere between here and Exeter."

"We have Baxter with us—"

"Yes, I know. All the same, Polly, how would we all come off, even with Baxter on our side, if they suddenly swooped? That man Hawker is certain to be armed."

"I know. Go on, then, Betty, whilst I stand by and keep a look-out."

They were at the car by now. Betty went round to the back wheel and began to make use of a pocket-knife. She opened it at the small blade, steadily working the sharp point into the stout rubber tyre.

"Got to be careful, or there'll be a big bang," she chuckled. "And we don't want that. I'd like to do the other back wheel as well, Polly, if there's time."

"I haven't got a knife, or I'd help you with the good work," was the mirthful response. "We

ought to make it two wheels, Betty; then they won't be able to put matters right by using the spare."

"That's it. Here—listen!"

To their huge delight a puncture had been made without creating any sound louder than the sharp hiss of escaping air. The tyre was rapidly going down, and Betty left it to hurry round to the other and make a second puncture.

Then she and Polly coolly sauntered away.

But, as their two companions of the afternoon had not yet come out of the cottage, they did not go in that direction. Nothing like making the best of an opportunity, they were thinking. They could easily saunter over to the ruins and scout round.

"I'm sure we've got five or ten minutes," Betty remarked as they set off across the field. "Vera's in a hurry, we know. But Biddy won't mind the old dame keeping her talking. I could tell that by Biddy's face when the dear old soul opened the door just now!"

"And we may do some good by seeing what the Hawkers are up to over there," was Polly's enthusiastic rejoinder. "If we see them simply hanging about, waiting, then we shall know it's only a ruse to hide their shadowing us."

"We can't find out too much about them," Betty frowned. "Direct evidence; absolute proof—that's what we want! Then Miss Gray will have something on which she can get the police to act."

Hurrying together over the wind-swept field, more than once they glanced back to the cottage and the car that stood opposite the door. Had Biddy and Vera appeared, Betty and Polly would have felt bound to whip round and hurry back.

But there was still no sign of the cottage interview having ended when the two chums reached a hedge on the far side of the field. The grey old ruins were quite close on the other side of the



Betty and her companions watched keenly. Why had the Hawkers and the girl with them paused here to inspect the ruins? Betty was certain they had stopped only because the Morcove party had also stopped.

ragged hedge, and both girls took cautious peeps through the barrier before going farther.

The man with the twisted eyebrow—Mr. Hawker, as they had discovered his name to be—was simply waiting about with his wife.

They stood with a jagged piece of wall to shelter them from the wind, the man smoking a cigarette.

Betty and Polly drew back on their side of the leafless hedge, in case they might be glimpsed.

"But the girl they had with them—where's she?" Betty wondered. "I couldn't see her just then."

"Neither could I. Perhaps she's filling in the time by taking a look round. But she won't come this side of the hedge, will she?"

"We won't stay, anyhow," Betty decided.

"There's really no need, Polly; we've done what we wanted to do. He and his wife are only waiting until—Oh, of course, that'll be it! The girl is to let them know when our car has gone on again!"

"My hat, why didn't I think of that! But where is she, then?" Polly anxiously questioned.

"Where is she watching from?"

"Come away," Betty briskly advised. "Anyway, it's time we got back to the road. Biddy and Vera must be ready to go on again by now."

But a moment later Polly cried out in sudden amazement:

"Why, look, Polly—look! The car's gone on again without us! We're stranded!"

Retaliation

BETTY was instantly sharing her chum's utter astonishment and dismay.

"Goodness, Polly! And Biddy and Vera are in the car all right! They've simply given us the slip!"

"Rotten thing to do!" Polly stamped. "I could understand Vera not really wanting to have us. But I did think better of Biddy!"

Anger was in Betty's eyes also.

The car, as it sped away in the direction of distant Exeter, was not so far off that Polly and Betty could not see the occupants, for those two girls were looking out of the window. The stranded pair even saw Biddy wave to them.

"Well, that's the limit!" Betty gasped.

She turned to Polly.

"But it's serious, Polly! We were not to let Biddy out of our sight, so to speak—and now she's gone off without us."

"How on earth are we to go after her, either?" questioned Polly in dismay. "No car is likely to be passing this way—it's so off the beaten track. And miles from the railway, too! Oh, bother!"

"I say," said Betty tensely, "there's that girl who was with the Hawkers—and she's seen us. It looks as if she's coming to speak to us."

Polly's only response was a frowning nod. Like Betty, she could see that the companion of Mr. and Mrs. Hawker was hurrying swiftly across the field.

It was possible that she was merely going to rejoin the man and woman; but the course the girl was taking would certainly bring her within speaking distance of Betty and Polly.

She had first come into view near the lonely, roadside cottage from which Biddy and Vera had just driven away.

The Study 12 girls suddenly set off to meet her, as she made a beckoning sign.

"I say," she called out to them; "your friends asked me to tell you that they couldn't wait any longer!"

"What!"

"I happened to be down there by the cottage, when they got tired of waiting about for you. They said I would be sure to see you over by the ruins, and asked me to tell you."

Betty and Polly looked at each other. Were they to believe this—or had it, in fact, been the other way about? Had the stranger given Biddy and Vera some fake message which had caused them to leave the chums at the ruins?

The uneasy doubt was still troubling the minds of both Morcove pupils when they noticed that the Hawker girl was looking past them. In the self-same instant they looked round, but the sense of possible danger had been aroused too late.

