

NO SCHOOLGIRL SHOULD BE WITHOUT THIS SPLENDID PAPER!

The Schoolgirls' Own 2^D



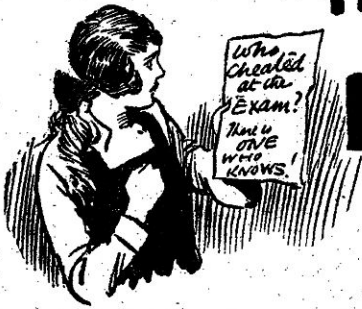
**"I LEAVE IT TO EVA TO
ASSURE YOU THAT SHE
DIDN'T CHEAT!"**

A dramatic incident from this week's splendid complete tale of Morecove School.

A SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE TALE OF THE GIRLS OF MORCOVE SCHOOL.

THE SILENCE OF DOLLY DELANE!

By
MARJORIE STANTON.



Because of the action of another girl, Dolly Delane is forced to leave Morcove and her chums. Yet Dolly suspects that she is being made the victim of a girl who has cheated. Yet what can she do? Read this fine story and judge for yourself.

Her Guilty Secret.

"AND so you are the clever girl who has just lately won the Grace Pullen Prize! Aren't you proud of yourself?"

It was the headmistress of Stormwood School who spoke. She had come out on to the school drive, to join in a good-bye to the party of tennis-players that had come over from Morcove School to-day for a bit of a tournament.

Eva Merrick, to whom the congratulations had been addressed, blushed to the roots of her hair, and it was left for Betty Barton to exclaim earnestly:

"We are all proud of her at Morcove!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Haw, haw, haw! Eva has not heard the last of our congwatulations, has she, geals?"

"Far from it!" was Polly Linton's blithe rejoinder. "It is this very evening that we are holding a grand banquet in Eva's honour!"

"Banquet, indeed!" was the headmistress's laughing comment. "You are like my Stormwood girls. You don't believe in doing things by halves. Well, I hope you have a very enjoyable time, girls!"

"Thank you, Miss——"

"Yes, thanks—thanks, bai Jove! As a mattah of fact," Paula Creel beamed, "the pweparations waywant the expectation of a weally gwand time—yes, wather! I myself have—er—pwepared a little speech, don't you know! I——"

"That will keep, Paula, darling," Polly thought it advisable to hint. "What we mustn't do is to keep the school bus waiting."

"Yes, all aboard!" said Betty gaily, and there was a sudden rush for seats, Naomer Nakara shrilling excitedly:

"Queek—queek, Polly! Next to me—next to me!"

"Right-ho!"

Perhaps Betty Barton and her chums of the Fourth Form at Morcove were going back to their own school in all the greater spirits because they had scored finely in the afternoon's games, and

perhaps Stormwood should have been looking very glum, only they could always look forward to beating their friendly rivals some other time!

"Good-bye, all! Good-bye, Zonia, darling! We shall be over again soon!"

"Queek—queek! Let me get out again!" Naomer could now be heard yelling, as she came tumbling forth. "I not go till I kees Zonia again!"

"Wather not! Weal, you Stormwood geals, cheer up! We beat you—yes, wather! How-eva!"

"Didn't Paula do a lot to help us beat you?" chuckled Polly, causing the Stormwood girls who were standing around to go off into peals of laughter.

"Haw, haw, haw! Weal, you know, one can't always be in form—what!" the amiable aristocrat of the Fourth Form at Morcove blandly excused her own modest achievements. "I have not yet recovered from the stwain of pweparing for the Grace Pullen exam."

"Which you didn't win!" Polly, the merciless teaser, twitted the chum she loved.

"Which Eva, here, did win!" rejoined Dolly Delane, laying an applauding hand on Eva's shoulders. "And this evening she will know just how proud we are of her!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, are we off? I—— Ow, whoa!" howled Paula, suddenly sitting down on the bus floor, as the vehicle started off.

"Healp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Good-bye, Stormwood! Good-bye, Zonia!"
"Good-bye, all!" called back the Stormwood girls heartily.

Some of them ran beside the Morcove motor-bus as it went speeding down the drive, poor Paula meantime finding herself quite unable to rise up from the floor, owing to sundry knees being mischievously stuck out to keep her where she was.

"Geals, I say——"

"Yes, it was a grand afternoon's play," Polly began to remark very loudly, to drown the

squealing protests of the half-submerged Paula. "I enjoyed it."

"Geals, healp! Weally and twuly——"

"Goodness, where is Paula?" the madcap now asked, looking along the seats. "Have we left her behind?"

"Geals, I am heah! Can't you hear me—what? Healp!"

"Never mind! Even if we have left her behind," said Helen Craig lightly, "she can easily walk home!"

"And practise her speech on the way, certainly," assented Tess Trelawney.

"Ah, dear," came Paula's dismal groan from the floor of the bus, "unless someone extwicates me fwom this distwessing pwedicament, I shall pewish! Healp! Do you hear me? Let me up!"

"It's funny," said Polly sedately; "I seem to feel something tickling my ankles."

"So do I—and I!" the others took up the joke.

"What can it be?" wondered Polly. "Hallo, there is something crawling about on the floor!"

"Yes, wather! And can't you geals dwop it and healp me out of this?" wailed Paula. "I'm a weck—a wuin! Healp, I ask you!"

"It's Paula!" gasped Polly amazedly. "Well!"

"My gwacious, geals——"

"Poor dear, did they tease her, then?" said the madcap, at the same time very unceremoniously lugging the ruffled one to her feet. "She shall have a chocolate, so she shall! But not now, because they are all gone!"

"It may seem extwewely funny to you, geals," was Paula's aggrieved comment on the general laughter. "Personally, I am just about wuined for the west of the day. No speech fwom me this evening!"

"Hooray!" cheered Polly. "I mean, what a pity, Paula! But cheer up! Put yourself to rights, and then you will feel all right."

Paula needed no advice in that direction. Already she was getting out her own special little pocket vanity glass and comb, and for the next few minutes she was giving fiddling touches to her hair. That done, she very carefully put on her school hat again, and let her chums see her smiles of relief.

A good deal of the talk was about tennis, but towards the end of the journey the girls cast their minds forward to what Polly called "this evening's grand do."

It was like Betty & Co., as soon as they had finished with one bit of excitement—in this case the afternoon's tennis at Stormwood—to think of the next item on the programme, and certainly this evening's festivities were something to which to look forward.

The original intention had been to hold a formal Form tea in honour of Eva's winning the Grace Pullen Prize. But certain fixtures had been found to make a five o'clock function undesirable, and so the chums had asked permission to make it an evening one.

The headmistress of Morcove had been quite agreeable. These were the longest days in the year, and there was no objection to the girls having a formal supper round about eight o'clock.

In all other respects, the original arrangements held good. The preparation of the "banquet" had been left to a committee, whose grave conclaves, needless to say, had been held in Study 12. The "whip round" had produced quite a handsome sum for the committee to expend, and, in addition, certain girls had gone shopping on their own account.

