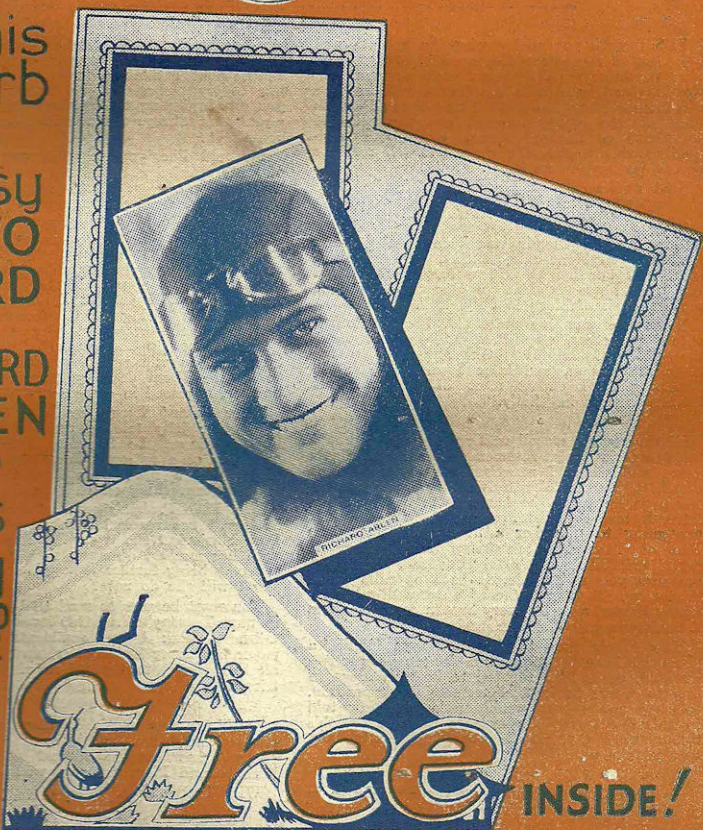


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Double Free Gift In This Issue!

# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2<sup>d</sup>

This  
Superb  
Real  
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PHOTO  
-CARD  
OF  
RICHARD  
ARLEN  
AND  
This  
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STAND-UP  
MOUNT



*A Long Enthralling Story of Betty Barton and Co. of Morcovè School.*

# TOO MUCH FOR THE MADCAP!



*What excitement there is in the Fourth Form when madcap Polly Linton suggests the production of a Form Play! With characteristic energy, Polly herself shoulders the bulk of the work, her chums supporting her loyally. All is going well, when with dramatic suddenness, comes news that robs Polly of all happiness and all desire to carry on with her self-imposed task!*

## Proposed and Seconded!

**T**HE meeting was over. Morcovè's Fourth Form class-room door had flown open with a bang, to let boisterous juniors come surging forth.

Some went storming upstairs to the studies. Others formed into chummy groups and slowly drifted away, deep in talk. In either case, there were only happy faces to be seen. Betty Barton, the Form captain, had given the meeting a pleasant surprise this evening.

She had begun by reminding her hearers that every term they reckoned to keep up the amateur theatricals. Was this term to be an exception to the rule? ("No!") Were they to leave it to the Fifth Form, perhaps, to steal a march on them? ("No!")

Well then, what about a play? Unless she, the captain, was greatly mistaken, a certain member of the Form would love to write them something. (Loud cheers, and much standing up to identify madcap Polly Linton as being the party suspected.)

In the end, and after much argument, proposing and seconding and showing of hands, everything had been amicably arranged. Resolved, that if and when Polly Linton chose to write a play, the Form would produce it!

Resolved, also, that Madge Minden be appointed musical director; also, that Tess Trelawney be and is hereby authorised to paint the scenery.

Resolved, finally, that Betty Barton be appointed secretary and treasurer, with power to collect "subs."

