

Meet Betty Barton and Co. in "THE MORCOVE IMPOSTOR" Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

No. 775, Vol. 30.
Week ending
December 14th, 1935.
EVERY TUESDAY.



Desperately Jill tried to reach the sinking purse. It contained every penny she possessed!
A dramatic incident from
"THE VANISHED STAGE STAR"—Inside

There are FIVE FINE FEATURES in This Issue

The MORCOVE



The Watcher at the Window

BETTY BARTON opened a certain study door at Morcove School just wide enough for her to put her head past it and speak.

"Rehearsal time, Biddy! You're coming down, of course?"

"Oh, I suppose so, Betty. But—"

"But what?"

There came a shrug and a pouting look from pretty Biddy Loveland—that lucky girl who, this term, had come into a vast fortune left to her by an uncle of whom she had known almost nothing!

"Well, Betty dear, you have heard me say before: I wish that the Form's play for Breaking-up Concert had been just one of our usual! I mean a play written by Polly Linton, who is

WHILE MORCOVE MAKES MERRY—

'And only Betty and Polly Can Save—'

Betty gave a humouring laugh.

"Oh, Biddy, don't start that talk again!"
"But it's all very well! Miss Gray came to Morcove a week or two ago to prepare us for this blessed play of hers. That is all she has been here for, really. But you and others know very well, Betty, she has sort of hung about me. She's even used this study of mine in the evenings! She won't let me out of her sight! So can you wonder that I'm not keen on her or her play?"

"Miss Gray is a good sort, Biddy."
"I'm afraid I can't agree! I hate to say it, but it has been pretty clear to me from the very first that she thinks I may be useful to her some day. She turned up here just after I'd had the news about the fortune, and I suppose, being at a loose end— Oh, I'm not going to say any more!" Biddy suddenly broke off. "Yes, I'm coming down now, Betty, to the rehearsal."

A moment's silence in the study caused a pleasant hurly-burly in the long corridor outside to become very noticeable.

Other girls belonging to the Form were scampering by in twos and threes, with something to chatter and laugh about.

There was an excitability, this evening, a special boisterousness, partly due to the nearness of Breaking-up Day, and partly on account of the rehearsal, fixed to start in the "gym" within the next ten minutes.

"Anyhow," Betty smiled, after looking very grave during the pause, "I'm jolly glad you have thrown yourself heart and soul into the play,

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always so good at that sort of thing, instead of our having to do one of Miss Gray's."

"Biddy, you're the only girl in the Form who hasn't welcomed the change for once!"

"Quite likely," was the retort to Betty's playful reproach. "But, then, you see, I seem to be the only girl who has found Miss Gray such a—such a nuisance!"

IMPOSTOR!



BIDDY LOVELAND'S ENEMIES ATTACK!

the Morcove Millionairess From Disaster

after all, Biddy! And what a fine part Miss Gray has given you to act. 'Biddy, a Parlour-maid—Miss Biddy Loveland'!"

"So long as she didn't pick me for an important part, Betty, simply to butter-up to me! Oh, you look like that, but—"

And there, in slight confusion, Biddy broke off. The door had opened, letting in the very person about whom such scathing things were being said!

Miss Gray might easily have been mistaken by a stranger to Morcove as a junior mistress. She was a young lady who, it might have been thought, was gifted with the power of winning affection from girls of school age. Yet this was the Miss Gray for whom Biddy felt such an aversion!

No wonder that Betty, who knew vital things of which Biddy was in blissful ignorance, was thinking at this moment:

"Oh, Biddy dear, if you only knew!"

From Miss Gray came the smiling remark:

"Ten to seven, and I see the girls are already trooping down to go across to the gym. I suppose, Biddy, that you—"

"Oh, yes!"—wearily. "Don't worry about me, Miss Gray; I shall be there! I'm going—now!"

And quite pettishly Biddy strode out of the study, pulling the door shut behind her with a little slam.

Miss Gray looked at Betty and smiled on. But Betty shrugged.

"Don't mind her, Miss Gray," she said.

"My dear girl, what does it matter? Any rudeness from her doesn't worry me, Betty. What would worry me would be the slightest sign that she had—suspected! So long as she continues to flout me, I can be sure that she is as ignorant as ever about the real reason why I have put in these weeks at Morcove School."

"Yes, it would be terrible for Biddy if she knew the truth—knew that there were people waiting and watching, day after day, to kidnap her! She would soon be a nervous wreck—afraid to go anywhere or do anything for fear of being suddenly taken away and kept prisoner," muttered Betty in a troubled tone.

Miss Gray had come to the study to get some papers she wanted for the rehearsal.

Written by

MARJORIE

STANTON

Illustrated by

L. Shields

"A few more days, and then it will be for others to protect Biddy from the danger that has surrounded her ever since she came into the fortune. She will be gone from Morcove School, like the rest of you girls. And I—"

"You will have done what Biddy's lawyer-guardian sent you here to do, and done it well!" Betty exclaimed. "Those kidnapers would have

had her—not the slightest doubt about that—if you hadn't been secretly guarding her."

Miss Gray was about to answer when—Thump! some tipped-over object hit the closed door and a protesting wail was heard.

"Owch, ow! Heav'n!" Betty whipped open the study door to find that elegant duffer of the Form, Paula Creel, floundering up from the passage floor.

Close by, in a capering state, was the imp of the Study 12 chummery, Naomer Nakara, ready with shrill explanations, rather than apologise, for having caused Paula to go flop.

"Disgraceful!" complained Paula, struggling to her feet. "Weally, Betty deah, the unwulness of Naomer, at the approach of the hols— Er, bai Jove, is that you, Miss Gray?" the elegant one realised with some dismay. "Er—sowwy—"

A study door came open, far down the corridor, and out surged a number of girls. Polly Linton was one, and the rest were all members of Betty's famous "chummery."

"Wait for us, Betty!" several of them dimmed.

But Betty was not forgetting that Biddy Loveland had gone from her study a minute since, and was by now, presumably, downstairs. Just as well to see that the schoolgirl millionairess had someone with her, whilst going across to the gym. That building was in an isolated position in the grounds, a couple of minutes' walk from the schoolhouse porch, and these were dark nights now.

So, leaving the others to follow, Betty sped downstairs, and was just in time to rejoin Biddy in the front hall.

"You'll think I'm running after you, Biddy, for what can be got out of you!"

"Oh, don't be silly," was the laughed answer. "I could never think that of you—is it likely! Come on, Betty, or Miss Gray will be wanting to

hold my hand as we go across—in case somebody runs off with me. Ha, ha, ha!"

