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Nº1

THIS WEEK
MARY BRIAN

A splendid complete story of Morcove School, introducing Lena Daunt, a new girl.



THE GIRL WHO WAS DIFFERENT AT HOME!

By

MARJORIE STANTON.

Utterly charming to the girls with whom she has to mix at Morcove, yet the cause of continual unhappiness at home, because of her spiteful temper, Lena Daunt is forced upon Madge Minden as a companion, with a far from happy result for Madge, as this splendid story will show.

Not a Nice Girl.

"IS she there, Polly? Can you see her? Madge should be catching this train."
"Yes, Betty, I can see her. She's coming!"

And Polly Linton cried a merry greeting to the girl who was about to board this afternoon train to Morcove School.

"In here, Madge! We're all here!"

Madge Minden, although looking very pleased to see two or three of her best chums with their heads out of the compartment window, did not hurry herself. For one thing she knew there was ample time, for this was a big junction at which the train had now stopped. And for another thing Madge always did take life quietly.

Unlike Polly, that madcap of the Fourth Form at Morcove, and one or two other sprightly members of the Study 12 coterie!

"Well, Madge, how are you?" was the general cry that greeted her as she reached the wide-flung carriage door. "How do you like going back to school?"

"I'm all right—so far," smiled Madge. "Shall have something special to tell you in a minute. I suppose I had better see that my luggage is being put on board. Shan't be a jiff!"

"Don't get left behind!" was Polly's warning cry.

Then she drew in her head and turned round to the batch of chums who were squeezed into the compartment.

"Something to tell us in a minute! I wonder what Madge meant by that, girls?"

Naomer Nakara, that impish little thing from a Southern clime, fretted uneasily on Madge's account.

"Ooo, queek! I weesh she come back! She keep ze train waiting."

"Pway keep calm, Naomer, deah," simpered Paula Creel, arranging a travelling-rug about her knees. "It wouldn't do for evowry geal to be as

excitable as you. If more of you were like Madge I might get a bit of peace. Yes, wather!"

"You have managed to get a good bit of room, anyhow," remarked Polly. "Shift up a bit, please, Paula."

"Weally, Polly——"

"Or shall Naomer and I shift you, Paula?"

Paula hastily shrugged herself into the smallest possible space. Twice already, during the high-spirited journey back to school on this re-opening day, she had been made to sit on the floor. And Paula was the very last girl to enjoy such indignities.

Meantime Madge Minden had walked to the end of the train, to satisfy herself that her luggage had been bundled on board. A glance into the van showed her the familiar trunks, with her initials in white, and so that was all right. She came strolling back, but suddenly all this habitual composure forsook her.

"Those chocs, that I bought just now—what have I done with them?"

It was only too obvious to Madge: she had left them behind in the platform tea-room, where she had been getting herself a cup of tea whilst waiting for the train.

Madge, making a sudden little run to the tea-room doorway, was aware of several of her chums calling to her from the carriage window. She laughed over her shoulder, giving an explanatory gesture, and then darted into the tea-room.

At the little round table which had been hers whilst she drank her cup of tea, someone else was sitting now. This was another girl, a complete stranger to Madge, and not a new scholar for Morcove evidently, for she was not wearing the school costume.

But Madge gave her only the most fleeting glance. She saw the chocolates, still reposing on a window-sill close beside the table, and she would have reached for them, with a quiet "Excuse me,"

only a young waitress was also at the table, giving change to the seated girl.

At sight of Madge the waitress instantly understood.

"Oh, your chocolates, miss! Yes, I was just noticing that you had left them behind! Allow me!"

Then an awkward thing happened for the waitress. In reaching across the table to the window-sill, she accidentally jolted the table. It was not clumsiness. The little tea-room held far too many tables, and this hampered one's movements. But, as a leather handbag fell over on the table, causing its loop to dip into the owner's teacup, there came a very snappish cry.

"You clumsy thing!" exclaimed the girl who was waiting for her change. She sprang up from her chair, snatching the handbag away. "Look what you've done now!"

There was the merest spot of wet on the leather loop.

"I'm sorry, miss—"

"What's the good of that? Why they must have such clumsy people as you!" flared out the girl, glaring at the distressed waitress. "You ought to be made to pay—"

"Oh, come," Madge could not help interposing, "surely it is nothing to make such a fuss about?"

"I was not speaking to you!" came the cold remark. "Why should this handbag—a present that I had at Christmas—be spoiled—"

"Accidents will happen," said Madge. "And can't you see that you are upsetting this girl—"

"Upsetting her!" sneered the other girl, with a withering look for the waitress. "Here, give me my change, and let me get away! I've got to catch this train."

Madge, although she had secured the chocolates, felt bound to linger. She thought that this other girl was the most objectionable she had ever encountered, and she meant to stick up for the waitress. The latter, however, with a dignity which Madge admired, calmly dealt out the change, and then turned her back upon the insulting customer.

Next moment Madge side-stepped to give a wide berth to the girl, who went from the tea-room, muttering viciously.

"Nice sort of girl!" Madge could not help remarking as the waitress looked round, pale and upset. "I am so sorry. It was all my fault for leaving the chocs. behind."

"Not at all, miss. She is—that sort!"

Madge nodded, in thorough agreement, and then made her own hasty exit. Doors were being slammed all along the train.

Naomer fairly yelled:

"Ooo, queek—queek!"

"I'm a nice one," smiled Madge as she sedately rejoined her chums. "Whilst bothering about my luggage, I go and leave behind these chocs.!"

"What's the matter?" was Polly's instant query as she saw Madge's flushed face.

"I've had a bit of a row with the most awful girl I ever ran up against," was Madge's careless answer. "Have a choc. anyone?"

The box was passed round the carriage.

"Now, Madge, what was it you had to tell us?" resumed Polly, a minute later.

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove!"

"Something you won't quite like, I'm afraid," came the response. "This term I am going to be—a day girl!"

Something She Did Not Expect!

"WHAT?"

"Going to become a day girl?"

"Howwows!"

"Oh, Madge! Oh, I say!"

Utter consternation drew exclamations from all.

"Yes. It can't be helped," Madge continued placidly. "And, anyhow, it is not for me to complain, girls. Dad wished it, and he only wished it for the sake of making things nice for others."

"But, Madge," broke out Betty Barton, "where are you going to live? You can't possibly come all the way from your own home every day!"

"Oh, no! I am going to live in Barncombe."

"Barncombe! Oh, well," exclaimed Tess Trelawney, "that won't be so bad. Pretty handy for the school, Madge. And, of course, you'll still have the run of all the studies."

"Bai Jove, wather!" beamed Paula. "A wavin welcome, Madge, deah, whenever you can drop in, what? All the same—"

"You see," said Madge in that level voice of hers, "just lately dad has had to take rather a special interest in a family who have settled in Barncombe, so that one of the daughters—there are only two, and the other is only nine and rather delicate—can go to Morcove as a day girl. The father is dead, and the mother feels she would like to have her elder daughter at home out of school time. Dad is anxious to do all he can for the widow, because he was a great chum of her husband's long ago."

All this was received with attentive nods.