Possibly it was Betty's additional duty, as captain, to stay behind in the class-room, to set Miss Everard's own desk in order, so that it would not show too many signs of having been used for the "Chair," and then to put out the lights. But Betty, quite apart from these reasons, did not want to hurry away with the rest—even with her own best chums, like madcap Polly Linton, and amiable Paula Creel, and that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara. "Let me," Betty was thinking mirthfully, "have just a minute to get my breath back."

So, by a little adroitness, she was able to hang back until all was quiet on the Fourth Form front, so to speak. In other words, the last chattering groups had moved off, and upstairs most of the study doors had been shut by girls who ought now to be thinking of prep., when Betty switched off the class-room lights and ascended to the Fourth Form quarters.

Very few of the studies were quite silent as she went past them; but Betty would have been bound to admit that they represented peace itself, compared with the hubbub emanating from Study 12—her study! Not only could she hear its usual occupants, Polly, Paula and Naomer, all talking at once. Pam Wyloughby and a few more had drifted in, for a further chat about the play.

BY  
MARJORIE STANTON

Expecting an outcry on entering, Betty wore a bland smile as she turned the knob and went in.

Something like the pandemonium of the recent meeting instantly took place in Study 12. Whereas Paula and others were vigorously demonstrating their delight over the way things had gone at the meeting, Polly Linton very noisily expressed disapproval. It goes without saying that the disapproval was only make-believe; but that made it none the less loud:

"You're a nice one, Betty!" cried Polly.

"Why——" laughed Betty.

"You know!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't take any notice of her, Betty——"

"No, bekas——"

"Be quiet, you!" Polly rounded on Merve's royal but excitable scholar. "I promise one thing! If I've got to have anything to do with the show—you won't be in it, Naomer."

"Won't I?" retorted Naomer saucily, keeping at a safe distance, with the table between her and Polly. "Betty will see about zat!"

Polly appeared to have grounds for feeling very put out!

"I'm not going to be the one, this time, to have to write the book of words and everything!"

"Oh, Polly!" cried Pam and others. "When you have always been so good at that sort of thing."

"Yes, bekas—— Eeeeee, ow!" screeched Naomer, her left ear suddenly between Polly's finger and thumb. "What ze diggings!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's right, Polly deah," chuckled Paula, from the best armchair. "Naomer wants keeping in ordah, yes, wather. We had much too much of Naomer at the meeting, bai Jove!"

"Did you! And how would you like to have your ear pinched—eh?" demanded Naomer, suddenly pulling on a very shell-like one.

"Ow, ow! Stop it!"

"Order!" cried Betty. "I say, we make more noise than all the rest of the studies put together."

"So we ought!" claimed Polly. "We're the only study that really matters! It's the captain's study."

"Only it isn't the captain who makes the noise," smiled Madge Minden.

"The trouble is—the whole trouble is, Naomer," was the madcap's assertion. "All this talk about the Form getting up a sort of musical comedy; I wouldn't mind having a shot at it, only—how can one? Naomer, if she isn't chewing apples, is scrunching toffee. I don't say anything about not being able to do prep. That doesn't matter! But when it comes to swotting out a play——"

"You know you're longing to start, this very evening!" cried Helen Craig.

"And Naomer will be very, very good—won't you, Naomer?" suggested Madge, pulling the dusky one on to her knee. "Study 12 will be as quiet as a public library, when Polly wants to compose!"

"Yes, bekas, I zink of doing some composing myself, for ze play," agreed Naomer gaily. "What ze diggings, why not? You see the songs I shall make up!"

"Better leave it all to Naomer," jested Polly. "Let her have a shot this time."

"With all due respect to Naomer, I would not have liked to put that proposal before the meet-

ing," chuckled Betty. "I'd have been booked! No! Under powers conferred upon me by the Form at the general meeting, Polly, I'm afraid I must call upon you to jump to it! Something that will be one better than our last affair, jolly good though it was!"

"But what sort of something?" cried the madcap.

"That's up to you," said Betty. "A neat plot, of course; there must be a definite idea—simple, original, clever——"

"Anything else?" asked the one whose established fame as the Form's playwright had let her in for this.

"The fwesher the bettah, what?" suggested Paula, combing her hair as she lolled in the best armchair. "If you could stwike an original note, Polly deah——"

"I shall do some striking before the end!"