DARK, indeed, out of doors. The wintry night so pitch-black that a solitary girlish figure could steal across the school grounds, presently, without any fear of being seen.

No scholar of Morcove School was this, creeping back after an unauthorised trip beyond bounds. She was a girl who, in fact, had never yet seen the inside of the school.

The gym-windows were squares of bright light now, for the rehearsal was in full swing. And to one of those windows, on a side of the big building facing open country, the girl made her way under cover of dark night.

Seeing, and yet unseen! There she stood, ready to flit away at the first hint of danger; a girl whose eager eyes, peering in at the uncurtained window, seemed to be interested in only one of the many performers.

And that one was Biddy Loveland, Morcove's millionairess scholar!

Whilst They Rehearsed!

"S T!"
"Oh, daddy, you gave me such a turn!"
"It's all right, Kath. How are you getting on?"

The secret watcher outside that window of the gymnasium had been suddenly joined by a man whose overcoat collar was turned up and his felt hat drawn well down, so that his 'hin, pallid face was mostly concealed.

"Is she taking part, Kath? Have you seen her?" he whispered. "I'd better not look. But I felt I must come to see how you were going on." The girl called Kath drew away from the window, as it would not have been safe for her to answer her father whilst still peering in.

"Yes, she's there, dad; and wearing stage things, too. It's a dress rehearsal to-night—"

"Good! What's she wearing, Kath? Anything very special—difficult for us to copy?"

"Why, no, dad—"
"Good again!" And he rubbed his gloved hands together. "That means a lot to us, Kath, if her stage dress is something we can—"

"It's only a parlourmaid's uniform, dad—"
"Really? Well I'm hanged!" And it cost him an effort not to laugh out loud. "Why, then, we can buy that at any outfitter's shop in the town. That's a bit of real luck, that is."

"But it is an important part she is playing, dad, although the character is only a parlourmaid. She has had a lot of lines to learn. So I'm wondering," whispered the girl who had been spying, "how I am to get to know them all."
"Yes; that's a snag," her father muttered, and he lapsed into a frowning state of thought, whilst she stole back to the window and again peeped in, her eyes only an inch above the low sill.

The play seemed to be a rollicking farce dealing with a fancy-dress party at a country house. It was a clever idea, for it meant the wearing of all manner of fancy dresses by the young players, Biddy, as the parlourmaid, being the only exception.

She was on the stage now, having been "rung for" again by certain fancy-dress characters who were in a panicky state about something that had gone wrong.

No doubt it would all end up happily, the curtain coming down just as the would-be revellers started to enjoy themselves at last. But at this

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moment in the play "parlourmaid Biddy" was the central figure in a very wild scene.

The watcher at the window saw the girl in cap and apron and cuffs playing a very difficult part, and playing it well. Others on the stage had boisterous, even lunatic parts, which could hardly be acted too extravagantly. But Biddy's was more or less a "straight" part; she was a servant in the house, respectful, demure, having to answer all the frantic questions with which she was being bombarded, without getting her lines mixed.

Suddenly the watching girl felt her sleeve being plucked. It was her father, stooping close to her again.

"Here, I want you, Kath. I've been thinking—about that matter of the lines."

So, as he turned back after whispering, she again left the window, to follow him. Dark figures in the darker night, they stole across the grass together, finding a shrubbery a good, safe place for conversing.

"This is the position, Kath. You've got to be able to learn that girl's part in the play before the night of the concert. You must be word-perfect in the part, or we shall come to grief."

"But, dad, I can never hope to pick up the part by spying whilst they all rehearse. Besides, I fancy this is almost the last rehearsal. They're wearing stago dresses."

"That's what I've been thinking, Kath. You must get into the schoolhouse straight away. It should be easy, this evening. As so many school-girls are out here at the gym, very likely the house door is on the latch. They won't have locked up as usual."

"And then—what?"

"First thing, hide. That should be easy enough, too. There must be some lumber-room or unused attic, all nice and warm for you. In the night, creep down to that girl's study. It's a sure thing she has been given a typed copy of the play, to be able to learn her words."

Kath Hawker nodded.

"Yes, I've noticed, dad; several of the girls have brought their copies with them to the rehearsal."

"Just so. It's the usual thing. Play actors can't work off just one copy. So, Kath, you're almost certain to find a copy in that girl's study. Don't steal it. With a pencil and paper you can soon scribble down the lines she has had to learn."

He fumbled in a pocket and produced a small torch.

"Have this with you, Kath. That'll save you from having to switch on the study light. If you get hold of the lines to-night, come to—you know where."

"And if I can't, dad?"



Hurriedly the intruder began to copy out Biddy Loveland's part in the play. While Morcove slept, the clever scheme to kidnap Biddy was being carried a stage further.

"Hang on for the following night, that's all. But if it's to be done at all, I reckon it can be done to-night. One thing to remember, Kath! Don't creep down too early."

"Midnight?"

"Not a minute before. You never know, with so many sleepers in a big school like Morcove. About food—"

"Oh, if I can do the one thing, dad, I can do the other," she laughed softly. "I'll scrounge something during the night. I'll go now."

"Yes. Before the rehearsal's over. Best of luck, Kath," his low voice rasped on. "What a difference it has made to our chance of success since your mother and I sent for you to lend a hand! Without you, now, I doubt if—"

"Then mind," she grinned; "I shall expect my fair share, dad!"

"You shall have it, my girl. Out of what comes to me and your mother over this business, there'll be plenty to spare for our Kath. If we don't clear ten thousand—"

"Ten thousand pounds!"

"She's come into a million. Won't it be worth a trifling ten thousand to have her turn up again, safe and sound? I can't see that lawyer chap boggling," the scoundrel exulted. "Only let us get hold of the girl, and I'll give that lawyer the scare of his life-time."

He conferred a careless, dismissing pat upon her shoulders, and next moment she was stealing away—alone.

From the shelter of the shrubbery he watched her as she very warily made for the nightbound schoolhouse. Her stealthy movements gratified him.

A daughter to be proud of, his Kath!

At last he saw her reach the schoolhouse porch. For a few moments she was at a standstill there, only visible to him because she had opened the unlocked door a few inches—to spy and listen.

Then he saw the door open a little wider. She slipped past, through into Morcove's great schoolhouse, there to lie in hiding for the night.

Her scoundrel of a father turned away, to make his way out of the school grounds.

As he did so, a great burst of laughter, followed by clapping and cheering, came from the gymnasium.

The dress rehearsal, it seemed, was over!

Her Secret Task

"**H**A, ha, ha!"
"Lovely!"
"Jolly good, from beginning to end—it really is!"