"And so, Madge—"

"Well, in the end dad asked me if I would make my home with them, and be a day girl, attending school with Lena Daunt, the elder girl. He put it to me that it would be nicer for Lena, and make things better for Mrs. Daunt."

"And so it will."

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, Madge, we all know you are an acquisition anywheah! With your music, and—"

"I can't rise and bow," laughed Madge. "We are so squeezed up, I doubt if I could sit down again. But it's nice of you to say so. I don't know how it will work. But, of course, if only because dad asked me, I want to make it a success."

"So you won't be coming along to Morcove to-day, Madge?"

"No, Betty. Not to-day. I shall be along in the morning, in time for school. This afternoon I must get out at Barncombe, and make for the Daunts' place. It's quite a nice home, dad says, and Mrs. Daunt is a dear."

"And Lena—what's she like?" asked Tess.

"Haven't seen her yet," shrugged Madge. "But I'm told she is quite nice."

After such a topic as this had been started, the rest of the run to Barncombe was bound to pass quickly enough. The change over for Madge from boarder to day girl was too big an event for it to be dismissed with only a few comments.

They all loved Madge, and they knew how she loved them. There was not the least doubt that she had generously sacrificed her own inclinations, feeling that it was "up to her" to be just as nice to the Daunts as was her father.

So, as the train clattered up through the lovely Devon country to quaint old Barncombe, Betty and the rest had plenty to say about this startling development. It must not mean any difference to Madge in the long run! That was their emphatic

resolve. Trust them to see that Madge still remained as much "one of them" as ever.

The talk was all to this effect, and Madge, when the train had reached Barncombe, descended to that familiar platform feeling that, if she deserved a little sympathy, she had certainly got it!

"See you to-morrow, then!" was her parting remark to the girls left behind in the train.

It was a school "special," going on to Morcove, four miles distant.

"We'll be down at the gates, looking out for you, Madge," sang out Polly—"you and the other girls!"

Madge gave her calm nod, and went to see after her luggage. The objectionable girl of the tea-room incident had left the train, but did not appear to have any luggage. Madge saw her stroll off the platform, delivering up her ticket with a haughty insolence towards the collector. Strange how some people liked to give themselves airs!

In a few minutes Madge herself was taxiing with her luggage to the home of the Daunt family. She knew every inch of Barncombe, so it was no surprise when the taxi turned into quite a nice residential road, and drew up opposite the front gate of a smart, detached villa.

What did give her a surprise was the sight of her own father's car at the kerb, proving that he was indoors with the Daunts. This was the unexpected, but Madge instantly guessed that, whilst having a run round on business matters to-day, he had found time to take in Barncombe.

Leaving the taxi-man to unload her things, she entered the front garden of West View, and came to a pretty little porch. There was no need for her to knock or ring. Open flashed the hall door, and Mr. Minden himself was the first to greet her.

"Here you are then, Madge! I might have brought you in the car had I known. But I never expected to finish up in Barncombe when I left home this morning. Come along in, and—"

He was interrupted by Mrs. Daunt, who, with smiling eagerness, suddenly came forward, and Madge was left in no doubt as to how glad the mother was to see her.

"I do think it is just splendid of you, my dear," she chatted on, after drawing Madge into the house. "To be so willing to make your home with us, for reasons that your father has explained. Are you tired after the journey?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Daunt! What a lovely home you have! Really—"

"It is nice of you to say so, my dear. In a few minutes you shall have tea. We like Barncombe very much, and I am sure we are going to be very happy, with Lena placed at such a fine school! This is my younger daughter, Kitty."

Madge fell in love with Kitty on the spot. Bright-eyed and glossy-haired, she was the jolliest little nine-year-old. For just a second she had looked rather shy as she came into the presence of Madge, but now her nervousness vanished.

With Mr. Minden, they all went into the tastefully-furnished drawing-room, which looked out on to a back garden that would be very pretty in summer-time. Madge, music lover that she was, rejoiced to see a first-rate piano.

"Lena—Lena may not be in for some time yet," remarked Mrs. Daunt as she touched the bell for the maid to bring in tea. "It's a pity she is away from home, for your father, Madge, was saying he would have run you and Lena to the school in the car."

"Just to let Lena have a first glimpse of the place, and perhaps meet a few of your chums,

Madge," added Mr. Minden. "That was my idea."

The door opened, and the servant of the house brought in the tea. A tall, good-looking girl, as Madge noticed, very smart in her cap and apron. She moved about with an air of knowing herself to be very attractive.

"Thank you, Elsie," murmured Mrs. Daunt. "I think we might keep one or two scones hot for Lena when she comes in."

"I've done it, ma'am," said Elsie demurely. "I've kept some back."

"That's right," approved Mrs. Daunt; and she added, after the maid had withdrawn: "Trust Elsie to think of Lena. She always is so careful—"

"Because it's all to her advantage," burst out



A SURPRISE FOR BOTH. "Here is Lena," said Mrs. Daunt, and Madge Minden found herself confronting the very girl with whom she had remonstrated in the station tea-room on her ill-tempered treatment of the waitress!

Kitty, with a laugh at the way this startling comment was being received.

"Kitty, dear, I'm shocked at your saying such things," said Mrs. Daunt, but her smile showed that there was some truth in Kitty's inopportune remark.

"Perhaps I do rather let Lena make a fuss of Elsie," acknowledged Mrs. Daunt. "But—"

T-r-r-ring, ring! went the hall-bell at this instant, and Kitty flew from the room, exclaiming:

"That's Lena! She's got back early, after all!"

There was a pause in the drawing-room. Then there appeared in the doorway a girl who could only be Lena, as Madge knew.

And, with a great shock of amazement, she saw that Lena was the very girl who had made that unpleasant scene in the station tea-room!

Madge Makes a Protest.

THE same girl, and yet—not the same! That was Madge's instantaneous thought, for, even before a word was said, she found Lena Daunt looking as if the last thing she could ever do was to be "cattish."

She smiled at Madge as if that unpleasant incident on the station platform had never occurred. And Madge wondered—was it because Lena was out to impress Mr. Minden with her sweetness?

"Didn't I see you at the station?" Lena remarked sweetly as the introduction took place. "I suppose those were some of the Morcove girls you were with? I wish I had known!"

"Well, Lena," exclaimed her mother delightedly, "as you have got back by that afternoon train, after all, how would you like to have a run in the car to Morcove directly tea is over?"

Lena turned to Mr. Minden with a delighted face.

"How awfully nice of you if you will, Mr. Minden! And Madge will go with me, of course? I shall love it! Oh, I don't know that I want any tea. I'd like to get away—"

"Could I go, please?" broke in Kitty wistfully. "I would so like to see the school, and—"

"Don't be silly! Of course you can't go!" snapped out Lena, as though taken off her guard. Then she softened, out of regard for the presence of "company."

"Had Kitty better come, mother? I think not, don't you? Not this time, Kitty!"

"Oh, but do let her!" pleaded Madge, convinced that the mother was quite willing.

"I certainly think she might," murmured Mrs. Daunt.

Kitty's eyes met Madge's in a grateful glance, but Madge took less notice of this than of the sudden frown that Lena gave.