"And then, bai Jove, a few epigwams——"

"A few what?"

"Phwases that will create a pwofound impwession——"

"On the mind of the Fifth Form, yes," chimed in Helen. "We will assume the Fifth Form have minds, whilst modestly appreciating that where talent is concerned, the Fourth has it."

"Polly, in writing the play——" began Pam; but now Polly flared out:

"I don't want any advice about writing the blessed play. I shall write the play in my own way——"

"Oh, so you are going to write it? That's good," commented Betty, with pretended relief.

"How can I get out of it?" protested the madcap virtuously. "When you, Betty, as good as told the meeting that I had had an idea for a play."

"Well, hadn't you?" grinned Betty. "Would I ever have called the meeting to find out if the Form would be keen, if you hadn't been talking about it being time the Form got up something to act?"

"Yes, and what about that exercise book you have been writing in so much on ze quiet?" Naomer accused the madcap, who blushed.

"It's a fine lot of time I get for quiet writing," she retorted, with mock huffiness. "Anyhow, Madge, you're for it, too. 'Music by Madge Minden'—that goes without saying."

Madge, the music lover, gave a demurring smile, but did not protest. She knew, only too well, that protests would be in vain.

"And you, Tess," Polly exulted over the Form's artistic genius, Tess Trelawney; "plenty for you to do in the next week or two."

"Polly's running into rhyme already," said Betty. "I hope it's to be all in rhyme, Polly?"

"I shan't say! And mind," warned the madcap, "if anybody goes looking at that exercise book which contains—er—notes of mine—they'll get it in the neck from me!"

The Form captain delivered herself of a loud sigh of contentment.

"Thank goodness, my responsibility now ends! Polly writes the play—if she hasn't already written it. Madge puts it to music. Tess paints the scenery. Naomer keeps quiet. That leaves me with nothing to do—except report progress from time to time."

"Does it!" said Polly grimly. "Who is going to get the girls to come to rehearsals, if you don't, Betty? And the printing—programmes, bills, and no misprints, this time. And finance. You can't expect me to keep the accounts."

"Right-ho!" assented Betty cheerfully.

"And costumes—"

"Oh, you must see Pam about the costumes!"

Suddenly Polly's enthusiasm got the better of pretended diffidence.

"I say, girls, it will be fun, though, won't it? And a crashing success, all pulling together, like we always do. Let's go out this time to knock spots off anything we've done in this line before!"

"Yes, gorjus! Bekas—"

"There is the promise Miss Somerfield has given; that if it goes down well before the school, she'll arrange for it to be given again in Barncombe," nodded Betty eagerly. "And so we might get in a nice bit of money for a deserving charity."

Helen jumped up.

"Oh, Polly, do let's look at that play of yours, if it's already written! Even if it's only in the rough—"

"Yes, queek, queek! Bekas—"

"No," objected the Fourth Form playwright. "I shouldn't dream of letting you see it as it stands. Another thing, I must sit down now and write to Jack. Betty, it will be all right if I ask Jack and Dave Lawder to come over to Morcove next halfer, won't it? Fact is, my play, in its present form, has parts for them both. Miss Somerfield won't mind, will she?"

"Just as if!" answered Betty.

"Here goes then, anyhow," said Polly, and, dropping down into a seat on her side of the table, she started to write.

Silence was accorded her, and in a few moments those who did not actually belong to Study 12 went away. Then Betty came to Polly's elbow, whilst the letter to Jack Linton was in progress, and entreated:

"Polly dear, you are going to let me have a look at the play as it stands at present?"

"Oh, there you are, then!" said Polly, slamming out the potentially famous manuscript.

"Thanks!"

And Betty retired with it to an armchair, with Paula on one side of her and Naomer on the other.

Meantime, Polly dashed on with the letter, finding it impossible to be brief, there was so much to tell. Closely written on all four sides was the sheet which she finally folded into an envelope addressed to:

"Jack Linton,  
Grangemoor School,  
near Barncombe."

