

THE PAPER ALL SCHOOLGIRLS VOTE "THE BEST!"

The Schoolgirls' Own 2^d



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FREE!**

INSIDE

**DAINTY
STAND UP**

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COLOURS

PHOTO

OF

MARION DAVIES

Another fine story featuring Lena Daunt and Madge Minden.



An Afternoon Off.

TWENTY pairs of eyes were watching Miss Redgrave as she went from the Fourth Form class-room at Morcove School.

There had been a sudden message, calling her away to consult with the headmistress, and the Form supposed that Miss Redgrave would be gone five minutes at least.

Such a thing was not to be taken quietly. A break in the morning's work was always welcome. The moment the youthful mistress vanished, twenty hands rested their peccs.

"Let there be no unseemly disturbance," mad-cap Polly Linton sternly requested. "Carry on, girls!"

At that instant, Naomer Nakara pinched Paula Creel.

"Heah!" yelped the elegant one. "Dwop it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush!" pleaded Polly pathetically, standing up in her desk. "How can you!"

Then a ball of paper came whizzing at Polly, hurled by some playful spirit in the back row. Polly, always hard to take by surprise, dodged the missile beautifully. Paula, always the one to meet with trouble, caught the ball full on her nose-tip.

"Yowp! Look heah—"

"Silence!" thundered Polly, making pretence of being in charge of the now hilarious Form.

"Disgraceful! Stand out, Paula Creel!"

"Ooo, yes, queek—queek! Stand out!" urged impish Naomer, starting to elbow squirming Paula from her seat.

"Dwop it! I wefuso!" squealed the oft-teased duffer. "I say, I shall go down on the floor—"

"Then go—queek, queek!" chuckled Naomer, administering a final push that made Paula go thump to the floor with a dismal yelp.

The merriment increased. Polly marched out and took her stand at Miss Redgrave's accustomed place. She rapped the teacher's desk.

DISTRUSTED BY THE FORM!

BY
**MARJORIE
STANTON.**

"The whole Form is gated for life!" announced Polly, amidst great hilarity. "No cream buns will be allowed at tea."

Here some of the girls took it into their heads to give mock groans.

"As for you, Paula Creel— But where is she—"

"Heah! Heah!" came the muffled response from the duffer, who was now being sat upon by Naomer. "A weck—a wuin! My hair, my fwock! Heah!"

Polly, in front of the class, walked up and down, gesticulating.

"I cannot allow it—I will not allow it! The whole Form will do ten thousand lines! I resign!"

"Loud cheers!" suggested Tess Trelawney.

"Thus—thus am I repaid for all the years I have devoted to this Form!" Polly said tragically.

"I weep!" And she picked up the blackboard duster, holding a corner of it to one eye. "I grieve—"

"What you had better do is to get back to your seat," advised Betty Barton. "Miss Redgrave is—"

"What?"

"Coming back—yes!"

"Oh, dear!"

And next second Polly was sitting alongside Betty again, writing furiously. The entire Form, after its little outburst, was a perfect example of orderliness as Miss Redgrave came in, except that Paula Creel was complaining under her breath:

"Dweadful! Dweadful! All wight, Naomer! You wascal, weducing me to an utter weck! Bai Jove!"

Miss Redgrave's eye singled out Paula as being in a tell-tale ruffled state. Nor, perhaps, was the chummy mistress blind to the roguish grin on the dark face of little Naomer. But no comment on all this was offered. So long as it was not unruly and disturbing to other Forms near by, she did not mind her girls having a little fun.

Whatever happens, Madge Minden could not be a sneak! And because of this fact she is forced to stand by and see Lena Daunt worm her way into her friends' esteem, while she herself becomes more and more estranged from them!

That was where Miss Rodgrave was such a sport!

"Well, girls," she interrupted their marvellous industry, "I have a welcome bit of news. Miss Somerfield tells me that this afternoon the whole school is to have a great treat."

"Ooo!" exploded Naomer excitedly, and Miss Redgrave joined in the general laughter.

"Professor Peblow is coming here to give his lecture on his recent travels. It will be a lantern lecture—one that he is giving at schools all over the country. And I am sure we shall enjoy it!"

The Form clapped. A lantern-lecture, instead of afternoon school, was something to justify a little joyous excitement!

"Yes, wather!" beamed Paula Creel as soon as the Form had been given liberty to discuss the news. It was five to twelve, and Miss Redgrave was allowing the girls to close their books and dismiss. "Geals—geals—"

"At three o'clock this afternoon, in Big Hall," the Form mistress suddenly remembered to inform her scholars. "And please be in your places at least ten minutes before the time to begin."

"Yes, Miss Redgrave."

The girls were surging away, whilst Miss Redgrave stood clearing up her desk after the morning's work. She chanced to notice a couple of girls who attended daily from Barncombe.

"Oh, by the way, Lena Daunt—and you, Madge Minden—I shall expect to see you at the lecture."

Madge Minden nodded, implying that she had had no intention of missing the treat. But Lena Daunt detached herself from Betty Barton and some others, to approach the Form mistress.

"Well, Lena?"

"Could I be excused from the lecture, please, Miss Redgrave? It is not that I don't want to hear it. I'm sure it will be most fascinating!"

"Then why not stay?" asked the amiable mistress. "I am reluctant to allow any absentees, Lena. Professor Peblow is doing a service by giving these lectures at all the big schools. Any collection that is made is devoted to his pet object, Empire Emigration. We ought to show our appreciation, Lena."

"Oh, yes, but—mother is away from home, as you know," replied Lena Daunt demurely. "There is no one with my sister but Elsie, the maid, and I would rather be at home if it doesn't mean missing lessons."

"Very well, Lena," the mistress promptly assented. "In that case, of course, I excuse you. Madge Minden is living at home with you now. Does she want to be excused?"

"I haven't asked her, Miss Redgrave. But she need not stay away from the lecture since I shall be at home."

Miss Redgrave nodded, deeming the matter ended, and so Lena went off, stepping briskly, and holding herself up in the way that the mistress liked to see her girls do.

In every respect, Lena was proving a great credit to the Form. For one who was only in her second week as a scholar, she had achieved great popularity. Her work in class was admirable: on the games field she always gave a good account of herself. For the rest, she was a vivacious, eager-to-please girl, whom it was only natural that the others should like.

She had even become quite a recognised member of the Study 12 coterie. This was not a "set" formed to the exclusion of other girls, but it comprised those girls who happened to have earned the right to a particular welcome in the Form captain's study.

To that study Lena now made her way. It was full up when she entered, and gay with boisterous talk and laughter. The afternoon's treat was under discussion.

"I believe this professor chap is the same Johnny who has been lecturing at my brother's school," remarked Polly, swinging her legs as she sat perched on the table edge. "I had a letter from Jack only this morning, and he mentioned something of the sort."

"And I can't stay to hear it!" was the rueful remark with which Lena startled the gathering.

"What? Oh, Lena—"

"Sorry, but it can't be helped," she shrugged prettily. "I felt I must ask to be excused, as mother is away from home, and—and I don't think Kitty should be left with only the servant any more than is possible."

"But, look here! Why not fetch Kitty along to the school for the lecture?" Betty suggested brightly. "She'd like it, surely?"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, Lena—"

"Oh, I don't think Kitty would really care to come! Besides, she—she is not strong, you know. Too much excitement—bad for her," regretted Lena, giving little caressing touches to her hair. "And there's the trouble of getting her here."

There was a pause.

"Well, you know best, of course, Lena," said Polly. "But what about you, then, Madge?"

"I shall stay to the lecture," answered that girl simply.

Nothing more was said to her, and anyone who was familiar with the life of Study 12 would have considered this rather odd. Even Paula Creel did not express any beaming delight at the fact that Madge, anyhow, would be with them this afternoon.

Madge always had been the quiet one of the coterie. At the same time, she had always been one of the most popular members of the happy circle. Just at present, was there not a slight constraint in regard to her, an embarrassment?

There was, and Madge knew it!

Presently she quitted the room, feeling sure that most of the girls, if not all, were relieved at her going. She drifted to the floor below, and wandered into the music-room. Nothing was more usual than for her to do this, for music was a passion with the girl. Now, however, she had no heart to sit down and play.

Betty and the rest, it was only too obvious, were changing towards her. But why?

They were too free from all fickleness, and had been fond of her for far too long, for the affection to wane without sufficient cause. What then, was the cause?

It was something to do with Lena Daunt! That was all Madge could tell for certain.

Beyond all doubt, this estrangement would never have happened if she—Madge—had been boarding at the school as usual this term. But, to fall in with her father's friendly desire to do the kindest thing by the Daunts, she had willingly agreed to make her home with that family in Barncombe.

So it meant that she was now a day girl, along with Lena, and one way or another the changed position was telling against her, although Lena did not suffer by being a mere day girl. Far from it!

