

PACKED FULL OF FASCINATING STORIES AND INTERESTING ARTICLES!

The Schoolgirl's Own 2^d



WAS MADGE A THIEF?

(A dramatic moment between Madge Minden and Cora Grandways in the fine complete Morcove story inside.)

A Splendid Long Complete Story of Lena Daunt at Morcove.



LENA DAUNT'S ATONEMENT!

After all her reckless disregard for everything save her own enjoyment, Lena Daunt at last is forced to realise the wicked folly of her ways. What effect it has on her and what action it makes her take, you will read in this fine tale

"Kitty Wants You!"

THE day was just breaking—a strange hour for a girl to be dismounting from her bicycle at the gates of Morcove School!

No one else was about, nor had a single chimney of the great schoolhouse yet started to smoke, so Lena Daunt could be quite sure that even the earliest risers amongst the domestic staff were not yet up.

Placing her machine against the boundary wall, she went to the bell-pull outside the locked iron gates and gave it a nervous tug.

Ding-ling, ding-ling, ling!

Then all was silence again, except for the distant cawing of jackdaws as they flapped about the great cliffs.

Pale and anxious looked Lena Daunt as she stood waiting for the gatekeeper to appear. In the grey light of the early dawn, there was a wanness about her pretty face which made it very tragic. Her eyes, that were usually starry bright, looked as if they had known no sleep during the night now past.

"Hullo, there, what is it? Eh, what?" drowsily complained the gatekeeper's wife, as she came forth from the lodge, jingling a bunch of keys. "Goo' gracious, miss, what are you doing here at such a time? Here, Alf," she called back into the lodge, "here's one o' th' scholars, I do declare!"

"It's all right, Mrs. Baggart," the girl hastened to whisper between the bars of the closed gates. "I am Lena Daunt, a day-girl. I started away almost before daylight, because—because my sister—"

"Oh, you mean the poor lass that was knocked down on the road last evening, and brought into the school san.?"

"Yes!"

"Anxious about her, I suppose you are? All right, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Baggart, making all speed to unlock the gates and set them wide. "I don't wonder

I'm sure! It was a bad upset for everybody, so it was. You must let me hear how your sister is going on, miss."

"I will, when I have found out," promised Lena. "May I leave this bike here? And I suppose I can go straight to the san.?"

"Certainly, miss; you do! There'll be summon on duty, for sure—the night nurse, most like. And she'll tell you—perhaps let you see your sister."

Lena gave a sort of wistful nod, as if to say: "How I hope it will be so! If only—oh, if only I can see Kitty, and find her getting better!"

Kitty, the same sister who, times out of number, had been nagged and bullied at home by this elder girl! But Lena was in a chastened mood now. She was sorry for all that—yes, and sorry for how much else!

What an eternity of suspense it had seemed to her, the wintry night that was gone at last!

All alone in the home back yonder in Barncombe—for her mother and Madge Minden had spent the night at the school—Lena had gone through agonies of remorse.

"My fault—all my fault!" was the mournful murmur that had broken from her time after time. "Why—why did I ever do all the mad things that have only ended in this?"

Two-thirds of the way up the drive, she turned aside to cross a spacious plot of grass that lay in front of the handsome little building which was Morcove's sanatorium.

It was as big as many a cottage hospital, to afford beds during any epidemic. At present, however, there was not the most minor case of sickness in the school. The only patient was little Kitty Daunt, who had been brought in last night after the accident on the road.

The outer door was on the latch, and Lena, with a mixture of eagerness and apprehension, let herself into a bare, spotless entrance-hall. On her right there

By MARJORIE
STANTON.

was the door of a ward, with a little oval window. She peeped through the glass, and saw the night nurse coming away from a corner bed.

This, then, was where Kitty lay, and now—now she was to hear the news, whether good or ill!

Softly the ward door opened, revealing nurse, neat and buxom in her charming uniform.

"Well, my dear?"

"I'm—Lena Dault," faltered that girl, feeling guiltily ashamed to own to the name, even though it was impossible that nurse could know what guilt attached to it. "My sister—how is she now, please?"

"You've not come across from the schoolhouse?"

"Oh, no! I live in Barncombe, and attend the school daily. But I came here early—"

"Well, now, what can I say?" nurse exclaimed softly, still keeping Lena out of the ward. "Your sister, poor little soul, has had a good night, but, you know, there was an injury to her head. She must be kept very quiet."

"But she's better, then?"

"She is no worse, I think. The doctor will be here again presently; then we shall know more."

"Thank you!" gulped out Lena. And after a pause: "Could I—could I see my sister, please?"

"Well—yes." Nurse was rather hesitant, that was evident. "If you will promise not to excite her. And if she is dozing, you must not speak, mind!"

"No, I—I will be very good!" blurted out Lena, creeping into the ward.

She was going to be very good always—now! If only her sister could get over the accident, how good she—Lena—would be to her! No more nagging, no more bullying, after this! Kitty should have a loving sister from this time onwards if she recovered.

If!

But how if—if the injuries took a bad turn? Supposing—oh, supposing she did not recover!

It was the same thought, sending a shiver through remorseful Lena, that had haunted her mind in the night.

Silently, sorrowfully, she stole past vacant beds to the one that held her sister. Nurse followed, ready to intervene if this visit by the elder girl should go amiss.

And, sure enough, there was the sudden unmistakable sign that Lena never should have come to the bedside. She had stood there for a moment, looking down mournfully at the child who lay with closed eyes, murmuring fretfully. And then the eyes opened, and the youthful sufferer gave a little cry of pain:

"Lena! Oh, no, no, Lena! Don't—don't!"

The nurse instantly put a hand on Lena's shoulder and drew her back a pace or two.

"Hush! You must go," was the authoritative whisper, "at once!"

"But I want to stay!" Lena implored huskily.

"Oh, please—"

"No. The poor child—see how the sight of you distresses her!"

"But I am her sister!"

"That makes no difference," was nurse's regretful answer. "Why she is like this towards you I cannot say. It may be delirium. But you only do her harm."

"Very well, then, I'll go," Lena almost sobbed.

"But how awful! Oh, it makes me feel—"

She did not say the rest. She would have been ashamed for nurse to know how this made her feel.

Girl and nurse were half-way back to the door when a startling thing happened.

There came a plaintive, yearning murmur from the patient—a girl's name, voiced longingly:

"Madge!"

They both stopped dead.

"That sounds as if she were longing for Madge Minden," was the nurse's whispered comment. "It might make all the difference if that girl came to the ward. Madge is over at the schoolhouse now?"

"I suppose so—yes," was Lena's miserable response. "She has been living at my home in Barncombe and attending daily. But last night she came to the school with mother, in case—"

"I understand," nodded nurse. "But why didn't you come?"

Ah, why!

"I—I felt that someone must stay and look after the home," faltered Lena. "I wanted to come, only I—I didn't."

Once again, she dare not be frank. She dare not tell the nurse that fright and remorse had made her stay at home when others were rushing to the school to be with the injured girl.

"Madge—Madge, dear!"

That feeble call again, like the murmuring of a girl in her sleep!

Lena's sense of self-disgrace deepened still more. There was not the least doubt that, whilst her own presence was but a source of distress to the sufferer, she would find relief in the sight of Madge—Madge, the girl who had been as a loving sister to her!