The high wind was shrilling in their ears, and the other girl's loud voice had made Betty and Polly deaf to any other sounds there might have been.

They had now turned round to find Mr. and Mrs. Hawker in the very act of swooping to seize them. The man and woman had doubtless crept up behind them very stealthily.

In vain the two schoolgirls did their best to resist. They were overpowered by superior strength. Their attempts to shout for help were frustrated. Each was a struggling captive to be carried to the far side of the field, through the gateway, and so to the ruins.

The Hawker girl, following, was enjoying it all. "And two of our tyres are flat, dad," Betty and Polly heard her saying. "I reckon they're responsible for that!"

"I've no doubt they are," muttered the girl's father, as he bore Betty along, whilst Mrs. Hawker carried a still-struggling Polly. "And they shall pay for it!"

When, five minutes later, they realised that they were shut up together in a prison-like remnant of the ancient manor-house, it was clear to them that the Hawkers' motive had been more than a spiteful one.

This was no mere retaliation for the punctured tyres. As soon as the car could resume its journey, the villainous pair and their girl would be off after Biddy! Now it was certain that she and Vera had gone on only because of a lying message.

"My goodness, a nice fix we're in now, Betty!"

"Yes, things are pretty bad," Betty quietly responded. "But we must see if we can't manage somehow."

They had been locked away in what had once been the dim, stone-walled still-room of the manor, in the kitchen regions. It was a ground-floor room, and its window still retained the massive iron bars which used to be fitted to such accessible windows in past ages.

Already they had tried the door, but it was bolted and locked on the outside. As for smashing it down—such a task would require a smith's hammer at least, and there was nothing in the room to serve as a makeshift implement.

"Nothing!" Polly said for the second time, with a shrug of helplessness. "Only a few slate shelves."

"How about trying to prise up one of these flagstones?" Betty suggested. "That would give us a battering-ram. But it'll take some doing. They're worn smooth, after all these years."

"That penknife of yours no use, Betty?"

"Not a bit! At least—I'm not so sure," Betty amended. "Let's see!"

Out came the tiny knife, intended only for the sharpening of pencils at school. Opening the big blade Betty went down on both knees and started to scrape and pick at the very old mortar-like

substance between the edge of the one flagstone and another.

"Pick deep enough, Betty, and we can get our fingers in!"

"That's what I'm thinking! Oh, we'll manage! It's a case of slow but sure, Polly, or the knife will break!"

Then the blade broke!

"Ugh, dash!" Polly fumed; but Betty, always the calmer one in adversity, said nothing.

She went on picking with what was left of the blade, and after several more minutes the crevice was big enough for both girls to hook their fingers round the edge of one flagstone.

"Whew!" Polly was soon panting impatiently. "We've set ourselves a nice job."

"We must keep on trying."

And suddenly up came the flagstone, both girls struggling to keep it from falling back. They held it balanced on one edge whilst they got their breath back. Then, between them, they lifted it towards the door.

Another breathing space, and then, taking up the stone again together, they drove it edgewise against the door.

Crash!

"A few like that, Betty!" the madcap breathlessly laughed. "Now again—"

Again the makeshift ram was driven with slattering force against the old oak door. The latter

still held out, and so the two girls persisted, making that gloomy chamber—so prison-like with its barred window—resound with crash upon crash!

They knew that the door must give way at last, and give way it did. The moment came when they knew they had smashed their way to freedom, and then—

"Girls!" a voice suddenly came into them through the unglazed, barred window. "Oh, Betty—Polly!"

Dropping the flagstone to the floor they turned towards the window.

Someone was peering in with a look of amazement and alarm. And that someone was—Miss Gray!

Betty and Polly flew to the barred window.

"Miss Gray! How did you manage—"

"Oh, I can explain later, girls. Do you need help? I'll come—"

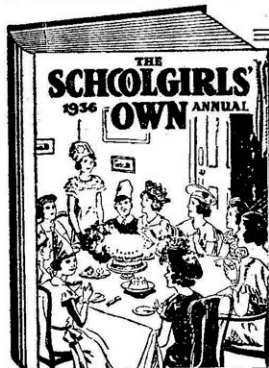
They laughed triumphantly.

"We're free! We're coming out now, Miss Gray. We've smashed down the door! Will be with you in a jiffy!"

Nor was it a minute more before they were with Miss Gray in the open air.

"And now," Betty panted, "tell us—have you seen a car standing out there on the road? People mending punctures—"

(Continued on the next page.)



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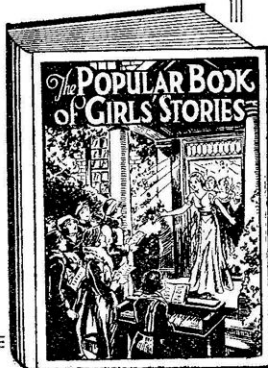
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"It will have gone on by now," Miss Gray said quickly. "They were Mr. and Mrs. Hawker, with a girl. I was watching them— But where is Biddy?"

Betty rapidly explained all that had happened. "So," she concluded, "Biddy is on the way to Exeter with Vera! Polly and I were feeling really scared, because, if we hadn't been able to get out—"

"You have a car, Miss Gray?" Polly struck in. "Yes. I have Miss Somerfield's spare car. It had to go to Exeter to be decarbonised. It was arranged that I should drive down in it and return in the Darrells' car with you girls."

"Then we can get away!" Polly shouted jubilantly. "Come on—after them!"