What a shame it was. Madge could not help thinking, bitterly. Lena could go on winning favour in the eyes of Betty and the rest, when all the time she was an utter hypocrite—charming at school, but the very reverse at home! A

loving sister towards Kitty in front of the Morcovians, but behind their backs—cruel was the life that Lena led Kitty!

"Whilst I," ran Madge's dejected thoughts—"I seem to be out in the cold now—scarcely welcome in Study 12. Lena must have turned them against me. It can only be something of that sort. I'd like to know what it is she has said or done."

From sheer force of habit, she now seated herself at the piano and began a piece from memory. It was not one of her brilliant rhapsodies or a difficult sonata, but a mere fragment of melody, subdued and sorrowful.

For that was her mood just then.

Suddenly, as she played, there came a thought of Lena's younger sister Kitty. This was the little girl's favourite piece; she was always asking Madge to play it. The dear kiddie was even trying to learn it herself, although she was finding it not so easy as it sounded!

Madge's expression softened. She even smiled faintly, thinking of the youngster in that nice villa-home in Barncombe, who was so responsive to every little mark of kind attention. Ah, it was always happy enough in the home until Lena came upon the scene, overhearing and spiteful!

And yet, only a few minutes since, Lena had been talking to Study 12 as though Kitty's happiness was of the utmost importance!

Was Lena really going to spend the afternoon with Kitty? Did Lena ever fail to seize the chance to go off on her own, no matter what loneliness it meant for her sister?

At last the school's gong went for dinner, and Madge came away from the music-room, to go down to the dining-hall. The mustering of Morcov's hundred or so scholars was more boisterous than ever this morning. What with the coming lantern lecture and time for games before the lecture should begin, it was as good as an extra "halfer"!

Madge saw Lena come in with Betty and the rest, seeming as a friend of long standing with them all.

"I'd have gone home to dinner," the hypocrite made a point of remarking sweetly as the school sat down, "but that would have made it awkward. The maid has only cooked for herself and Kitty this morning."

A fib, if ever there was one! Madge knew full well that it was a cold joint at home for the mid-day dinner, and it would have made no difference if both she and Lena had suddenly turned up. The pudding also would be ample for four, because Lena herself had told the servant to make a big one that would do for two days.

The desperate desire, not new to Madge, came upon her to denounce Lena in front of her admiring schoolfellows the moment dinner ended. There was an elation about Lena which Madge felt convinced was due to the prospect of an afternoon's enjoyment. A matinee, most likely. It was a great week in Barncombe for the theatre, as a fine touring company was giving Gilbert and Sullivan's light operas.

But the embittered schoolgirl knew that this longing to show up Lena was one that must not be indulged.

She—Madge—was pledged to make her life with the Daunts for the whole of this term. If she exposed Lena, not only would it savour of "telling," but the chums would be rendered very miserable on her—Madge's—own account.

Still worse, Madge realised that she would have to leave the Daunts' home, and then—what about

Kitty? The mother, in spite of her best attempts, had been unable to protect Kitty from being so spitefully treated. Lena, as a girl who had fallen into disgrace at the school, would be a greater trial than ever at home.

Poor Kitty!

But Madge's compassion towards that lovable little sister was not limited now to a mere tender thought of her.

Suddenly she saw that she, too, must go back to that home in Barncombe this afternoon. Tell Miss Redgrave and the girls she dare not, but she was convinced that Kitty would be all alone unless she went home herself. Lena and the servant would be off out together again.

No sooner was dinner over than Madge went to Miss Redgrave and asked to be allowed to go home.



ALL A POSE! "I'd have gone home to dinner," said Lena, as they sat down, "only the maid will only have cooked for herself and Kitty." Madge sat silent, though she knew it was an untruth just to impress Betty and Co.

"Why, Madge? I have already given Lena permission, on account of her sister. Why must you want to miss the lecture?"

"It isn't that I want to miss it, Miss Redgrave. Only, I—if you could let me, as a favour?"

"For what reason, Madge?"

"Well, to be at home and—and help with things."

Miss Redgrave received this in silence. She took a thoughtful turn upon the carpet, frowning perplexedly.

"I always like to be as indulgent as possible, Madge. But, apart from the fact that the whole school is under orders to attend the lecture—in schooltime, really, remember—"

"Yes, Miss Redgrave; I know."

"There is this, Madge—your reason for wanting leave is hardly good enough. Lena is different.

She naturally wishes to look after her sister, and sees the chance to do so without missing lessons. But you—"

The Form mistress paused.

"I am sorry, Madge, but I do not feel I can grant you leave of absence. I don't like to feel that your having become a day girl—just temporarily—is to mean your being given opportunities to go off on your own. Day girls have quite sufficient opportunities, in any case."

"But—"

"No, Madge; you have had my decision. There is no real need, as there is in Lena's case, and so you must attend the lecture. Go back now to your chums, and get some hockey with them."

But there was to be no hockey practice for Betty & Co. after all, though they had intended to have an hour on the games' field.

There was a surprise at hand for the girls, and it came just as they were passing into the open air, twirling their hockey sticks. The chur-rur-rurr! of a motor-cycle was heard, and they looked towards the drive, to see Polly's brother Jack coming up from the gateway on his fine machine.

"Jack?" was Polly's astounded exclamation. "This is strange, girls! Whatever is he doing here like this?"

If Polly herself could not guess, it was not for the others to hazard any conjecture. So, as Jack Linton pulled up close to the porch, they ran towards him eagerly, to discover the meaning of this unexpected appearance.

One on Her Own!

JACK LINTON swung off the saddle and turned to face the girls.

One thing was at once evident. He had not come with any bad news.

"Cheerio!" he greeted them blithely. "I say, is Professor Pellow here?"

"Not yet," said Polly. "But he is expected. Why?"

Jack grinned.

"He's a beauty, girls; a rare old absent-minded fellow, if ever there was one. He left some slides behind at our school yesterday, so the Head asked me to run over here with them. How's everybody?" Jack added. "Where's Madge? And where's Paula?"

"Madge is somewhere about," Betty answered vaguely. "Paula is shamelessly dodging the hockey. She felt she must change her frock for the lecture."

"And that, of course, takes Paula quite an hour at least," said Polly. "But now you are here, Jack, you can stop for a while?"

"Well, yes; I don't know that I have any important engagements for this afternoon," was Jack's facetious answer. "And I wouldn't mind hearing the lecture again. It was all right, even though the old chap has a face like the back of a 'bus."

"You didn't bring Dave Lawder with you in the side-car?" Polly reproached him.

"Dave is having to swot for some special exam," explained Jack. "He sent his—er—kind regards, and all that."

"I'm perfectly sure he didn't," asserted Polly. "Well, Jack, you'll stop. Ask Miss Redgrave, and she may let you sit with us. You can say I've no objection."

"You're very kind," said Jack, turning back to his motor-cycle and side-car.

He wheeled the "combination" to a safe spot for leaving it unattended, and then picked a small package out of the side-car.

"All right, then," was his parting remark to the girls as he set off towards the porch. "I'll report to Miss Somerfield, and see what I can do. By the way, Polly—in the side-car—some chocs for you!"

And he was gone. Polly, after pretending to swoon at that parting cry, ran to the side-car.

"Wonders will never cease," she declared, as she brought to light a really handsome box of chocolates, tied about with ribbon. "There are times—there are moments when I have hopes of Jack, after all."

The sweets were passed round and voted "delish!" Then the girls might have gone out to the games' field, but somehow the mood for a strenuous bit of hockey had vanished.

Jack's turning up like this made them want to stay and entertain him. Then, too, the numbers were somewhat short for hockey practice, since three of the usual players were not here. Paula was upstairs, Madge was off the scene, and as for Lena Daunt—she had been off home to Barncombe this last half-hour.

Returning indoors, they met Jack coming away from Miss Somerfield's private room.

"Hallo, you girls!" he addressed them cheekily. "I'm to stay, and you're to see that I have a nice tea after the lecture. Where's Madge?"

"You keep on asking where Madge is," Polly said, in mock resentment. "We don't know."

"Then shall I go and find her?"

"No, you won't go and find Madge," said his sister tartly. "You'll see her presently, Jack, for she is staying to the lecture."

"But here is Madge!" was the sudden remark from Betty which caused Jack's face to light up.

Wheeling round, he eagerly strode to meet the girl who had hesitantly appeared, as if doubtful about her company being desired.

"Hallo, Madge! You're staying on for the lecture, then, although you're not a boarder now? How do you like it at the Daunts', Madge? I am not to meet this new girl that I've heard about from Polly."

"No, Lena Daunt has gone for the day," Madge responded, with such unwonted dullness that Jack rallied her.

"Well, cheer up, Madge! Don't look like that! I'm here, anyhow! I'm to sit next to you at the lecture, and then at tea, and— Yes, Polly?" he faced round to ask, as his sister called from a little distance away.