"Yes, bai Jove, haw, haw, haw!"

"Bekas, eet ees just the right sort of play—with a good part for me, don't forget!"

"Oh, yes, kid," madcap Polly's voice answered Naomer's shrill yell. "You were wonderful!"

"Of course I was! And now—hooray, come on ze Study 12 lot! Bekas, now for a hand-round in ze study, hip-pip!"

"Don't we change first?" laughed Betty.

"No-o-o!"

And so, just for fun, stage dresses were still being worn when Study 12 became packed to its walls with lighthearted girls who had all been rehearsing.

"Bai Jove!" sighed Paula, flopping down into the best armchair, the arm-rests of which, next moment served as perching places for other girls. "Wealcome wespite fwom the stwain, the exertion—yes, wather!"

"With two lines to speak—a fine lot of strain you're undergoing!" Polly remarked, with her usual playful scorn for the beloved duffer. "And I believe Miss Gray is going to drop you out of the play, too—so you needn't worry!"

"Wight-ho!" Paula beamed. "I shan't wowwy! I wefuse to wowwy about anything, this last week of term, bai Jove!"

"Bekas," Naomer began to chant:

"Christmas comes but once a year,

And when he do come,

He bring ze jolly good cheer, hip-pip!"

"Next verse," Polly requested, and took up a ruler to start, to beat time.

At that moment the door opened, and a very young and pretty girl, in parlourmaid's uniform, began to deliver a message.

"If you please, young ladies, Miss Somerfield says, not so much noise!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, come on in, Biddy—ha, ha, ha!"

For Biddy it was, still wearing her stage dress. At first sight of her, the others had really mistaken her for the real thing in Morcove parlourmaids.

"Poor Biddy," jested Bunny Trevor. "Once she was one of the richest girls in the land, and now—look at her!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why didn't you get Miss Gray to come along with you?" Polly said.

"Bekas, zere is enough cake to go round," yelled Naomer. "What ze diggings, we don't want to leave anyzing in ze cupboard on breaking-up day! And now, a big slice for Biddy before anyone else! Bekas—"

"Our leading lady in the play, yes!" Polly heartily declared.

"Leading lady!" Biddy disclaimed. "Rabbits! I will say one thing for Miss Gray, girls. She has given us a play to do that gives Polly plenty of scope. Without that, I reckon the whole thing would have been a flop."

"Oh, no," Polly modestly dissented. "If you ask me, I think she has given everybody a good chance."

The talk flowed on. They stopped discussion of the play and chatted about the coming "hols," but were soon reverting to Miss Gray and her little comedy. Study 12, like the rest of the Form, was rejoicing in the certainty that "Left Till Called For"—as the play was named—would be the hit of the evening.

Forty minutes of bustling face—that was to be the Form's contribution to the programme. And let other Forms beat that if they could!

"Hark!"

It was the voice of Miss Gray, in the corridor, inquiring:

"Biddy Loveland—does anyone know where —"

"She's in Study 12, Miss Gray!"

"But don't trouble to fetch her, girls—thanks all the same. I only wondered where she was."

In the study, Biddy heaved a loud sigh.

"You see! She can't go a half-hour without being sure where I am!"

"That," said Bunny, with more truth than Biddy was going to suspect, "is what it means to be a millionaires."

"But cheer up, even though you are so rich," Polly carried on the banter. "Girls, why are we waiting upon ourselves with cake and lemonade, when we've got Parlourmaid Biddy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So, Biddy, taking the hint, began to wait on them all, and a hilarious time ended in Study 12 with Naomer's tipping the schoolgirl millionaires.

"Bekas, I couldn't have done it better myself!"

But the fun only ended in the study to be resumed elsewhere. One of the last evenings of term, this, and so Betty and Co. were letting themselves go. The whole Form was inclined that way, and Miss Merrick, the Form-mistress, had to pretend not to know what goings on there were in the Form quarters, to-night.

Last thing of all—the Form considering that it had been insulted by the Fifth, by derisive allusions to the play—a grand pillow-fight was waged upstairs.

Betty led the raid upon the Fifth's dormitory, the battle-orders being "one biff all round, and then skeedaddle!"

Things did not quite go according to plan. The Fifth was not taken by surprise, and the raiders got about as much as they gave.

Also, the Fifth counter-attacked, and it was only after some strenuous work that Betty's lot drove off the enemy, with great losses—of pillows.

Then there were complaints of hunger and thirst after such desperate skirmishing. So it was decided to have a gather round in the dormitory.

Hot water from one of the bath-rooms enabled steaming "clove cordial" to be available, ad lib. There were cakes and tins of biscuits, and even a jar of tongue and some strawberry jam, fetched up very stealthily from one study and another.

About eleven o'clock the proceedings terminated with: "Here's to the next time!" and by half-past Betty and all her room-mates were fast asleep. Twelve o'clock, and then—

Like a dark spectre came Kath Hawker, stealing down a flight of stairs that served the disused attics.

Silent in this great building which was itself enjoying the unbroken silence of the wintry night, she rounded the dormitory landing and went down another flight, and then another.

To the left, then, into the long, unlighted corridor of studies. She knew the study which was Biddy Loveland's. There was not much the Hawkers did not know about the schoolgirl millionairess and her daily life at Morcove.

Here was the door. Kath turned the knob, slipped into the study, then very cautiously closed the door. Now!

Out came the torch which her father had lent her for the crafty deed. She switched it on, and in another moment was pulling open a table drawer.

A copy of the play's book-of-words—was it here? Was it?

Yes. The strong ray was shining upon a sheet of pinned-together typescript that Biddy had evidently slammed away in the drawer on top of all else.

Kath drew out the papers, closed the drawer, then drew up a chair to the table and sat down.

With the torch placed so that its brilliant light shone only upon the blotting pad, she took pencil and paper and began hurriedly to copy out those lines which were Biddy's in the play.

Ding-dong! went the chime in due time, whilst she was still writing fast.

And, as Kath Hawker busied herself with pencil and paper, a smile was on her lips. There were amusing lines in Biddy's part that this girl was copying out. But the smile had nothing to do with the play.

It was the smile of a girl who could see a big reward coming, for what she was doing at this midnight hour—and for what she would have to do, on the night the play was produced!

Danger Still Threatens

AND now that greatest of all days in the term had come.

Prize day at Morcove—and the Breaking-up Concert to be held in the evening!

After that, nothing to do but go on making "whoopee," and perhaps see to a bit of packing in readiness for to-morrow's going away—for Christmas, hurrah!