Paula was one of these. Rumour had it that Paula's own supplementary contribution had just about left her study cupboard crammed to the door.

Whilst the homecoming tennis players were thus chatting about the coming "spread," it was not to be wondered at if Eva Merrick kept out of the talk, and was obviously embarrassed.

But it was for a far different reason than the one imagined by her chums that Eva looked ill at ease.

They took it for granted that pure modesty over her famous success in the Grace Pullen contest was making her uncomfortable. Little they dreamed that it was a guilty conscience!

Night and day alike, there was no respite for her from the inner voice which accused her of having cheated at that exam. At this very moment, amidst all the jollity of the ride back to Morcove, she seemed to hear that voice within her, denouncing the cruel fraud which had gone undetected.

A question-paper purloined from the headmistress's desk the day before the exam., the questions "tackled" overnight, enabling the cheat to go into the examination hall, at the fateful hour, primed with answers that were bound to win—that was the story of Eva Merrick's heinous deed.

That was how, when the result of the exam. had been made known, three days ago, she had been acclaimed by all the school for a brilliant achievement—acclaimed by the very girl who was the chief victim of the fraud, and that girl Eva's own study-mate and chum!

If ever it was found out! For the hundredth time, that guilty fear sent a shiver of dread through Eva. Why—why had she been so weak and despicable as to fall to the temptation? Or, having fallen to it, why had she not plucked up the courage to confess at once?

But it was no use railing at oneself like that now, was her miserable reflection. Too late—too late! Confession within a few hours of the deed's committal might have meant a chance for her to be forgiven, but now—no, too late!

"Hurrah, here we are again!" was madcap Polly's boisterous comment on their arrival at the Morcove porch. "All change, please!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, and I must change my fwock, geals, in pweparation for the banquet!" beamed Paula, allowing such frolicsome spirits as Naomer and Polly to be the first to jump down out of the bus. "And then, pewhaps, I had bettah wehearse my speech again," she added to herself.

It was six o'clock, and the festivities were to start at seven-thirty sharp. None too much time for those who were responsible for getting everything ready! The five or six girls who formed the committee went hurrying into the school-house and up to Study 12, and even the rest repaired to their "dens," to be available if wanted.

Dolly Delane was on the committee, and so she was one of the first to gain the Fourth Form corridor. She was expecting a letter from home—dreading it, one might almost say—and this caused her to give a look in at her study, whilst her chums continued on their way direct to No. 12.

A moment more, and Dolly was very sadly taking up the letter which she found lying in wait for her upon the blotting-pad. Heavily she sighed to herself as she set a finger ripping open the envelope.

Here it was at last. Yes, mother's own letter from the farm at home, in answer to the telegram that had let them know the result of the Grace Pullen exam. If only she, Dolly Delane, could have been the happy winner—ah, how joyfully she would have pounced upon this letter from home. As it was—

With a deep sigh, she began to read, but suddenly the written sheet became a mere blur to her brimming eyes, and she had to desist, sinking down into a chair and weeping quietly.

If she had been the winner, instead of coming in a close second! To have so nearly won, and yet to have lost just the same, what cruel luck it was!

If She Had Won!

PLUCKILY she stemmed her tears at last, and began to read, although she could not hope to scan all the loving, consoling things that mother had written without a fresh breakdown:

"Your father and I, dear Dolly, were glad to have the news at last, although, of course, we were very disappointed, for your own dear sake, that it told us you had lost.

"Poor darling Doll, what a shame, dear! Full well we know how hard you studied up for the exam, and since then you have told us that you were so extra keen, this year, because the big prize would have just done to pay for your fees next term.

"Anyhow, you have made a fine, plucky show, Doll, and we are just as proud of you as if you had won, dear. You came in second, fancy! Bravo!

"I wish, dear, I could say that it doesn't matter that you have missed the prize. But, there, it is no use keeping things from you, Doll, especially as in a week or two you will be home, and then you would have to know, in any case.

"We are still in great straits, dear, but there is just one ray of hope. It looks like being a good corn harvest. Dad's wheat is grand this season, and, given fine weather, that will just enable us to tide along.

"But what I would like to be able to say is that you will be going back to Morcove, in any case, next term, and that I can't say, Doll, darling. Oh, my dear, how it breaks my heart when I think of you having to cut short your schooling, all because we are so very badly hit!"

Dolly raised her glistening eyes from the page. "Because I didn't win, that is what it amounts to," was her rueful murmur. "A fifty-pound cheque for me on prize-giving day, if I had won! If I had won! Ah, if!" she said, laughing, so as not to cry.

Then Eva Merrick came in.

"Letters, Dolly? You've got one—"

"From home, yes," Dolly answered, hastily putting the letter away.

But next moment she drew it out of her pocket, to search for a line that she was certain must be there.

"Yes, Eva; mother asks me to convey her congratulations to the girl who did win. That's your. She says—"

"Oh, thanks! Er—never mind! I mean—"

"She is sure, Eva, that it was a case of the best girl winning. As the mother of the girl who came in second, she feels she must applaud your achievement."

"Thanks!" Eva blurted out again uncomfort-

ably. "Yes, well, I— You know. When you write, you might say I am— You know!"

"Certainly! I say, look, there's a note for you on your blotter, Eva!" Dolly exclaimed, noticing it for the first time herself. "It hasn't come by post, either."

"No. Who is this from, then, I wonder?" Eva said in great surprise, taking up the note. "Someone in the school?"

There was no one to answer her. Dolly had passed out, to go along to Study 12 and get busy with the rest of the committee.

Left alone, Eva relapsed into such sudden dejection that she could not bring herself to open the note at once. She sat down, staring dully at the wall.

Coals of fire again, those words that Dolly had



COALS OF FIRE! "Mother asks me to convey her congratulations to you, Eva," said Dolly. "Of course, she is a little disappointed that I didn't win, but she is sure it was a case of the best girl winning." Eva caught her breath, if only Dolly knew the truth!

said just now! How awful it was, to be the recipient of congratulations which were utterly undeserved!

And yet, even now, there was that in Eva Merrick which made her realise, if the cheating could remain undetected, she would come in time to enjoy everyone's praises, and revel in the glory that she had hankered after, and had gained so unfairly.

All for the glory of being the prize-winner had she wanted to win, and now she was having that glory. It was like bread turned to ashes in her mouth at present, but, sooner or later, she would get over this conscience-stricken state. She felt sure of it. She had got to, anyhow, for it was too late now to confess. Such, at least, was the girl's own wretched conviction.

And why, after all, should she talk to herself as if the cheating might be found out even yet? How could it ever be discovered? The exam. was a thing of the past. At the time she purloined the paper, it had been perfectly safe to do the deed. Oh, no, it was sheer guilty panic to harbour the fear that some day her right to the prize might be challenged.

She gave her moody eyes to the unopened letter again, and ripped the flap of the envelope with a finger.

Next moment she was on her feet, aghast with amazement and horror.