"Well, you'll have to run upstairs and get ready at once," she said, amiably enough, in spite of the irritation she had momentarily displayed. "Madge and I have our things on, so don't keep us waiting, dear!"

"Right-ho!" was the joyous response with which Kitty whirled out of the room. She seemed to go up to her room three stairs at a time.

"Perhaps you would like to see your room, Madge?" suggested Mrs. Daunt, after the hasty cup of tea. "Lena will show you—"

"Yes, come up with me, Madge, and I'll show you your room!"

Nothing could have sounded more cordial than this. All the same, Madge had the unpleasant conviction that she was not going to like Lena. She was a girl whom one could know for a long time, perhaps, without finding her out. It all depended upon how soon one saw the cattish side of her nature. Madge, as it chanced, had started by seeing the girl at her very worst.

Her worst? No, far from it!

So Madge discovered when, left alone in her bed-room, to have a journey's end tidy-up, she suddenly heard a fierce upbraiding that little Kitty was receiving from her sister across the bed-room landing.

"Go down and say you don't want to go after all—go on!" Lena was furiously commanding her sister. "I won't have you come!"

"But why, Lena, when I—"

"Because I don't choose! It's to get away from you for a bit that I'm partly so thankful to be going to Morcove School! I get fed-up with you—wanting to have all I have, a mere kid like you!"

"Oh, Lena, I don't! I—"

There was a sound suspiciously like a sharp smack, silencing Kitty's protesting voice. Madge walked towards her door. She couldn't put up with this sort of thing! She would have to stop it.

Lena's hissing whisper continued: "If you don't stay at home, Kitty, I'll give you such a time when I get back. You see if I don't!"

Then Madge opened her door and crossed the landing.

"Lena? I don't know if you are aware that I—I can hear," Madge said composedly. "Don't bully your sister, please."

Lena's underlip went between her teeth, and she stood drawn-up—hardly able to conceal her passionate resentment.

"Must you always interfere?" came from her at last, disdainfully. "It was you, at the tea-room, butting in!"

"I don't want to interfere," Madge said gently. "I have come to live with you, and, of course, I want to get on well with you. You are going to my school, and I want the other girls to like you. They would not like to hear you domineering over this sister of yours."

The large, innocent eyes of little Kitty were all this time regarding Madge in adoring awe. Madge gave her a half-smiling look that bade the youngster look less scared, less crushed—that was the word for the state she was in; crushed! But Kitty, although she did not lack spirit, blurted out suddenly:

"I'd rather not go, after all, Madge. No, really, because it—it only means a lot of bother. And we don't want—rows: I'll run down and tell them I'm not going."

Away she flashed, before Madge could say anything, and now Lena seemed inclined to laugh in triumph.

"So you heard me talking to Kitty just then! Are you much given to that sort of thing, Madge? I mean to say, I don't know that I was talking so loudly that you could hear—without wanting to!"

"If we are not careful, we shall start by quarrelling," was Madge's restrained answer. "I don't pry and listen, if that is what you mean, Lena. Are you going to Morcove with my father? If so, I'm ready."

And she went back to her bed-room to resume her hat, the one thing she had to do before going downstairs.

Lena came down immediately afterwards, and it more than amazed Madge to find that the girl was again in one of her very amiable moods.

This would have been a great joy to Madge, if it had meant that Lena was feeling sorry for a bit of bad temper.

But it meant nothing of the sort. By now, Madge quite understood the sort of girl she had to deal with—and live with, alas! Lena, it was perfectly evident, could be all things to all people. She could be perfectly charming abroad, and quite the reverse at home. She was only being so sweet now, because Mr. Minden was on hand.

Sure enough, no sooner were the three of them in the car than Madge was having a most painful time of it at the hands of Morcove's new day girl. Mr. Minden was driving, whilst the two girls sat at the back. So Lena could be as unpleasant as she pleased.

"Are you going to tell them, at the school, that I am not nice to know?" she asked, smiling coldly.

"I don't know why you should think such a

thing," Madge exclaimed. "But if that's how you treat your little sister, Lena, I—I can't help saying so, I think it most unkind."

"Oh, you do? Perhaps, when you have had time to get fed-up with Kitty—always bothering one's life out—you'll not wonder at my losing patience with her. She forgets that she is years younger than I. She's always wanting to do as I do; but she is not going to!"

Madge let this pass without comment. It seemed to express Lena's fixed idea that she was the only one who counted in the family; that she must have everything and little Kitty—nothing. And, again, what would Morcove think of this if it got to know?

In a few minutes the car turned in at the school-gates and took the run up the drive to the porch. Ellen was the parlourmaid who admitted them, and like the long-serviced maid that she was, Ellen had a special smile for Madge.

"I quite wondered what had become of you, miss! And then your chums told me that you were going to be a day girl," this term. I hope, miss, you'll be just as happy."

"I hope I shall, Ellen!" said Madge.

But she had her doubts.

That beautiful little villa-home in Barncombe; Mrs. Daunt and Kitty—they had seemed to augur so well for Madge's happiness out of school. But what sort of a life was it going to be for her if she had to put up with Lena's double-faced conduct? And she looked like having to do that.

The thing was done, now!

"What a Nice Girl!"

MISS SOMERFIELD, the headmistress, was notified of their arrival, and they were shown in to that lady; but, as this was only a flying visit, Madge and Lena were soon told that they might run away and find some of the other girls. So, leaving Mr. Minden in talk with Miss Somerfield, they went upstairs together.

The old school! And this was the first evening of the new term, with the usual little jollifications going on in the various studies. Madge's heart ached just a little, and what wonder? Mere day attendance as a scholar was going to exclude her from so much of the best side of school life!

Ah, well! If, as looked like being the case, her presence in that villa home in Barncombe was to mean a buffer between Kitty and her overbearing sister, it would be worth the sacrifice.

Such was Madge's selfless thought about it all, as she came to the door of Study 12 and tapped.

It had to be a loud tap-tap, for there was great talk and laughter going on in Betty's and Polly's study.

"Come in—mind the step!" sang out Polly, borrowing one of her brother Jack's favourite "gags."

"Oh, it's Madge!"

"Madge, bai Jove! Hooway!" cried Paula, so delighted that she actually bounded out of her easy-chair. "We didn't expect this, Madge, deah!"

"It's only a flying visit. Dad is with Miss Somerfield," said Madge; "and here is—Lena Daunt. Chums of mine, Lena. Betty Barton, the Form captain; Polly Linton, Paula Creel—"

"Pleased to see you heah, yes, wather," beamed Paula, instantly taking to this new day girl who was so much a picture of amiability.

"It's nice of you to say that," exclaimed Lena, very sweetly. "What a topping school it appears to be! I am so looking forward to the life here. I suppose, even though I am only a day girl—"

"Oh, rather," Betty hastened to declare; "you can have some grand times along with the rest of us, Lena! You can always stay around on the halfers, of course. Do you play hockey?"

"Hockey's my favourite game! I don't know, though; tennis is all right, too."