Towards tea-time, the burdens which Betty and Co. had to take up to Study 12 were very

(Continued on the next page.)

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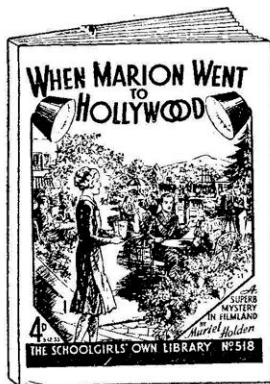


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different from the usual batch of class-room school books.

Prizes!
One girl had surprisingly got a prize for this, and another for that. Even Naomer had received an "encouragement" prize!

As for school books—they had been slammed away when the Form came out of class for the last time this term, at midday. There had been no school this afternoon, but a muster for the prize-giving, and continual clapping.

Cheers and clapping during the speech, and more clapping and cheering as girl after girl was called up to receive her prize at the hands of Lady Lundy—for whom, at the close, there had been louder cheers than ever.

"Kid," cried Betty, that being the name to which Morocove's dusky scholar answered. "Go along with the compliment of Study 12 to Biddy Loveland, and ask her if she'll join us at tea—for our last afternoon. Hurry up! And tell her—five minutes from now."

Study 12 meant to sit down "pronto" to its tea-table this afternoon. The chums meant it to be a most elaborate "do," with a Christmasy flavour about some of the cakes and other eatables. But the gathering would have to be as brief as it was joyous.

There was so much to be done between now and seven o'clock, when the concert would start.

Big Hall had to be transformed into a concert hall by having seats brought in to accommodate a large and distinguished audience. Fatigue parties downstairs would be welcome, and as such work would be an opportunity for riotous fun, Betty and Co. were not going to be slow in offering themselves.

"The mince pies!" Bunny Trevor announced, entering Study 12 with a bulging, greasy paper bag. "They've come!"

"Well, don't dump them on my prize for good conduct," Polly objected.

"Prize for what?" deimurred Bunny. "I didn't know it was for—"

"Oh, but it was, really," said the madcap with her most angelic smile. "Miss Somerfield didn't like to say so really. She said for literature, I know; but—Listen to this!"

And Polly, taking up the very handsome volume which had come to her this afternoon, opened it at the page just inside the front cover.

"Presented to Polly Linton," she pretended to read aloud proudly, "in recognition of her faultless, exemplary conduct! With best wishes from her headmistress to the best girl in the school!"

"Ooo, story!" yelled Naomer, who had returned in time to hear this spoof inscription being recited. "Bekas, you wait till you get home, Polly, and see ze report zere is about you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My report," Polly claimed, "will make Jack"—her brother—"green with envy! And leave those mince pies alone, kid! Is Biddy going to honour us?"

"What ze diggings, she jumped for joy when I gave ze message!"

That Biddy could have wished for nothing better was evident when she turned up for the jolly tea-party. She had not come empty-handed, either. A mammoth box of mixed chocolates, presented to Study 12 as something that would be "handy for later on," caused another of Study 12's special brand of "hurrah!" to be heard all over the schoolhouse.

Then, for a lark, Betty and Co. carelessly

implied that Miss Gray was expected. Biddy, catching some remark to this effect, took alarm. "You're not expecting Miss Gray, are you, girls? If you are—then, much obliged and all that, but—"

Shrieks of laughter greeted this. But afterwards Betty exclaimed, a little seriously:

"Oh, Biddy! You are hard on Miss Gray!"

"I think it is she who is hard upon me! What DO you think, girls? She has hinted that we might travel together, to-morrow! As if I want her with me, all the way to London! As if I haven't had enough of her, ever since she came to Morcove!"

"Sit down, you poor persecuted millionairess," Polly said. "Miss Gray hasn't been asked to tea. We could never have got her, she is so busy."

Biddy's face cleared then and Betty and Co. did not pursue the subject. They were certain that she was out of danger now!

Of that, those girls who had been aware of the danger when it was present, were convinced. During the last few days, in spite of an unflinching vigilance, nothing had occurred to put Betty and Co. in fresh fear for Biddy's safety.

So, as the plate of fancy cakes and the cups and saucers went round, there was a great deal of boisterous merriment after all. Bunny Trevor's sudden complaint that other studies seemed to be making all the noise, this afternoon, was only one of her flippancies.

Other studies were making a noise, certainly. But Study 12 was not exactly quiet.

Tea over, most of the chums were off at once, to help swell the general din of prize day elsewhere. But Biddy lingered, insisting upon helping Betty and Polly to clear away, and they had that secret reason for feeling glad she was staying around.

Just as well, they were thinking, that she was under their eye! After all, it was at a time like this—when all the routine of school life had given place to excitable activities—that something MIGHT happen.

Back from the washing-up sink came Biddy and Polly, with china to be put away for the last time this term. Biddy had been with Polly to help with the drying.

"You girls in this study seem to get a better time than any of the rest of us!" Biddy laughed.

"I wonder whom I shall be with next term? It won't be Miss Gray, anyhow. I wouldn't say it in front of others, just now; but really—there have been things about Miss Gray that none of you would have liked."

"What things, Biddy?"

"Oh, well—for instance," Betty was answered. "Not content with using my study as a place to work in, of an evening, I'm not sure that she hasn't been poking about in the drawer that is mine, on my side of the table. When I came down yesterday morning—well, somebody had been meddling, I could tell."

"Oh!"

Betty and Polly looked at each other. Biddy might imagine that they were only thinking: "What a thing for Miss Gray to have done!" But what the Study 12 pair were thinking was: "Strange! It was the night before last we were in sudden alarm, although afterwards we decided that it must have been pure fancy."

"So, girls," Biddy pleaded, "if I do seem a bit fed-up about Miss Gray—"

"All right, dear," Betty nodded. "We understand. Now we can go down to help get Big Hall ready."

There was enough fun and frolic going on, when they got downstairs, to make Biddy soon forget what she had been saying about Miss Gray. But Betty and Polly were not forgetting!

So, whilst Polly remained as a madcap participant in all the commotion of getting seats arranged, Betty slipped away to find Miss Gray.

"I'm sure you won't mind my asking," Betty began. "You didn't go to Biddy's table drawer the night before last, after she'd gone to bed?"

Miss Gray looked startled.

"No, Betty, of course not! Has Biddy been saying—"

"Someone meddled with things in that drawer during the night. She spoke as if she were certain about that. And Polly and I think it rather queer. The night before last I woke up to find that Polly, in the next bed to mine, had also stirred in her sleep. We were exchanging a few

"Strange, indeed," muttered Miss Gray, "that it should have been Biddy's study! Are you and Polly wondering if one of the Hawkers was in the schoolhouse? But what could have been the motive for poking about in Biddy's study?"