She even emitted a sharp little cry of wild dismay, as her dilating eyes saw what was written on the sheet of paper she had opened out:

**"WHO CHEATED AT THE EXAM.?
THERE IS ONE WHO KNOWS!"**

Wildly she continued to gaze at the sinister words, which had been written in a large, disguised hand.

Someone knew!

Here, in the very school, there was someone who could denounce her!

At the very moment when she had been comforting herself with the thought that no one could ever know, this message!

Eva Merrick's nerveless hand suddenly let the paper fall. She stared at it, lying upon the carpet, as she might have stared at a viper in the grass. And, indeed, there was a viper's venom in the words that still held her gaze.

Someone! And how was she ever to know who the someone was? But some girl or other could tell, if she liked, the words seeming to suggest that exposure might be avoided if—

If what?

She suddenly snatched up the letter, in case Dolly should come back and see it. In a frantic fashion, the guilty scholar tore the sheet to pieces, and then put those pieces up the chimney.

That done, she went to the open window, to gasp at the fresh air. She was going hot and cold alternately, trembling from head to foot.

Found out, after all! Oh, here was a just punishment upon her, indeed—to be utterly at the mercy of someone who knew!

And now, whilst she stood shaking with fright, she heard some of her Form-mates go scampering past in the corridor, gaily talking of starting to lay the table down in that room which had been granted them for the festivities.

Another hour or so, and she, Eva Merrick, must go in to join the girls at the supper-table, with this drawn sword, as it were, dangling above her head!

And what if one of the scholars to sit down at that same table was the very one whose secret hand had penned that threat?

It was a thought so appalling that suddenly she crossed towards the study door with a resolute step, whispering excitedly:

"I won't go on another minute like this! Let me go now—now, and make a clean breast of things to Miss Somerfield!"

But the guilty girl, who had hesitated before, was going to hesitate again—turn coward once more.

Her hand dropped away from the knob of the door, and she shrank back, a groan of suffering preceding the despairing murmur:

"I can't—no, I can't own up now! Too late! They'll know I only confessed when I was

threatened with exposure. I shall be expelled—expelled!"

And she sank into a low chair, and rocked and writhed with the agony of this appalling position into which her own folly had plunged her.

The One Who Knew.

"**N**OW I think everybody might be allowed to come in!"

Polly Linton said it, as she backed a step or two, for the purpose of casting a last critical glance at the laid supper-table in the school's music-room.

She and her chums had given the finishing touches to the "grand spread," and the table certainly did the girls credit.

On a spotless cloth were set places for just as many girls as the Fourth Form numbered. Down the centre were crystal vases, filled with fresh-cut flowers of Madge Minden's own arranging.

Tess, the artist of the Form, had prepared a very pretty souvenir card that was alleged to contain the menu. But there never would have been room on that card for a list of all the dainties that were set out upon the table.

"Well, yes," agreed Betty heartily, "I think that ends our preparations. That was a good idea of yours, Trixie, to write a ticket for each girl's place."

"Every girl will find herself next to her best chum, so it ought to work," said Trixie. "Paula, for instance, sits between Polly and Naomer."

"That's the idea!" chuckled Polly. "I must be near enough to keep Paula in order!"

The door flashed open, and Helen Craig came in, after a run to her study to get her camera and some magnesium ribbon. She was going to take a flashlight photograph of the "banquet" by-and-by.

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Polly. "The girls will be glad to have a memento photo of the occasion. Hark! What on earth—"

The predominant sound, as they listened, was a certain familiar and simpering voice, raised in lamentation.

"Dweadful—dweadful!" they heard Paula Creel groaning, as she came towards the music-room door. "A downright catastrophe!"

Then the door swung open again, and Paula entered in a panic.

"Geals—geals, a tewwible thing! I can't find my notes for the speech!"

"Hooray—I mean, so sorry!" Polly said, keeping a straight face. "Where did you put them last?"

"Haow can you expect me to wecollect?"

"Then how—I put it to you, Paula—how do you expect us to recollect for you? Stand aside!"

"But, geals—"

"Out of the way, Paula, darling! The company arrives!" cried Polly gaily. "Yqu look very pretty!"

"Yes, wather! I mean to say—"

Paula's dismayed murmurs were suddenly overwhelmed by Madge's striking up on the piano. She was to play the company in, and it was arranged that she was to break off into "See the Conquering Hero Comes!" when Eva made her hesitant appearance.

"Yes, all ready, girls!" was Betty's blithe greeting, as the Form came in by twos and threes. "You'll find your places named."

"Pass right round! Pass along, please!" Polly megaphoned through a gramophone horn. "And hands off everything until you get the word 'Go!'"

Of course, none of the girls needed advice of that sort. Having found their chairs, they all remained standing behind them, pending the arrival of Eva. Madge crashed on at the piano, whilst tongues were let loose in praise of the really splendid effect that the "groaning board" presented.

Dolly came in a minute later, looking as blithe as any, and as pretty, in the party-frock into which she had changed.

"Where's Eva, Doll?" some of the committee clamoured. "You are in her study."

"She's just coming. She's feeling shy, I think."

"Haw, haw, haw! Yes, wather! Of course, geals, if I had won the pwize—"

"Instead of losing all your notes for the grand speech— Oh, sorry!" Polly said, all in one breath. "I oughtn't to have let the cat out of the bag!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I gweately wegwet, geals, I am in that unfortunate pwe-licament. Howevah—"

"Here's Eva!" Betty skipped back into the room to warn them all, after looking out into the passage. "Now, Madge, dear! Play up, the band!"

"Yes, wather!"

Madge abruptly, but neatly, changed into that well-known tune which is usually accorded to anyone's triumphal entry, whilst the cheering began. Naomer, in her excitement, made a grand stand of her chair, and from that lofty position she waved wildly as Eva appeared in the doorway.

"Hurrah! Hooray! Three cheers for Eva, the guest of the Form! Hurrah!"

"Yes, wather! And, as I have lost my notes for the speech, geals, I may as well wemark at once, unacoust—"

"Hurrah! Hooray!"

It must not be supposed that there was any facetious note in this frenzied reception of the Grace Pullen prize-winner.

The Fourth Form meant its plaudits in all sincerity. When Eva Merrick won the prize, she did so against the whole school, thus bringing credit upon her own Form, as well as upon herself.

So, although there was a lot of laughter mingling with the cheering, that was only because everyone was so happy.

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Haw, haw, haw! Wheah do I sit, geals? Not next to Naomer? Heah, I say—"

"Ooo, yes! Queek—queek, next to me!" shrilled Morcove's roguish royal scholar, jumping down from her chair to hug on to Paula. "I love you, Paula! I love everybody's more than ever this evening, eet is so nice!"

"Dweadful—dweadful!" sighed Paula, as she found there was no help for it but to sit down between her most inveterate teasers. "Things always go wong with me! I don't know why."

At the top of the table, Betty cast a glance round, and saw that there was one girl still to come.

"Cora Grandways, where is she? I don't like starting— Oh, here she is!"