"You like everything, eh?" commented Polly heartily. "That's good. We like girls who are ready for anything here at Morcove. How long can you stay now? Anyhow, sit down—"

"And let's have the cake out," proposed Betty. "Ooo, yes, queek—queek, I get him!"

Naomer darted to the corner cupboard, just as if she belonged to the study.

"Now the lemonade," suggested Polly, cutting away at the cake.

"Ooo, yes, queek—queek!"

Naomer, at the cupboard, groped about, knocking over several empties left from last term, but at last she came upon one unopened bottle, which she brought to the table, with a couple of glasses.

"If you'd like a game of hockey, on Saturday there will be a place in the team," said Betty, opening the lemonade. "But we can talk about that in the morning. You won't be out of things, because you are a day girl."

"Still, I rather envy you boarders," came very prettily from Lena. "Thanks! Cheerio!"

"We rather envy you—one thing," exclaimed Tess, speaking for the first time since Lena appeared. Tess, the artist, had been lost in admiration of Lena's clear-cut features.

"This cake is delish! But why should you envy me?"

"For having Madge to live with you," said Tess.

"Yes, wather! However, Madge, it's all awanged, isn't it. You can wely on us, we are not going to let you feel any difference!"

"It's been awfully sporting of Madge to offer to make her home with us in Barncombe," Lena said, with a smile for Madge that was sheer hypocrisy.

"But for Madge, I don't know what we should have done. Mother didn't want me to go to and from the school every day, alone."

"Well, you can take it from us," said Polly, swinging her legs as she perched on the table-edge; "Madge is easy to get on with. You needn't look like that, Madge. I only wish it could be said of me!"

"Wather, bai Jove," agreed Paula fervently. "Madge doesn't tease; Madge doesn't wout me out of my easy-chair—"

"Your easy-chair! I like that!" fired up Polly. "You see, Lena, if Paula will look up in a study that isn't hers, can she grumble if she gets routed round now and then?"

"As regards being wouted wound," came from the easy-chair. "It is not being wouted wound that I mind so much, galls. It is being wolloed about on the floor; dwagged by the scwuff of the neck—yes, wather! Why I put up with it I weally don't know! Now, Madge—Madge is nevah unwuly. Madge is a—a weal bwick, bai Jove!"

"Oh, I am sure!" assented Lena, again smiling at Madge.

That girl jumped up.

"Well, Lena, we must be off—musn't keep my father waiting, as he has a long drive before him. See you in the morning, girls!"

She went out rather abruptly, expecting Lena to follow. But Lena was going to take her time over the good-bye, and suddenly Madge found that it was Tess who had come after her into the corridor.



A HORRID THING TO DO!

Lena walked to the mantelpiece and stripped it of some of its nicest ornaments. "I got this room nice for you to-day thinking I should like you," she said coldly. "Now I know it was labour thrown away!"

"I say, Madge, she's awfully nice, isn't she? Hers is the sort of face I'd like to sketch, some time. How do you like her mother and sister?"

"Oh, they are awfully nice!"

"So you are going to be quite happy there, Madge? I'm ever so glad about that," Tess said, in a subdued, earnest tone. "It would have been awfully hard luck, Madge, if it had meant any disappointment. But you and Lena are going to be good chums, of course!"

It was too taken-for-granted by Tess, for Madge to be called upon to reply. Nor, in any case, would there have been time for Madge to say much. Lena suddenly came away from Study 12, waving good-bye to Betty and the rest as they crowded in the study doorway looking quite charmed with her.

When they knew—when they came to know what she was like at home! thought Madge. But were they likely to find out? And if they did not—what then?

Would it be "up to her" to undeceive them? She thought not. Most emphatically she was not going to say things about Lena.

For one reason, all "sneaking" was hateful. A second reason was, that, the moment Betty & Co. knew that there was another side to Lena's character, they would be all so sorry for her, Madge!

This being so, she formed the sudden creditable resolve to try to coax Lena into being just as nice to her sister Kitty as she could be to others, when she liked.

"After all," thought Madge, as they were driving back in the car, "Lena seems to want to be friends with those girls who are my best chums.

Surely, then, she will feel bound to act decently at home, with me on hand."

Yet it was only an hour later that poor Madge was being made to see what an utterly graceless girl Lena could be in the home, without caring a scrap what she, Madge, might think of her!

"Miss Do-As-I-Like!"

MR. MINDEN had said his loving good-bye to the daughter of whom he was so proud and fond. Without any misgivings as to her happiness at "West View" he had betaken himself off in the car, and the street door had scarce closed behind his back before Lena was upsetting the household.

It began with an impatient cry to her sister:

"Kitty, what did you do with that book I got from the library?"

"I haven't had the book, Lena. I——"

"You have!" stormed Lena, striding into the drawing-room, where Madge was chatting with bright-eyed Kitty. Mrs. Daunt was not there for the moment, and Madge feared she herself would have to play the part of peace-maker, if she could.

"Elsie says you have had it," Lena said, with quite needless ferocity. "She saw you with it."

"Oh, what fibs! I have not seen the book since last evening, Lena, when you were reading it."

"Well, find it! Don't sit there, when I tell you to look about for the book—sharp!"

Lena was crossing the room, looking ready to pull Kitty to her feet from the couch which she was sharing with Madge.

"Bother you—always making scenes," complained Kitty, reluctantly getting up. "If it weren't for Madge, I wouldn't—no, I'd simply refuse to fag about for you. But——"

"That will do!"

"Well, Lena," the younger sister pleaded sadly, "I do think you might have a little regard for Madge. It's not very nice for her."

"Pooh. You, I can see," sneered Lena, "are going to fawn to Madge, to get her to side against me. Well, who cares!"

Then Madge stood up.

"I don't think that was called for, Lena. Really, you don't give the kiddy half a chance."

"I know what I'm about!"

"Oh, all right. I merely——"

"Interfered, yes! And the sooner you learn to mind your own business, the better!"

"Lena, Lena," the younger sister ran back into the room, to whisper entreatingly. "Mother's coming——"

"What if she is!"

"Oh, Lena," was Kitty's almost agonised whisper, "don't make mother miserable by quarrelling with Madge. The first evening! I'll find that book somewhere; only be quiet!"

Mrs. Daunt was with Madge in the drawing-room when Kitty came back, thoroughly wearied with so much futile hunting about the house. Lena, it seemed, had given up wanting the book and had gone upstairs.

"I say, mother, do ask Madge to play," Kitty pleaded as she came upon the scene. "Mr. Minden told us, didn't he, that Madge plays beautifully?"

"Yes, Madge," the mother turned to smile at that girl, without pausing in some knitting. "And I am sure nothing could be better for this first evening than a little music. When Lena comes down she shall sing."

It was Madge's habit never to want to show off her playing, nor yet to hang back in a false-modest

way. She went to the piano, Kitty rushing to drag out a pile of music.

"But I expect you play a lot from memory?" Kitty suddenly paused to exclaim.

"You find me a piece that you all like," suggested Madge quietly. "That will be best, Kitty. Don't you play?"

"Oh, my playing!" laughed the happy-hearted youngster. "But now that Lena's going to school again after the hols., I can get more practice. Here we are! This bit, Madge!"