"Unless it was in the hope of finding letters of hers that would show what her arrangements were for the hols?"

"That, Betty, is a very shrewd idea. There may have been some purpose of the kind. At any rate, the incident—now that I have heard of it—makes me feel as anxious as ever."

"I know," Betty nodded. "Is Biddy so safe, after all? We thought the danger had passed off. But—"

"Betty, there is only this evening and one more night before Biddy goes off for the holidays. These last few hours; let us be as vigilant as ever —"



It was obvious to Betty and Polly that Biddy had been taken completely by surprise. She was being pulled into the car—kidnapped before their very eyes!

whispers, wondering what the time was and so on, when we heard a kind of faint stumbling sound on the stairs."

Miss Gray's expression was one of acute interest. "So we left our beds and crept out to make sure that everything was all right," Betty went on. "Of course, we were not forgetting about Biddy! But we neither saw nor heard anything, and we concluded that we had been a bit too jumpy: that if there had been somebody, it was a mistress or a senior. As a matter of fact, in the morning we heard that Ethel Courtway had been down in the night to get some tincture for an aching tooth."

"And what time was it, Betty—do you know?"

"About ten minutes to one when we heard the sound. For the chimes went one o'clock just as we were getting back to our beds. Now that Biddy has been telling us about her study drawer being meddled with, Polly and I wonder—well! Was something taking place that we ought to have found out, and didn't?"

"Oh, rather! Yet I don't see how anything can happen now," Betty said with a smile. "For Biddy is in the midst of us all. Surely they would never plan to kidnap her under our very noses!"

"And still I say, Betty—be very watchful, as you may be sure I shall be."

The talk did not end there, but it was less than ten minutes later when Betty rejoined her Form-mates, to find Biddy so in the midst of things that it did seem, again, absurd to fear for her present safety.

By now the seating arrangements had been completed in Big Hall; easy chairs in front, as "stalls" for all the distinguished invitees, and hard chairs and benches at the back, for Morcove's own scholars!

The dais had been adapted as a stage, and Biddy's chums were up there, enjoying a singing, with Madge at the grand piano.

For half an hour longer this impromptu concert continued to draw mock applause and derisive

encoring from a very ribald audience. Then Authority appeared upon the scene, to request the girls to go away and do their community singing somewhere else.

Betty and Co., for their part, went away to get some more packing done, and then to start dressing for the play. All taking part in the play were going to dress well in advance.

The idea was to assemble in the Form classroom and just run through the lines for the last time. Miss Gray had said she would be there.

So, presently, the girls were excitedly engaged in preparing themselves for the stage. They could not be all together whilst doing this, and Biddy was not under the eye of Betty and Polly all the time. As usual there was much rushing about—making up one's face in one place, and then dashing elsewhere to get dressed.

But the Study 12 chums could feel sure that if Biddy were not with them, during this minute and that, at least she was with other members of the cast.

Then, just before Betty and Polly were ready, they saw Biddy going downstairs, in her parlour-maid's uniform.

Make-up had done strange things to her face, and at first sight the two chums did not know her for Biddy.

There was the fleeting idea that this girl in cap and apron must be somebody engaged to supplement the school staff. On great occasions, Morcove did engage extra maids to help with the waiting.

"Is that really our Biddy?" Betty laughed incredulously.

"It is—why?" grinned Biddy. "Don't I look all right?"

"Splendid, Biddy," chuckled Polly. "But so much older in the face! Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the make-up. I hope it's all right. I had to make myself look older, to be more in keeping with the part. I think I look awful; but on the stage, I suppose—"

"Oh, rather," Betty agreed. "You can't go by how you look at close quarters."

Biddy had other players with her who were ready. She went downstairs with them, and Betty and Polly could be sure that when they themselves got to the class-room she would be there.

But, five minutes later, they turned up at the class-room to see no "parlourmaid" standing about in talk with other characters in the play.

Half a dozen of those others were there; but Biddy—where was she?

"Stop Them!"

"WHERE is she, then?" Betty asked with an anxious eagerness that surprised the small crowd.

"Who, Betty?"

"Biddy! She came down with you girls?"

"Oh, yes. But a few moments ago she was fetched away. There's somebody called to see her."

"What!" gasped Polly.

"I brought the message," said Eva Merrick. "I was asked to let her know that Vera Darrell was outside, in her mother's car. Vera wouldn't come in as she had a dog with her. So Biddy has gone out to speak to her."

Betty and Polly felt as if their blood were running cold.

"Who told you, Eva, to give that message to Biddy?"

"Oh—somebody taken on for the evening, it

must have been," was the unconcerned answer. "Rather funny, it was a girl in cap and apron whom I didn't recognise, so I almost mistook her for Biddy herself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the Study 12 pair did not laugh. They turned and walked out quickly, closing the class-room door behind them.

Then they rushed—to the front door.

"My goodness!" Polly was saying tensely, over and over again. "Oh, my goodness, Betty!"

The hall door was ajar, as if somebody had just slipped forth, meaning to return in a minute or so.

Out to the lamp-lit gravel sweep rushed the two girls. It was much too early for cars to be arriving with distinguished ticket-holders for the concert. They saw only one car, standing in a rather out-of-the-way position.

It was drawn up at a distance away from the porch as if to leave room for other cars that might arrive.

But Betty and Polly, even as they caught sight of that one car, could see Biddy—in her stage dress—being taken on board.

That she was not willingly entering the car was apparent. Yet she was not actually struggling to resist being carried off.

Betty and Polly realised, with horror, that Biddy had been taken quite by surprise, and that she was being pulled into the car by somebody before she quite understood what was happening.

And, even then, the car was ready to move off! A moment, this, when Betty's presence of mind was to make all the difference in the world.

Polly's impulse, as that girl afterwards admitted, was to try and rescue Biddy by making a dash to get her out of the car. But Betty—

Betty knew that it was too late for anything like that.

"Stop the car!" she cried to her chum. "Only thing now, Polly—stop them!"

But how?

The one whose mind had been quick enough to suggest such tactics as that was quick enough to think how they could be carried out.

"Here, Polly—come on! Quick—quick!"

Betty, as she voiced those words, was darting to lay hold of a garden chair that stood between the edge of the gravel sweep and the schoolhouse wall. It was only one of several outdoor seats placed here and there on either side of the porch.

Snatching up the chair, Betty hurled it with all her might, so that it fell crash in front of the car just as the latter moved forward.