The general invitation to the Form had had to include the one who seldom did anything but disgrace it, and now Cora Grandways was flaunting into the crowded room, very expensively dressed and very proud of her looks.

Her sister, Judith, had entered along with the rest of the girls, but that had not been good enough for Cora. She had to have a special entry

of her own, deeming herself such a "cut above the rest!"

"Will the Form captain please excuse my lateness?" Cora said, with that mocking grin which always attended a reference to Betty's official position. "I wouldn't have let it happen for worlds!"

"Neither would I," sighed Paula, thinking of her lost notes. "I can't wecall one wemark I was going to make. My mind's a blank."

"Then now we can start," came from Betty, who had had more sense than to heed Cora's jeering apology.

Just then the happy girls found that the room door had softly opened, and Miss Redgrave was there.

"Oh, hooray! Miss Redgrave, do—"

"No, I wouldn't dream!" was her smiling refusal of the yelled invitation. "I only just looked in to see if you were nicely started. Have a happy time, girls!"

And she was gone.
The supper was to keep, more or less, to the usual succession of courses. Sardines for a start, by way of hors d'œuvres, salmon mayonnaise, cold meats and salad, tarts, and then—well, anything one liked in the way of meringues, ice-cream, chocolates, dessert, to say nothing of lemonade ad lib!

Perhaps it was inevitable that a sudden pause in all the merriment should ensue. Someone was needed to dispel that slight embarrassment which usually marks the commencement of a formal "feed," and Naomer was the one who came to the rescue.

"I zink I start with an ice-skeem," she was suddenly heard to remark, "in case he melt before I get to him!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" Paula's simpering guffaw joined in with the general outburst of laughter. "Bwiliant idea, Naomer! As for me, I will just twy a sard— Hallo! My gwacious, what's this?"

She had been going to break her roll of bread, one that had looked rather dry and crusty. To her amazement, it parted in two, on paper hinges, disclosing its hollow nature.

"Healp! My gwacious, look heah! This bwead, geals!"

There were shrieks of laughter as the girls saw that somebody—was it Polly, by any chance?—had provided Paula with one of those dummy bread rolls that are sold at toyshops for practical joking.

But if Paula had been staggered for the moment, she was simply delirious with joy when she realised that inside the dummy roll were her missing notes for the great speech.

"Bai Jove, how wipping! I say, don't you know, heah they are—yes, wather!" She beamed round the table. "Polly, deah, you wascal! Polly, your doing, what? Haw, haw, haw!"

"But don't give the speech yet," said Polly demurely. "Wait till the reporter for the local paper arrives."

"Eh, what?" Paula exclaimed delightedly, ever the one to let herself be taken in. "A wepowter, bai Jove! Hooway! Is one weally coming?"

"He is not here yet," was Polly's adroit answer, as she looked at her wrist-watch.

Paula fell to after that in great good spirits. Now and then, in between her dainty mouthfuls, she chuckled. It was her fond belief that a reporter really was coming.



AN UNDESERVED HONOUR!

As Madge played her welcoming tune, Naomer made a grand stand of her chair, and waved wildly as Eva entered the room. "Hurrah!" cried the girls. "Three cheers for Eva, the guest of the Form!"

But presently the moment came when, reporter or no reporter, the formal proceedings must commence. The girls were looking to Betty. Polly began to rap with a fork for silence. Eva, on the Form captain's right hand, as the guest of the evening, was looking more uncomfortable than ever.

It was some of the girls' belief that Eva was in sheer agony over the whole business. And so she was, but not for the reason that they supposed.

Suddenly Betty stood up

"Well, girls—
"Hurrah! Order! Hooray!"

"It is your wish, I know, girls, that I should express the tremendous pride we all feel in having in our Form the girl who won the Grace Pullen!"

"Yes, wather! Hooway!"

"It has been a very great pleasure to all of us—"

"Yes, yes! Yes, wather!"

"To hold this little spread as a compliment to Eva Merrick."

Prolonged cheering.

"Eva Merrick, the girl who beat the whole school in the recent contest; Eva Merrick, who even beat Dolly Delane!"

Loud laughter, mingled with some loving cries of: "Poor old Doll! Never mind, Doll! Better luck next time!"

"Eva Merrick, the best girl to sit for the exam! For we know," Betty's ringing voice went on, "only the best girl could have won! Eva Merrick, girls!"

"Hurrah! Eva Merrick—bravo! Eva—Eva!" was the cry all round the table, whilst Betty sat down. "Speech, Eva. speech!"

But Eva, deathly pale, and only smiling in a ghastly way, was obviously unable to get out a

single word at this moment. So Polly gave Paula a friendly nudge in the ribs, as a hint that it would now be well for the Form's famous speech-maker to have her say.

"Haw, haw, haw!" simpered Paula, standing up. "One moment, howevah!"

And she sat down again, amidst tremendous cheering, to have a look at herself in the famous pocket mirror.

Then, rising once more she was greeted with more facetious cheering.

"Order—order! Silence for Paula Creel! Silence!" sang out Polly solemnly, whilst Betty banged with a spoon.

"Fellah membahs of the Fowth Fowm, bai Jove," Paula began elegantly, "it is with the gweatest gratification that I awise to congwatulate Eva Mewwick on this splendid suppah! Naomer, dwop it! As I was saying, geals, it gives me—
"One moment, pway, whilst I wifer to my notes. Oh, yes! Er—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It gives us all, I am sure, gweat pleasure to congwatulate Eva Mewwick on being the—ah—the winner—what? Yes, wather! And not only the winnah, bai Jove, of a pwize weally worth winning, but, what is more wemakrable, geals—"

"Not remarkable, Paula," whispered Polly.

"Not wemakrable, geals, no! It stands to weason—what!—that, as Eva won the pwize, she must have won it—er—fairly—yes, wather! That is to say—I mean, as the poet has said," Paula continued, now starting to read direct from her notes, "the poet Gway, I think it was. Howevah, if it wasn't Gway, it was possibly—"

"Brown," suggested Polly, spooning an ice.

"Pwecisely! That is to say—"

"Or even Green," blandly remarked Tess Trelawney.

"Pwecisely! But as the poet has said—"

"You don't think it could have been White?" Helen suddenly asked brightly.

"Weally, geals, I—I will pass on," Paula resumed flustered, turning to the next of six sheets in all. "Er—yes, wather, heah we are! You must listen to this! Down thwough the ages, geals, the school to which we pwoudly belong has been famous for its—er—"

"Excellent supper," came someone's stage whisper.

"And now to-night, geals, we may congwatulate ourselves on having in our midst one who— You quite wealise, what? One who is a gweat-cwedit to Morcove! And so," Paula went on, skipping to another page, "it is my gweat pleasure to—er—very gweat pleasure," she said, skipping to yet another page, "to wound off with the remark that we have gweat pleasure—"

Here the speaker paused, and lowered her notes:

"Geals, I gweatly wegwet that my notes are wather disawwanged. Yes, wather! Having weached page six, I find that, wightly speaking, it is page two! In fact, I have begun at the finish!"