"Miss Gray," broke out Betty, whilst they were all three racing back to the road, "what made you come this way, through Bulverton?"

"Because, girls, quite by a happy chance, I found that your car had come this way. My car gave me trouble—just where the road forks, and I had to stop and look at the engine. A farm-hand came up to ask if he could do anything for me. I gleaned from him that your car had gone via Bulverton. It was when I said I had come from Morcove School that he spoke of having seen a car go that way with some schoolgirls in it."

"How lucky!"

"And then," Miss Gray spoke on, "I came in sight of—not your car, but the Hawkers'! It was beside the road, and they were attending to the tyres. I stopped a good way back and scouted around, wondering if anything had been happening between you girls and the Hawkers in this lonely part. But here we are. Jump in!"

"Exeter!" Polly cried as she and Betty dived into the car, whilst Miss Gray rushed to the driving-seat. "Nonstop!"

And fifty minutes later they had reached the town.

For the time being, all anxiety was at an end. The Darrells' car was found at the parking-place where it had been arranged to leave it—and so was the Hawkers' motor! Evidently, then, nothing had happened to Biddy yet!

Then Baxter was found, and he could tell the fresh arrivals that "Miss Vera" and her friend—meaning Biddy—were in the town, probably having tea just then.

"You had better go to that tea-place they talked about," Miss Gray said to Betty and Polly, "whilst I get rid of Miss Somerfield's car. Don't let Biddy know what happened to you at the ruins."

"Oh, no! We'll make that all right!"

And, with smiles for Miss Gray, the Study 12 pair set off briskly for the teashop. There, sure enough, they found Biddy and Vera enjoying a sumptuous tea. Both girls were amazed and disgusted to learn that they had been tricked into going on from the cottage without Betty and Polly.

"That girl who was in the other car told us that you didn't want us to wait; you were so keen on the ruins, and were going to get the old cottage woman to give you tea! But," Biddy wondered blankly, "why on earth should the girl have said such a thing! Can you two account for it?"

Betty and Polly could have done that very easily, but they knew they must not. Making out that the whole affair was a silly hoax enabled the talk to be turned into pleasanter channels. Not that Biddy found it exactly pleasant to be told that Miss Gray, having no car of her own

to go back in, later on, must be given a lift in the Darrell car.

"That Miss Gray," sighed the schoolgirl millionaire, "she's a thorn in my side! But don't let's talk about her now. You must make a good tea, now that you are here," she added to Betty and Polly.

But when they left the teashop a little later they saw Miss Gray waiting for them outside, and Biddy's face expressed anything but pleasure at sight of the young lady!

Plans Go Awry!

"I HAVE been thinking, girls—"

"I hope, Miss Gray, you haven't been thinking about us!" Biddy bridled up.

"Do let us have a bit of pleasure!"

"Yes, by all means, make the best of your last hour or so—"

"Last what! We've ages yet!"

"Biddy—all of you," Miss Gray said, speaking to Betty and Polly as if she had no secret understanding with them; "the gale is as bad as ever, and for that reason you should soon make a start for home."

"Oh!" Biddy stamped, whilst Vera said loftily: "But, Miss Gray, my mother's chauffeur knows every inch of the road. It really is absurd, when he can easily do the run in an hour and a half."

"The weather being what it is, I feel I must insist upon your—"

"Insist!" Biddy echoed. "But you're not a mistress!"

"True; but I am temporarily attached to the school, and I can imagine that Miss Somerfield would wish me to take care that no harm comes to you."

"Harm!" Biddy laughed. "What harm can come to us? I wonder you don't tell us that we must go back by your train—so as not to come to harm!"

"As a matter of fact," Miss Gray said, remaining very calm under Biddy's angry gaze, "I am hoping that room may be found for me in the car."

"There's room in the car, of course. But—well, we did think of going to the pictures," Vera said.

"And perhaps you haven't had tea yet?" Biddy said bleakly. "We shall see you later, then. You know where the car is parked?"

She and Vera moved off together, looking for a chance to cross the busy street. The fine picture-house was only a few doors down on that opposite side. Betty and Polly, showing Miss Gray how sorry they were for her, became aware of her intention to go into the cinema with them all.

"You did right," she whispered, "not to take sides with me. Biddy mustn't be given cause for feeling offended with you two girls."

It was well past seven when they left the cinema to find their way back to the car park, for Biddy and Vera had insisted upon seeing the whole programme. Baxter was waiting with the car, and spoke of getting Miss Gray and the Morcove trio to their school by nine at the latest.

They would be going through Barncombe and straight on to Morcove, missing Vera's home. After her Morcove companions had been dropped at the school, Vera would be taken back.

"It's quite all right," she lightly informed Miss Gray. "I can be as late as I like. Mother never fidgets about me!"

When they got into Barncombe it was ten to nine by the illuminated town hall clock, which they glimpsed whilst steering out into the lifeless

High Street, where every shop window was in darkness.

"And so we shall be in well before assembly," Biddy smiled across to Betty and Polly.

"But it's absurd, getting back so early!" said Vera. "I think you should have all looked in at my home, after all. Perhaps Dick has turned up."

"Who is Dick?" asked Betty.

"Oh, you and Polly weren't with me when I told Biddy. He's a cousin of mine. They've already broken up at his school, on account of sickness. There was some talk of his coming down for the week-end with Aunt Peggy. But there had been no wire when—Hallo, stopping?"

Baxter was pulling up rather sharply now that the car was clear of the town, on the dark road to Morcove.