"I'm going up to the study, Jack, to put the chocs. away, and to see about tea for by-and-bye."

Polly turned to her chums with an "Are you coming?" look, and they went with her upstairs.

It was not a marked avoidance of Madge, or Jack would have noticed it and would have been astounded. But to Madge herself there was, in the others' going away, just that mere suggestion of estrangement which so pained her these days.

She suddenly felt very upset. Great was the effort, unbeknown to cheery Jack, which this girl chum of his had to make to hide her distress.

"If you're not doing anything better, Madge, you might take a stroll round the grounds with me?" he suggested. "What's the matter, Madge?"

"Oh, nothing! I don't think I will come out now, Jack. I've got to stay for this lecture—"

"Got to stay," sounds as if you wished you hadn't!" said Jack, still scanning Madge's rather wan face. "What would you rather have been doing, then?"

"It's no use going into that, Jack. I merely wanted to be at home at the Daunts' place this

afternoon; but Miss Redgrave made me stay at school. Where would you like to wait, Jack, until the others come back to you?"

"But can't I be with you, Madge? What's wrong with our having a jolly old talk after the ages it seems since we last saw each other?"

Madge made a slight turn from him, shaking her head. Not a word came, but he knew her too well to fail to sense her desire to be alone.

Greatly puzzled, he stood looking after her as she drifted away. And then suddenly he saw her stop dead, as if struck by a thought about which she must speak with him. She turned round and came back more than quickly—in a very excited manner.

"Jack," came her tense, beseeching whisper, whilst she caught him by the arm. "You can do something for me. Will you?"

"You know very well, Madge——"

"Yes, Jack, I do know!" she spoke on hurriedly. "You always have been such a good fellow for doing we girls a good turn. It's like this, Jack. Lena Daunt has a younger sister who, I believe, will be all alone at home this afternoon. But if you could run and fetch her in the side-car? You see what I mean, Jack? So that little Kitty can be at the lantern lecture. She'd so love it!"

"Right you are, Madge! If I get away at once, there is heaps of time. Ten minutes to Barncombe, ten minutes back; that still leaves a good half-hour in hand. I'm off, if you will just tell the others——"

"But wait, Jack," entreated Madge, stepping after him. "One thing I want you to promise. If you do find little Kitty all alone in the house, not a word to Polly or the rest that it was so afterwards. I've a reason."

"Right-ho, Madge! I say, though!" He came back a step. "Wouldn't it be better if you came with me to fetch Kitty Daunt? I mean to say, she doesn't know me from Adam!"

For a moment Madge looked very perplexed. Now that Jack had mentioned it, she realised that someone ought to go with him to the house.

"I wonder," she exclaimed suddenly—"I wonder if Miss Redgrave would let me go home, just to fetch Kitty?"

"I am jolly sure she would, Madge. You run and try her. Do, Madge! And I'll be outside, waiting."

"Very well! We'll do that, Jack!"

And they parted on the instant, Jack to return to the open air, whilst Madge flew in search of the Form mistress.

Two minutes later she put her head in at the doorway of Study 12.

"Jack is running me into Barncombe," she informed the girls, who were busy laying tea in advance. "Hope you don't mind, Polly?"

"No, I—I don't mind, Madge. But—why?"

"It is so that he and I can bring back Kitty Daunt. I'd like her to hear the lecture and see all the slides."

"Lena's at home with Kitty," Polly stated. "Lena said that Kitty could not be brought to the lecture, in any case."

There came a desperate little cry from Madge that seemed like bad temper to all who heard it.

"I can't help what Lena said! What Lena says is——"

There Madge pulled herself up—just in time. She had been on the point of saying fiercely: "Not always the truth." Lip between teeth, she drew away from the door, closing the latter smartly.

In the study, Polly and her companions looked at one another with raised brows.

"What do you make of her?" broke out Polly, in a disappointed tone. "Madge, just lately, isn't the girl she used to be. And it's—a pity."

And the others, by their pained silence, seemed to imply that they thought so, too.

Lena Daunt At Home!

AT that very moment Lena Daunt was dismounting from her bicycle at the gate of West View, Barncombe.

Wheeling her machine up the path to the porch, she let herself into the house.

"Kitty! Here, wherever you are, put my bike away for me in the shed!"

This domineering cry brought Kitty racing into the front hall.

"Why, Lena—home at this time! It's not a halfer, surely?"

"Whether it is or isn't, that's nothing to do with you! Do as I say. My bike——"

"Yes, Lena; but——"

"There's no school this afternoon—only a piffing lecture that I wasn't going to stay and be bored with. Is Elsie about?"

"She's gone up to dress."

Lena went upstairs, to find Elsie the maid out on the landing, all a-grin.

"You've got an afternoon off, miss? How nice!"

"What about it?" laughed Lena. "How'd you like a matinee, Elsie?"

"Oh, miss——"

"We'd better get all the theatres we can whilst that touring company is in the town," said Lena carelessly. "We'll get along as soon as I've had a tidy up. It's 'The Mikado' this afternoon. You shall come. I like to give you a treat when I can, Elsie. You often do me a good turn!"

As to that, miss, I'm sure I always want to help you when I can."

Lena was turning away when she saw her little sister half-way up the stairs.

"Now then—prying! You go down——"

"Lena, I don't pry. I couldn't help hearing you say that you are going to the theatre with Elsie."

"Well?" glared the elder sister.

"Lena, you ought not to be doing it! You mustn't—not with mother away. And besides, the expense——"

"Another word from you!" flared out Lena, taking a stamping step towards the stairs. "Go away, and mind your own business!"

"It is my business, Lena. Already you have spent money that mother, when she went to London, left with you for housekeeping."

"I'll give you something if you don't look out!" seethed Lena. "Come up here! Get to your room, kid!"

"No——"

"You'll do as I say!"

With a vicious rush, the girl who was so charming at school dashed down the stairs and seized her sister. The latter, though a spirited little thing, was helpless if ever Lena "went" for her.

Next minute the youngster was being hustled up to the bed-room floor. Once she held on to the banister rail, and then Lena struck that hand of Kitty's away.

"Oh, Lena, you are hurting me!"

"Get up to your room, then!"

"Lena, why are you so——"

"Shut up! You shouldn't be so interfering——"

kid like you!" panted Lena, now dragging her sister across the landing.

Under the eyes of Elsie, who only grinned, Kitty was sent headlong into her bed-room. She tried to come out again, being quite roused by now, and instantly Lena fell upon her once more.

"When I tell you to, stay in your room!" the young fury cried, pushing Kitty backwards across the floor. "Now then!"

"Lena, don't—don't!" was the younger sister's moaning cry. "Oh, why isn't Madge here? Lena—"

"I dare say; but Madge isn't here!" Lena laughed wickedly, at the same time flinging Kitty upon the bed. "You dare stir from there until I'm gone!"

And she went out, slamming the door behind her.

Meeting the smirking looks of the servant, she laughed again, with spiteful enjoyment.

"A firm hand, Elsie—that's the only way!"

"Yes, miss."

Then Lena jeered as a sobbing sound came from Kitty's room:

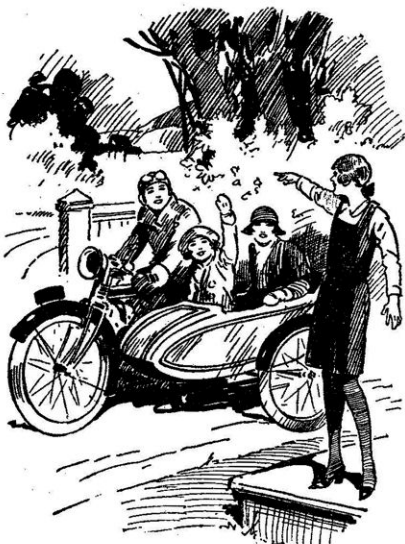
"Cry-baby, cry! Tell mother, won't you? Ha, ha, ha!"

Mincing into her own room, she whistled a tune, whilst making haste to look her very best for the theatre. As it was an afternoon performance, she did not need to change her frock. Nor did she feel inclined to bother how Elsie looked. That girl, in fact, always looked smart enough out of doors.

Suddenly an idea prompted Lena to call to the servant:

"Elsie!"

"Yes, miss?"



MADGE STANDS ASIDE! Jack started up the motorcycle and he and Kitty waved good-bye to Madge. Lena gave a false sweet smile at the girl who had stood aside for her.

"Look here! You'd better hurry along in advance and secure two seats, or they'll all be gone."

"Stalls, miss?"

"Yes," Lena said, slipping a ten-shilling note into the other's hand. "You needn't wait about outside for me, although I expect to be there five minutes after you."

So Elsie departed, and Lena now felt in a more high-and-mighty mood than ever.