"Hurrah! Bravo, Paula! Well done, Paula!"

"If you wish me to pwoceed, howevah—"

"No, no!"

"I will extempowise."

"Sit down!"

"Unaccustomed as I am to public sp—"

"Sit down! Ha, ha, ha!"

The burst of laughter which attended Paula's sitting down—when there was no chair behind

her!—ended abruptly, as Cora Grandways now rose to her feet.

"May I say a word?" she began, with a gleam of malicious mischief in her eyes. "The last speaker seemed to be surprised that Eva won the prize fairly!"

"No, no; Paula didn't!"

"Paula said it was remarkable——"

"I withdrew the expression, geals!" Paula protested, standing up again. "I would nevah dream of suggesting that any geal could win an exam. unfairly!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I should hope not. But you certainly did talk as if——"

"That'll do, Cora! Order—order!"

"Oh, all right! But if I were Eva, I would have felt uncomfortable!" Cora grinned. "There was no need for Paula Creel to say how wonderful it was the prize had been won without cheating. Even I have never been called a cheat. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cora, what is the idea, your butting in like this?" Betty asked, from the top of the table. "Do sit down, please!"

"I merely rose," the malicious girl spoke on, with her derisive smile, "to draw attention to the back-handed compliment that Paula Creel was paying Eva. Now I sit down, and leave it to Eva herself to assure you that—that she didn't cheat. Oh, no, of course not! Ha, ha, ha!"

Cora Grandways dropped back into her chair as she gave the sarcastic laugh. Betty and others stared at her, still wondering what point there was in all this. Only Cora's usual self-assertiveness, they supposed.

But Eva, she knew better.

Now, at the very moment when she was called upon to stand up and reply to all the flattering things that had been said, she knew who had written that sinister note.

It was as she had feared.

The girl was actually sitting at this table, and that girl was Cora Grandways, and no other!

Eva Merrick's Choice.

CORA, the one who knew!

Could anything be worse? The notorious mischief-maker and standing enemy of Betty & Co., the girl who never missed an opportunity of acting spitefully against any of the Study 12 coterie, she was the one who had found out! And Eva for a long time now had been well—"in" with Betty and Polly and the rest.

What mercy was to be expected, then, when this was the position? Was it not certain that Cora was saving up the pleasure it meant to her to throw this bombshell into the school?

Cora always had been one to jeer at the fair play for which Betty and her chums stood. How it was going to delight the spitfire to be able to denounce one of those chums as a cheat!

These were the distracting thoughts which Eva Merrick was experiencing, now that the supper-party had dispersed and she, for one, was all alone.

Oh, the secret agony it had been for her to stand up and flounder into speech, her every word listened to in respectful silence, except when the girls had burst into cheers. Coals of fire again, all of it!

The wonder was that she had not broken down in the end, shrieked out hysterically that she was a sham and a fraud, and that Dolly Delane should have had the prize.

What a wonder, too, that no one seemed to have formed suspicions, as the result of her nervous confusion. But she had come away from the room, at last, knowing that Betty and all the rest—all excepting Cora—still deemed her worthy of the praises that had been sung.

It was getting dark out of doors now, and Eva realised that she would soon have to stop this miserable pacing to and fro in a remote part of the grounds, and go in to attend the assembly and prayers.

Another night coming, for her to lie sleepless on her bed! Worse than ever the haunting dread would be, too, now that she had received the venomous hint that Cora Grandways meant to denounce her in the long run.

Then suddenly Eva went from bad to worse once more. Away she hurried to the schoolhouse, with the desperate intention of coming to grips with Cora, and of making fierce, lying denials. The only way now, or so it seemed to the miserable girl. Cora's insinuations must not be allowed to go unmet. There must be a vehement denial of the suggestion that the prize had been unfairly won.

Up through the twilight schoolhouse the agitated girl made her way, feeling quite ready to play the part of an injured innocent. After all, that was going to be so much easier than bringing oneself to confess!

The studies seemed to be very quiet as she went past their closed doors. It was as if a deep hush had settled upon the school, the hush before the storm! Guiltily she wondered, had a whisper started?



THE SECRET OUT! "You are telling a fib," said Cora. "You did cheat. You got hold of a paper!" "Who says so?" demanded Eva. "I do," was the reply. "I myself saw you take it!"

Was she going to be questioned? But, if they did question her, she would brazen it out before them all, even as she was prepared to brazen it out before Cora.

And now here was the door, round the corner, that served the Grandways sisters' study. Eva tapped, and then walked in.

Both girls were there—Judith, sitting at the table, with a book in front of her, gazing musingly at the wall now that the room had grown too dark for her to see to read.

As for Cora, she was sprawling, in her usual way, in an easy-chair, straddling her feet and lolling back, with hands clasped behind her handsome head.

"Hallo, Eva!" the elder sister greeted the visitor, with the falsely sweet smile. "How do you feel after the great event? I thought you seemed rather nervy."

"I want to speak to you, Cora; but not—not—"

She was glancing at Judith, and that girl instantly got up and went from the room, closing the door behind her.

Then, to make the indignant protest have the right ring of truth in it, Eva began at Cora immediately, in a passionate tone:

"Cora Grandways, you have been making nasty insinuations against me this evening! What's more, you have written me a note—an anonymous note, but you wrote it. You daren't deny it!"

"Dare you deny, Eva Merrick, that you deserved it?" came Cora's softly spoken retort.

"I do deny it—yes! I—I shall deny it in front of everybody! You have no right to say I cheated! I didn't cheat—I didn't!"

Cora languidly arose from the easy-chair. In the deepening darkness of the study, the two girls met each other's eyes.

"Say that again, Eva Merrick!"

"No, once is enough!"

"So I should think," Cora smiled, "when what you say is a fib. You did cheat. You got hold of the question-paper on the day before the exam. That gave you time to get all the answers ready. It gave you an immense advantage over everyone else in the school."

"Who says I got hold of an exam-paper?" Eva said fiercely.

"I say it. I have a right to say it. I myself saw you take the paper, as it happens!"

Next moment Eva was huddled down in a chair, dropping her shame-stricken face into her hands. She moaned despairingly.

Deny things after this, how could she? Cora had been an actual eye-witness!

"Yes," Cora said, smiling triumphantly, as she stepped to where the guilty girl was bowed down with shame, "you thought you were quite safe. You never heard a sound, did you? Although it's a wonder you didn't hear my step close to the French-windows of Miss Somerfield's private room."

That had been the sound which she, Eva, had imagined was only caused by the rambler roses rustling in the wind. How well she remembered it now! At the very moment when her hand was stealthily purloining one of the question-papers!

"I saw you," Cora's accusation went on. "We had all been given a day off that day. It was after lunch. I was going to look in on Miss Somerfield, and ask if I could be allowed to have out my motor-bike for once. That's how I came to see one of the wonderful Study 12 batch steal-

ing a printed question-paper, so as to cheat at the exam."

"Cora, I—I— Oh spare me!"