They stopped, and the passengers saw a policeman walking towards them in the middle of the road. He must have signalled them to pull up.

"You can't get past this way," they heard him tell Baxter. "A couple of elms across the road, and it'll be midnight before they're out of the way. Where are you for?"

"Morcove School."

"Then I don't know exactly what you're going to do!"

Forced to Stay the Night

THE interior light of the car showed the faces of all four girls looking variously amused, excited, and dismayed. Miss Gray, for her part, was definitely worried.

"But how lovely!" Vera cried, clapping her hands. "Oh, turn back and drive home now—splendid! Girls, we can keep it up all night. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great fun, this," Biddy agreed. "We'll have to go to a hotel! Well, my guardian will pay!"

"Hotel be blowed," said Vera. And, rapping upon the partition-glass, she took upon herself to give the order to her mother's chauffeur:

"Baxter! Home!"

He nodded, supposing the decision to have originated with Miss Gray.

"I could try another way," he called round to them all; "but it means back-road work, over the moor—"

"Oh, not that," Miss Gray quickly decided. "Back into the town first, anyhow. And I will ring up the headmistress."

"You can do that from my home," Vera gaily remarked. "What a scream!"

"I'm afraid your mother will think—"

"Mother won't think anything of the sort! You don't know mother!" Vera rippled.

The car backed a little, turned, and then went speeding for the Darrell's house. Five minutes later they were alighting at the porch, and Vera's skittish ring-ring! at the bell struck in upon the noise of a wireless jazz-band.

A smart parlourmaid, opening the door, was brushed aside by the daughter of the house, who whirled in, crying:

"Mumsie, such fun! Biddy and these others can't get home to-night! We can sleep them, can't we? Hallo, auntie darling! Hallo, Dick!"

Morcove realised that Vera's Aunt Peggy and



"Look, Betty!" Polly burst out indignantly. "The car's gone on without us. We're stranded!" On the face of it, the behaviour of Biddy Loveland and Vera Darrell seemed unforgivable.

her schoolboy son had turned up for the week-end. That being so, it might have been considered quite impossible for Mrs. Darrell to find accommodation for "Morcove" that night. But no! Mrs. Darrell, expensively dressed, and in the midst of a game of cards with Aunt Peggy, was enthusiastic.

"But, my dears, of course! Come in, come in!"

Some confused introductions, with the wireless still going, were typical of the house and its occupants.

"Telephone, Miss Gray? Use the one in my morning-room; Vera will show you! And now, my dears," to the Morcove girls, "you would like something after your journey! Awful night! Half the greenhouse gone west. Emily shall lay supper for you."

The wireless suddenly howled as Dicky worked the knobs.

"Moscow," he asserted, as if he had achieved a clever thing.

Then a Frenchman began speaking, and Dicky switched off.

He came over to engage the Morcove girls in talk.

"Couldn't you have walked?" Dicky suggested cheerfully.

"Dick, don't be so rude!" Vera cried, having whirled upon the scene again. "As if they wanted to walk four miles, a night like this."

"But so we could, even now, easily," Polly said. She had taken an immediate dislike to Dick. "And enjoy doing so!"

"Yes; and get in when all the rest of school's gone to bed!" Vera cried. "Biddy, you can sleep with me. And there's the spare room for you, Betty, and Polly. I don't know about Miss Gray, but—"

The slightly contemptuous remark went unfinished. Miss Gray was suddenly back from the morning-room telephone.

"They can't get Morcove," she announced gravely. "They say it must be the gale that has blown down the line."

"Rotten!" Biddy grimaced. "Then we simply will have to walk to the school after all! We can't leave them in suspense."

"I don't like the idea of you girls walking back along that lonely road," Miss Gray reflected aloud.

"Oh, why ever not?" smiled Biddy. But Betty and Polly knew the risk Miss Gray was thinking about.

"So," that young lady calmly resumed, "I see what must be done. You girls stay, as Mrs. Darrell is so kind about it all, and I will walk to the school, to set their minds at rest."

"But here's Dick!" cried Vera. "Let Dick walk! Dick, why don't you offer!"

"Er—oh, if you want me to go, then I suppose—"

"No," Miss Gray quietly interposed. "You would have to walk all the way back. I, when I get there, can go to bed. So, if you don't mind, I'll be off at once, and—"

"But, my dear, you must have something first!" Mrs. Darrell shrieked, rustling back to the drawing-room. "What a night!" as they heard another pane of the greenhouse go. "Miss Gray, you had better not leave! It's not fit! Besides, they will understand!"

Betty and Polly were not surprised to find Miss Gray unable to accept this happy-go-lucky argument. She adhered to her decision, and so Betty, on the quiet, offered to go with her.

"That's awfully good of you, Betty," was the answer. "But it isn't necessary. I'm not nervous."

"She's not so bad!" Biddy slightly amended her opinion of Miss Gray, after that "tiresome" person had set off. "I must give her something nice for Christmas when we break up, that's all!"

"And now!" said Vera, for they were sitting round a tempting supper-table in the dining-room. "Is this better? Dick, I don't know that you need hang round?"

He had drifted in, with his conceited grin.

"But I'm to see after you girls!"

"See after us?" Vera echoed incredulously. "If you want to sit down, sit down. But you must keep quiet, or you'll be sent to bed early. Little boys should be seen, not heard. Coffee, girls, now, or later?"