At this instant the door opened, and Lena stood revealed, dressed for out-of-doors.

"I'm going to the pictures, mother. Must do something—"

"But, my dear," was Mrs. Daunt's gentle remonstrance, "when this is Madge's first evening with us—Lena—"

"Well, my library book is lost. Kitty lost it!"

"I didn't! Lena, why will you—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Lena—Lena!" exclaimed Mrs. Daunt distressfully. "Come, come! Do be a little better-tempered! What will Madge think of you?"

Lena gave the smile that made her mouth look like a thin line in her pale face. Plainly enough that smile said: "Madge can think what she likes! Who cares! She knows me already. And she won't tell at school, anyhow."

Without another word, Lena stalked from the room, and now Mrs. Daunt bundled her work aside and hurried out after the girl. The room door closed, and it was for Madge to guess, rather than hear, how the mother was remonstrating with her difficult daughter in the hall, possibly forbidding her to go out this evening. For Mrs. Daunt could be firm, as Madge had already realised.

Suddenly, however, the front door went slam! And then Madge and Kitty heard the garden gate crash after Lena's exit.

"Isn't it too bad?" whispered Kitty. "Now mother will be so upset. It's enough to make you want to rush away, Madge. You'll never be able to stand it, I'm sure!"

"Oh, I don't know," Madge smiled, anxious to banish the child's distress. "I've rather made up my mind, you see, Kitty."

There was a pause. The fact that Mrs. Daunt had not returned to the room suggested that she really was very upset. The sudden silence in the whole house seemed a dramatic one to Madge.

"If only you can stay on with us," blurted out Kitty earnestly—"it'll make such a difference to me. Still, you mustn't think of that! I ought not to have said it."

"Sh!"

Madge sat down quickly and began to play. Mrs. Daunt was returning, and the music would dispel any tension that had arisen. The heart of Madge was being strangely stirred by the situation she was in.

Such a happy home it was, but for Lena! Such a good, kind mother, and Kitty such a loving little thing; but the temper and willfulness of the elder girl spoiled all the happiness.

Nothing if not tactful, Madge went up to bed early that night, pleading that she wished to finish her unpacking. Lena had not come in, and it was obvious that Mrs. Daunt was grieving greatly.

Kitty had said good-night once, but she came across to Madge's room of a sudden—the prettiest little thing in pyjamas and bed-room slippers.

"Do let me stay whilst you put your things out, Madge," pleaded the little one. "I'll be ever so quiet!"

"Goose! I don't mind how much you rattle away, Kitty."

"Sure you don't, Madge?"

"Of course!"

Kitty received this with a little sigh of deep satisfaction.

"You are nice!" she declared suddenly. "Wish I'd had you for a sister instead of—"

"No, no, Kitty, you mustn't say that!"

"All right, then, I won't. Madge, what will they be doing at Moreove School just about now—the boarders?"

"Well, dear, it's call-over now, I expect. Then they'll all go up to the dormitories—"

"I know; and talk for ever so long after lights out! Don't you wish you were there, Madge?"

"This will do for me, Kitty; but I think you ought to run back to bed now, darling. Don't think I'm cross—"

"You cross!" Kitty was greatly amused. "All right; only you leave your door open for a bit, and I'll leave mine—shall we?"

"Very well," laughed Madge. "You funny little thing! Good-night!"

It was very certain that Mrs. Daunt, waiting downstairs for Lena to come in, was anything but annoyed to hear Kitty and Madge still in talk for some few minutes.

It was a nice, honey sound, Kitty's singing out all sorts of remarks and questions from where she lay in bed, to Madge, in the other bed-room.

At last, however, Madge said good-night for the very last time. She went in to Kitty to say it, giving a kiss to the head of glossy hair that nestled upon a pillow, and Kitty, with a deep sigh, seemed ready to go to sleep at once.

Madge returned to her own room, closed the door, and started to undress.

Suddenly she heard Lena being let in at the front door.

Elsie, the maid, had gone to the door, and Madge was rather shocked to hear Lena sing out a curt:



IF THEY BUT KNEW! "Thank you, Madge, for letting me have your place in the team on Saturday," Lena said. "It was nice of you." Betty Barton and Polly Linton were not to suspect how little she meant the words.

"Good-night, mater!" and come running upstairs. Evidently the tiresome girl was dodging the rebuke that she knew she deserved.

Then suddenly Madge's door was tapped.

"Come in!"

Lena, still hatted and coated, minced into the room—not to make any remark to Madge. To the latter's amazement, the elder daughter of the home coolly went round the room, collecting various knick-nacks that had helped to make it look so nice.

For what reason?

The explanation came when Madge for a full minute had stared bewilderedly. Lena stripped the mantelpiece and the dressing-table of some of their nicest appointments, then spoke.

"I got this room nice for you to-day," she said icily, "thinking you would be a girl I could get on with. Now that I know what you are like, I can see that it was labour thrown away. Good-night!"

And the bed-room door went slam! after her haughty exit.

Only Madge Knows.

AFTER morning school next day, the Fourth Form discovered what an acquisition Lena Daunt was going to be to the hockey team.

She played a really excellent game. Betty Barton was all for giving her a place in the team for the coming Saturday's match against Barncombe House, and this was easily arranged.

Like the sporting lot they were, the Morcovians were eager to let a new girl win her spurs, and there were several offers to "stand down," so that Lena could play in that match.

It was Madge who became the one to make way for Lena in the team for Saturday. Madge particularly entreated Betty in the matter, and the Form captain yielded, recognising that Madge doubtless wished to do the very friendliest thing by the new girl, so that their relations both in and out of school would be extremely happy.

That afternoon Betty and Polly invited Lena to tea in Study 12, and, of course, Madge stayed on as well. That Madge was welcome went without saying, and besides, it was supposed that the two day girls would prefer to ride home together afterwards. Amongst others who helped to make the jolly tea-party a successful "crush" were Paula Creel, Tess Trelawney, Helen Craig, Naomer, and Dolly Delane.

Lena was on her best behaviour. It was not that she was so very sweet to all of them that made Betty & Co. like her so much. They rated her so highly for the nice sporting spirit which all her talk appeared to show, never suspecting that it was all put on for their benefit.

On the point of going off, Lena turned to Betty. "You really want me to play in next Saturday's match, Betty? Thanks ever so!"

"It's Madge you have to thank," exclaimed Betty. "She simply insisted on making way for you, and it's right that you should know it."

"Nice of you, Madge!" Lena promptly thanked the girl in front of them all.

And after that Study 12 could only think of the two as cycling home together, even closer chums than before.

What would their surprise have been, not to say disgust, if they had known how that homework run to Barncombe was made by the two girls! Lena, keeping Madge at arm's-length, refusing to say a word to her that could be called civil, and finding a kind of proud delight in such behaviour!

Yet even that studied unfriendliness when they were alone together was less painful to Madge by far than what she had to undergo in the home.

If ever a girl had a need for infinite tact and forbearance, Madge had that need these days. Poor Madge! She was finding Mrs. Daunt and Kitty so altogether nice to live with. The one was like a real mother to her, the other like the jolliest of little sisters, always amusing and affectionate. But in regard to Lena, Madge had to struggle hard to keep the peace which Lena found a sheer delight in trying to break.