"I wonder how the school will enjoy being told!" exulted Cora. "Fancy, one of the Form captain's chums! And we are always told that you Study 12 girls are such ones for playing the game! But, there, I'm not going to blab."

Eva looked up sharply. She sprang to her feet. "You are going to be silent, Cora? Oh, Cora,

I—I—"

"Well, yes, I am rather disposed to hold my tongue about it all," was the airy response—"that is, if you are disposed to hold yours! And you seem to be!" grinned Cora.

"How can I help it?" was the wretched girl's half-feeble protest. "It means expulsion for me, Cora. I'd have to go home, branded a cheat. The very people who have been praising me for having won the prize will scorn me for what I am—a miserable cheat. Oh, why—why did I ever do it? I don't know!"

"Yes, well, don't snivel. I can't stand that," shrugged Cora disdainfully. "Look here, there was a time, Eva, when you and I were pretty good friends. You were against Betty and the rest then; now you have been roped into their set."

"Yes, I grew so ashamed of the mean way you were acting."

"You've got something worse to be ashamed of now!" said the evil genius of the Form tartly. "But I don't want to harp about it, Eva. Say you'll throw in your lot with me—"

"You mean be your—your friend?"

"That's right—my crony," said Cora, nodding calmly as she held herself erect. "The same Eva Merrick that used to be thick with me in the old days, ready for any bit of fun, and if it was at the expense of Betty & Co., all the better! You are staring, Eva. Don't you like the notion, then?"

"I—I— Oh, what shall I do?" the ensnared girl said wildly to herself, wringing her hands. "It's awful!"

"You prefer to be shown up, perhaps?"

"No! At least, I want to know more, anyhow," Eva spoke on huskily. "As your—your friend, I would have to throw over Betty and the rest?"

"Certainly! And be a chum for me to go about with on halfers, and all that. As I say, just like you used to do, Eva."

"I can't!" was the hard-driven cry. "No, no; not again, Cora! Since those days you've got yourself more disliked than ever. I've been going on all right—"

"Except that you've collared a prize by cheating! Oh, yes, you are a model girl, you are!" twitted Cora. "Now, look here, I'll give you time to decide, Eva. There's the bell for assembly, so we can't talk any more now. You can have till the morning, see?"

Into Eva's white face there came a look of wild relief at the respite which was being granted her.

"All right! Yes, yes! Thanks, Cora!" she panted, backing away to the door. "I'll think about it, and perhaps— After all, why not? But— Oh, I can't decide now—no! I'll tell you in the morning!"

How she got outside the room she never knew. She was dizzy and trembling, and passed, with stumbling steps, round into the main corridor, whilst Cora dropped back into her easy-chair and kicked up her heels as she chuckled.

"How lovely!" exulted the girl who simply gloried in luring others into dangerous paths. "She'll say, 'Yes'; of course, she will! And so at last I shall have got back at least one of the girls. Betty Barton robbed me of—Eva, the Grace Pullen prize-winner! She should come, in useful to get others to come over to me, at Betty's expense all the time!"

Can It Be True?

DING, dong! Ding, dong!

The first stroke of midnight sounding from Morcove's lofty belfry, and in the Fourth Form dormitory two girls lying wide awake, unbeknown to each other.

Eva Merrick was one. No need to say what was keeping Eva awake to-night! Before these few dark hours of the summer night had worn away and morning was here again, she had got to make her bitter choice.

But the other girl, what of her?

Poor Dolly Detane, victim of all this untold suffering that a trusted schoolmate had caused her! Cruel, indeed, that she should be kept on the rack like this, when what had she ever done to deserve it? What had she done, except work so very hard for the Grace Pullen Prize, and deserve that prize right enough, if only she had not been cheated!

But the wrong done to her was something of which she was as completely in ignorance as were her chums. If she was lying awake to-night, it was not because the loss of the prize seemed to be due to any unfairness. The best girl had won! She was only thinking of the stern future, as it must be faced now that all hope of paying for another term at Morcove by means of the fifty-pound prize was a thing of the past.

More than once had the good girl read her mother's letter from beginning to end before she came up to bed. Reading between the lines, Dolly had sadly come to the conclusion that things were far, far more critical at home than mother liked to say. Their harvest the only hope, and what that meant, in a climate like the Homelands!

Softly she turned over in bed, and a faint sigh came from her, such a sigh as might have been mistaken for that of a girl merely stirring in her sleep. But it was a sigh of perplexity, as Dolly still found her wakeful mind running on the idea that had come to her during the evening.

She had got to leave at the end of term. That was a grim certainty. Supposing, then—supposing she went home at once, so as to lend a hand on the farm?

That letter of mother's, it worried the poor girl. She wanted to do something, having failed to win the prize, something that would be a help in another way.

How she could help her parents, once she was under the old brown-tiled roof of the farmhouse again! Never a holiday but what she had made it her delight to help about the place; and, with the harvest coming on, her help would be simply invaluable.

Supposing, then, she went to Miss Somerfield with mother's letter, and asked to be allowed to go home at once, instead of waiting for breaking-up day?

It was almost a certainty that Miss Somerfield would agree.

The headmistress already knew that her, Dolly's, school career was smashed up. It was a thing that Miss Somerfield greatly deplored. But the

kind and wise principal of Morcove would be quick to appreciate a scholar's desire to stand by her parents, and she would know how truly useful the girl could make herself at home during the rush season.

"I shall ask her, then, in the morning, before school commences," was Dolly's sudden firm resolve. "And then good-bye for ever to the dear old school! Oh, how I wish I could get to sleep now! I'm so tired, so—"

Hark!

What a strange babble of talk had come from one of the other girls in her sleep! Who was it jabbering away about something she was dreaming?

Dolly sat up in bed, the only inmate of the room to do so. Fast asleep, all the rest, for they had none of her sorrow and anxiety to keep them awake.

Was it Eva Merrick who— Yes! And she was continuing that sort of moaning murmur.

With this thought, Dolly quietly slipped from her own bed and padded across to the one that held Eva Merrick.

Only a minute since had the conscience-haunted scholar dropped off at last.

"Eva, dear," Dolly whispered, "what is wrong?"

"I didn't do it—I didn't!" came from the sleeper in a miserable, whimpering tone.

"Didn't do what, Eva?"

"Didn't cheat at the exam!" was the perfectly intelligible answer which left Dolly astounded.

She had only voiced her question softly, as a way of humouring the dreaming girl into an easier sleep. Yet that was the astounding answer she had got! It was as if Eva were awake, after all. Either that, or else her mind must be working in her sleep, as the mind is capable of doing under great stress.

"I don't care: it's too late now," Eva suddenly mumbled again fretfully. "Oh, how awful it is!"

Dolly stood agasp with amazement and horror.

Then suddenly she bent over the troubled sleeper, and whispered a question in a slow, impressive manner:

"Eva, did you—did you cheat at the exam? Did you, Eva?"

"Yes, I did. Well, I don't care! Oh, dear, they'll find out! Hallo, where am I? Who are you?"