The driver—a man—seeing the chair right in the way of the car, stopped abruptly, then went into reverse. He was reckoning to have to back only a few yards, and then he could go forward again, on a hard lock-round, avoiding the chair.

But now—crash!—Polly had hurled another of those wood and iron chairs to the gravel behind the car.

Next moment the back part of the chassis was smashing and grinding into the chair. Again the man stopped, whilst Betty, having found another chair, hurled it to make one more lying in front of the motor.

Then the man jumped out. He was agitated enough to look as wild as a lunatic. As he rushed to kick both chairs from in front of the motor, the person who had dragged Biddy into the car must also have lost her head.

It was a woman whom Betty and Polly recognised as they now dashed close, meaning to get

at Biddy. Here was Mrs. Hawker, absolutely panic-stricken now that her husband was unable to drive away.

For a half-second—no more—she seemed minded to jump out and help him as best she could. Then she shrank away from that door of the car to which Betty and Polly had rushed.

They saw her twist about and go to the other side of the car. Next moment she was jumping out on that other side, whilst Betty and Polly reached in from their side and took hold of Biddy.

They had got her—poor Biddy, in a half-fainting state. They lugged her out. She came foot to the ground on the gravel, between both her rescuers, who held her up and then quickly helped her away.

Slam, slam! came the closing of the car's door, next moment, and then a roar of the engine. The Hawkers were off, as if to save their very lives.

But they had not got Biddy!



Crash! Polly had hurled another chair so that it fell behind the car. Now the plotters were in a trap. Betty and Polly had been too smart for them.

Betty Has a Plan!

"PHEW!" Polly puffed.

"My hat! Puff!"

"Biddy dear!"

panted Betty. "Oh, Biddy!"

"I—I—I'm all right," gasped the "parlourmaid" of the coming play. "But—but what on earth! They—those strange people—they were going to drive off with me! Why? Why?"

She spoke on breathlessly:

"I—I was hoaxed! I was told that Vera Darrell was out here in a car—you know, Vera, my Town friend, only I fell out with her the other day. I thought she had come to offer to make it up with me! And instead—those people! Who are they?"

"I expect you'll have to be told now, Biddy. But let it wait. Look here, this is the night of the concert. If we can avoid a general upset, we had better. Nobody seems to have come out, so I suppose nobody is any the wiser."

"Half a sec.," Polly pleaded, and ran to where she could peer in at a certain class-room window.

When she came running back—and that was not until after a full two minutes at the window—she looked absolutely astounded.

"Well, what now?" asked Betty. "We mustn't stay out here, Polly. We—"

"No, but wait! I say, I—I'm just staggered; knocked over with surprise. In fact, I seem to be dreaming!"

"How do you mean?"

"In the class-room, where we were to meet to go over the play for the last time—there's a girl taking your part, Biddy!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"There she is," Polly insisted. "A parlourmaid, her face made up for the stage, and—and

what's more, she's speaking some of Biddy's lines."

"Good gracious!" gasped Betty and Biddy together. "Let's take a look!"

They ran to do so, very warily, and Polly followed them. What all three girls saw, during the next minute or two, by peering in at that window, left no room for doubt.

Some girl, not belonging to the school, was passing herself off as Biddy! The stage dress and the make-up helped to make the deception quite easy.

There was the girl, finally rehearsing with other players who had not the slightest suspicion that the parlourmaid of the play was NOT their Biddy!

"Here, come away," Betty suddenly whispered. "Now, I think I understand! Yes, it must be so! Biddy dear, you were given the spoof message by Eva Merrick. And Eva Merrick says she was told to tell you by a girl in cap and apron."

"Then that's the girl?" Polly gasped.

"That's about it," Betty nodded. "You see? To Eva, she passed as temporary parlourmaid belonging to the school. Very likely her face wasn't so made-up then. Now she is posing as—"

"But why?" clamoured Biddy. "Why?"

"You've got to know," Betty gravely responded. "That girl belongs to those people who very nearly kidnapped you. By acting as an unsuspected substitute for you, Biddy, they were to gain—why, perhaps a couple of hours before anything was found out."

"And in two hours, with a car," Polly excitedly rejoined, "they could have got you miles and miles away!"

"Kidnapped!" Biddy echoed, looking aghast. "So I was to have been—kidnapped!"

Betty turned to Polly in a rueful way.

"Now Biddy knows! And that, Polly, means that she'll be all nerves—won't know a moment's happiness over Christmas—unless the Hawkers have been caught. She'll be dreading their trying again—as very likely they will try, unless they are caught. But—I see a way to catch them now."

"You do, Betty?"

"Yep! I have it," smiled Betty. "That girl who is posing as Biddy now—let her go on posing. See?"

"I don't quite see, I'm afraid," Biddy faltered.

"But I do!" cried Polly; and she laughed grimly. "Betty means, let the girl go on acting her part, and then, when the time comes for her to slip away—"

"Have her followed! That's the idea," Betty chuckled. "The police must do that. We girls can't do any more to-night—"

"As if you hadn't done enough as it is!" Biddy said emotionally. "Oh, supposing they had—"

"It's the night of the concert, and, anyway," Betty added, "it's for the police to do the rest. We girls get off here. We'll go in now, and you, Biddy, must keep out of the way. Polly and I will bring Miss Gray to you—"

"Miss Gray? Oh, why bring her into it all?" stared Biddy. "You know how I dislike her!"

"And you shouldn't!"

"Oh, you two, it's not the time to begin about that!"

"Biddy, do you dislike me and Polly for having done our best to save you from those people?" Betty smilingly questioned. "Well then! For you have got to know, at last, Miss Gray only came to Morcove to watch over you! The production of the play has been just a blind."

Biddy's face, under the stage make-up, must have been turning very pale. Her eyes expressed understanding; her mouth was a round O of speechless amazement.

"So," Betty nodded on, "the next time you see Miss Gray you will know what to say to her!"

"And you can get ready to say it now, Biddy dear," came Polly's chuckled rejoinder. "For here she is!"

The young lady had suddenly let herself out of the schoolhouse by the front door. The instant she was clear of the porch she must have discerned the three girls, not fifty paces away. Now, as they stepped to meet her, she stood still in surprise, peering at Biddy only in the darkness.

"But," they heard her exclaim, "it can't be! That isn't you, Biddy Loveland?"

"This is Biddy Loveland," laughed Betty softly. "Warranted genuine!"

"But—Then who," gasped Miss Gray, "is the girl I've seen in the class-room, dressed just the same as—as—"

"So she took you in, too, did she?" Polly said grimly. "Really, she must be clever!"