If it had not been for the very useful alliance that hers was with the servant of the house, she would have been one of the last girls ever to stand a girl in service any treat. But she found that it "paid" to load Elsie with favours.

That girl was to have another visit to the theatre this afternoon, but Lena had spared herself the possibility of being seen about in the town with the servant. It was going to gratify Lena's "swank" to take her seat at the last moment, in the proper fashionable way!

Whilst she was lingering to admire herself in front of the dressing-table mirror, she heard a tell-tale creak of Kitty's door. Next moment the sisters were again confronting each other on the landing, Kitty's thin face full of an appealing desire for peace.

"Well, are you going to be good now?"

"What have I done, Lena, that you should be so cross with me?"

"You're always under my feet, saying what I ought to do!" Lena protested passionately.

"You've been worse—far worse—since Madge—"

"No, Lena! Madge never—"

"If I say she does, she does!" stormed Lena, stamping a foot. "Be careful, Kitty, or I shall go for you again! You've got to understand, whilst mother is away, I mean to—"

She broke off abruptly, startled by an unexpected tr-r-r-ring, ring! of the bell.

"Now, who is that?" she exclaimed testily. "Bother them, whoever they are! I want to get away to the—"

Tr-r-ring, ring, ring!

"Oh, all right, bother you!" muttered Lena, whirling down to answer the bell. Kitty, following timidly, saw her sister stride angrily to the front door and set it wide open.

"Madge!" gasped Lena, falling back a step, completely staggered.

"Oh, so you are still at home!" was Madge's surprised remark. "I—I— This is Polly's brother, Jack Linton," she flusteredly introduced that lad. "He ran me here in the side-car."

"How'd you do?" smiled Jack, doffing his school cap. "You are Lena, of course—not the younger sister, Kitty?"

"Yes, I'm Lena," answered that girl, instantly assuming a very amiable manner. "Pleased to meet you, Jack Linton. I've heard about you a lot! You're coming in for a bit?"

"Er—well—thanks, I suppose I'd better," said Jack, rather looking to Madge for guidance. "We're in good time. Hallo, here's Kitty, I see! How are you, Kitty?"

Suddenly free from all embarrassment, Polly's brother stepped to meet the shy youngster, and now Lena and Madge were left facing each other.

"I'll explain," said Madge steadily. "I thought Kitty would be lonely, this afternoon, and so I asked if she could be fetched to the lantern lecture at the school. Miss Redgrave gave me permission to come and fetch her, in Jack's side-car."

"I see!" Lena said, calmly, for she was not

going to flare out in front of Jack. Oh, no! Jack looked such a nice boy, and he was Polly's brother.

"Kitty, darling," Lena instantly turned to her sister, "would you like to go to a lantern lecture at the school?"

"What, be with all the girls—Madge's chums

"Yes, dear! Run up and get dressed, then, as quickly as you can!" Lena urged her sister, with a sweetness that was not lost upon Jack. "And we'll soon get you to Morcove!"

"Where is Elsie?" asked Madge gently.

"Oh, Elsie is—Elsie's out for the afternoon," shrugged Lena. "I—I gave her the afternoon off, as I—I was going to be at home. Now I wish I were going to the lantern lecture!"

"Why not come, then?" urged Jack. "Still time—"

"But the trouble of getting back to the school!" deplored Lena, with pretty weariness. "I don't think I could manage the cycle ride again, and then to have to ride back afterwards."

"Um," said Jack. "Sorry, but the side-car simply won't take three. And pillion-riding is barred—dangerous. You ought to come, though!"

"I only wish I could—now! Are you staying to tea at the school, after the lecture?"

"That's right," he nodded. "In Study 12."

There was a pause. It endured for only a moment or so, yet in that brief space of time Madge reached a generous decision.

In a flash she realised that it would be the very best thing if Lena rode with Kitty in the side-car, whilst she, Madge, followed on Lena's bicycle. Lena certainly had done the journey once already, whereas she, Madge, had come here in the side-car. Besides, the concession might do something towards a better feeling between the sisters, and what a blessing that would be!

"Jack, you must take Lena in the side-car, with Kitty," Madge instantly suggested. "Please! And I will follow on Lena's bike."

"How awfully good of you, Madge!" exclaimed Lena, with a glowing look. "I don't like to accept; but really, if I'm to return to Morcove I must be given a lift!"

"Then that settles it," declared Jack heartily. "Madge doesn't mind; she's as fresh as paint, of course. As soon as Kitty is ready, then, we'll get away!"

"Go in and sit down, Jack," Lena gaily bade him, while she sped upstairs to see after Kitty.

"Kitty, darling, are you nearly ready? Isn't this a glorious treat, eh, dear?" was cried loud enough for Jack and Madge to hear, downstairs.

But they did not hear what passed in Kitty's room, after that.

"Hurry up," fumed Lena, in a subdued voice. "And mind, not a word to Jack or any of them at the school, about what I was going to do!"

"It's all very well, Lena; you—"

"Breathe a word, and I'll give you such a time when we get home!" hissed Lena. "I'll make it worse for Madge, too—so mind!"

Pale and trembling with the fright caused by her sister's vehement threats, Kitty hastily finished dressing for out-of-doors. Another minute and she was going downstairs with Lena, who was now changed back once again, to the girl of angelic disposition whom Morcove so admired.

"My push-bike is round at the shed, Madge," remarked Lena, as they all went down the garden path. "Sure you don't mind?"

"Not at all, Lena. I am very glad."

And Madge meant it. She had formed the generous belief that somehow the unselfish act



HONOURED BY THE "PROFESSOR."

"Good-afternoon, ha, hum!" said Jack, bowing to Paula. "It is very kind of you to accord me this welcome." "Er—ahammed, P professor, chawmed," stammered Paula.

would tell upon Lena. Surely that girl could not share the side-car ride with Kitty, and attend the lecture with her without being softened towards the youngster.

Surely, this was to bring about a better state of things in the home, if only by the very shaming of Lena into a nicer attitude towards her sister!

Jack saw to it that the two girls were nicely tucked up for the journey, and then he swung astride the saddle of his motor-cycle and kicked off. The engine roared.

"See you later, Madge!" he shouted, with a farewell wave.

She nodded and smiled, waved at Kitty, who was the picture of delight, and then—away went the cycle, speeding its rider and the two sisters towards the main road for Morcove.

Madge turned back into the house. In a rapid manner she passed through to the kitchen. Sadly she noted the utter neglect—the dinner things dumped in the sink, still dirty, the sink itself stopped up, the whole place disgracefully untidy. She sighed heavily.

"If Mrs. Daunt knew that Elsie is letting the place go like this!" she murmured to herself bitterly. "Oh, it is too bad, when the home has always been so beautifully kept. It makes me long to have a go at it myself."

And suddenly Madge yielded to this fresh impulse. The thought of the home remaining in this state, for the rest of the day, was intolerable.

She was sure that Elsie had gone to the theatre, and that Lena would have joined her there, only Jack's appearance had made it worth while going back to Morcove. In any case, here was the home

looking like this—a thing Madge simply could not stand!

Off came her hat, coat, and gloves. Before another minute was out, she was up to her eyes in the housework!

The Mystery of Madge!

THE door of Study 12 flew open. Helen Craig looked in upon those chums of hers who were gathered here.

"Quarter to three, girls, and they are all going down now. Coming?"

"Right-ho—"

"Wather!"

"Ooo, yes, queek—queek!"

Naomer was gone in a flash, whilst Betty, Polly, Tess, and one or two others took the journey downstairs in more leisurely and talkative fashion.

As for Paula Creel, the usual anxiety as to whether she looked "all wight" caused her to follow slowly, after returning her tiny comb and mirror to her frock pocket.

"They're not back yet, evidently—Jack and Madge," said Polly, as they all came to the ground floor. "Rather decent of Madge, wasn't it, to think of Kitty Daunt like that?"

"It was," agreed Betty gladly. "Lena will be awfully glad about it. She herself may come back, now that it has been possible to fetch Kitty to the lecture."

"Yes, wather!" simpered Paula, coming up behind her chums as they dawdled towards Big Hall. "Er—I pwesume I look all wight, geals?"

"If you ask that question again!" threatened Polly. "As a matter of fact, the hall will be in darkness—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded Polly. "Here's a duffer who thought we were having a lantern lecture in broad daylight! Oh, Paula, Paula! But look—"

"Hurrah, yes, here's Jack," was Betty's jubilant cry. "Oh, and Lena is with him—Lena has come with Kitty!"

"Then, where's Madge?" wondered the others.

As quickly as the thronged state of the ground floor would allow, they ran up to the three arrivals. Shy Kitty was instantly made to feel at ease, for Naomer and one or two others took her in hand, affectionately, whilst the rest heard what Jack and Lena had to say.

"Madge is coming on Lena's push-bike," explained Jack breezily. "It was her suggestion, as Lena felt rather tired."