Thump! She pounded a licked stamp on to the letter, then sped away to post it.

Just after this Betty took her chum's play round to Madge and Tess.

"Do look, girls! It's really awfully good."

"I like the title, anyhow!" exclaimed Madge, taking the manu-

script to glance through it. "Merrie Morcove!—A Musical Medley in Three Scenes."

"Eh, what? Three!" frowned Tess. "Have I got to paint three scenes!"

"You'll manage them, Tess, beautifully," was Betty's confident remark.

Madge's turn for dismay arrived, as she turned the pages.

"But it's nearly all songs! Have I got to put all these verses to music? Oh, impossible! It needs a real composer."

"You'll manage them," was again Betty's prediction, perfectly! But—h'ssh!" as Polly's returning scamper was heard. "I must get back, girls."

And the captain, hastily recovering the MS., nipped back to Study 12.

When Polly came romping in, three seconds later, the draft libretto of "Merrie Morcove" was lying upon her pad, and her three studymates appeared to have started prep.

### Going Ahead!

A POSTCARD two mornings later from Jack was the answer to Polly's four-page screed. "Over on Saturday," wrote Jack.

So that was that.

Meantime, "Merrie Morcove" was being licked into shape by Morcove's gifted authoress.

One way and another all interested parties had obtained a sight of the play in the rough, and the general belief was that it was quite the best thing Polly had ever done.



"I do like the title of this," exclaimed Madge Minden, as she glanced at the rough copy of Polly's play. "I think the whole thing is awfully good," said Betty.

The only derisive criticisms came from quarters that did not count. Cora Grandways jeered, as usual, simply because the whole thing had originated in Study 12. Diana Forbes, always inclined to take example from Cora, made sneering comments on the enterprise. And then there was Ursula Wade; unpopular Ursula, who had to find mean excuses for not wanting to take part in anything for the good of the Form, and the possible help it might bring to some deserving cause.

But such girls and their opinions did not matter! Polly had fired the enthusiasm of the great majority, which meant that she was now going full speed ahead, much to the disturbance of Study 12's usual routine.

That routine never could be termed tranquil. Now it was one great turmoil. Press day on the "Morcove Magazine" was not in it for flurry. Paula would soon be forgetting what it was like to "wecuperate" in the best armchair. She was continually being bundled right out of the study, either because playwright Polly wanted to polish up a few more lines, or because of conferences between the author, the musical director, or the artist.

Madge Minden preserved her calmness, and perhaps it was just as well. If there had been two Polly Linton's in collaboration, the ceiling of Study 12 must have come down sooner or later. Tess was slow in starting, and, although Polly would remember at one moment that Tess was best left to do her part without interference, the next moment she would forget.

Hence some rather heated scenes, during which neither girl would let the other finish a sentence. "Yes, but—" cut short by: "I know, but—"

There were no clashes between Polly and Betty. With cheerful capability Betty was getting in the "subs" to finance the great production; and the financial side of the affair was nothing to Polly. It left her cold. In which respect she was like most other playwrights.

But where Madge, Tess and Pam were concerned, Study 12's head-strong junior was one mighty driving force. Music, scenery, costumes—all were urgent.

The time would come when that driving force would be concentrated upon rehearsals; next Monday would see the start of Polly's fiery coaching of a score of Form-mates, whose idea of what they had to do would then be only very faint. Meanwhile, if she was not sparing her co-organisers, she certainly was not sparing herself.

Friday night, after some belated prep., found her hard at work upon more touching-up. Betty was being allowed to help; she was copying out some parts, so that girls who had been cast for them could learn them up over the week-end. Paula, in the best armchair, was scarce daring to breathe, lest she should be thrown out. As for Naomer—

A mouse could not have gone to the corner cupboard quieter than did Naomer! Not a sound as she turned back the key, opened the door, and brought out the requisites for a "hand-round."

"Here you are, Polly—"

"Hush!"

"Leave off now, Polly," Betty suggested, putting down her own pen. "You've done enough, dear, for to-night."