"You must let Madge Minden know about this," advised the nurse, as she attended Lena to the door. "Find her as soon as possible, and get her to come across. I shall be on duty for another hour."

Lena nodded dully, and went away. Gone was her quick, jaunty step. In utter misery, she drifted listlessly towards the schoolhouse. Chimneys were smoking now, and the downstairs doors and windows had been thrown open to give the place an early morning airing.

The risen sun was giving a golden shimmer to some of the windows. Lena cast up her eyes to the higher windows, and suddenly she saw two or three girlish heads being put forth, although the rising bell had yet to go.

There were girls, up there in one of the dormitories, already out of bed and seeing what the new day was like. But no jubilant comments on the bright morning rang out. All was orderly silence—and Lena could guess why.

There at the dormitory window were girls who were as anxious as any about Kitty, and Madge was one.

Instantly Lena had recognised the dark head, the clever face of Madge Minden, the quiet one of the Fourth Form, once so popular with all, but now—

Another guilty pang went through Lena. It was her fault again that Madge stood disgraced in the eyes of once loving chums! What a career of folly and mischief had been hers—Lena's—in the last few weeks! And now the reckoning time seemed to have come!

She passed into the schoolhouse, and at once a good-natured housemaid came up to her.

"Morning, miss! I'm afraid you've had a bad night on account of your sister? There's a cup of tea going in the servants' hall, if—"

"Oh, I don't want anything, thank you! I—I must find Madge Minden."

What a strange turn of Fate it was that she should have to tell Madge:

"Kitty wants you!"

Why She only wanted Madge

THE three or four girls who had been looking out of the dormitory window now drew in their heads and turned away to make their morning toilette.

All over the great room other girls were waking without being called. Anxiety quite took away the desire for an extra ten minutes in bed.

Even Paula Creel, as fond of bed as any, had opened her eyes, and was ready to throw aside the coverings eagerly. Then there was Naomer Nakara, Morcove's dusky scholar from the desert country of North Africa. Usually so impishly noisy, this morning she was going about her dressing very quietly and sadly.

"Why, Naomer, darling," Polly Linton rallied the youngster, "cheer up, dear!"

"Ohé, ohé!" sighed Naomer, and suddenly she squatted down upon the floor and drooped her head like a mourner. "I not able to be happy. I so mis'ble!"

"But perhaps Kitty is much, much better this morning," argued Betty Barton hopefully. "We'll go across and inquire, shall we?"

Naomer bounded up like a girlish Jack-in-the-box. "Ooo, yes: queek—queek!"

"Bai Jove, that's bettah—yes, wather!" commented Paula Creel. "For gwacious' sake, none of you start moping, or else I shall absolutely weep, I shall! Geals, geals, I dreamed that poor Kitty"

"Never mind what you dreamed, Paula," advised Polly. "Dreams never come true, anyhow. Kitty will go on all right!"

"Thanks, thanks!" Paula exclaimed gratefully. "You welieve me gweatly, Polly. Bai Jove, you are wippers, you geals, when twouble is awound—yes, wather! Hello, Lena!"

"Lena!" exclaimed Betty and several others, now that Kitty's sister had suddenly appeared in the doorway. "We saw you from the window, Lena. Whatever time did you leave home to get here as early as this?"

"How's your sister?" questioned Tess Trelawney eagerly. "Have you heard?"

"Bai Jove, Lena—yes, wather—how is Kitty?"

"I—I called at the san, and saw her, but—but I couldn't stay."

"Did she seem better? Was she awake?"

"Well, yes—"

"And seemed glad to see you?"

"Bai Jove, I weckon Kitty was awfully glad—yes, wather!" beamed Paula, hurriedly getting on with her dressing. "You've been such a loving sister to her always, Lena, you know!"

Lena could hardly go paler than she was already, or those words would have caused a tell-tale change. She looked towards Madge Minden, who was standing a little apart from all the other girls.

"Madge, will you go across to the san, as soon as you can? I think—I think my sister wants you. She—she was saying your name, and the nurse thought it meant that you ought to be there."

"I will go at once," was the brief response from Madge. "I intended doing that."

Another half-minute found her fully dressed, and she hurried away, looking relieved at being able to put herself apart from the others. Betty and Polly exchanged glances, but said nothing. Paula sighed, shaking her pretty head at her thoughts.

The first bell clangd out now. It was dimming through the schoolhouse as Madge sped downstairs and across the entrance-hall to the front door. Out in the morning sunshine, she ran over the dewy

grass to the san., and came breathlessly to the ward door.

"Oh, yes, come in, Madge!" the nurse welcomed her. "It's strange, but my little patient seems to be wanting you badly. It's as if there were something on her mind that she wants to tell you. This way, Madge."

Briskly, but silently, nurse led the schoolgirl down the ward to the corner bed. Kitty was lying back, her bandaged head at rest upon the downiest of pillows, her eyes closed. But she was not asleep, only in that sad stage which is semi-consciousness.

"Madge!" came the fretful whisper once again. "I want Madge—I want Madge!"



FOR HER ENEMY'S SAKE! Oh, Madge, you will get that money put back into the collecting-box, so that Lena will not be found out?" implored Kitty. And Madge, to soothe the little sufferer, nodded "Yes!"

Then the nurse spoke ever so gently: "She is here, dear. Madge is here."

The eyes flickered open, and Madge would never forget the strange look—mixture of joy and pain—which came into that wan face.

"Kitty, darling!" murmured the girl at the bedside, stepping closer. "My poor Kitty! Are you in pain, dear? But you will soon be better."

"No, my head doesn't hurt me now," was the sighing response. "It only feels all funny, somehow. I can't exactly say; I don't know what I mean. But there's something— Madge, don't go away!"

"No, dear, I won't. I will gladly stay every moment of the day, if they will let me," Madge whispered, with passionate sympathy.

One of Kitty's hands was lying outside the bed-clothes. Madge tenderly held it, giving it a gentle squeeze. With a sigh, Kitty closed her eyes again, as if she felt like sleep, and then she gave a little start and cried out, as if in terror.

"Madge! I shall remember properly in a minute, if only you'll stay by me. I can't tell anyone else—not mother or anyone. Oh, Madge, I do want you to—do something for me!"

What did this mean?

In the pause that ensued Madge and the nurse looked at each other bewilderedly. The patient seemed to lapse into a fresh stupor, and that was the opportunity for nurse to whisper in Madge's ear:

"We must try to get this from her, Madge, whatever it is. It is something that is troubling her greatly, and unless she gets it off her mind it will hinder her progress. Hush, though! She is paying attention again."

Then, bending near to smile brightly upon Kitty, who had opened her blue eyes once more, the wise nurse chatted encouragingly.

"Would you like me to go away, so that you can have a nice little talk with Madge? I will if you like, dear."

"Yes, please! Oh, please, nurse, if you would

Very well, then; I'm going!"

And nurse, flashing a meaning look at Madge, passed swiftly to the other end of the ward, and then went out.

The girl who remained at the bedside was conscious of drawing a deep breath of suspense. She was alone with Kitty, and now—what was it that the poor little girl would have to say?

What was it that the youngster so strangely could not confide even to her loving mother?