"Yes," nodded Lena, smiling brilliantly, "and I do think it was kind of Madge! I couldn't have come otherwise. One can't live one's entire life on the saddle of a push-bike!"

"We'll keep a seat for Madge," suggested Betty blithely. "Let's sit at the end of a row, then she can drop down beside us."

"Next to me!" was Jack's notion. "Early doors this way, and mind the step!"

Lena glanced at the other girls and laughed.

"I do like your brother Jack," she whispered to Polly. "He is such a scream. It must be nice to have a brother."

"Sometimes I feel anyone can have him who wants him," said the madcap. "But not at present. Oh, I've forgotten the chocs. he brought me. Must fly back!"

Bursting clear of the crowded entrance to the darkened hall, gaily Polly raced upstairs. The idea of undergoing the great lecture without the chocolates for a stand-by was out of the ques-

tion. She was soon tearing downstairs again, with one large chocolate in process of disappearing!

"I've not seen Madge, Polly?" the Form-mistress remarked, as the boisterous one was passing into the hall.

"She is coming back from Barncombe by push-bike, Miss Redgrave. Lena came in the side-car, with her sister."

"I see!"

Polly, hugging the box of chocolates, dashed into the dark hall, and after a good deal of floundering about she at last found her chums.

They had "bagged" the last seats in a middle row, and she would have dropped on to the outermost chair, which was vacant, only Jack strongly objected.

"Out of that," he commanded. "That's for Madge. What a trial sisters are," he complained, as Polly slipped in front of him. "Now sit down and behave."

"You'll not get any tea if you're saucy," she retorted. "I can't see who's who! Is this Paula?"

"No, this is me," laughed Lena, who was sitting next to Jack.

"If my brother gives you any trouble, Lena, let me know. I mean to say," Polly chatted on, finding her seat at last, "the management have secured Professor Peblow in his great turn at enormous expense. So—"

"Ooo!" came Naomer's sudden awed remark, as a disc of light appeared upon the screen.

The professor was adjusting the lantern. All at once, the most startling silhouette appeared upon the screen.

The professor had got in the way of the lantern-rays, and all Morcove school enjoyed the projection of his face in profile, with a bushy beard. Naomer started to clap.

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded the audience.

"Sh, sh!" enjoined the mistresses. "No talking now, please."

Polly passed the chocs. The box went along the row to her left, some distance, then came back. Lena had them then, to pass to Jack. She nudged him.

"Oh, thanks. After you, Lena."

And, after Lena, Jack mischievously took charge of the box, causing Polly to make a heated, if subdued, protest.

"Give me back my chocs, Jack! D'you hear me?"

"Sh!" whispered Jack. "No talking."

At the same time, he rustled his fingers into the box, to suggest that he was liberally raiding it. Polly proposed that she should change places with Lena. But Lena nudged her to be quiet.

"Jack," persisted Polly. "Pass them back this instant!"

"No, she hasn't come yet. I'm keeping her seat."

"I'm not talking about Madge! Those chocs."

"Who?"

"Ugh!" breathed Polly. "Wait till I get at you!"

This threat proving of not the least avail, Polly saw nothing for it but to take Jack off his guard. The room was as dark, just there, as anywhere. Polly slid out of her chair and was crouching low, trying to pass along to Jack without being seen, when—all the lights went up!

Jack stared down at her in bland surprise.

"You don't need to sit on the floor, Polly!"

That young lady's expression, as she hurriedly resumed her proper seat, would take some describing. The headmistress was about to make some

remarks introducing the lecturer, and so the mad-cap had to become a model of decorum.

After Miss Somerfield had spoken, there was a burst of applause. Then the lights went down again.

"Good," breathed Jack. "Have a choc., Lena? And you might pass them to Polly, with my love!"

The lecture started, and Morcove instantly realised that Professor Peblow was a jolly old chap. The slides thrown on to the screen, to illustrate his talk, were most fascinating. His jokes were good, and, above all, Morcove could tell that there was the modesty of a really great man in what they listened to. He touched but lightly upon incidents that could only have been full of deadly peril to himself.

Once or twice the Study 12 chums, with eyes grown accustomed to the dark, peered to see how Kitty was enjoying it all. Kitty was in raptures. She and Naomer were always the first to lead any burst of applause that greeted some particularly exciting picture.

But where, all this time, was Madge?

The lecture drew to an end, and still there was that vacant seat next to Jack's. In spite of the eager attention to the fascinating talk, now and then Betty & Co. exchanged whispers about Madge.

"She's not come back!"

"No! What does it mean?"

And what it meant they were still wondering when, at a little after four, the schoolgirl audience dispersed.

After giving ringing cheers for Professor Peblow, and seeing that he took up a good collection for his pet scheme, Morcove scampered off to the studies and—tea!

"You are having tea with us, of course, Lena— and Kitty," cried Betty. "It's ready-laid, so come along!"

"Thanks ever so! Kitty darling, we are going up to Study 12."

"Ooo, yes, queek—queek!"

"But what's become of Madge?" grumbled Jack. "Even if she had a puncture, she should have been here by now."

"Must have decided to stay away," shrugged Polly. "Now that Madge is a day girl, she—"

"She what, Polly?"

"Oh, nothing!" And Polly, sorry she had spoken like that, made a desperate effort to be her mad-cap self again.

"Jack, do let's have a game with Paula, now you are here! Can't you dress up, whilst I run and say that a distinguished personage is going to take tea with us? Do!"

"The professor?" winked Jack. "If I can manage a beard—"

"I'll find you some things!"

"Good!"

Polly could forget the absence of Madge then, even if Jack could not. She raced about, rummaging up materials for Jack's bit of masquerading.

Ten minutes later she burst in upon the assembled company in Study 12.

"I say, don't sit down for a bit, girls; we've a visitor! Can you guess?" Polly rattled on breathlessly. "A most funny old object; but he is such a dear!"

"Good gwacions! Not—not the pwofessor, Polly? Bai Jove, am I all wight?" palpitated Paula, hastily getting out the pocket comb and mirror. "Geals, geals—"

"Sh!" gestured Polly, as a mannish step

sounded in the passage. "Isn't it nice of him to honour us!"

"Yes, wather!" Paula was exclaiming, when Polly suddenly stood back from the doorway, to let the "distinguished visitor" enter.

Jack came in, buttoned to the chin in a man's heavy overcoat, and brandishing a silk hat. He had a beard, and he had huge orange-peel teeth.

Some of the girls saw through the disguise at once, and they wanted to shriek their laughter. But Paula was not one of them. The fact that the bearded freak was bowing to Paula in particular made that young lady very bewildered.

"Good afternoon, ha, hum!" said Jack, showing all his huge orange-peel teeth. "It is very kind of you to—ha, hum!—accord me this welcome!"

And he handed his silk hat to Paula, for her to hold, whilst he pulled off his motoring gloves.

"Thanks, thanks," stammered Paula, accepting the hat. "Gwreat pleasure, I'm sure. Chawmed, pwofessor—chawmed! But—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" went off all the others at last, whilst Paula yelped:

"Good gwacions—it's Jack!"

"Yes, wather," he said, whipping off the beard. "Polly's doing, not mine."

Then Betty jingled a spoon in a cup.

"Tea! Kitty, where would you like to sit?"

"Oh, let her be next to me," Lena pleaded sweetly. "Then she'll feel more at home! Aren't you having a lovely treat, Kitty dear?"

What her sister might be thinking of such double-faced conduct no more troubled Lena than did Madge's opinion of the same sort of thing, at other times. By now, Lena realised that she was perfectly safe—neither girl would give her away.

Study 12, that afternoon, lived up to its reputation for successful gatherings. Tongues were going all the time; the plates of cakes and pastries were effectually cleared; it came as a shock to all to hear the school chimes ding-donging half-past five, so quickly had time passed.

Reluctantly Jack said his good-bye to most of the girls, and went down to warm up the motor-cycle, whilst Lena and Kitty got their things on. He was to drop those two girls just outside Barncombe, where he had to turn off to take the road for his own school.

It would have suited his own wishes better to take the sisters to their door, so that he could get a sight of Madge and find out why she had not come to the lecture. But he was bound to get straight back to school now, without delay.

"It's strange about Madge," murmured Betty, on the point of going down with Lena, to say good-bye at the porch. Kitty, dressed for the ride, had already romped off with Naomer. "Especially as Jack was here!"

"She may have been to the matinee at the theatre," Lena said carelessly. "It is drawing the whole town."

Polly and Betty looked at each other.

"If I thought that Madge could have done a thing like that—again," was Polly's nettled exclamation, "Well!"

"Anyhow, we shall know in the morning," Betty said quietly. "For we will ask her, straight out, as I think we've the right to do."

And nothing more was said.

None Will Believe Her!