"And queek, have ze refresher, to keep you

fit," urged well-meaning Naomer, insinuating a plate holding cake and apples in the direction of Polly's elbow. "And a lemonade, Polly—"

"Don't spill it all over my MS.!"

Polly thrust the great work into her drawer, then got up, running fingers through her hair. She looked wild, fearsome, until she suddenly laughed.

"It's all very well, but if I don't push on—"

"Gwanted, Polly deah; yours is a gweat responsibility, twue! Howevah—"

"Here, learn that!" said Polly, with only make-believe dudgeon, as she took one of the copied parts from Betty's side of the table and handed it to Paula. "And if you are not word perfect in time for first rehearsal on Monday night—look out for squalls!"

"Howwows," gasped Paula, realising that she was cast for quite a big part. "I don't have to wecite all this?"

"Recite? Recite? Ugh!" Polly groaned, casting up her eyes to the ceiling, whilst she masticated a mouthful of cake. "And then you wonder that I get in a stew!"

"Well—success to 'Merrie Morcove!'" cried Betty, raising her tumbler of lemonade.

"It's going to be the most awful failure we have ever had," sighed Polly, with a pessimism becoming to her responsibilities.

"No, bekas, we have never had a failure!"

"Then it will be our first awful failure. I can feel it. Even Madge's music won't save it, or Tess' scenery."

"Then the Form's acting will," rejoined Betty gaily. "Polly, you're talking out of your hat! 'Merrie Morcove' will be a hit."

"She is only fishing for ze compliments," Naomer wrongfully diagnosed Polly's decrying the play. Whereupon Polly, glaring as she set down her tumbler, went for Naomer and caught her after a chase round the table.

"Eeeeee, ow!"

"That's wight, fall over me—ow! Betty deah, speak to them!" howled Paula, trying to save a tumbler of lemonade from going all over her frock.

Betty smote the table—thump!

"Order! Do you want the whole thing to be knocked on the head, Polly?"

"I want Naomer to be knocked on the head—good and hard! And soon!" added Polly, with a push that sent the Imp headlong. "Pnew! By the way, I did do my prep., didn't I?"

"After a fashion, I believe so," grinned Betty. "And now, here's Tess. Come along in, Tess; just in time for a snack before bed."

"Not for me, thanks," said Tess, bearing a large sheet of cardboard on which something was sketched. "Polly, is this more the idea for Scene II?"

"What do you call this?" gaped Polly. "And what's the good of coming to me, anyhow, about art, and scene painting?"

"I didn't want to come to you, but you sort of hinted—"

"I don't remember hinting—"

"Polly, you certainly did say—"

"If you don't know me by now, Tess! But since you ask me, this is only a—a—goodness knows what it is!"

"It's a rough-out—"

"I know, but—"

"Yes, but—"

At this moment Madge came in, with some manuscript music.

"Yes, what? How have you got on Madge?"

"Oh, don't look at that!" smiled Madge, as the music was grabbed at by Polly. "You won't be able to understand that, I'm afraid. But, Polly, about the opening chorus

"Haven't you done it yet?"

"Oh, I shall be all right for time—"

"But will you? This is Friday night"

"Cheer up, to-morrow will be Saturday," interposed Betty. "And Jack and Dave will be over to lend a hand."

"I don't know that they are coming over to lend a hand!" fumed Polly.

"Well, to get the hang of things," laughed Betty appeasingly. "And I must say, Polly, the parts they are to take will give a zip to the show. I like that idea of yours; bringing on two fellows to say things that put Morcove on its mettle."

Naomer yelled out:

"Yes, Polly, that bit where your brother tries to make out that Morcove is not as good as his school; and zen we all get on ze hind leg about it! Gorjus!"

A certain, familiar ding-ling! was suddenly audible from downstairs. Polly gave a grand gesture of despair.

"Bell for prayers. Then bed. Ugh! Well, I'm through—done with you all and done with everything until to-morrow. Oh, and I suppose we'll make something of it!" She suddenly cheered up. "Girls, I'm sorry I've been such a trial—"

"It's we who have been a trial to you, I'm afraid," smiled Madge.