The babbling voice had changed sharply to a startled one, as the dreamer opened her eyes and saw another girl bending over her.

"It is only I," Dolly said, with enforced calmness. "You were talking in your sleep. You must have been dreaming."

"Was I? Yes, I know I was dreaming," Eva said in a bewildered way. "But what did I say, Dolly?"

"Never mind now. We shall wake the others."

"Dolly," entreated the other girl, heaving up in bed, "was I saying things about the exam?"

"Yes, you were. Hush, though! Lie down again."

There was the faintest of moaning sighs as the girl who had awakened out of her dream-haunted sleep sank back upon her bed.

Dolly stole back to her bed, and settled down very quietly. But, if sleep had been absent from that bed before, it was farther than ever from it now.

Merciful goodness, what was this to which Eva had been owning whilst she slumbered? Ought one to take the words seriously?

The first utterances had been like the tearful denials of a girl falsely accused. But there had followed those hard-driven mutterings about not caring, and then the candid admission that she had cheated!

The night wore on, and Dolly was still in a terrible state of mind about the incident. Everything seemed to point to the fact that Eva had the truly awful misdeed upon her conscience, and that it was because the culprit was so suffering in her mind that she had babbled in her sleep.

And yet—

Supposing the dream-talk was all pure nonsense, as such babblings often are, the very reverse of sober fact?

Dolly felt she must, in fairness, take this possibility into account. Eva might have talked like that simply because the strain of the recent examination was still telling upon her faculties. In that case, how unkind it would be to take the words seriously.

And yet—

And so at last the girl who had come second in the examination dropped off from sheer mental exhaustion, and it would not have been surprising if it had been her turn now to ramble whilst she slumbered.

Up to the very last moment she had been racked with the perplexing problem that now confronted her. Should she carry on with her resolve to go home before the end of term, or should she stay, harbouring suspicions against Eva, cherishing the desperate hope that that girl's guilt would be proved in other ways before breaking-up day?

Next morning, before breakfast, one wan-faced scholar came into a certain study, where another wan-faced girl was standing alone, in deep thought.

"Dolly, I want to speak to you," Eva began, forcing her cheerfulness. "I say, what happened in the night? You came across to me, didn't you, because I—I was talking in my sleep?"

"Yes, Eva." Dolly slowly turned, and steadily looked her study-mate in the eyes. "It was about the exam."

"I know I was dreaming about—about the exam," Eva said, flushing. "I often do, still. It shows what a strain it was. But—but what did I say in my sleep?"

"Oh, a lot of nonsense, I expect," was Dolly's generous evasion.

It was no use. Tax this other girl point blank with the heinous thing babbled about in her sleep, Dolly could not.

Morning had brought with it the belief that the dream-talk was not sufficient evidence of Eva's guilt. To accuse her on such flimsy grounds would be to come under suspicion oneself of wanting to trump up a charge against the prize-winner, because one had come in second!

That was the awkward thing that gave Dolly pause.

If she had been a disinterested girl, clean out of the running for the prize, then her reporting the midnight incident would have been a far different matter altogether. But she was the very girl who should have had the prize, if Eva really had cheated! She, and she alone, had a personal motive for challenging Eva's right to it!

"Dolly, shall I tell you—I mean, do you know what I—what I was dreaming so stupidly?" Eva suddenly burst out, with a feeble grin. "I dreamed that I—that I cheated at the exam. I didn't, Dolly! If I was saying things like that in my sleep—oh, you mustn't take them seriously!"

"I am not going to repeat them, if that is what you fear," Dolly said quietly. "What's the time? I wonder if I could get a word with Miss Somerfield before brekker?"

"What! Not about me, Dolly?" gasped the girl who had nervously protested her innocence a moment since. "Dolly—"

"No, not about you, Eva. I have said I shan't say anything to anybody. I want to see Miss Somerfield about going home at once."

"Before the end of term?"

"Yes, Eva," the girl who had come second answered, passing from the study. "My time here is as good as finished for ever, and there is trouble at home."

She pulled the door shut behind her, and walked slowly along the corridor, in thought as deep as ever. No, she had no right to make Eva's dream-talk the basis of a sensational charge against her. And yet—

Dolly could not forget it.

How vehement had been Eva's denial just now, needlessly vehement if—she was innocent, after all!

Too Late—Too Late!

"TENNIS? Wather not, bai Jove! Don't speak to me, geals! Don't bweathe a word!"

And Paula Creel flopped down on to a shady patch of grass under one of the playing-field's stately old elms.

"Why, what's the matter, then, Paula?" laughingly inquired Betty Barton, from where she was playing a singles with Madge.

"Mattah, bai Jove?" lamented Paula, addressing the company round about. "Do you geals imagine I am evah going to get over last evening's howwible fiasco?"

"We thought the supper-party was a grand success!" cried Madge Minden.

"Yes, wather! But my promised speech!" wailed Paula. "It reduces me to the extremity of despair, bai Jove, when I recall the bwiliant phvases which I didn't wepeat, after all. And all through Polly, the wascal!"

"Never mind, Paula; here is something to cheer you up," came from Helen Craig, as she approached the girls with what looked like an unmounted photograph in her hand. "Behold, the flashlight portrait group!"

They crowded around, the first emotion being one of expectant delight. Then, as certain oddities in the print were observed, the delight chafged to mingled astonishment and mirth.

"Ha; ha, ha! Look at Naomer, with seven heads!"

"Bai Jove! Haw, haw, haw! And I like the way Polly is winning, the wascal! But wheah am I, geals? Wheah am I?"

Helen painstakingly pointed out a foggy blur that represented the elegant member of the Form.

"That's you, Paula, darling!"

"My gwacious! Do I always look like that? Healp!"

"Not always!" laughed Tess. "But you must allow for the effects of that after-supper speech."

"That's the twouble," Paula sighed again. "And all through Polly!"

It chanced that Polly Linton, at this instant, was to be seen pelting towards the tennis-courts from the schoolhouse porch, with a whirlwind speed that Paula mistook for gay spirits.

"The wascal!" Paula repeated aggrievedly. "Here she comes, bai Jove, not a bit wepentant!"

After putting my twiceless notes inside a dummy bread woff! A joke's a joke, geals, but—"

"Is Dolly here?" panted Polly, now, that she was within speaking distance. "Has anyone seen her? Have you heard the rumour, girls?"

"Wumour, bai Jove! My gwacious, you look wather agitated, Polly, deah!"

"I'm fairly bowled over with the news!" was the madcap's breathless admission. "Miss Redgrave tells me that Dolly Delane is going home to-morrow!"

"What!" almost yelled Betty, catching the sensational remark, as she and Madge came hurrying away from the court, their game cut short.

"Dolly leaving? Never!"

"And for good!" Polly added tragically, causing all who stood around to turn to one another with mouths agape.

"So let's find her, and ask her what it means!"

less and sullenly aloof for many a day. Now she was coming away from Eva's study with that girl, and there was a strong suggestion of the two having become quite friendly. Apparently they were even going out together, now that afternoon classes had ended.