AT six o'clock Lena and Kitty got indoors, to find Madge there in a home that had been marvellously tidied up.

Elsie, the maid, had returned, and was in the

kitchen, grinning, no doubt, at the swept and garnished state of that part of the house. Madge herself, in the drawing-room, showed no signs of having been the one who had worked about the place for a couple of hours on end.

Whilst Kitty ran to sit with Madge and begin a joyous account of the visit to Morcove School, Lena sought Elsie in the kitchen.

"You know why I didn't turn up, at the matinee, Elsie?" grinned the elder daughter of the house, closing the kitchen door to ensure privacy. "Did you enjoy the piece?"

"Oh, yes, miss! But I do wish you had been there!"

"Another time, Elsie. I've had a ripping afternoon, anyhow. By the way, have you got a programme, or the tear-off slips of the theatre tickets?"

Elsie instantly produced all these from the pocket of her jacket hanging behind the door. With a wink, Lena took possession of the programme, and retained one of the pink slips. It bore the number and the row of a reserved stall at the theatre.

For the time being, she kept them upstairs in her bed-room; but last thing that night she disposed of the pink slip in a certain crafty way, chuckling to herself as if this were some great joke she was playing.

Next morning she found excuses for not going off to school with Madge. That girl was charged with a message to the Form-mistress, to account for Lena's absence. There was a lot to do at home, and Lena could not make the servant responsible for everything!

It was such a sham excuse that Madge, as she cycled to school, felt greatly inclined not to give the message. Nor had she quite made up her mind what to do about it when she reached the school gateway, to find Betty and a few others waiting there.

"Morning, Madge," they greeted her, cordially enough. "Where's Lena, then?"

"Morning all!" responded Madge, dismounting. "Lena is not coming to school until this afternoon."

"Nothing wrong at home, Madge?"

"Lena says she has certain things to do that can't be left to the servant."

There was a pause. Madge felt that it was caused by her having answered rather tersely.

Then Betty asked:

"What became of you yesterday afternoon, Madge?"

"Yes, Madge—"

"Oh, I—I decided to stay at home," she answered simply. "Is Miss Redgrave cross about it?"

"She's not pleased," said Betty regretfully. "But, so long as you have a good excuse, Madge—have you? For we don't want to see you getting into a row."

Madge felt herself turning rather pale. These girls seemed to have waited for her, not so much because of the old friendship, as because of a wish for explanations. Polly in particular was looking almost mistrustful. And suddenly Madge felt driven into exclaiming:

"Well? What's the matter with you all? Just lately—"

"Madge, I for one am going to ask you right out," burst out headstrong Polly. "There must have been some peculiar reason why you stayed away from the lecture, considering my brother Jack was here!"

"Well, so there was a—special reason."

"Will you tell us what it was, Madge?"

"I'd rather not. I—"

"Were you at the theatre, Madge?" came Polly's outright question. "Yes or no, Madge, and—and let it be the truth, this time."

Then Madge's face flamed scarlet.

"What do you mean! When have I ever told you an untruth? Oh, you girls, just lately—you are horrid to me! It's not fair—"

"What isn't fair?" struck in Betty, looking upset. "If you don't know us better than that, by this time, Madge—"

"Then why have you been so cold to me lately?" she protested huskily. "You said it was not to make any difference, when I became a day girl."

"But you yourself have been—different—"

"Perhaps I have," Madge exclaimed, in a hard-driven way. "It's made a difference—"

"Very well, then," Betty pleaded appeasingly, "in that case, Madge—"

"Geals, geals," wailed Paula, who never could stand a painful scene. "Oh, dwoop it now—dwoop it, yes, wather! If Madge did go to the theatre—after all, we know she is crazy on good music, and it was Gilbert and Sullivan, what? Geals—"

"I was not at the theatre, so there!" Madge cried out indignantly. "Does that satisfy you? Really, what with one thing and another—"

She broke off, suddenly overcome. Hastily standing her machine against the wall, she turned away from the other girls, and fumbled out a handkerchief. Tears had gushed from her eyes.

As she put up the handkerchief, to stem the torrent, a tiny pink paper, scarce bigger than a postage stamp, fluttered to the ground.

The others all saw it. For a moment, nudging one another, they stared at it, aghast. Then Polly advanced and picked it up.

She looked at it and then, with the bitterest grimace of disgust, she passed it to Betty.

It was the tear-off portion of a reserved seat for yesterday's matinee. There was the printed date, and the number and the row.

"Madge!"

She turned round, dropping the handkerchief away from her tearful face.

Accusingly, now, every one of her chums was staring hard at her. Betty held out the slip.

"Look at this, Madge! It fell from your coat-pocket a moment since—when you pulled out your handkerchief!"

"And it is proof," said Polly angrily, "that you were at the theatre."

"I was not! I was not!"

"Madge, how can you tell such a fib," was Betty's stern reproof. "As Polly says, and as we all realise; this proves that you went to the matinee, yesterday afternoon. It is the portion that a person with a seat in the stalls retains."

"Wea, dwoop it; geals; dwoop it now—"

"No," burst out Polly, with rising disgust. "It is not good enough to pass this over. For it is not the first time!"

"What!" gasped Madge.

"You were at the theatre with Lena, the other evening," said Betty sadly. "Lena owned up the morning after. She knows now, if she did not realise it then, how strict the rule is against theatre-going without a grown-up companion. But you, Madge, you have tried to deceive us a second time."

"I have not! Will you believe me—"

"How else can this theatre slip be explained?"

"I knew nothing about it!" Madge said huskily, beating her hands together. "If it came from my

jacket pocket, it must be because—it can only be because it was put there!"

"By whom?" asked Tess Trelawney.

"By Lena, do you suggest?" added Polly. "Come, Madge! You know very well that Lena was at the lantern lecture yesterday afternoon. So she couldn't have been at the theatre!"

"Besides, why suggest that Lena should do a thing like that?" exclaimed Betty indignantly. "She's your friend! She is the last sort of girl to want to lower you in our eyes, even, if she had a reason! No, Madge, I'm afraid——"

"Oh, all right then!" was that girl's passionate outcry. "Nothing I say will convince you; but you are wrong, you are being unjust to me! Now that I am a day girl——"

"That seems to be the trouble," broke from Tess moodily. "Now that you are a day girl, Madge, you seem to have made up your mind to do just as you please. And it's a great pity."

"Yes, wather," lamented Paula. "Oh, dear,

and, and how awful it was to have to think such a thing!

But she must not be angry with them. No. Just now it had been the madness of helpless desperation that had made her answer them so hotly. She really had no right to be angry, for every word said to her had been voiced in good faith.

They had not the faintest suspicion as to how it was that she stood in such a bad light to-day. Lena—Lena in their eyes was one of the nicest girls; a chum! To suggest that Lena must have been responsible for that bit of incriminating evidence was, in their opinion, most unfair.

What then was Madge to do?

It was a choice of evils now. Either the whole truth about Lena must come out, or else—this misfortune must be endured!

Madge walked about in the open air, quite alone, pondering tragically. The bell stopped. Not



HER ONE-TIME FRIENDS! "I must stick it, that's all!" Madge told herself bravely. "Just stick it!" And she turned her steps towards the school-house porch, to mingle with the girls whose friendship she had lost.

this is dreadful, dreadful. I would never have dreamed, Madge!"

The bell was ringing Morcove's scholars into school. With the composure born of bitter despair, Madge suddenly turned to her bicycle and mounted it, riding away to the cycle-sheds.

Sorrowfully Betty and the rest lingered and watched her, not a word passing between them. At last, when she was a good way off, one and another of the girls heaved a sigh, then dawdled up the drive to the school porch.

They were thinking, one and all, what a pity it was!

And Madge?

After she had put her bicycle away, she stood about in the shed, disregarding the bell for school.

She felt that, even if she did get reprimanded by the Form-mistress, presently, it wouldn't matter. Nothing seemed to matter now.

Her chums—they were cruelly misjudging her. After this, apparently, all friendship was at an

another girl could now be seen. Still she lingered there.

"What am I to do—what shall I do, now!"

Full well she knew that it would be possible to clear herself, but only if she called in little Kitty as a witness in her favour. And how could she resort to such a course?

Sister against sister! That was what it would mean. The younger one called upon to bear witness against the other; called upon to say things that would leave Lena utterly disgraced, scorned by her schoolfellows!

Where would be the comfort in being cleared by such means?

"And then, the revenge that Lena would take upon Kitty," was Madge's unhappy reflection. "A worse spite than ever! Things will become worse in the home. Mrs. Daunt, in fairness to me, will say I must leave. Then Kitty will miss me so much. Ought I to try to clear myself, when that is what it means?"

No!—All that was best and noblest in Madge made her reach that sudden selfless decision. No,

if she could only right herself in Betty & Co.'s eyes, by dragging Kitty into it all, as a witness against her sister, then it was quite out of the question. Time alone must right the wrong. She herself was helpless.