"You haven't! You're wonderful! And it'll be all right!" From the depths of pessimism, Polly was suddenly raised to heights of supreme confidence. "We'll show the other Forms what we can do!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

"Fail? How could we fail?" asked Polly,

her madeap self again, "when we've got Paula! By the ear, Paula, quick march!"

And the amiable duffer, cheered on by Naomer, was led away by Polly in that fashion.

The piano was going very early next morning. Madge was hard at it in the music-room, getting one of Polly's ditties set to a lilting tune. Aware of this, sundry members of the Fifth Form called a scornful: "Stop that row!" whilst going by; but it would have taken more than that to annoy Madge.

She was not so temperamental as Tess, who had come down early to do some routing out of old scenery, stacked away in a lumber-room adjoining the gym.

It was known to be Tess, and not some wild animal escaped from a travelling menagerie, when various Fifth Form gymnasts went to investigate the cause of all the bashing and smashing sounds, coupled with a savage gibberish emanating from the lumber-room. Tess had found

what she wanted; canvas that could be made to serve a second time. But she had lost her temper—badly!

As for Polly, she was starting Saturday in great good spirits. Could it be because Jack would be over, later, bringing his best pal, Dave Lawder? It would never have done for Betty, or anyone else, to say so; but the chums quietly believed that such was the case.

By five to nine one of those volcanic conferences had begun in Study 12, but the bell for school proved just in time to prevent Polly from saying that she would be "done with the whole thing!" Harmoniously the chums went down to class, where Miss Everard awaited them.

Last night's prep. was looked at during the morning, and no one came in for censure. The Form, in fact, was standing so well with its mistress, it got let off at least five minutes early.

Some twenty juniors were now all eagerness to be given something to do in connection with the forthcoming production. In vain Polly dinned that she was not ready for them yet. They hung about her in Study 12; they swarmed



"Why isn't Jack here?" asked Polly. "He sent me a card to say he was coming." "I know," replied Dave Lawder, "but he was detained at the last moment." "What do you mean, has he been gated?" Polly demanded anxiously.

after her when she went down to keep an appointment with Madge in the music-room. All privacy for the gifted collaborators was at an end.

By the time the gong went for dinner, the Form had got hold of some of Madge's tunes, and Polly's clever verses were being sung to them. Later, it was all Betty could do to get the girls out to games. There were no actual desertions from the team, but nobody turned up on the field a minute before the time.

Nor did Morcove, this afternoon, press its visiting team from Barncombe House School to stay for tea. Those friendly rivals—incidentally, the winners of the match—were in their own school's bus again by half-past three; and then the Morcove juniors could rush indoors to get washed and changed, intending a lightning tea, and afterwards—a business-like go at "Merrie Morcove!"

Few were the studies brewing their own cup this afternoon. Polly and Madge never even sat down to their tea. They stood, cup-and-saucer in hand, clear of the lively tea-tables downstairs, for a mere minute or so; then it was a whispered: "Come on, Madge!" and an equally guarded nod in response.

They fitted away, hoping to get at least ten minutes all to themselves in the music-room; but hardly had Madge begun to try over one of the "band parts" than in surged other girls. With the tune that Madge was then playing already on their brains, these skittish spirits came trooping in like a real chorus.

"Now then—whoa, stop, girls, stop!" appealed Polly. "Madge—"

"Over again, Madge!" clamoured the joyous mob. "Opening chorus!"

"Yes, bekas—encore!" shrieked Naomer, standing to beat time with a blackboard pointer. "One, two, three!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get ze jerk on!"

So they began all over again:

"O, we are the girls of Morcove School;

Of Morcove, Merrie Morcove—"

Then Polly rushed at Naomer and, wroting the baton from a dusky hand, gave the Imp's dark and glossy head a tap with it.

"Doh!" sang Polly, pretending she had struck a tuning fork upon a block of wood. "Doh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, look here—since you all are here," Polly vociferated, "no fooling about! What do you girls want to do?"

"Rehearse! Rehearse!"

Polly treated the enthusiasts to one of her most scathing looks.