"So you're Biddy?" Dick smirked, finding a

seat for himself next to her, with Betty and Polly on the opposite side of the table. "The girl who has come into a million quid! Have some pie? Veal and ham. Shall I cut you a helping?"

"Oh, not as much as that!" Biddy laughed. "Then that will do for me," said Dicky. "Being down here has given me an appetite."

"Why, how long have you been here?" cried Vera, parading a disdain which, as Betty and Polly sensed, cloaked a good deal of liking for Dick.

They noticed that Vera's pretty eyes went to him often, and that he could not say anything to Biddy without her, Vera, paying attention. This little interlude amused them greatly.

He was, during the meal, inclined to say a good deal to Biddy. He devoted all his time to her, in fact—bringing quite a jealous glint into Vera's eyes at last. As for Betty and Polly, they far from minded being rather neglected by Dick. Either Biddy or Vera could have him—and welcome!

"Conceited idiot!" Polly described him when, an hour later, she was alone with Betty in the spare room. "And, talk about making yourself nice to Biddy just because she has come into all that money!"

Betty laughed. "I'm afraid there is a bit of that about him, Polly. Poor Biddy! It made her so uncomfortable, you could see—his keeping on about the money."

Going to the window, Betty peeped round the edge of the curtain.

"As wild as ever, Polly. What a shame it was that Miss Gray had to tramp to Morcove. I do hope she has got there safely."

"She's had a trying day, Betty."

"She has! I know it's not fair to blame Biddy for being so rude to her. It must have seemed to Biddy and Vera as if Miss Gray deserved a snubbing. But at times I felt furious!"

"Same here, when we know it's her job to fight the danger."

"And our job to help her," was Betty's rejoinder.

They were soon in bed, and for a good while they talked together in whispers whilst the soothing of the raging wind was, doubtless, making a pleasant lullaby for other inmates of the house—including carefree Biddy, Morcove's millionairess schoolgirl!

At Midnight!

"ARE you awake, Polly? Did you hear a noise?"

"There are noises everywhere to-night, Betty. It's the gale."

"But I thought I heard—just then—"

And Betty, in the dark room, sat up in bed.

"Sorry, Polly dear, if I seem jumpy, but—"

"Oh, if it was a suspicious sound it's just as well. I was nearly asleep," Polly remarked, whilst lifting herself on one elbow. "What time is it, Betty?"

"I won't switch on for a moment, to see. The noise I heard, Polly—it wasn't caused by the gale, I'm sure. Just a sec."

Betty slipped out of bed and padded to the window. By drawing apart the curtains softly she could let in bright moonlight.

At that instant both girls heard the Town Hall chimes. After the four quarters came a ponderous bong, bong! of the hour bell.

Twelve o'clock.

"Polly, there's a car standing outside the front gate!"

"There is?"

Out of bed jumped Polly. Grabbing a dressing-gown, she joined Betty at the window.

"Lucky I didn't switch on," Betty breathed. "Now, whose car is that, Polly? Can't tell, from here if it's the kid-nappers—"

"It looks to me like the same make!" Polly whispered in great excitement. "My hat, have they found out that Biddy's spending the night here? Are they—"

"Sh! That accounts for the noise I heard," Betty muttered.

She snatched at her dressing-gown, then went across the moonlit room to the door.

"As if somebody were creeping about," she muttered.

Polly tiptoed after her chum, who, next instant, opened the door without making the faintest sound.

Both girls were at once aware of a raging draught. It made them wonder whether an outer door or window were open somewhere about the house.

Then Betty, who was peering out into the bed-room passage, gave such a violent start that Polly, close behind, was aware of it.

"Anything, Betty?"

"Yes!" was the panted reply. "Oh, quick, Polly—after her, quick!"

With a sense of being the only ones awake in that house, they reached the staircase landing, where Betty, pausing, held her chum at a standstill. They peered down the flight of stairs, listening at the same time.

"Who was it, Betty—could you tell?"

"That woman! I'm certain! But she was gone in a flash. Now is she downstairs, or has she dodged into some other passage up here?"

"Let's go down," headstrong Polly urged. "If she saw you, then she will try to get away to the car that is waiting. And we don't want her to escape!"

"No! Catch her now, Polly, and that will be proof, if you like! Come on, then!"

"What's that sickly smell?" wondered Morcove's madcap, as they both scurried downstairs.

Betty noticed it; a not unpleasant odour that made her think of surgeries—or was it the dentist's? She could not be sure.

Below in the hall, where they switched on a light to find everything in order, that faint reek still assailed their nostrils. Then came a blundering sound from the kitchen, and without a thought of the risk they might be incurring, both girls dashed into a side passage that led to the domestic regions.

"She went this way," Polly jerked, leading now. "It's the back door that's open. She's gone, Betty—and we can't go out after her!"

"Shout, then, Polly! A policeman may hear, and if he sees a car going all out—"



"There's a car outside the front gate," Betty exclaimed tensely. In a moment Polly was with her at the window. Had the would-be kidnapers discovered that Biddy Loveland was staying the night in this house?

Betty got no further. Suddenly, in that dark kitchen—for no moonlight was coming in at its window—she and her chum were aware of a dark-clad woman rushing at them.

She seemed to have turned back to deal with them before they should raise an alarm.

Nor had she been a moment discernible to the two girls when one of them was swooped upon.

It was Polly who, before she could offer any resistance, was jabbed in the face by a reeking pad.