It was more than an awkward situation. It was absolutely painful.

By now she had fully realised that Lena was a great trial to Mrs. Daunt and Kitty. The mother's kindness was thrown away, and her firmness set at naught. Kitty was rebuffed and snapped at until her life was made a misery. And if ever Mrs. Daunt sought to prove to Lena that she was being unjust to Kitty, somehow the servant of the house always seemed to be available as a witness in Lena's favour!

This was an artful game between Lena and Elsie the maid that was very skillfully played. But Madge saw through it, if the mother did not. With Lena and Elsie it was a case of "You help me and I'll help you." Madge found, in other words, that Elsie the maid came off very well under the arrangement.

On the day of the great match at Barncombe House, the two day girls returned home for dinner. It was one of Kitty's "bad" days, or Madge would have wanted to take her along to the match, than which nothing could have given the youngster greater delight. But, poor little soul, Kitty was having to lie down with a headache, and so Madge, when she went up to get dressed for going out, slipped into Kitty's room, and promised not to be away all the afternoon.

"I must just show up on the ground, Kitty, dear, but, if possible, I'll be back presently. And then, if your head is better, I can sit and talk with you."

"It is good of you, Madge!" was the fervent response from the ailing one. "But you don't need to bother about me, wasting your halfer!"

Madge drew the rug snugly about the slight and pretty form, kissed the poor little throbbing head, and went away. Lena was in her room, dressing for the hockey match, and that girl called out:

"Look sharp, if you are coming with me! I'm nearly ready."

Dear! would Madge have liked to say that she need not be waited for. But it was another instance of the restraint she had to use. What would Mrs. Daunt's feelings be if the two girls went off separately? What would Betty & Co. think if the pair of them did not turn up together?

Five minutes later, there was one of those little "scenes" in the home that were so painful to all except the one who made them. Mrs. Daunt was asking Lena if she would call at the grocers', in High Street, to pay the weekly bill.

"Oh, of course I must be asked to do a lot of errands because it's my half-holiday! Bother the wretched grocers!"

"Lena, it is on your way, and it won't take you a minute," said Mrs. Daunt firmly. "It is not asking you to do much."

"There's Elsie. Why can't she go?"

"Elsie has other things to do. If she gets out into the town, she'll be out all the afternoon."

Perhaps that had been Lena's idea—to get Elsie the chance to steal an afternoon off—for she

frowned and stamped in a baffled way, as Madge saw.

"All right. Where's the wretched money and the grocers' book?" fumed the graceless girl. "And, mother, can I have some more pocket-money?"

"How much more, Lena? I can spare you a shilling or two, although—"

"That's no use, mother. Don't be mingy! Make it ten shillings more, can't you?"

"No, Lena, I really cannot. And what's more, I don't think it right that you should have it. Already this week—"

"Well, now that I'm going to Morcove—"

"There can be no need for you to want fifteen shillings or so to spend this afternoon, Lena. I have given you five shillings. Quite sufficient, isn't it, Madge?"

"Oh, all right—if you are going to ask Madge!" flared out Lena, stamping away. "Come on, Madge—if you are coming!"

In the most distressed manner, Mrs. Daunt kept that girl back just a second or so to ask earnestly: "I do so want to be quite fair, Madge. But do you know of any need for Lena to want so much pocket-money this afternoon?"

Madge shook her head, and the mother's face cleared. It was naturally a great relief to the good woman to be assured that, in the opinion of one well qualified to express an opinion, Lena was not being denied unfairly.

There was the usual pettish silence on the part of Lena when Madge caught up with her, a hundred yards from the home. The wintry day was fine and dry, and there was everything to conduce to a happy spirit. Lena, however, would not be amiable. It seemed as if Madge's becoming like a sister in the home had rendered anything but squabbling impossible.

At last, in High Street, Madge made one of her attempts at conciliation.

"Shall I slip into the grocers' for you, to pay that account Lena?"

"No, you won't! The grocers can wait!"

Hardly had the words been snapped out than both girls saw the Morcove private motor-bus coming along, with the Fourth Form team on board.

It was the signal for Lena to wear a pleasanter look. She gestured to the driver to pull up, and as the bus drew into the kerb she ran to the door at the back of it.

A chorus of welcome came from the interior.

"Yes, jump in, Lena! Madge—bags of room!"

"Ooo, yes! Queek—queek!"

"Paula can easily sit on the floor!"

"Ha, ha, ha! But really—"

"Yes, wather! In any case, geals, I am already crushed to bits. Ow!" Lena and Madge heard Paula yelp as she sat squeezed between Polly and Naomer. "A week, a wuin, as usual!"

"Thanks for the offer of a lift," Lena called in to them all sweetly. "But I've got something to do in town that will take a minute. I say, will you girls let me give you tea at the Creamery on the way back?"

"Oh, thanks, Lena, but—"

"I thought it would be nice after the match."

"So it will be nice, Lena; but we can't let you! The expense," said Betty, thinking of the number that they made.

And others murmured to the same effect.

"We'll join you in having a cup, each paying—"

"Don't be silly," Lena gaily interrupted Polly. "I want to repay your kindness to me as a new

girl. I'd have you home to tea, only—only Kitty isn't very well to-day."

"Besides, your mother would have a fit, surely!" cried Polly. "What a shame your sister is unable to come and see the match!"

"Oh, she'll be better by the end of the day!" Lena assured the sympathisers. "Well, then, it's settled. I'll run and book the big table upstairs at the Creamery. Ta-ta for the present!"

"Madge, jump in, won't you?" invited Betty; but Madge shook her head.

"I—I'll stay with Lena, girls."

"All right. See you presently."

They thought it quite natural that she should wish to accompany Lena, and so the bus went on again, taking with it a whole troop of happy-hearted girls who were still ignorant as to how matters stood.

What Shall Madge Do ?

MADGE looked round for Lena, to find her already diving into the famous tea-rooms.

It was a moment of acute dismay to Madge, for now she realised that Lena could only be going to "stand treat" so lavishly by coolly appropriating the money for the grocers' bill!

Tea for an entire hockey team could not be done under ten or twelve shillings. As likely as not, Lena would make it such a lavish affair that the bill would be fifteen shillings. And Betty & Co. would imagine that the girl must be well able to afford it, or she would not be doing it.

What was to be done?

That it was no concern of Madge's she refused to believe. She, and she alone, was aware of this reckless intention of Lena's. The girl was going to spend the grocers' money, and then coolly tell her mother, later on, meeting all remonstrance with impudent laughter.

After a minute Lena came away from the Creamery, and Madge felt sufficiently keyed up to have things out with the girl. There and then she put it to her indignantly:

"Lena, you are going to use that grocers' money to pay for a big tea to all the girls!"

"What's that to do with you, I'd like to know?"

"I won't allow it—I won't! Your mother—"

"You mind your own business!" Lena panted fiercely at her school-fellow. "So long as I tell mother, by-and-by—"

"That's not the point," struck in Madge sternly. "I know that even you would not misuse the money and say nothing—"

"Oh, you don't think I'm a born thief!"