Helpless to say a word for herself. Helpless to do a thing to dispel the black cloud of distrust that Lena Daunt had heaped up against her!

But that was not the thing that hurt most. It was the agony of being forced to see that same girl occupying the position she herself once had held, and which was even now rightfully hers. An accepted and popular member of the Study 12 coterie, always welcome whenever she chose to put in an appearance there.

And if they only knew, if Betty & Co. could only suspect the truth of the matter!

Madge drew a short, hard-driven breath. It must never be—they must never know—from her. "I must just stick it, that's all," Madge said to herself tensely. "Just stick it!"

And at last, with the calm fortitude that had come of such a spirited resolve, she turned her steps towards the schoolhouse porch, to mingle with the very girls whose friendship she had lost!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

It has not taken Lena long to break the friendship of years between Madge and Betty & Co. But how long can matters go on like this? How long will it be before Lena is found out and Madge restored to the popularity she once enjoyed? You must not miss the next story in this fine series. It is "In Fear of Her Headmistress."

My Dear Readers-



Your Editor is always delighted to hear from you, whenever you like to write. His address is "The Schoolgirls' Own," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.



MORCOVE MAGAZINE week again, so there isn't much space for me to have my little chat with you, readers all! Really, I think I'm a very patient sort of Editor, don't you? Lots of Editors might be quite cross about being crowded into such a small corner. But, knowing how very unimportant a mere Editor's Chat must seem beside such an absorbingly interesting thing as THE MORCOVE MAGAZINE, this Editor just makes the best of it, you see!

Well, well, well, I mustn't waste any more of my very limited space if I want to tell you all about the things in store for you in next week's number!

First of all, of course—one of you once told me I always began things like this; but, then, isn't it the best way? One should always begin at the very beginning, and the first thing is always sure to be the beginning, isn't it? Very right and proper, I think! Well, as I was remarking, first of all, there's the fourth of our fine free gifts—the beautiful photo, coloured and made to stand up, like the others, of PATSY RUTH MILLER. If you don't want to spoil your pretty set, be sure not to miss her on any account!

The Story

AND now you're all eagerness to know what there will be for you to read, I suppose?

Well, there's the long complete Morcove story—a most exciting one this—entitled:

"IN FEAR OF HER HEADMISTRESS!"

I expect you will guess straight away that it is

Lena Daunt who is the girl in fear, so it's no good my trying to pretend that it isn't! But why and how and all about it is something I must keep a secret. Anyhow, it has a whole lot to do with poor, much-tried Madge Minden, and does not in any way tend to help things for her. But no more of this until next week!

Next week's instalments of our two serials, "THE SEA WAIF'S SECRET" and "PEGGY ON HER OWN," are as exciting and enjoyable as ever. I should like to tell you just a little more about them, but really I haven't space, so I must just hurry up and say a few words about

"HER MYSTERIOUS AUNT AMELIA,"

by Elsie Trevor,

the fine complete story in next week's issue. You will just love every word of this. It is a school tale packed with interest and fun. But, as you will see by the title, there is a mystery about it, so I just daren't say a word more. As I've told you before, this typewriter of mine just cannot keep secrets. I've never known such a machine for letting cats out of bags!



Adventures of
TIGER TIM
appear each week in
The RAINBOW 2-
and
TIGER TIM'S Weekly 2-



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[Week Ending February 12th, 1927.

BACK TO SCHOOL AGAIN!

By NORA NUGENT

Temporary Editress.

This issue was got together just before our house-party broke up, so that the other girls could go and spend some time with their own parents before returning to Morcove after what, I hope, has been a jolly and interesting holiday for everyone.

It gave us a great deal of pleasure getting this issue together, for we all sat round in the drawing-room at my father's new house, with a supply of paper and well-sharpened pencils.

I think I had the easiest job, and I am sure Kathleen Murray had the hardest, for she kept on saying: "Does anyone know a word of six letters beginning with 'N' and ending with 'W'?" "I say, girls, how does one spell—" But I mustn't give the word, must I, or I'll be giving you an extra clue to the puzzle!

Anyway, we got the complete issue finished and ready for press, and then we parted, to go back to our various homes. I sent the matter off to the Editor of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, and it was all ready for publishing by the time Betty and Co. returned to the school. Next month the proper editorial staff will take over again, but I hope that those of us who have kept the paper going will not be forgotten by our readers. You will still see occasional contributions from our pens in the pages of our magazine!

And now, just before I lay down the editorial pen for the last time, let me wish all my readers the best of good wishes, and thank them for the very nice letters which they sent to me, congratulating me on last month's issue of "The Morcove Magazine."

GOOD RESOLUTIONS

Which should have been made—but weren't!

Naomer Nakara: Not to tease Paula—more than six times a day!

Cora Grandways: To get Ursula weighed up!

Ursula Wade: To give up her grand ways!

Dolly: Not to delay in writing up some more "Jottings" for THE MORCOVE MAGAZINE!

Trixie: To hope to be able to speak French!

The Fifth Form Mistress: To keep her Form in order, and not to miss massing 'em in the Form-room on the slightest provocation!

Madge Minden: Never to use Cross Words!

Tess Trelawney: To give us her opinion of what Elsie Drew!

Elsie Drew: To put the previous suggestion to the test!

Dame Steggles (our tuck-shop keeper): Not to go on raising the price of currant buns!

The Matron: To put more coverlets on our beds during this cold weather!

Sybil Farlow: Not to sink far lower in the Form than she already has!

The Third Form Mistress: Not to Potter about quite so much!

Steggles (the School porter): Not to drop his aspirates, but to aspire to better English!

Polly Linton: To treat the duffer of the Form with more consideration, and not to do anything that will appal her!

Monica Holden: Not to rivers her opinion of Mabel!

Mabel Rivers: To Hold on to her friendship with Monica.

The Fourth Form Dramatic Society: To act in a better way towards their audiences!

The Fifth Form in General: To remember that "the Fifth" is generally associated with guys!

MAGGIE BARLOW'S TUCK SHOP!

A Tale of Last Term by MONICA HOLDEN.

"What are we going to do about it?"

Maggie Barlow spoke the words as she looked blankly at her two chums, Connie Carteret and Kitty Weston, of the Fifth Form. The Fifth were playing against the Fifth Form hockey team of Barncombe House on the following day, and they had invited the rival team to be their guests at a special Fifth Form "spread" which was to follow the match.

And now they had gone to the tuck-shop to find it closed and a notice pinned to the door which stated that Dame Steggles had been called away, and consequently the tuck-shop would be closed for a week at least.

"We can't possibly exist with the tuck-shop closed for a week," complained Maggie, who is plump and very fond of looking after "the inner girl." "Even if we get on to Barncombe on the phone, and get enough food for the spread, it still means that we shall have no tuck-shop for a whole week!"

That, of course, to Maggie, was a serious blow, for it is doubtful if there is another girl at Morcove who is such a patron of the tuck-shop as Maggie.

But there seemed no way out of it, and the Fifth-Formers moved away disconsolately, Connie saying that she would get Miss Somerfield's permission to ring up Barncombe and order supplies from them.

It was later on the same day that Maggie Barlow had a brain-wave!

"I say, you girls!" she announced gladly, rushing into the study where Connie and Kitty were preparing tea. "You haven't rung up about the tuck, have you?"

"Not yet," answered Connie, "but I will do so after tea."

"I've got a topping idea!" cried Maggie. "Luckily, we are all in funds, so we can carry it out. Listen! Why shouldn't we run our own tuck-shop for a week?"

"What on earth do you mean, Maggie?" demanded Kitty.

"Well, we can't go on for a whole week without a tuck-shop," said the plump girl. "Suppose we lay in a good supply of provisions, and open our own tuck-shop? We could have it open out of lesson hours, and I could manage it. I'd just love to do that, and we could get a lot of stuff at wholesale rates, and sell it much cheaper even than Dame Steggles can do, because we wouldn't want to make any profit."

Connie and Kitty were not very enthusiastic about the idea, but once Maggie gets a notion into her head it takes a lot to shift it, and they eventually agreed to the scheme.

Maggie flung herself into the idea with enthusiasm. She rang up a wholesaler's in Barncombe, and managed to get permission to use a disused wood-shed in the grounds for her tuck-shop, which was to be allowed to be run for one week only, after which the official tuck-shop would be re-opened.

Naturally, all the girls in the school were pleased when they heard of the scheme, for it meant that they would still be able to get the little "extras" which form part of the menu of our study spreads.

Judge of the Fourth Form's dismay, then, when Maggie loftily remarked, after her tuck-shop had opened on the following day, that it was to be a Fifth Form tuck-shop only, and that girls from other Forms would not be supplied.

Maggie was not playing in the hockey match, and she decided to remain in charge of her tuck-shop all the afternoon.