She was going to shout, as Betty had suggested their both doing, and instead she only gasped breathlessly. There was something on the pad that she had breathed, and instantly she became weak and dizzy.

At that same moment Betty, realising that Polly was as good as "downed," and that it might be her turn next, would have dashed at the woman, to try and wrest the pad from her. But now a man suddenly loomed upon the dark scene. Betty saw him—the man with the twisted eyebrow—coming at her as if to strike her down.

She saw him towering in front of her, his right fist upraised, and she dived aside.

Bang!

A revolver-shot, making its shattering report in the kitchen!

However it may have been with Polly, for the next moment or two, Betty felt as if she had gone stone deaf.

When her hearing recovered from the shock, there were hurried sounds as of the man and woman getting outside as quickly as possible.

"Betty! Whew, help!" came Polly's gasping cry. "Light, Betty! Quick! Where's the switch?"

And then, although neither girl had found the switch the light came on.

The man and woman were gone, but someone else was there.

Miss Gray!

SHE came towards them quickly and spoke hurriedly in a low voice.

"I fired—into the air. But don't let anyone know I was here. Let them think it was burglars. You're not hurt, either of you?"

"Not I," Betty panted. "How about you, Polly?"

"I'm all right. Only got a whiff of that stuff, but it nearly knocked me over. Here, though—Miss Gray—"

"Sh! I must go! Remember—not a word about me!"

And next instant she was gone—out by the back door into the moonlight night.

They heard no sound made by her swift retirement; heard only the noise of a car, speeding away, and a babel of confused cries from above stairs.

"What is it? Who is it?" Mrs. Darrell's frantic cry sounded. "Oh, where are the police?"

"Burglars, mummie!" Vera shrieked. "How perfectly thrilling! Where's Dick? Dick, are you downstairs?"

"Eh, what?" was the very muffled response from Dick, who was not only still above stairs, but crouching behind a bed-room door. "What's all the row about!"

"You might go and see, I think!" yelled Vera. "Oh, is that you, Aunt Peggy?"

"I can't find my dental plate!" Aunt Peggy wailed. "Surely they haven't stolen my teeth?"

"Hi, help! Police!" a boyish voice suddenly bellowed from a wide-open bed-room window.

"Police! Hi, police!"

Polly looked at Betty.

"What a specimen he is, that Dick!"

"What a night, I say!" was Betty's half-laughed rejoinder. "But, don't forget, Polly—not a word about Miss Gray!"

Biddy Needs Betty!

THERE was an inrush of girls into Study 12 directly after Sunday-morning service at Morcove School.

Betty and Polly had arrived with Biddy Loveland only a few minutes before the march-in to the school's own chapel. There had not been time to say much then.

"Well, have you two seen her?" clamoured those girls who now swarmed in upon Betty and Polly.

"Miss Gray? We have!" Betty smiled. "Had quite a long talk with her."

Bunny Trevor closed the door with a boisterous slam.

"Then perhaps you will explain! All we know is that Miss Gray turned up late last evening to say that you two girls and Biddy would be sleeping at the Darrells'. We took it for granted that afterwards Miss Gray went to bed."

"And she didn't," Polly burst forth. "She got hold of a bike and rode back to Barncombe. She was going to stay around all night, watching the Darrells' house."

"That's the sort she is," Betty interposed.

"That's the young lady half the Form regards as a nuisance, and as for Biddy—no use for Miss Gray at all!"

"Jolly shame," murmured Pam.

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Most wegrettable —"

"But—at the moment it can't be helped," Betty raced on. "If we want to make it up to Miss Gray, for what she's having to put up with from Biddy—we must still hold our tongues. The reason why Miss Gray kept out of the way, last night, after she had put those two intruders to flight, is that she didn't want Biddy or anyone except those in the secret to know that she was there in Barncombe."

"Did she still stay around, after that midnight alarm?" asked Madge.

"No, she rode back to Morcove, let herself in, and calmly went to bed! She knew that there would be no more danger to Biddy for a bit, anyhow," Betty added.

"My goodness, though," gasped Helen Craig, "what awful danger there was at the time—and Biddy even now hasn't the faintest idea!"

"The plan was to give her a whiff of that stuff in her sleep, and then carry her out to the car," Polly said grimly. "But even if Betty and I hadn't butted in, the woman would never have done the trick. Miss Gray was ready, outside the house. She had seen them arrive in the car."

"All the same," Judy Cardew exclaimed, "you two made a huge difference. What a shame you can only be given credit in the school for having blundered upon a couple of burglars!"

"Oh, but don't forget, the 'burglars' were armed!" Polly chuckled. "Didn't one of them let off a revolver—by accident, it's supposed?"

"How I wish I had been there," sighed Pam. "I hope Miss Somerfield hasn't been annoyed about it all!"

"Between ourselves, girls," Betty chuckled, "Miss Somerfield has personally thanked me and Polly. How's that! She wouldn't, for worlds, have had us run into such danger, but as we did—and came off all right—"

There was a sudden interruption. Dusky Naomer burst upon the scene, capering high.

"Bekas, look what I have got, girls—gorjus! Look at zis ee-normous box of chocs which Biddy has just given me—hooray!"

"Given YOU?" shouted Bunny. "Why?"

"To pass round, so don't get ze wind up! Zey are for all ze Form," Naomer rattled on, hastily stripping off the ribbon securing the lid. "But no reason why we shouldn't have first choice. Ooo! Come on, everybody!"

"A fine lot some of us have been doing to deserve chocs," said Bunny.