Nor were Betty and the rest blind to the shame-faced look which came into Eva Merrick's face as she came on with Cora.

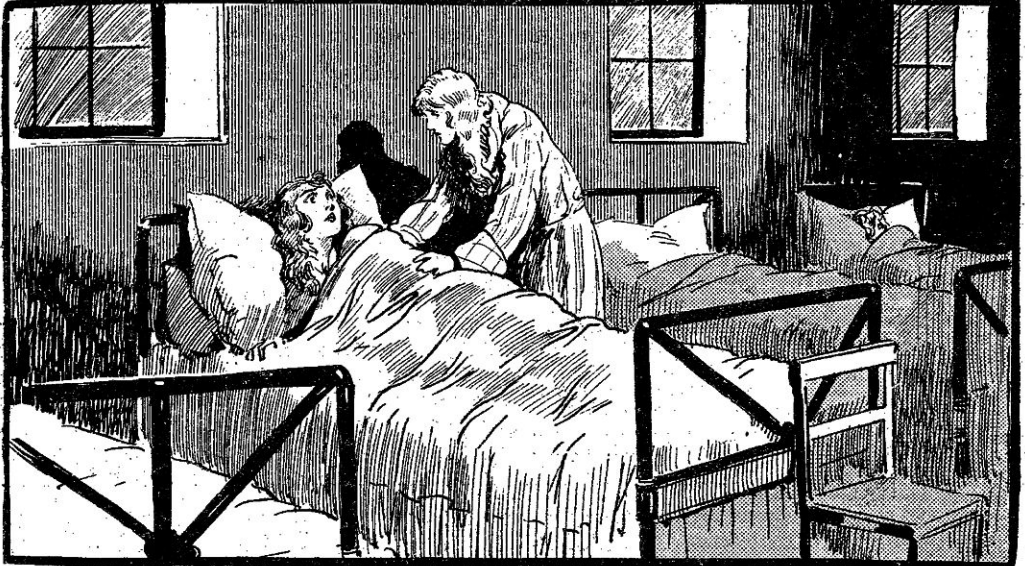
Her eyes went down, and she seemed to shrink into herself as she passed between the girls who deemed her a chum, the very girls who had been loudest in their praises about her winning the Grace Pullen.

"Er—Eva, one moment," Betty began haltingly.

"Is Dolly in the study?"

"No."

"It is said that she is leaving the school for good to-morrow!"



HER TROUBLED CONSCIENCE! "Eva, did you cheat at the exam?" asked Dolly, bending over the girl who was talking in her sleep. "Yes, I did, and I don't care!" was the answer. Then Eva awoke. "Hallo!" she cried. "Who are you?"

rushed on Polly. "Poor old Doll! I do believe she is in the most awful trouble—worried about affairs at home. Coming, any of you?"

For answer, the whole pack of them sped away to the schoolhouse, mounting to the Fourth Form quarters with a haste due to wildest dismay.

The news must be true, since it had come through Miss Redgrave, but it still remained to find out just why their chum—their own old Doll—was suddenly ending her schooldays.

The distressed girls gained the Fourth Form corridor, and they were within a few paces of the study shared by Dolly and Eva, when they saw the door open and two girls come out. Eva was one, but the other—

"It's Cora!" Polly exclaimed, under her breath, amazedly.

Here, indeed, was another staggering surprise for Betty & Co.!

It was a most unusual thing for Cora to look in upon any of her Form-mates. She had been friend-

"Yes; she told me so a few minutes since."

Eva passed on, obviously glad to get away from the bewildered girls. In silence, they watched her until she had vanished with Cora.

"Well!" gasped Polly at last.

"Bat Jove! Geals—geals, that's pwetty stwange, what? Eva is off with us, and on with Corwa, bai Jove!"

"Surely not!" exclaimed Madge tensely. "Oh, impossible! Why should she be?"

Ah, why? Would Betty & Co. ever know just why Eva had suddenly gone over to Cora like this?

"Well, let's find Dolly!" fumed Betty. "I know! She is with matron, most likely, seeing about packing."

On this, they chased off again, and at last they found Dolly, just as she was coming away from the matron's room.

"Dolly, darling, what does it mean! Oh, do tell us!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, Doll—"

"You are leaving? Leaving for good, it's said!" half a dozen of them cried out distressfully. "But why—why? You told Eva, but you have not liked to tell us!"

She told them now, bringing tears to their eyes by the painful explanation. And so, at last, the chums knew that, like no other girl, she had been fighting for her very existence at the school when she went in for the Grace Pullen exam. If only she had won, there would have been none of this. But she had lost, and the price of defeat, in her case, was good-bye for ever to Morcove!

"You can just imagine how I'd love to stay on up to the last possible moment, especially as I shan't be coming back next term!" the poor girl said emotionally. "But I can be so useful at home, and dad and mother are willing to have me home to-morrow. They know that I shall never be happy until I am helping them all I can."

One of the girls suddenly stepped close and kissed her. It was Betty.

"Poor old Doll," she gulped, "I don't know when anything has upset me more! Oh, Dolly, darling, is it really going to be good-bye for ever?"

"I am afraid it must be," was the resigned answer that made Paula Creel, for one, get out her handkerchief.

And that good-bye Dolly Delane said to all of them directly after breakfast next morning.

Good-bye to Miss Somerfield and all the mistresses! Good-bye to the chums she loved so dearly, and whose happy days she would share never more! Good-bye to the school that held next place in her heart to home itself!

Thus did Dolly Delane "break up" for the last time at Morcove School, at what seemed to her the call of love and duty. Good connections by the trains enabled her to make a swift journey, and by tea-time she was with her parents in the

old brown-tiled farmhouse; and, if there were tears in the eyes of dad and mum just then, there was also a shining light that came of enhanced pride in their plucky, uncomplaining daughter.

Afterwards she went out into a meadow, where they were getting in the last of the hay. It must not lie out another night, for the glass was falling fast.

Dolly turned to with a will, and it was no small thanks to her extra pair of hands that darkness found the last load safely under cover.

Next morning, at Morcove School, with the first glimmerings of dawn, Eva Merrick awoke, and gave a moaning sigh to herself.

Another day at hand! Another day for her to suffer in her conscience, another day for all her former friends to be amazed, astounded, at her having become Cora Grandways' boon companion!

Meantime, here in this grey-lit dormitory of Morcove School, what was it that the wretched girl could see that stood as a visible sign of her wrongdoing?

It was an empty bed, the bed where Dolly Delane should have been sleeping peacefully, only one had hardened one's heart against the victim of the shameful deed, and had let her go, when a single word about it all could have—

Hush!

Never must that word be spoken now. Too late—too late! Confession would mean—expulsion!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

And so, because of Eva Merrick's deed, poor Dolly Delane is condemned to leave her old school and all the chums she loves. Will the truth ever be revealed? You must not miss next week's long complete tale, which is entitled: "Brought Back to Morcove!"

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