"Your mother is not so well off, Lena, that she can afford to let you—"

"Go away and stop interfering!" Lena blazed out, with a passionate stamp upon the High Street pavement. "I'm nothing to do with you!"

And she walked away.

Madge followed—not with any idea of further argument. That was useless. What she would do in the end she really did not know; but she had got to do something. All the way to the Barncombe House games field she was racking her brains.

If only she herself had possessed the ready money she would have made for the grocers' and paid the bill, afterwards telling Lena. Even if that had been possible, however, it would have been a poor solution to the problem. Lena would have been resentful; Mrs. Daunt would have got

to know, in any case, and so the upset at home would have been as great as ever.

One thing began to stand out clearly in Madge's troubled mind. Her only course was to frustrate the intended tea-party. Betty & Co. must not become, however unwittingly, the means of Lena spending money that was worse than borrowed!

But how—how was it to be managed?

Madge found herself, that afternoon, taking only a vague interest in the thrilling hockey match, as she stood with other onlookers around the field. Still she was racking her brains—must rack them. For she knew that Mrs. Daunt's heart would be just about broken if Lena came out with the audacious story, by-and-by, that the grocers' money had been mis-spent.

Meantime, Lena herself was having a grand time on the hockey field.

No wonder Morcove's new day girl was the admiration of the onlookers, as Madge could tell she was. Lena was in tip-top form, and her play was a charming exhibition of skill. Madge had no grudging admiration for the way the girl was backing up her side and being generous to the opposition. She was as glad about all this as were Betty and the rest. But there was the secret, grievous thought: "Why—why can't she be just as nice to those at home?"

"Well, Madge, and what are our chances for a win, do you think?" came the sudden genial remark from someone who had stepped to Madge's side.

It was the Form-mistress, Miss Redgrave.

"I've only just come," this young lady explained, "and I can't stay to the finish. Wish I could. The score, they tell me, is—"

"One—all, yes," murmured Madge. "And, really, it is hard to say which side will win."

"That new girl of ours plays a splendid game, Madge," said the chummy mistress, keenly watching Lena's spirited play. "She is going to do us great credit. Her work in class, too—I am awfully pleased with it. She's clever!"

"Yes, very," agreed Madge.

"You like her, of course?"

"The Daunts are an awfully nice family—"

"I am sure they must be. Look! But, no; I thought that would be a goal, Madge. I do wish I could stay to the end, but I am using Miss Somerfield's car, and must not be out too long."

"Miss Redgrave—"

"Yes, Madge?"

In her great agitation, Madge hardly knew how to say what she wanted.

"Could you—I mean, may I give Betty and the rest a—a message from you, Miss Redgrave? To—to ask them to return to school at once, after the match?"

"But won't they be stopping for the usual cup of tea in Barncombe?"

"Yes—at least—yes, that's just it, Miss Redgrave," Madge floundered on. "They will be stopping for tea at the Creamery, unless they get a message from you—"

"But, Madge, whyever should I order them to return direct?"

"Only because—because it will be better, I think, if Lena is not kept about. I want her to return home with me," gulped out Madge, reddening as if her motives were anything but laudable ones. "If Betty and the rest drive back to school directly after the match it will be best, I'm sure, Miss Redgrave—honestly, I think it will be best."

Miss Redgrave eyed this scholar of hers very steadily for a moment.

"Very well, Madge," came after a rather tense pause. "I ought to know you well enough by this time. If you think it's better, you may tell Betty and the rest from me they are not to break their return journey in Barncombe."

The mistress conferred a puzzled smile that said: "I still don't understand!" and walked away, leaving Madge as agitated as ever. She felt very uncomfortable; but the relief was boundless.

Then suddenly the field rang with a cry that marked the finish of the match.

"Goal!"

And a win for Morcove! They, the visiting team, had gained their second goal at the very last moment, and now, as they came romping off the field with their friendly rivals, all was great gaiety. Polly and one or two others ran towards Madge.

"Pouf! What did you think of the game, Madge?" puffed Polly. "I never knew a faster one myself." And she heaved again for breath.

"A ripping game!"

Belatedly Paula Creel came up, beaming.

"A swashing victory, Madge! One that will go down in history, bai Jove—what? But, weally, our new goal, Lena Daunt, is twuly bwiliant!"

"Here, Lena. Come and hear nice things being said!" laughed Polly with an inviting flourish of her hockey-stick.

"Whichever way I turn, people are saying nice things," declared Lena, coming up with Betty and one or two more. "What a nice lot of girls we were playing against."

"Yes, wather—"

"And now can we get away at once for tea?" proposed Lena. "We don't want to have to hurry over tea, and so—"

"About that," broke in Madge, nerving herself for another unpleasant task. "I have a message, Betty, from Miss Redgrave. She was here a few minutes ago. She told me to say that you are all to return direct to Morcove."

"What?"

"Oh, I say—"

"Dweadful—dweadful!" groaned Paula. "After that pwostwating game, bai Jove—no tea until we get back to Morcove!"

"Madge, you are joking," asserted Polly. "Not really?"

"That's the message," affirmed Madge steadily. "I'm sorry, but you must all go straight back to Morcove."

"Um!" grimaced Betty. "Well, of course, if it's Miss Redgrave, we must do it. Her word goes. Lena—"

"Can't you possibly manage it somehow?" pleaded that girl vexedly. "Perhaps—perhaps Madge misunderstood."

"Oh, no!" said Madge flatly; and that, whether Lena liked it or not, settled it.

"Very well," said Betty resignedly. "After all, it may be just as well, Lena, as your sister is not well, and you must be rather wanting to get home. Some other time, shall we say?"

Lena became very quiet and pale; but, if she was distinctly vexed, Betty and the others could make full allowance. It was, of course, a bitter disappointment to her.

So, very slowly, the Morcove bus filled up with the victorious team. Lena and Madge were taken on board, to be "dropped" in Barncombe at their

nearest point for home. As the bus moved off, Barcombe House girls flocked alongside, cheering the victors and mirthfully threatening a great "revenge." This helped Morcove to recover his spirits, and there was no lack of jollity in the bus as it whirled them away.

Only Madge knew what a passion Lena was in, even whilst she affected to be as light-hearted as any.

And who would catch the full brunt of that mad rage by-and-by Madge could guess!

What Will it Cost Her ?

AN hour later, as Lena Daunt came out of her bed-room, she paused to listen.

Now that tea was over, Madge had run up to sit with Kitty, who did not feel quite equal to spending the evening downstairs.

"My head is ever, ever so much better, really," the little one was assuring Madge. "Only I expect mother is right. I'd better give it until the morning. Madge—"

Madge came down and came into the drawing-room—signal for Lena to stalk out. It did not surprise Madge to see the piano closed, for the room had been "done" thoroughly to-day. But to find the cover locked down and the key gone made her instantly form a correct notion of why it was.

"Lena," she called to that girl from the room doorway, "what's become of the piano key?"

"What?" rudely shouted back Lena from the kitchen, where she was in secret talk with the maid.