Mrs. Daunt had been all night at the school. More than once, Madge felt certain, the loving mother had come across to the ward. In any case, a phone message would have fetched her instantly.

But Kitty, in her conscious moments, had not wanted to tell her mother whatever it was that troubled her poor, dazed brain. Nor had she wanted Lena, to be able to confide in her. It was something that only she—Madge—must hear!

She raised a cheery smile as Kitty looked up at her.

"Now, dear? Now you can tell me!"

"Yes, Madge—oh, yes, now that no one else can hear! At least, I want to tell you, but I—my head, it goes into a muddle. When I try to think clearly

"You poor darling!" Madge murmured, feeling ready to cry with pity. "Will you wait a little while, dear? It is something that can wait?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" broke distressfully from Kitty. "Give me a little time, and I shall be able to get it right; and then I know I shall go to sleep, because I can trust you, Madge—"

"You can, dear. Anything you tell me—anything you want me to do—"

"I know, Madge. All along you have been so good and true, when Lena has been so unfair! It's about Lena—yes, now I know! Madge—"

"Yes, dear—what?"

With her listener bending over eagerly, Kitty panted excitedly:

"Why I borrowed your bicycle last evening and rode to Morcové School, and got knocked down by a car, Madge; it was because—because I knew that Lena, my own sister, she was going to steal some money!"

A great shock went through Madge as these words came.

"I hoped I might be in time to prevent her," Kitty spoke on emotionally, "but it was no use! She had done it, Madge, by the time I found her."

"Done what, Kitty?"

The sufferer stirred in her bed with the stress of what she wanted to get off her mind.

"Listen, Madge! Lena has stolen all the money out of that hospital collecting-box at the school! If only the money could be put back, Madge, before it is missed!"

The poor girl would have lifted herself up in bed in her great excitement, but Madge gently restrained her.

"Lie still, Kitty, darling, or else—"

"Yes, Madge, I will; but now that I've told you— Oh Madge, can you get that money put back? If only you will do that, I shall have it off my mind—"

"I will do it, Kitty, darling," was Madge's immediate promise to the sufferer. "Trust me, dear! Don't give another anxious thought to it all. Leave the matter to me, Kitty, and I promise—"

"How good you are!" sobbed out Kitty. "Oh, this has done me so much good! I knew that if I told you—"

"Well, then, no more now," Madge pleaded, soothing Kitty into a more comfortable attitude. "I'll go, and I'll do my very best, dear, whilst you get to sleep and get well again."

The victim of last night's accident was in tears of relief as Madge kissed her. Lingering for a few moments to let Kitty become more composed, the schoolgirl at last crept away, and outside the silent ward she had a glad smile for the nurse.

"It is all right, nurse. I know what the trouble was, and I'm seeing to it."

All right!

Madge meant the words, in the sense that there was no need for others to worry. But in the other sense—what was the use of saying that "it" was all right?

What poor suffering Kitty had told her was too dreadful for words.

Lena a thief—a thief!

Here, in the heart of Morcové School, one of the most despicable robberies had been committed, and by Lena—by one of Morcové's own scholars!

Madge to the Rescue!

DISTRACTEDLY Madge wandered away. From a short distance, she saw Mrs. Daunt hurrying across to the san., and she was thankful to have escaped an encounter with that good woman.

Poor, unhappy mother of a wayward, deceitful, graceless girl, such as Lena had proved herself to be!

As if there had not been enough heartbreak in the girl's behaviour of late for Mrs. Daunt, that there should be this terrible trouble menacing her now—now, at a time when she was so worried on account of poor Kitty!

"But it shall never be brought home to Lena—not if I know it!" Madge said to herself desperately. "How glad I am that Kitty confided in me! I can do something—I must!"

And at once! That was equally imperative. Madge knew of the hospital collecting-box to which Kitty had referred. It hung on the wall in the main hall, near the stairs. Not a day passed but what some girl or other spared a few coppers, or even a sixpence, for the box.

There was no appointed time for opening the box and remitting the collection to the hospital authorities. Now and again during the term Miss Somerfield would attend to the matter, and then she would give out in Big Hall how much the total had been,

The appalling thing was that at any moment the box might be found to have been rifled. It only needed a maid to handle the box whilst dusting the hall, and its looted condition would become known.

So, then, here was the problem for Madge to face. How was she to restore an average amount of money to the box with all possible speed?

Agitatedly she put a hand into her pocket for her purse, but it was not there. She had come away from home last evening without it.

In any case, she knew that her cash resources were only a few shillings, and Lena must have taken more than a pound—considerably more. The box had not been officially opened this term. It had held several weeks' collection at the time it was looted.

And then suddenly a thought struck Madge that turned her sick with dismay.

To rifle the box, Lena must have slit the gummed-on protecting label to the sliding panel at the base of the box.

Even if she put back a fair amount of money, there would still be the tell-tale sign that the box had been tampered with!

"But I can't bother about that," Madge said to herself desperately. "The thing is for me to put back the money. I've got to get some money to-day, but how—how?"

Borrow from other girls?

But this crisis had come about just at a time when she had no chums from whom to borrow! At this moment Betty and all the rest were "off" with her, and that again was entirely Lena's doing. "It would serve her right," thought Madge passionately, "if I told her I might have been able to save her now, by borrowing money, only—she herself has robbed me of my friends!"

Towards Lena she could not feel any pity. Why should she? It was for Kitty's sake—dear Kitty's and the mother's, too—that she was going to get the money to put back. As for Lena, the culprit, some day, perhaps, she would be brought to her knees over so much wrong-doing.

At last Madge went back to the schoolhouse. The various Forms had gone in to breakfast, and she was due at the Fourth Form table. In the main hall a housemaid was busy dusting and polishing. Madge saw the girl give a brisk wipe to a curved oak chair, and then—

The watcher's heart missed a beat. For now the housemaid was flicking the duster over the collecting-box hanging to the wall.

The girl had only to take it off its two nails, and there would be a cry of surprise. Empty!

By a great mercy, however, nothing like that happened. The girl in cap and apron passed on, dusting ledges and rubbing panels, and Madge, breathing freely again, went into the dining-room.

As she came to the Fourth Form table, one girl, and one only, looked up at her. It was Lena, and her look was not one of pleasure. How could it be?

Madge's own eyes gazed deeply into the other's, and she thought:

"Lena wonders if I know! She herself knows what Kitty was wanting to tell me. She has guessed!"

The late-comer to breakfast took the seat awaiting her, and Miss Redgrave spoke down the table to her kindly:

"Did you see Kitty Daunt, Madge?"

"Yes, Miss Redgrave."

"And how is the poor girl now?"

"Yes, bai Jove, pway tell us, Madge! Do believe our weally gweat anxiety!"

"I think Kitty will go on better now," was all

Madge would answer, as she received her first course at the hands of Ellen, the parlourmaid.

At that table the talk could not get going this morning. Cora Grandways tried to be funny once or twice, but only ended by getting herself ignored. Miss Redgrave, knowing why all the girls were so low-spirited, did not try to rally them. She thought it only right that the Form should be sympathetically subdued on account of Kitty, especially as Lena was present.

"You others can rise now," the youthful mistress said, whilst Madge was still making a pretence at breakfast. "It's a lovely morning, and there is time before school—"

"To go across to the san!" exclaimed Polly, jumping up eagerly.