"But who is she, then? To me, she was certainly Biddy! I came out here to see what had become of you two other girls. I was told you had slipped out of doors. And I find you here, like this, with Biddy!"

Miss Gray's bewildered remarks ended there. She would have said more, but suddenly Biddy burst into tears.

"She's all right," Betty hastily gave the assurance. "It's only that she knows everything—at last!"

"I do—yes!" was Biddy's half-sobbing cry. "And, oh, Miss Gray—when I've been so horrid to you, such a cat! Miss Gray, can you ever forgive me? Miss Gray, do—do! Or I can never be happy again!" finished up the Morcove millionaire.

Five minutes later those three girls and Miss Gray re-entered the schoolhouse in secret manner, by way of a side door.

Biddy was to go with Miss Gray at once to see the headmistress, who, doubtless, would soon be on the telephone with the Barncombe police. As for Betty and Polly, they were to make for the class-room where the other amateur actresses were assembled.

They went fully prepared to treat the sham Biddy Loveland just as if they were as ignorant as other girls about the daring imposture. But the parlormaid of the play was not then with the other characters.

"Where's Biddy, then?" Betty asked them lightly.

"Biddy? Oh, she went away—to take another look at her lines, she said."

"And just as well, some of us think," grimaced Eva Merrick. "I hope Biddy isn't going to let the show down! But she is awfully nervous this evening!"

"I'll run up to the study and see if she is there," Betty said, as lightly as before—and turned back to the door.

The rest were not surprised to see Polly going away again with Betty. There were only "Don't be long!" cries for both girls as they passed out of the class-room.

"'Nervous,' Polly! She is not going on with it!"

"And yet—not one of them has suspected! But we want to know where she is now, anyhow!"

Upstairs to the Form quarters dashed both girls, making for Biddy's study. But it was deserted.

Then it became a question as to whether the impostor was still in the schoolhouse, or whether she had even slipped away already.

Whilst Polly set off to hunt the whole place through, Betty went full speed to the headmistress' private room.

Biddy and Miss Gray were there, with Miss Somerfield. As Betty in her alarm made a most unceremonious entry upon the scene, she saw the headmistress replacing the receiver of an extension telephone.

"Miss Somerfield—"

"Yes, Betty, what now?"

"She's taken fright—she's gone! We doubt if she is still in the schoolhouse."

"Ah! That," the headmistress frowned, "is most disappointing. Another fifteen minutes, and the police would have been here. But one thing, at any rate, can be done. I will have the gardeners and my chauffeur go out at once to see if they can—"

Miss Somerfield broke off, aware of someone else coming now, at a rush, to the room.

Next instant Polly dashed in.

"Miss Somerfield—all of you! It's O.K. still! She hasn't gone yet!"

"No?"

"No. She's up in one of the attics. I fancy she is changing her clothes there, in the dark. She may be going to hide there until the concert is on. Anyway, that's where she is!"

"Good!" said the headmistress. Then she laughed. She looked at Miss Gray, who also started laughing. They laughed quite a lot together.

"What amuses us," explained Morcove's headmistress at last, "is the way you two girls do manage to—well, save the situation. But I think you must be feeling rather the worse for it all. You won't be fit to take your parts in the play."

"Shan't we!"

Miss Gray turned to Biddy.

"And you—what about you, dear?"

Morcove's millionaire scholar grinned.

"Let me make up my face again"—for her recent tears had wrecked it—"and I won't fail the Form!"

"Then, all three of you," Miss Somerfield laughed again, "go along now, leaving the rest to me!"

Happiness Now—And in Store!

AND so, after all, the part of "Parlourmaid Biddy" was taken by the Form's own Biddy, when, by-and-by, the curtain went up.

The rollicking play came on as the last item in part one of the fine programme. A huge audience, delighted with what had gone before, was soon in convulsions of laughter over "Left Till Called For."

The screaming farce dealt with the night of a fancy-dress party and all the complications resulting from something having been "lost, stolen, or strayed." As would-be revellers thrown into a sudden panic, Betty and others had the piece going with a bang.

Madcap Polly and Bunny Trevor were particularly funny, and Naomer was another huge success, although she provided many unrehearsed effects.

But it was the constant ringing to summon the parlourmaid that supplied the cream of the humour.

Somehow, whenever Biddy had to appear, to be bombarded with questions by all the other girls, her "straight" part in contrast with their comedy parts "brought down the house."

Towards the finish, when the audience could tell that Biddy was making her final exit, the piece was held up by a great burst of clapping.

In vain a few sober folk in the audience called: "Hush!" Scores of people from the town had to go on exclaiming about "Biddy the parlourmaid." The programme had named the girl who was taking that clever part. Biddy Loveland—"and she's the one who has just come into such a huge fortune!"

Then, when the curtain was down, that prolonged storm of applause started which was to mean the raising of that same curtain again and again.

First of all the whole company of amateur actresses took their call.

Then, in response to shouts for the chief characters, the curtain was lifted again, to reveal Betty, and Polly, and Bunny; Naomer and Paula—and Biddy!—hand-in-hand, bowing and laughing.

"Bravo, bravo!" dinned the audience. "Bravo, all!"

The curtain fell once more. Still the clapping was as loud as ever.

"Biddy—Biddy Loveland!" clamoured the audience. "Biddy!"

So up went the curtain yet again, and there was Biddy, alone on the stage, very shyly bowing,

prettily confused by the tremendous compliment being paid to her. And it was like her at this moment to do the pretty thing!

Suddenly she darted off-stage, to return, pulling with her—Miss Gray!

Even if the audience had not understood, there would have been Biddy's expressive gestures to explain:

"Author!"

"Hurrah! Bravo, bravo—hurrah!" was the deafening applause to which Miss Gray had to bow her acknowledgement again and again.

"Bravo!"

And then, whilst the curtain was still lifted, what must Biddy do in front of the vast audience—more than half of it comprising Morcove girls—but suddenly throw her arms about Miss Gray's neck and kiss her!

Perhaps some people in the audience were surprised; but Betty and her chums, in the wings—they could understand the reason for Biddy's impulse!

NOT until after nine o'clock, when the school concert was over, did the chums have a certain anxiety dispelled that had been with them throughout the evening.

Then word came to them that the Hawkers had been caught!

The police, by following Kath Hawker when she sneaked away from Morcove School, had been able to lay hands upon her father and mother, who were now in custody.

Miss Gray it was who brought the news to the girls, when they were ready to enjoy the supper which was to wind up Morcove's last evening in the term.