"But you girls won the match!" Polly observed joyously. "So glad! Betty, it means they can do without us another time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Another time," said Betty. "I think you and I had better keep with the team—Biddy as well. Miss Somerfield thinks so, too. I may tell you! After last night, our Biddy simply must not expect to be out and about so much."

"There'll be the play," Madge remarked. "We must push on with that next week."

"Don't mention the play to Biddy!" Polly exploded. "We'll never, never get her to take any part in it. A millionairess—wly should she!"

Then the door opened and Bunny cried:

"Talk of angels—" For it was Biddy who had appeared just when they were discussing her.

"I say, Betty," said Biddy, "can you come to my study for a moment? I—I want you to advise me."

"Wrong number," laughed Betty. "The captain lives next door, round the corner." She went out of the study with Biddy. "What a trouble you are, these days! What is it now?"

The Morcove millionairess was looking perplexed enough to warrant that question. She did not respond until they had reached the other study. Then, having closed the door:

"I say, Betty, you always know best what to do. Just look out of that window for a moment, will you?"

Darting to peer out of the window, Betty saw only a loose-limbed youth of school age sauntering to and fro at the gateway.

"See him?" Biddy said uncomfortably. "It's Dick Darrell."

"Oh, so it is—oh, ha, ha, ha—"

"Betty, don't laugh. He is hanging about for me," the schoolgirl millionairess sighed. "He hinted that he might walk out this way. And Vera isn't with him, or, of course, it would be different. Would you go out to him, Betty?"

"I? I wouldn't go a yard to see him!"

"But what am I to do? Betty, will you come down with me and—well, I will tell him to beat it."

"Right-ho, but we mustn't be long. I want to see something of Pam and the others to-day," Betty jested.

"I shan't want to be long about it; and we might go down by the back stairs," Biddy was saying as they left the study.

Master Dick Darrell, dressed in his "Sunday best," with a flower in his coat, was still hovering about the gateway when the two girls reached it by somewhat furtive measures. Lots of girls were sauntering over the games field, and Biddy was dreading being seen and laughed at.

"What do you want?" Biddy irritably demanded as soon as she was within speaking distance.

"Oh, hallo, Biddy—and it's you as well!" Dick commented with a far less enthusiastic glance at Betty. "I say, what a fine school—from the outside."

"You can't see the inside—at least, not now. If you had come with Vera, about tea-time, then perhaps I might have been able to have you both to tea."

"Oh, Vera," he grimaced. "Who wants Vera? I say, though, I've got something good to tell you! I'm not going back on Tuesday! I'm going to be here a whole week!"

"Not here, I hope," Biddy said witheringly. "You've been hanging about here quite long enough, Dick Darrell—I don't know why!"

"I was wondering about this afternoon? I suppose you can go for walks? And let Betty come—I shan't mind."

Biddy surveyed him with unstinted scorn.

"Thank you, we'd rather not. I didn't like you before, and now—"

There Biddy broke off, as a girl came whizzing towards them on a bicycle, and that girl was—Vera!

"Oh?" said Biddy. "Why not?"

Vera shrugged. Quite definitely, she was annoyed about something.

"I'd rather not say!"

"Well!" Biddy laughed mirthlessly. "Fancy coming all this way just to tell me that, and not the reason! Goodness, Vera, are you being like this because Dick is here?"

"I say," that bright youth interposed proudly, "don't you two girls start scrapping about me!"

"Because you're not worth it? I know you're not," Biddy crushed him. "Sorry, Vera; he's your cousin, and so I suppose—"

"Oh, don't mind me!" Vera said shrilly. "If I didn't care to find him chasing after you, I wouldn't have turned up like this. For, as a matter of fact," drawing elaborately, "I guessed he was out this way!"

"And so you can both go back together, can't you?" Biddy blandly submitted. "Vera dear—"

"Thank you for nothing!" snapped that young person. "But I'm in a hurry, and perhaps you want to keep Dick a bit longer—hanging around—"

"Now, Vera, look here!" Biddy flared up, whilst Dick grinned proudly at Betty, inviting her to note how he was being fought for, after all! "You're being silly, Vera!"

"The fact is, Biddy Loveland," snapped Vera, "It was all right until you came into all that money—"

"Look here!" Biddy stamped. "I simply won't allow you to talk like that, so there, Vera Darrell! As if I've changed!"

"Changed? You're not the same girl!" Vera declared, tossing her head. "But I suppose you feel you have a perfect right to be different now you're the Morcove millionairess, with your ten-pound remittances from your trustees—"

"Oh, how dare you!" Biddy panted. "You were not feeling like this yesterday, down in Exeter!"

Betty thought:

"No; Dick had not turned up then!"

"But as I see what it all means," Biddy rushed on hotly, "now understand, Vera Darrell; I'm done with you! I never dreamed you were like this! I couldn't have imagined you would be so—so petty! All right, this ends everything! You can go—"

"I say, though," Dick blurted, "you don't mean me as well?"

"You!" Biddy said, with positive loathing. Then she laughed. "But it's no use my saying anything to you!"

Unfortunately, it was not going to appease Vera that Biddy cared less than nothing for the conceited lad. What rankled with Vera was that Dick, whether Biddy liked him or no, had come seeking the Morcove girl.

"Betty, let's go in," Biddy said wildly. "Come on! 'Dash!' she raged, hurrying along with her schoolmate, "if it's to be like this, then the sooner someone else has all the beastly money, the better. I don't want it. I hate it! To say that I have been showing off about it; that I've changed! Oh!"