"Yes, wather! Goals, goals—"

"Ooo, yes; queek—queek!"

"And nurse will bless you!" was Miss Redgrave's smiling prediction. "Still, I'm not going to prevent you. Madge, do make a good brekker!"

That girl nodded abstractedly. Away went the rest of the Form, and Miss Redgrave also hurried off, to find Madge suddenly starting up to call her back.

"Miss Redgrave! Please—"

"Yes, Madge?"

"May I be excused first school, to go home and get something?"

"Certainly, Madge. You and Lena are both excused, in view of the upset about Kitty. But show up for midday dinner, so that I know you are all right."

"Thank you!" came softly from Madge.

There was nothing to tell the mistress what tremendous agitation the girl was undergoing.

An idea had suddenly flashed upon her, making her feverishly eager to get away to the town. She must get some of her things together at home, and raise money on them! With Mrs. Daunt and Lena remaining on hand at Morocco, it would be easy to carry out this desperate project with perfect secrecy.

Madge hastened away to put on her hat and coat. Then suddenly she realised that she would have to speak with Lena before going off, to ask if that girl had the key of the house.

To her surprise, she found Lena alone, mooning about the ground floor, instead of keeping with Betty and the rest, as usual. Madge walked straight up to her, and asked the question:

"Is the house open at home, Lena, or have you the key? I am going off at once to get something."

The guilty girl stared dully, answering:

"You'll be able to get in. I left the back door on the latch. You can have my bicycle, if you like, as yours got damaged last evening. My bike is down at the gateway."

Madge nodded to imply that she would use the bicycle. She turned to go, letting her tense expression convey her feelings towards the other girl, who was silent and sullen-looking.

"Madge!"

"Well, what?"

The culprit had suddenly stepped after her much-wronged schoolfellow.

"What did—what did Kitty say to you, Madge?"

"You know very well!" flashed Madge, and with that she shook off Lena's detaining hand and strode away.

Two minutes later Madge mounted the borrowed bicycle, and for the next half-hour she was riding furiously along the undulating roadway to the town.

Labouring for breath, she toiled up every hill on the machine, instead of dismounting, and on each level stretch she pedalled as for her very life. So precious was every moment!

Arrived indoors, she rushed upstairs to her room, and then looked over all her belongings, considering which she should try to turn into ready money.

Her dressing-table held pawnable articles, such as silver-backed brushes and a hand-mirror. She also had a treasured necklace of real seed-pearls that had been her mother's years ago.

There was a pawnshop in Barncombe, as there is in every town, but Madge had many reasons for shrinking from the idea of going to a pawnshop.

It was not that she felt ashamed. Her cause was a good one. Only, she feared she would be recognised as a Morcove girl, and would bring disgrace upon the school.

So, in the end, she decided upon the alternative plan of taking some of her frocks to a wardrobe-dealer.

During the next few minutes she was very busy in her bed-room, taking out her few frocks from the hanging cupboard, folding and smoothing them, with the thought of how ill she could spare them.

She did not often have a new frock, but when she did it was something good. Now it was all to her honour that Madge could do up the bundle without any grieving over having to part with her wardrobe.

Quiet old Barncombe town was astir with life when she reached the narrow High Street, the bundle under one arm.

Turning aside presently into a mean side-street, she came to the dingy shop of the wardrobe-dealer, a wheezy old woman with greasy ringlets

of hair hanging about her ears. Mrs. Baxter—for that was the old dame's name—did not march with the fashions herself, although she was very keen on buying fashionable "left-offs" to sell them again.

Palpitating with nervousness, Madge found herself standing by whilst Mrs. Baxter threw open the bundle and began to sniff rather scornfully at the contents.

"Huh!" broke out Mrs. Baxter, spreading out a frock for inspection. "What do you expect me to give you for this here, my gal? There's any amount about, you know."

"I trust you to deal with me fairly," Madge said unhesitatingly. "I have told you I want to get some money at once to—help somebody else."

"Very kind of you, miss, so long as you don't expect me to be the worse off for such kindness! Not much good in being kind at others' expense, is there?"

Madge gave a feeble smile, admitting the fairness of this argument. Mrs. Baxter pulled another frock about.

"Well, I dunno, I'm sure! They ain't really my sort. My clients want something what they calls a bit more jazzy—something they can go to dances in, or the pitchers. Howsoever, miss, I don't mind, as a favour, giving you ten shillings for the lot!"

Indignation flamed in Madge's face.

"Oh, give me them back!" she cried disgustedly.

"I'll take them—"

"Well, miss, what's your idea, then, of a fair price?"

"You'd never pay it. You don't know a really nice frock when you see it. But I am hard pressed, and if you like to make it two pounds for the three—"

"Miss, I couldn't dream—"

"No; all right—"

"But thirty shillings, miss? Come now—"

"No!"

Madge was spirited enough to stand out for thirty-two-and-six, and she got it. As the three frocks had cost together about eight guineas, Mrs. Baxter was not doing so badly. But she doled out the money as if this were a case of daylight robbery.

Away rushed Madge, and now her simple task was to get the money turned into the smallest change.

It took her a little while, for she had to make trifling purchases here and there. At last, however, she was on the road back to Morcove, weighted down with a wealth of pennies and not a few sixpences.

The chimes of Morcove School were beating out half-past eleven as she rode in at the gateway. The scholars had been out for "break" and returned to the class-rooms, and so she could count upon a chance at once to put back some of the money.

Only, how dreadfully difficult it was going to be—dropping coin after coin into the box as fast as possible!

She knew the amount of noise that it was possible for a coin to make, dropping into a money-box, and, although the scholars were in class, there would be the risk of a servant seeing or hearing her.

Going in by the front door, she at once had the fatal collecting-box in view. There it was, over by the foot of the staircase, and there was no one about—thank goodness!



THE WRONG GIRL TAKEN! There before the eyes of all, went Madge Minden, who had been found tampering with the collecting-box! Lena among the onlookers, seemed very upset. She knew it should have been the not Madge, marched away in disgrace!

She took a grip on herself, and went straight across to the box. All the small change was purposely loose in her jacket pockets. Taking out a handful, with a frightened glance this way and that, she began to put in pennies and sixpences.

Just as she had feared, the coins jangled down noisily. The empty box aggravated the noise, and there was a monotony in the jingling and rattling and tinkling that kept her all of a tremble.

Then suddenly she had a desperate idea. It was hopeless to expect that she could go on like this, paying the coins into the box, in full view of anyone who might come suddenly upon the scene. It would be safer, much safer, to slip the box from its two nails and take it to the coat-lobby. There she could pay in the coins much faster, muffling the noise by folding a coat round the box.

There was still the risk of someone's going by and missing the box from its accustomed place, but that risk she had to take. It was far less than the other.

So, with another wary glance around, she whipped the collecting-box from the nails and walked away with it. She had only to take a few steps and she was in the coat-lobby.

Agitatedly she took her stand in there, muffled the box with her unbuttoned coat, and got out another handful of money from her pocket.

Madge fairly rained the coins into the box. As fast as she could, she slipped one coin after another through the slot, all the time heart-in-mouth with the fear of being discovered at the strange, desperate task.