"On such a serious charge, that man and woman will never be admitted to bail," Miss Gray added. "So all the danger to Biddy is at an end."

"Gorjus!" capered Naomer. "Bekas, what ze diggings, with Christmas coming, Biddy didn't want to zink it was somebody coming down ze chimney to kidnap her, when, after all, eet was only Father Christmas!"

"Yet there is something in that," smiled Betty.

"There is everything in it!" was Miss Gray's earnest retort. "Thanks to all you girls, Biddy will have what I hope is coming to every one of you—the Happiest Christmas ever!"

"Yes, well," said Pam, "we mean to keep the fun going."

"The whole lot of us, at Judy's home at Prior's Wood!" Polly chimed in gaily. "And the boys!"

"And we know what that means," beamed Paula. "Yes, wather, haw, haw, haw! Gweat wejoints!"

"But, Miss Gray," came from Madge quietly, "what about you?"

"Oh, I! I go up to Town to-morrow—travelling with Biddy. She says I simply must be in her compartment! I am to report to her lawyer-guardian in London—and what a lot I shall have to report, too, about your achievements! It's funny about Biddy. She says, whatever she does over Christmas, I must be with her!"

"Not funny at all," sparkled Bunny. "Simply that she has—well, slightly altered her opinion of you!"

"And in the New Year, Miss Gray?" persisted Betty. "What becomes of you then?"

"Oh, then!" And she smiled like one whose cup of happiness is suddenly overflowing. "I was just going to tell you, girls. There has been

(Continued on page 746.)

Her handbag containing all her money had been under her arm even as the other girl made that mad rush at her. Now it was floating along on the swiftly-running water. Grasping the branch of a willow overhanging the stream, she strove vainly to reach the bag.

She was just too late. The bag was swept along, only to sink a moment later, and though she dived in after it, she could find no trace of it. Numb and half-fainting with the cold she abandoned the task. There was only one thing to do and that was to return to her lodgings.

Running in an endeavour to infuse some warmth in her chilled body, she reached the outskirts of the town and came to her lodgings at last.

"My, what a state you're in, poor dear!" the motherly landlady cried, the moment she beheld Jill's sodden form. "You must go to bed immediately if you're not going to catch your death of cold. I'll bring up hot-water bottles, and some gruel to drive it out."

Numb as she was, Jill was only too glad to accept such sensible advice. She peeled off her clinging garments, rubbed herself dry with the roughest towel she could find, and got between the blankets.

Chilled to the bone—and penniless!

The unexpected meeting with Jean, and its unforeseen consequences, had proved a shocking setback for Jill.

But she was never the girl to despair for long.

With a returning glow of satisfaction, Jill recollected all that she had been enabled to accomplish before this unfortunate disaster.

"Juliette," the impostor, was in disgrace; possibly, at this very moment, the busy printing machines were revolving, pouring out their thousands of copies carrying Jill's sensational interview on the front page.

Something was bound to happen before long!

"Here's your gruel, my dear," the landlady announced, as she sailed into the room with a steaming tray. "Then I'm going to give you something to make sure you sleep."

Jill already felt heaps better, but her clothes had been taken away to be dried and she possessed no others. Even though it was now dark, she would not have been averse to resuming her quest for the big house. But the landlady was firm; she

insisted that she had nothing suitable to lend Jill.

Jill drifted off to sleep, and was soon in a deep slumber. When she awoke it was to discover that the room was already quite light. Within a few minutes her good-humoured landlady sailed in with another laden tray.

"You'll do!" she declared with satisfaction, as she felt Jill's forehead, and looked into her clear eyes. "I've brought the breakfast up, and here's the morning newspaper. Your things are nicely dry, and I'll bring them back as soon as I've finished ironing them."

Jill thanked her with a grateful smile, and took the newspaper up. It was not the local one, she rather disappointedly discovered. She glanced over the front page, and was about to turn it over when, suddenly catching a glimpse of a heading, her startled attention was riveted to a single paragraph.

It concerned—Juliette and Jean!

In blank, incredulous amazement and dismay, Jill read what the morning paper had to say about the bogus performers.

"We understand that an interesting experiment is about to be carried out by the Premier Film Company," it stated. "For their next picture we learn that an attractive offer will be made to secure the services of Juliette and Jean, the delightful 'comedy girls' who are already so popular on the stage."

Jill laid the paper down; the colour had drained from her cheeks, and dark despair filled her.

She had driven "Juliette" and her cunning partner off the stage—in vain! This unforeseen offer would give them a fresh start in an entirely different world of entertainment!

In rising dismay Jill suddenly recollected the crowning disaster of her misadventure yesterday. She had returned without her handbag. She was penniless—without even the means to pay for the breakfast at her side.

JILL'S plight is a desperate one, but she has justice on her side and she will fight on. Only by her own unaided efforts can she put matters right for the real Juliette and herself. Don't miss next Tuesday's enthralling chapters of this great problem story on any account.

"THE MORCOVE IMPOSTOR"

(Continued from page 733.)

a telegram for me—from my old headmistress."

"Your what!" gasped the chums.

"The headmistress at the school where I was a Form-mistr—"

"What!" Polly shouted. "You were a Form-mistress once?"

"Yes, girls. But I was dismissed, under a cloud. That cloud has passed away now. It is known that I was wrongfully discharged, and so I am to have my old position back again."

"But how splendid!" Betty cried, whilst others exclaimed to the same effect. "Except that I suppose it means you'll never be at Morcove again!"

"Not even to take us in a play?" Bunny put in merrily. "So that, Miss Gray, is how you came to have a play of your own to turn up with here, a few weeks ago! It was one you wrote when you were a Form-mistress! Did your girls—do tell us, truly—did they do the play as well as we did it to-night?"

"What a question to ask!" Pam objected.

But Miss Gray had an answer to it.

"Not every school has a Polly Linton, or a Bunny Trevor, or a Betty Barton," smiled Miss Gray. "Nor a Naomer!"

"Not to mention," chuckled Polly, as she saw Biddy coming upon the scene—"a schoolgirl millionaires!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sup-per!" yelled the dusky imp. "Hooray, everybody, come on! Last meal but one zis term, so make him a good one!"

"And to-morrow, girls!" cried Betty.

"The hols, hurrah! Christmas—Loo-ray!"

Their joyous shoutings continued as they all surged away together.

"Christmas, girls—"

"At Prior's Wood—"

"With Jack and Dave, Jimmy and Tom—"

"And Tubby as well, don't forget!"

"Hurrah!"

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

(Don't miss "Morcove's Christmas Phantom" in next Tuesday's issue of SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN.)