"Never mind, Biddy dear," Betty smiled comfortingly. "You're lucky. Most rich people have to lose their money before they know what their friends really are."

After they had gone a little farther up the drive, Biddy wondered wearily:

Friends Fall Out!

AS she dismounted, Vera treated Dick to a fleeting smile before speaking to Biddy in a tone that betrayed changed feelings.

"Oh, Biddy, I shan't be able to come out with you next Wednesday, as we had arranged,"

her. Juliette had congratulated her on her efforts to harass the new "Juliette and Jean" partnership. Here was her amazing chance to carry the war much further.

With a strange smile touching her lips, Jill sat down at a little desk, enclosed the note in a fresh envelope, then took up her pen. In her best imitation of the neat handwriting on the old envelope, she wrote:

"Miss Jean Dimmond."

Her plan was as brilliant as it was audacious. It was the bogus Juliette who had undoubtedly written the note. Now Jill was going to deliver it to Jean, her present stage partner. If Jean really believed that "Juliette" had something so secret to tell her that they must meet in a caravan in a deserted quarry, and obeyed the injunction to that effect in the note, it would prove that she was in the conspiracy as well.

Jill found a messenger-boy and dispatched him with her note to the hotel where Jean was staying.

Without hurry she made her way to the bus stopping point and caught the next to Knowland Corner. It seemed as well to be on the safe side. She didn't want to travel on the same one as Jean.

Observing the same caution as before, though she believed it was no longer necessary, Jill made her way back to the spot at the edge of the quarry from which she had first gazed down on the caravan.

"MORCOVE'S SECRET MENACE!"

(Continued from page 697.)

"What are they doing, Betty? You might run back and see!"

Betty did so. When she rejoined her million-aress schoolmate the smile had become one of great amusement.

"They're both going back to Barncombe together, Biddy."

"Then she has got nothing to grumble about now!" was Biddy's scornful comment.

Betty came whisking into Study 12, a few minutes later, to find Polly and others still there. She was laughing.

"I can't feel sorry, girls. Bust-up between Biddy and the Darrell girl!"

"What about, Betty?"

"It's not worth telling. I felt, as you know, that sooner or later it was bound to come."

"And just as well it has come now," Pam serenely murmured. "There won't be that inducement, anyhow, for Biddy to go chasing about."

"But will Biddy settle down now?" Madge questioned.

"It would be a real relief if we could feel that it's an end to all the danger!" Judy said.

"Yes, wather, bai Jove—great relief!"

"I doubt it," said Polly. "What do you say, Betty?"

"If you ask me, girls, Miss Gray's job isn't ended yet—which means, neither is ours!"

And, as events were to show, that foreboding of Betty's was to be completely justified.

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

DON'T miss next Tuesday's grand long complete Morcove story: "THE MORCOVE IMPOSTOR," by Mariorie Stanton.

In amazement she observed that, in the brief interval since she had been here before, a horse had been harnessed to the shafts.

Evidently, little though she had guessed it then, her actual danger had been far greater than she had imagined. It might even be that she had managed to enter the caravan whilst the people in charge of it were actually engaged in fetching the horse.

But where were they now?

Jill, as she settled down to wait, could not glimpse a sign of anyone. The silence of the quarry was as pronounced as ever.

Half an hour elapsed—an unforgettable half-hour in which Jill had ample leisure to contemplate that sinister vehicle and shiveringly reflect how easily she might have been deceived by a clever forgery, and already have walked to her own downfall.

Suddenly she was conscious of a keen quickening of interest. A girl had appeared at the far side of the quarry, a girl who glanced anxiously from side to side as she hurried along.

Jill smiled a trifle grimly as she instantly recognised Jean, the girl who had so unscrupulously stolen her place and copied every detail of her familiar act.

The note had deceived her completely!

Now, having discovered the almost hidden caravan, she was swiftly crossing the floor of the quarry towards it.

She passed the tethered horse and reached the steps at the rear. And, even as she did so, Jill was conscious of a thrill that electrified her.

Two women had appeared in the quarry near to the horse's head, as though from nowhere. From their very movements she was positive that they were the very couple who had been in pursuit of her last night.

Unsuspecting of their presence, Jean was knocking on the door of the caravan.

"Juliette! Are you there, Juliette?" Jill faintly heard her call.

Getting no response, she opened the door and entered the empty vehicle.

Instantly the two women acted, so swiftly and ruthlessly that Jill, even though she was only watching, felt a chill of horror.

One of them grasped the door, banged it shut, and thrust a heavy bolt into position. Even as she ran back to leap on the front of the van, her companion cracked the whip and gave the horse a stinging cut.

The caravan started off with a jerk and clattered across the floor of the quarry.

They had made Jean their prisoner, and were off with her.

"And I've seen it all happen!" Jill breathed incredulously. "They've actually kidnapped Jean in place of me! Now there'll be no partner for 'Juliette' for the matinee performance. No partner at all, unless—"

She caught her breath sharply at the audacity of the idea that flashed into her mind.

Here, if only she made the most of her opportunities, was her supreme chance to strike a blow from which the bogus Juliette might never recover.

Resolution shining in Jill's eyes, she scrambled to her feet.

WHAT does Jill mean to do? Is she going to appear at the theatre in place of Jean? You'll be longing to know if she can carry out such a daring plan so be sure to read next Tuesday's chapters of this enthralling story.