But her straining ears picked up no warning sounds. Except for the muffled jingling down of the money, she only heard a drone of voices from one of the class-rooms.

Of a sudden, however, she got a shock.

There was someone close at hand, someone lurking out of sight round a corner! She was sure of it!

And then, even as she paused in her frantic task and looked nervously over one shoulder, she saw the lurker disclose herself.

Cora Grandways!

None Will Believe Her—None!

"**H**ULLO, what are you up to there? I've been wondering," came Cora's grinning admission, whilst she advanced towards white-faced Madge. "That's the collecting-box you've got—well!"

"Yes!" jerked out Madge fiercely. "And what's that to do with you?"

"I saw you take it off the wall just now and bring it here!" Cora announced exultantly. "I was coming downstairs, because I'd just run up to my study, with permission, and—"

"You took the trouble to spy? You would!" Madge exclaimed in bitter disgust. "All right, go and tell! Say what you like—"

"That tone to me!" Cora struck in, with a scowl. "You are a nice one to talk as if it's sneaking to tell! What girl would find another rifting that collecting-box, and not say anything?"

"I have not taken a penny!"

"You haven't? Then what have you been up to?" demanded Cora, with savage self-assurance.

"Here, show me that box—the underneath!"

"No!"

"Won't you?"

And next instant Cora, attempting a snatch that failed, saw enough of the box to be convinced that the sliding panel had been tampered with.



BETTY'S UNPLEASANT MISSION.

"Madge, you are to come over to the san- with me," said Betty as she unlocked the door of the Detention Room. "Kitty Wants you." Madge rose and came listlessly towards the door.

At the same time, her slight scuffle with Madge caused Cora Grandways to realise that the other girl had a lot of small change in her jacket pockets. She heard the money jingle.

"You wretched thief!" was Cora's triumphant cry. "Why, I've fairly caught you! Well, who would have thought it? Madge Minden, one of the Study 12 lot—oh, my!"

"I tell you I have not taken a—"

"Yah, tell that to your chums, and see if they believe it!" jeered Cora. "There's money cramming your pockets—money taken from the box!"

"No, Cora! I declare—"

"I say you are—you are a thief!"

It was a cry voiced loudly enough to be heard in other parts of the schoolhouse. Cora Grandways, the standing enemy of Madge and all who were or had been her chums, meant to make something of this!

She honestly believed that she had caught Madge stealing. Considering how often the spitfire of the Form had tried to work up baseless charges against Study 12 out of pure malice, it was not to be supposed that this—a clear case, if ever there was one—could be hushed up.

"Not likely!" Cora fairly shouted, whilst she was aware of servants coming quickly from the domestic regions and scholars and mistresses suddenly rushing from the class-rooms. "It's like your cheek, Madge Minden, to expect me to say nothing! You have been stealing, and—"

And there Cora broke off. The narrow entrance to the cloak-room suddenly held a mixed crowd of startled teachers, scholars, and servants. Miss Redgrave was to the fore. She took in the scene at a glance, and gave a great cry of horror and surprise.

"Madge! Cora! Madge Minden, what's that in your hands?"

"It's the collecting-box, and she's been getting money out of it!" Cora cried out excitedly. "And then she asks me not to say anything! Miss Redgrave—"

"Come here, Madge! Give me that box! Why, the sliding panel has been tampered with! Did you do this?"

"No!"

"What do you mean by 'No'? If you did not tamper with it, who did?"

Madge was silent now.

Poor ill-fated Madge, with a sudden vivid vision of Kitty, to whom the thought that Lena could yet be saved had meant so much! And the mother, in happy ignorance at present of how a daughter of hers had played thief!

"This requires an explanation, Madge," said Miss Redgrave, whilst the crowd grew bigger, seething with excitement. "For what possible reason, except pilfering, should you remove this box from where it always hangs?"

"Besides," broke out Cora, shrugging scornfully. "there is all the stolen money in her pockets now!"

"What!"

Miss Redgrave advanced upon Madge sternly.

"Have you any money loose in your pockets, Madge Minden?"

"Yes, I—"

"Show me!"

The girl, with a desperate look on her ashen face, never moved. In the greatest distress at having to do so, the Form-mistress took one more step, held Madge with one hand, and used the other hand to turn out a jacket pocket.

Then there spilled all over the floor a quantity of small change. There was nothing but pennies and just a few sixpences.

As evidence bearing upon the rifting of an ordinary collecting-box, nothing could have been more condemning.

Those who were able to see for themselves were painfully convinced on the instant. They cast back the news to scores of others who were unable to get near enough to see.

"It's Madge Minden!" scholars on the fringe of the crowd were told in scandalised tones. "She has been caught red-handed stealing money! She had got nearly all the money from the school collecting-box in her pockets!"

"Never!"

But the evidence was to prove too much even for the most incredulous girls in the crowd.

Only a few had witnessed the actual denunciation of her in the cloak-room, but now almost the entire school was to see Madge Minden marched away by Miss Redgrave to the headmistress.

There, before the eyes of all, went the girl who had been caught in the act! Miss Redgrave, walking beside the white-faced scholar, held the collecting-box, and also a handkerchief full of small coins that had been gathered up in the coat-room floor. There, too, went Cora Grandways, ordered by the mistress to be ready to repeat her evidence before Miss Somerfield.

As the crowd dispersed, Betty and Polly found Paula almost in tears.

"Oh, gads, gads, this is dreadful—dreadful! What has come over that good Madge that she's doing these things?"

"I don't know," sighed Betty sadly. "It beats me!"

"She used to be such a wipper!"

"Yes," said Polly heavily; "and now—this! What do you think of it, Lena?"

"It—it has upset me," quavered that girl. "I haven't the heart to—talk about it."

And, indeed, none looked more distressed than Lena Daunt at this moment.

How was she to end this secret torment, the misery that came of a guilty conscience?

Was she to let Madge suffer in silence the awful shame of being found guilty of the theft? Unless she—Lena—spoke out now, it was evident that Madge really would suffer the ignominy resignedly, rather than attempt to clear herself.

"She is thinking only of Kitty and of mother!" was Lena's agonised reflection. "She will go on bearing the blame, rather than let mother in for this extra trouble! But how can I stand by and let Madge suffer—how can I?"

Yet she did. For just a few minutes Lena Daunt was at the point of speaking out before the whole school. Then she let cowardice get the better of honourable impulse. Word came that Madge was being taken to the detention-room. The case was as bad as that! Expulsion was being talked of freely as the only possible outcome of her heinous misdeed. And yet Lena was—silent!

It was no use. She dare not speak out now!

Even though every word from Betty and the rest was as coals of fire upon her guilty head, even though she knew that Madge was heroically suffering for the sake of Kitty and her mother, still the wretched girl could not bring herself to own up.

And so the day wore on at Moreove School. Lena, the guilty one, mingled with trusting girls who were glad to own her as their chum. Madge, in the detention-room, sat all alone, with the look of atter despair upon her wan face.

Whilst in that quiet ward of the sanatorium, in her corner bed, lay poor Kitty Daunt, watched over by a fond mother who was rejoicing that the darling child seemed to be mending fast.

The Face at the Window!

"MOTHER—"

"Yes, my lamb?"