"I can't open the piano, Lena," pleaded Madge, going down the passage to the kitchen doorway. "Kitty would like me to play for a while."

"Well, it's no use bothering me! How should I know where the key is?"

"Dear me, could I have swept it up by mistake when I was doing the room to-day?" exclaimed Elsie the maid blandly. "I'll come and help look for it, miss."

"Thanks, if you wouldn't mind."



SISTERLY AFFECTION! "If I have any cheek from you, Kitty——" said Lena. "Stop!" Madge interposed, sheltering the younger girl from her sister's threateningly raised hand.

"Yes, dear?"

"I tell you what I'd like you to do, if you will," Kitty begged prettily. "Have a go at the piano when you go down, and I shall love to hear it as I lie here, all sort of dreamy."

"Funny little thing. I should have thought that music——"

"Ah, but you play such lovely soft bits! Some of those, please, Madge—do!"

"Very well, then, I will, Kitty. Anything to make up for the wretched day it has been for you!"

Lena, overhearing this, scowled. She had yet to have matters out with Madge. Meantime, it maddened her to hear her sister asking for Madge's music. She hurried downstairs, and, finding herself alone in the drawing-room, she suddenly did a very mean thing.

Swiftly Lena locked the cover over the piano's keyboard, and then poked the key under the piano itself.

Good hit back at Madge, this! There was nothing, Lena had found out, that was a greater delight to the other girl than music. Well, she would have to go without any music this evening!

Lena returned with them to the drawing-room, secretly enjoying the malicious joke. Both she and Elsie thought it a great joke to be pretending to hunt for the piano key, when all the time they both knew where it reposed.

"Look here, it's no use wasting more time hunting for a tiny key like that," broke out Lena at last. "It's gone, and there's an end to it; we shall have to get another. Elsie, you had better put your things on and go out into the town——"

"Yes, miss," assented Elsie demurely.

"And don't come back until you've bought or borrowed a key that looks like fitting!" grinned Lena. "Try every shop. I'll explain to mother when she comes in."

"Thank you, miss, I'm sure!"

Elsie was off up to her room in a flash, and now here were the two schoolgirls, left face to face—alone. Mrs. Daunt had gone in next door for a minute, and had evidently been kept.

A tense silence was ended by Madge.

"The lost key is not so important as all that. Lena, I mean, perhaps your mother would not wish Elsie to be out a long while? This is Saturday evening, and——"

"Will you kindly not take so much upon yourself?" came fiercely from Lena. "You're one of those girls who would like to see a skivvy kept cooped up—"

"Not at all!" fired up Madge. It was an accusation she could not take calmly. "I'm the very last to want that. But—"

"Oh, stop it, then! I've had enough of you for one day!" cried Lena witheringly. She walked to the door, then came back. "You know very well that you got that tea-party of mine put off!"

"I don't deny it—"

"Then you might at least be a little ashamed, busybody! Sneak," panted Lena, "to go telling Miss Redgrave that I was standing treat on the grocers' money!"

"Nothing of the sort, Lena! I didn't say a word about that. But I did make up my mind, somehow, to prevent you from grieving your mother to that extent. Look here, Lena—"

"If you say much more," was the infuriated cry that checked Madge's attempt to reason with the girl, "I'll—I'll smack your face for you!" She stood back a step and looked Madge up and down.

"You! I wish to goodness you had never come into the home, upsetting it! I shall tell Betty and the rest that you are a different girl here from what you are at school."

"Oh! When that's just the trouble about you, Lena—you daren't deny it—"

"I do! I shall deny it, and my word's as good

fierce talk that was going on. Now she rushed across to Madge and stood near her.

"Madge dear—oh, did she hurt you, Madge?" "Hurt me, no. That isn't the way Lena hurts me," was the Moroccan's calm remark. "Kitty, you shouldn't have come down—"

"I had to. I wasn't going to let Lena go for you so unfairly. Lena, how can you? When—"

"If I have any cheek from you, Kitty—"

"Stop!" cried Madge sharply, whilst she quickly sheltered the younger sister from the raised hand. "Kitty, no more of this. Back to bed, dear, and I'll go up and be with you. Hush, don't cry!"

"But it is so awful, Madge!" was the sobbing exclamation with which the younger girl suffered herself to be led away.

Nor, for a full minute after that, could Madge soothe the child who lay with head athrob once more, such anguish had she been given.

At last, however, there was that silence, always so tragic, that follows a violent scene. Madge sat there, feeling how Kitty still quivered with the upset, although the sobs and tears had ended. Awful, indeed, was the word for it all.

Suddenly Kitty broke out again, tearfully, with her face almost buried in the pillow.

"Madge—"

"Hush, darling!"

"But you won't be able to stand it. You'll go—"

"No, Kitty. That's a promise. So long as you and your mother want me I shall—"

MORE GOOD NEWS FOR YOU!

Next week there will be another fine coloured photograph of a film star free to all readers of the **SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**.

Turn to page 904 of this issue and read all particulars.

as yours any day!" flashed Lena. "You think you have got the right to domineer over me like an elder sister."

At this instant the street door closed behind Elsie. And Lena suddenly laughed.

"Now go out and spy after Elsie—I would! Please, Mrs. Daunt, I saw you Elsie dawdling about, looking in shop windows!" From the very first you've done nothing but interfere—"

"From the very first, Lena Daunt, I have known you to be a very different girl from what Betty and the rest think you to be. If it goes on much longer, and they find you out—"

"There's no way in which I can be found out!" blustered Lena with growing fury. "But you can always tell lies about me—I quite see that. You are jealous! You want to make up to mother here in the home, and at Morocco you don't want me to have a single friend, in case you get dropped!"

"Absurd!"

"Smile at me like that, Madge Minden, and I'll—I'll— There, take that to go on with!"

And, before Madge could defend herself, the other's hand had dealt her a hard smack across the cheek.

There came a horrified cry from someone suddenly in the doorway.

"Lena! Lena! Oh, you wicked thing!"

It was little Kitty. In dressing-gown and slippers she had crept downstairs, hearing the

Madge broke off abruptly, looking round to the half-opened door. Lena was there, and, in dread of a fresh scene, Madge got up and went to close the door between them.

"I've got the piano key—that's all I wanted to tell you!" laughed Lena. "So now I am going out to find Elsie. You can tell mother—if we are not in soon—I have taken Elsie to the pictures!"

Lena strode away to her own room. Madge, closing the door of the room she was in, tiptoed back to the bedside.

There was no light. In the darkness she heard little Kitty weeping anew, and found the child's cold hand reaching for hers.

"Kitty darling—Kitty," whispered Madge, sitting closer. "It is all right, dear. Remember what I said just now. I am going to stay."

And, at what cost to herself Madge Minden lived up to that fine resolve, our next story will tell.

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

If ever a girl was in an awkward predicament, Madge Minden is now! Forced, by her own sterling nature, to keep the secret of Lena Daunt's spite and ill-temper from her school-chums, she is only making things worse for herself by so doing. You must not miss next week's fine story to see what fresh difficulties are brought about by her "friendship" with Lena Daunt. It is entitled: "Schoolgirls at Strife."