She started by sampling nearly everything—"just to make sure the stuff was fresh," as she afterwards explained. And then, as often happens when one eats a little more than usual, Maggie began to feel drowsy.

It was Polly Linton who discovered Maggie fast asleep, and, with a sudden grin, she rushed back and told the Fourth all about her discovery.

Later on the hockey match came to an end, and the Fifth-Formers rushed to their tuck-shop for the parcels of provisions which Maggie had promised to put ready for them during the afternoon.

They found Maggie fast asleep—and not a single thing to eat left in the whole place!

Maggie, of course, indignantly denied that she had eaten everything, and a few moments' reflection showed the others that no girl could possibly have done so.

Then where was the food?

It had vanished, and the spread they had arranged looked perilously near turning out a complete fiasco!

In fact, Connie had already commenced apologising to the Barncombe House girls when one of the Third-Formers came up to her.

"Betty Barton's compliments," she announced, "and would the Fifth Form and the Barncombe team please pay a visit to the Fourth Form Common-room?"

It was not until then that Connie suspected the Fourth of having anything to do with the vanishing of the tuck; but, as a horrid thought struck her, she darted away, followed by the rest. Straight to the Fourth Form Common-room she went, and the door crashed open before her vigorous push.

And then she halted. For the room was set out with long tables, and one of the finest spreads that has ever been seen at Morcove was revealed!

"Come in, Connie!" said Betty, with a smile. "We are sorry your own spread has been called off, owing to the tuck-shop being sold out! You see, we wanted to have a spread, too, and when we found Maggie asleep in the shop we didn't like to disturb her. We helped ourselves, and she'll find the money for everything we took in her till. And now, will you all join us?"

Connie & Co. were furious, but they could do nothing. Had Miss Somerfield known that they had refused to serve the Fourth Form, there would be trouble. So, very wisely, Connie & Co. swallowed their indignation, and they and the girls who were to have been their guests swallowed the tuck which the Fourth had commandeered!

Maggie Barlow's tuck-shop never re-opened. Connie and the others decided that they would never again have anything to do with a tuck-shop whose "manageress" could not look after business without going to sleep!

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL CROSS-WORD PUZZLE!

Specially Invented for You by **KATHLEEN MURRAY.**

Once again, in the absence of Madge Minden, the task has fallen to me to invent a Cross-word puzzle for you. I hope you will find it of interest. But, to be perfectly candid with you, I shall be pleased when Madge gets back to this particular form of "brain-puzzler," for it is by no means an easy job, I assure you! However, here is the puzzle:

CLUES ACROSS:

1. To arrange or perform by turns.
7. Prefix signifying "out of" something.
7. Royal Field Artillery (abbreviated).
10. A piece of wood or iron used for fastening ropes upon.
13. A stretch of cultivated or meadow land.
14. Preposition meaning towards a place.
16. A married woman (abbreviated).
16. Anno Domini (abbreviated)
17. You use this when writing out lines.
19. To burn slightly.
21. Appertaining to the centre.
24. A shabby or unkempt boy.
25. Places of refreshment and lodging.
28. Cut with a saw.
29. Expression.
30. Seen in winter.
33. Preposition denoting general presence.
35. A printer's measure.
37. How the Archbishop of York signs his name.

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL PUZZLE.

1		2	E	4				5		6
		7						R		A
10	11	A	I		13			L		
14			K							
17		18			S					
21					L			O		
		24	N					S		
					M			E		
E		30	n					P		A
35	M		B		O					P
37	A		R		O			40	L	

38. Open (poetic form).
39. Not wide.
40. Christian name of a girl who appears in stories in "The School Friend," and whose surname is Gayton.

CLUES DOWN:

1. The far North.
2. Where a golfer places his ball.
3. What a schoolgirl calls an examination.
4. Initials of a great American city.
5. Ever (poetic form).
6. Not happier.
9. An ensign or banner.
11. Solitary.
12. One-half of "tram."
18. Has knowledge.
19. Not plump.
20. Not one.
22. One who converts hide into leather.
23. Royal Fusiliers (abbreviated).
28. To pinch sharply.
27. Commonly used to mean amateur photographs.
29. Observed.
31. Three-quarters of "Oboe."
32. How Paula says "row."
34. Meal generally taken in the studies at Morcove.
36. Mater (abbreviated).
38. Two-thirds of "old."

SOLUTION TO LAST MONTH'S PUZZLE.

	A	L	B	A	T	R	O	S	S	
A		A	I	D		E	W	E		P
D	O		N	A	T	A	L		B	E
M	A	C		M	O	P		B	A	N
I	R	I	E		P		S	E	R	E
R		T	O	N		F	A	R		T
A	M	E	N		P		P	E	E	R
B	A	D		A	R	T		T	E	A
L	B		S	C	O	R	E		K	T
E		D	O	T		E	E	N		E
		E	O	L	S	T	E	R	E	D

TO OUR READERS.

This issue of the Morcove Magazine brings the Editress-ship of Nora Nugent to an end. The proper Editorial staff is now hard at work on next month's number. We tender our heartiest thanks and warmest congratulations to Nora & Co. on the two excellent numbers they have produced!

BETTY BARTON.

THE GIRLS OF OUR FORM!

No. 9. NORA NUGENT.

By MABEL RIVERS.

Those attributes which generally belong to the Irish belong also to Nora Nugent—that is, needless to say, the *good* attributes.

Nora is of Irish descent, but she has always lived in England, which explains why she has no brogue. In appearance she is a medium-sized, rather slim girl, with fair, almost golden hair and beautiful blue eyes. She is one of the most generous girls at Morcove, and, although her people are fairly well-to-do, Nora is certainly no snob. In fact, she would have invited the whole of the Fourth Form to her home this Christmas if they would have come! But most of them, of course, had made other arrangements.

She is certainly the perfect hostess, and she never goes to her own room before going the rounds of her guests' rooms and making certain that everything is to their satisfaction.

She is something of a dreamer, and intensely fond of poetry and music, although she never tries

her hand at either of these things. She can play the piano fairly well, but not strikingly well, and she says she "has no time" to try to write poetry, although we are sure that if she did try she might write something really worth while.

She is one of the most popular girls of the Form, and her only fault is her habit of putting things off. "Oh, all right," she will say; "I'll do that to-morrow!" But she never does it to-morrow, and she puts it off and puts it off until one day she will rouse herself and work like "fury," as Paula would term it. Consequently, her Form work is somewhat erratic, but Nora never lets that worry her.

Still, she can be extremely enthusiastic over anything when once she does start on it, and just at present she's extremely enthusiastic about making this present holiday of ours the finest we have ever spent in our lives—and I think the whole party of us will agree that she is succeeding!

JUST JOTTINGS!

Put Down by DOLLY DELANE.

Someone suggested the other day that a series of films should be made showing the various girls of Morcove. We are afraid that the one depicting Paula would have to be a "slow motion" film!

In reply to a query made the other day, we wish to make it quite plain that the term "the school growler" means an ancient cab used to take girls from the station to the school. It has no reference to Ursula Wade!

Miss Massingham, as you doubtless know, was not a very high opinion of the industriousness of her Form, and when she was showing a visitor over the Fifth Form-room the other day, the visitor asked: "How many girls work in this room, Miss Massingham?" "Oh," she replied, "about one in every ten!"

Here is a story which is told of Cora Grandways. When she is on holiday she spends a lot of her time shopping, and buying such things as hats and silk stockings, etc. She went into one shop in London, and tried on about twenty different hats. At last she picked up one from the counter which she liked. "I will have this one," she said. "Will you send it to my hotel?" "Certainly, miss," replied the assistant, "if you wish it. But it's the one you took off when you came in!"

I have heard that a certain girl in the Fifth Form, whose name I will not mention, but who has the reputation of not being fond of cold water during this seasonable weather, has bought a cake of floating soap, so that she will not have to put her hands so deeply in the water!

A BIT ABOUT BROTHERS!

(EDITORIAL NOTE.—Elsie Drew's brother visited us for a few days during the holidays, and this little effort in verse was written by Elsie after he had been teasing her a great deal. We all admit that he does lead Elsie a strenuous life, but the rest of us think he's quite a nice boy!)

Uncles, I know, have their good points, and so
Have fathers, and sisters, and mothers,
But what possibly good point, I'd much like to know,
Can any girl find in her brothers?

They sit in a chair with a satisfied air,
And treat us to looks patronising,

And, if they are younger, they tug at our hair,
And new mischief they're always devising!

The elder ones joke, and say, "Go and eat coke!"
And slang phrases which we'd never use!
And they label us "children," and try to provoke
Us, until we agree with their views!

They tell us their woes, and they think, I suppose,
We should act sympathetically,
But I'd like to discover, if any girl knows,
What use any brother can be?

ELSIE DREW.