"It is nice when I wake up all at once and find you here like this, mother. But—could I have Madge in to see me, please?"

Mrs. Daunt found it hard not to let a look of acute distress pass across her face as Kitty begged that favour all at once, after rousing out of a doze.

"What's the time, mother, please?"

"Just gone four, Kitty, dear."

"Oh, then, I tell you what! You go away and get a nice tea, mother, and do ask Madge to come across when she has had hers!"

"You wouldn't rather see—Lena?"

"N-n-no, mother. It's Madge I want. You mustn't mind if I seem rather odd. I just want to ask Madge something."

"Very well, dear; I will see if I can get Madge."

The Form captain and her chums were holding no little happy tea-party in Study 12 this afternoon. They were not in the mood for that sort of thing. Betty, Polly, Paula, along with Helen, Dolly, Trixie, Tess and Naomer they were having tea at the Form's own table downstairs, when word came that Betty and Polly were wanted by the headmistress.

What did this mean?

Miss Somerfield was on the point of going out when the two girls got to her private room.

"Ah, Betty—and you, Polly," exclaimed the headmistress gently, "I am told that little Kitty,

over in the san., wants to see Madge Minden! The patient must have her wish granted, and so I thought I would get you two girls to take Madge across to the san., and then return with her. I could send one of the maids, but I think this is being more considerate to Madge Minden—less humiliating."

The Study 12 couple knew not what to say. Undoubtedly Miss Somerfield was acting for the best in appointing them to act as an escort to the inmate of the detention-room, but it was going to be anything but a pleasant task.

"You will find the key in the detention-room door," was Miss Somerfield's word of dismissal.

So, the two scholars went away, and they came to the outside of that room which, prison-like as it was, hardly ever knew an occupant. Its use was almost traditional. Until to-day there had been no scholar banished to the detention-room for a very great while.

Betty turned back the key and set the door wide open. The room was in deep gloom, for wild weather was beating up, and the barred window received little of the enfeebled light of a stormy afternoon.

"Madge, you are to come with us," spoke the Fourth Form captain reluctantly, "to go across to the san. Kitty wants you again."

The girl who had been separated from the rest like this started out of her deep apathy at the mention of Kitty's name. She took her elbows off the bare table, stood up, and silently came towards the door.

Not a word passed. A deep flush dyed Madge's cheeks for a few moments, as if she were feeling acutely the ignominy of her position, and Betty and Polly felt sorry for her—very sorry indeed. Yet they knew not what to say.

If only it had been possible for them to wonder whether, after all, she were not wrongly condemned!

But she had been caught red-handed, and, what was more, to-day's terrible misdeed was not the only one!

Out-of-doors the three girls had to run for it, with heads down to the roaring gale. Some rain was drizzling from the black clouds, but a few seconds found the trio under cover again. Madge hastily wiped a few wet drops from her cheeks. Only splashes of rain, perhaps. Or—were they tears?

The day nurse received them at the entrance to the ward, bidding Betty and Polly stay back whilst Madge alone went to that bed in a far corner where Kitty lay.

"Too many visitors would not be good for her," explained the nurse. "She is not getting on as well as all that."

Yet Madge, as she came alone to the bedside, had the glad belief that Lena's little sister was looking a shade better. But Madge was not allowing for the eager delight at seeing her which was in the youngster's face.

"Come along, Madge, and sit down!" the patient said in an eager whisper. "I can see Betty Barton and Polly Linton, and I hope they'll not go without talking to me. But first of all—have you managed to do anything about it?"

Madge nodded. In the midst of all her despair, she was thankful that Kitty had no idea of what exactly she had "managed to do" about it.

"How do you mean, Madge?" the other girl whispered on tensely. "Is—is my sister Lena saved?"

"Yes, dear. She can never be suspected now.

"And that is all your doing! Oh, Madge, what a brick you are! You just can't understand how glad I am, Madge! It was making me feel sort of off my head. I dreamed about it if I dozed off, and I was afraid I'd be talking in my sleep," the sufferer confided distressfully. "But you have saved her—saved my sister—"

"And so, Kitty, dear, all you have to do now is to go on quietly and get well."

"Yes, I know. But—but you must tell me how you managed it, Madge," implored the child. "I mean to say, I do hope you—it— Was it very difficult, Madge—risky to yourself? Tell me!"

"No, Kitty, I shall not tell you. You must not talk too much, you know. How is the poor head now?"

Kitty ignored this gentle question, except that she touched the bandage as if to imply that there was a pain just there.

"I want you to tell me, Madge, because I've been thinking. It must have been very risky. You are sure you haven't got into any difficulty over it, Madge?"

The direct question was followed by such a searching scrutiny from Kitty's feverish eyes that Madge quailed a little.

Try how she would, it was impossible not to look confused. She forced a reassuring smile, feeling as she did so how it made a mockery of all assumed composure. Keener than ever the feverish eyes scanned her, and then suddenly Kitty's own expression changed. She looked very worried and ill all at once.

"Madge! You—there's something you are keeping from me!" came the sufferer's dismayed exclamation. "You are worried, I can tell! In saving Lena—oh, Madge, what has it meant for you? Something that's hard to bear, I am sure!"

"Hush, dear! If you excite yourself like this, I shall have to go, Kitty."

"But—"

"Lie back, dear, and stay quiet, there's a good girl. Here is nurse coming."

"I can't help worrying, Madge. If you won't tell me, I shall ask the other girls. I shall call them—"

"Kitty, you mustn't!" Madge implored, with an increasing agitation that was not lost upon the sufferer. "Oh, I wish I had not come, Kitty! But I wanted you to be easy in your mind—"

"Yes, that's just it! And so you—you are putting up with something that isn't fair to you!" Kitty was exclaiming, when the day nurse arrived at the bedside.

"Lie down, Kitty, there's a good girl!"

"But, nurse, I want—I want to speak to the other girls! Mayn't I speak with them, please?"

"Now, now, dear! Hush! This has done you no good," the nurse remarked. And then, as Kitty sank back, weeping wildly: "What have you said to upset her, Madge Minden?"

"Nothing, nurse."

"You must go, anyhow," was the firm request. So Madge obediently stepped away. She was rejoining Betty and Polly at the ward door, when Kitty lifted herself up in the bed and tearfully asked again:

"Nurse, those two other girls—"

"No, dear, it's out of the question. You know Madge was only fetched here because you asked for her."

"But perhaps the others want to speak to me, nurse. Why did they come with Madge, if—"

"They only came to—well, to keep Madge company!" was the tactful answer from the nurse,

as she prevailed upon Kitty to lie back. "That's right, my pet! And now try to sleep again."

She held the child's pulse for a moment, and then went away, doing one or two things quietly in the ward.

The wild afternoon was growing noisier. Louder and louder the risen gale thudded about this isolated building. Kitty, in her bed, somehow dreaded the night that would be falling a full hour earlier because of the storm-darkened sky.

Her poor head was a-throb as badly as ever. Excited fancy made her see Madge at the bedside still, with that look which betrayed her suffering for others' sakes—the suffering which Madge had wanted to conceal and could not!

Lena saved—yes, saved for good and all! "She can never be suspected now!" Madge's own words those. But how had Lena been saved—how? At what cost to Madge herself?

Suddenly, above the howlings of the gale, there came the rattling, tinkling crash of a falling chimney-pot from the schoolhouse roof.

Smash! it dashed itself to pieces loudly upon a bit of stone paving, and Kitty, as she heard the alarming noise, sat up in bed.

For the moment nurse was out of the ward. Kitty from her bed could see out of one window, across to the schoolhouse.

She saw many faces suddenly at the schoolhouse windows, and, like every bed-ridden person, she felt the longing to be up and about again. Impulsively she slipped from her bed and went to the nearest window, hoping to attract attention, and then exchange a wave of the hand.

Then it was that she observed a single face at one ground-floor window of the schoolhouse that had bars to it, and it was the face of Madge Minden!

She was sure of it instantly. Although the daylight was so feeble, the face at that barred window was so white against the black background that it stood out plainly. Madge Minden, all by herself in that room!

"But why? Is that room a study? Oh, no, it can't be!" Kitty reasoned with herself wildly. "The studies are all upstairs. Besides, the bars—the iron bars! Oh, I do believe she—they—they's some sort of a detention-room!"

The patient's very feverishness was making her mind extra acute, as fever will often do. She stood looking for a moment longer, then gazed around the ward. Nurse was still away, but might be back at any moment.

Kitty normally was the most obedient of girls, but now she was quite light-headed with the excitement attacking a nature still suffering badly from the accident. Suddenly she was getting into her day clothes, putting them on all anyhow.

"I'm going across to the schoolhouse, I am—I will go!" she chattered to herself shakily. "They shan't keep me here, not whilst Madge is there! I want to know!"

A few moments more, and she was going towards the door with tottery steps. She reached it, tremulously drew it open, and then stopped dead, emitting a little cry.

She was face to face with her sister. Lena had come across to the san., unbidden, and was at this moment entering.

"Kitty! Oh, why are you out of bed? Go back—go back! What do you mean by—"

"Because—Madge—I want to know!" was the sufferer's frantic, incoherent cry. "Leave me alone! Lena! Let me go! It's Madge I want—not you! Oh, my head, my head! I want Madge—Madge!"

The wild cries died away suddenly. Only the howling of the gale was to be heard where Lena, pale as death, was holding her stricken sister, to save her from falling to the floor.

Through Storm and Darkness!

A COUPLE of hours had passed. The night, as wild as any that Morcove had ever known, had closed over land and sea.

In the schoolhouse the scholars were settled down to prep., although one girl was moodily drifting about the place—now upstairs, now downstairs—wretched as could be.

It was Lena.

The very shriekings of the gale seemed to be reproaches against herself. In the howling of the wild wind, or the murmur of it, like a rumbling voice, down the chimneys, she seemed to hear the voice of some angry spirit crying shame upon her, asking her how much longer she was going to let the innocent suffer for her misdeeds!

Her trusting chums imagined that she was only as moody as this because of Kitty's illness. They little knew! To be with them was to meet with nothing but compassionate remarks—coals of fire upon her guilty head! And so she was moaning about the schoolhouse, with only her miserable thoughts for company.

Suddenly, when she was standing in a tragic mood in the entrance-hall, the front door banged open, and someone was almost blown into the house by the shrieking gale.

With a sudden throb of alarm, Lena recognised the nurse who had been on duty all day.

"Is the telephone broken, or what?" panted the woman, setting her wind-blown coil to rights. "I have been trying to 'phone from the san., but there was no answer. Are the wires down?"

"They may be," Lena answered unasily. "That chimney-pot, when it fell—"

"Then perhaps the line for ringing up the town is also broken!" was the nurse's alarmed cry. "And I was going to ask Miss Redgrave to 'phone for the doctor!"

"Why, what's the matter, then?" jerked out Lena, in great excitement. "My sister—"

"She has taken a very bad turn all at once. We must have the doctor without delay. Let me try the house 'phone," said nurse, hastening to the telephone-lobby.

Lena drifted after her, and stood by, palpitating with suspense. Her heart was thumping as she waited and watched, only to see the nurse listening in vain for a reply from the telephone exchange.

"Broken down—it must be!" the nurse remarked at last, replacing the receiver. "And that's a nice thing! Oh, Miss Redgrave," she added eagerly, as that young lady appeared upon the scene, "the gale has upset the 'phone!"

"Yes—"

"And we need the doctor at once for Lena's sister! Is Miss Somerfield about?" asked the nurse eagerly. "Something must be done—at once!"

Lena saw Miss Redgrave turn pale.

"Miss Somerfield is away, fulfilling an engagement in the town, nurse. That wouldn't matter so much, but she has the car."

"How very unfortunate—deplorable! I know, by Kitty's symptoms, that she is taken very bad. What can you do about getting the doctor at once, Miss Redgrave?"

"Just a moment, and I will see," answered the Form-mistress, signing to the nurse to follow her.

Another second, and they were gone from Lena, who stood transfixed, clenched hands lifted to her chin, in the attitude of utter dismay.

Then suddenly the conscience-stricken and agonised girl flashed about and ran to the coat-lobby. On went her outdoor things, and away she darted to the front door.

Swool, soo-hoo! howled the gale as she opened the door. Battered and blown by the wind, she rushed away through the darkness, round to the cycle-shed. For her mind was made up. She herself was going off at once to get the doctor. It seemed up to her.

The way in which she had been the first to hear about Kitty's relapse, the failure of the telephone and the absence of the car, it all seemed to be Fate's own stern demand that she herself should do something at last for her sister's sake!

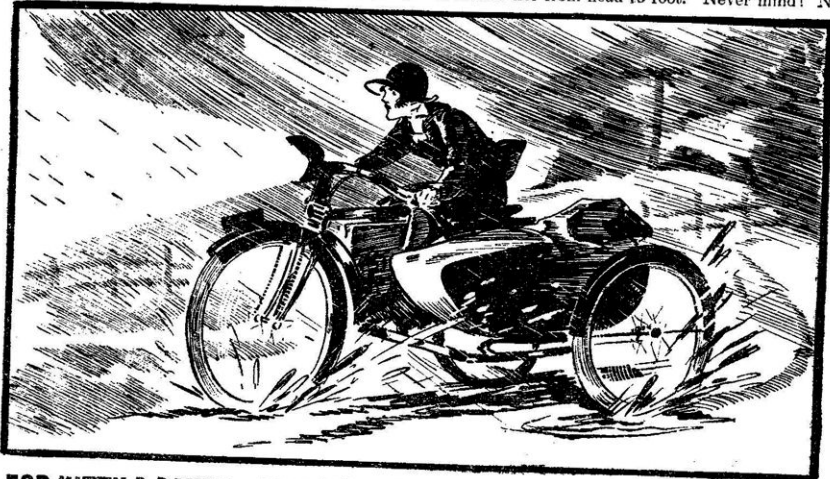
Only when she had fought her way against wind

Time after time the engine refused to fire up. She had not got the knack. But at last, when she was red hot with exertion and agasp for breath—bang, bang, bang!—the engine roared to life.

Peering before her into the darkness that was split by the front light, she let in the clutch. The cycle jumped away alarmingly, but she kept her seat and steered clear of the shed walls with only an inch to spare.

Then she was off and away down to the school gates, not yet closed for the night. She came out on to the high road, with a maddening medley of sounds deafening her—the roar of the engine, the booming of the gale, the crashing of storm-tossed trees, the hiss of pelting rain.

The headlamp flashed upon great puddles through which the cycle had to go with a swish and a splash each time. The deluge lashed her face and drenched her from head to foot. Never mind! No



FOR KITTY'S SAKE!

Through the pelting rain sped Lena on the borrowed motor-cycle, into the night. She cared nothing for the great splashes that came up and drenched her. Nothing mattered except that she should get to the doctor in time to save her sister.

and rain to the cycle-sheds did she realise that she had come without matches with which to light a cycle-lamp.

She gave a wailing cry of rage against herself, thinking she would have to go back to the school-house. And then she remembered Cora Grandways' motor-cycle and sidecar, with its acetylene lamps. Perhaps Cora kept a box of matches ready to hand on the machine!

Frantically Lena groped her way to that motor-cycle, and fumbled open the tool-bag. No matches there. In the sidecar, perhaps! Yes, there was a box of matches in the forepeak!

And now the desperate idea seized Lena that she would use the motor-cycle for the dash to Barncombe. She had been astride one more than once before, just knew how to manage the engine. If only she could manage now—oh, the time it would save!

With feverish speed she got the lamps going, and then, dragging out the "combination," she flooded the carburettor, swung into the saddle, and tried to "kick off."

matter if she got soaked to the skin and was laid up for it afterwards, so long as she did the best for Kitty now!

On and on, and now the very fact that no other messenger from the school overtook her deepened the conviction that Fate itself had decreed this.

They must be losing no time in getting off a message to the doctor, but she herself was already on the way. Mile after mile along the gale-swept, deluged road, with inky darkness around her, except for the rain-dimmed headlamp, thus she was speeding on.

How bravely the motor-cycle was holding out against the impeding elements! She would soon be in Barncombe at this rate. But supposing the doctor had been called away to some other case? Oh, how precious was every moment, when it was so certain that delay might mean fatal consequences for Kitty!

It had become such a serious case with her—and why? All because her illness had been attended with such secret worry on her sister's account.

And now the lights of Barncombe twinkled at her through the black darkness of the wild night. Lena warned herself that she must drive with extra care. It would be a fearful catastrophe to get into a smash on the road before her urgent message had been delivered.

Strange to think how last evening Kitty had been undertaking a perilous ride simply to save her, Lena! Now it was she who was speeding through the night to save Kitty!

The High Street at last, and, luckily, the doctor's house was at this end of it.

She slowed a little, finally pulling up opposite a gate with a brass plate.

Feeling soaked to the skin—for the driving rain had been trickling down her neck—she dragged up the short path and stabbed a finger at the surgery bell.

Then a trim maid opened the door, to see this white-faced, storm-battered schoolgirl standing blown about by the gale.

"Is Dr. Barnby in?"

"Yes, miss."

"Oh, thank goodness!" gasped out Lena. "He is wanted at once at Morcove School—at once! My sister Kitty is taken worse. Do get him to go off at once, please!"

At this instant Dr. Barnby appeared. No sooner had he heard the urgent message than he ran to get his things on and get away in his car. Word came to Lena half a minute later that she could have a lift back to the school in the car, if she wished. But she shook her head, exclaiming mournfully:

"No, I cannot go back to Morcove! My home is in Barncombe, close handy. I will go home and—remain there."

Nor would the morrow see her once again at Morcove School—not, at any rate, as a scholar.

Never again!

She knew it must be so, even as she quitted the doctor's house, her urgent errand discharged.

For, now that she had done her best to atone to Kitty, she must make atonement—to Madge!

Darkness to Dawn!

IT had come to that at last with Lena Daunt. She had found herself in the end.

Last night she had been alone in the home, full of cowardly fears, as well as being stricken with remorse. To-night she would be alone again, the fear replaced by a new-born courage and frankness, compelling her to make a clean breast of all her misdeeds.

At a late hour a light was still burning downstairs at West View, Barncombe. Lena was writing—writing hard.

Very early next morning she found a messenger who would take three letters at once to Morcove School. One was for the headmistress, another for Study 12, the third for Lena's own mother.

Then, when the penitent girl knew that her confessions were safely on the way, she turned to at the household work. It was one outcome of her reformed nature that she felt the desire to work hard about the place, doing her best for the home whose peace and happiness she had been wont to destroy!

At Morcove School, Betty & Co. were just rejoicing over the glad news that Kitty had taken a turn for the better in the night, thanks to the doctor's timely arrival last evening, when a note was handed to the Form captain.

"From Lena Daunt!" Betty echoed the parlour-maid's remark. "Oh, I see! I suppose she doesn't feel up to coming to school this morning after the drenching she must have got last night. Just a sec., girls, and I'll tell you what she says!"

Then those who were with Betty saw a look of the greatest excitement and horror spread over her face. Why?

In a few moments they knew. The note was passing from hand to hand. Phrases from the staggering confession were being read aloud gaspingly.

Lena, then, was the one who had stolen that money from the collecting-box! Lena was the wrong-doer from first to last—Lena, not Madge!

"I say!" panted Betty at last. "And Madge Minden—"

"She is still in the detention-room!"

"Yes, wather! But geals, geals—"

"Ooo, yes; queek—queek!"

"Come on—yes!" Polly fairly yelled.

They stormed round to the detention-room. The key was in the lock. Betty turned it back, and sent the door crashing round to the wall.

"Madge! Madge! Oh, Madge!" they all shouted together. "Come on out of that—"

"Queek, queek—oo, yes, queek!"

And they showed her the letter.

Never-to-be-forgotten moment that it was for Madge Minden! Worth all the unmerited shame and suffering through which she had passed—this moment when the chums she loved were mobbing about her, making such a babel with their cries of deep regret and emotional pride in what they knew her to have endured!

Yes, Madge Minden had her just reward at last. She felt it then, as the entire school, with all its mistresses, seemed to be around her suddenly, in admiration and love. She felt it again when she was with Kitty, an hour later, and Kitty's mother.

But most of all, perhaps, Madge felt the great repayment when Lena was with her once again, after all, beneath the roof of Morcove School.

"I had to come," faltered Lena, left alone with Madge. "It is not that I have any idea of going on as a scholar, even if Morcove would have me. I have spoken with mother, and she agrees. After this, Madge, I can do best by making a fresh start in some other direction. But I felt I must come back to the school just to see you, Madge. I am so sick of being all I have been—a coward and all the rest!"

She suddenly dropped into a study chair, and sat wringing her hands under a drooping head.

"The other girls," she whispered huskily—"will they ever forgive me? How can I expect it?"

And suddenly she wept.

Madge went to her, bending over and putting an arm gently about the sorrow-stricken penitent.

"They will all forgive you, Lena, if only because I have asked them to!"

"Madge!"

"Hush, Lena! Don't cry any more. It's all right now!"

But Madge herself, for very joy, was blind with tears as she said it. So keenly did she, in her goodness of heart, feel the other's turning away for ever from all falsehood and folly!

THE END.

So, through the girl who had wronged her so much, Madge was restored to her old happy position of popularity with her chums. Next week you will read the first story in a new series. This is "The Luckiest Girl at Morcove!" Make sure you do not miss it!