"Sort yourselves out, can't you! Talk about a lot of— Ugh, I'll be done with the whole thing, I will! Now, listen, girls," with a sudden change to sweet coaxing: "If you're very good, you shall try over one or two bits. Before we go any further, though, let's have the door shut. And where's Betty?"

"Here's Betty!"

The captain was only now coming in.

"I say, Polly, Dave has turned up," announced Betty; "but your brother hasn't come."

"Who-a-at!" was the madcap's astounded cry. "Why not? Has Jack let me down? Oh, I must look into this! I'll be back," she needlessly promised, darting away to the door. "Carry on!"

The Form did so, and Polly, as she sped downstairs, could hear the opening chorus of "Merrie Morcove" being rendered all over again; and it sounded quite all right—it really did!

#### What Had Jack Done?

DAVE LAWDER was in the front hall, coat and cap already discarded, for it was five minutes since he arrived.

The formality of "reporting" had given him Miss Everard to chat with, whilst word went up to Polly. The Form-mistress was still engaging him in talk, and her liking for the lad, as being a fine type of manly schoolboy, was not disguised. There was a warm corner of Miss Everard's heart, as there was in Miss Somerfield's, for Dave Lawder.

"Yes, Polly, here is Dave; but your brother hasn't come," the Form-mistress remarked, as the madcap raced down the few last stairs. "See that Dave has some tea."

"Right-ho, Miss Everard!"

For the moment, however, Polly was a round-eyed challenger of Dave's right to be here at all, without Jack. She was gazing at Dave in that way as Miss Everard walked off.

"But why?" asked Polly. "When he sent me a card to say he'd be here."

"I know," Dave nodded uncomfortably. "But at the last moment he—he was kept back, Polly. I was for staying back as well, to keep him company, but he said no, I must get to Morcove, even if he couldn't."

"How do you mean?" frowned Polly. "Is Jack gated then, or what?"

"Practically gated—yes. Not that he has done anything."

"Then I'd like to know why he is gated!"

"Yes, well, I might explain some time," said Dave, with an evasiveness that suited him badly. "How's things, Polly? I'm glad you're all going to do a play. Always good fun."

He did not grow more comfortable under her steady scrutiny.

"How have you come, Dave?"

"Bike, from Barncombe. I hired one in the town. A good few Crangemoor chaps are in the town this afternoon; we all go back on the six-forty, and I must catch that train. I'm awfully sorry your brother isn't with me, Polly."

"Oh, well! But I don't understand, all the same! You'd like some tea, Dave—"

"Oh, thanks, but—I had some at the Creamery."

"You must have something," Polly insisted. "Then you must come up to the music-room with me. We've tea'd down here for once," conducting him to the school's great dining-hall.

"I say, I'd rather not, thanks," he pleaded, hanging back. "In fact, I never expected to stay, being by myself. Only Jack felt he must let you know."

"So he put you to all the trouble of coming; never thought of telegraphing! You boys!" Polly derided their way of doing things.

"Now you speak of it, a telegram would have done just as well, of course," agreed Dave.

"Oh, I don't know so much," Polly now doubted. "After all, it's nice to see you, Dave. I'm afraid I didn't seem pleased at first."

"No; well, it was enough to rile you. Er—"

Dave gave out, as usual. He was ever a bad hand at small talk. Left an orphan in his infancy, he had been reared in a gloomy London house by a bachelor lawyer-guardian, a fine

gentleman, but as solemn as a judge. And the servants with whom Master Dave had had most to do—including a certain Scotch "Janet," very dour—had been a decorous lot. Since then, Grangemoor School had done its best to draw Dave out; but he would never be one of its riotous spirits.

A trusty half-back on the footer field, and good for twenty any time during the cricket season, but an awful browser amongst the library shelves—that was Dave. Yet he and Jack Linton, who was a masculine counterpart of madcap Polly, were studymates and the greatest of pals.

It was Dave's failure to keep the talk going, whilst Polly seemed to be giving her mind to absent Jack, that made them heed a certain burst of singing.

"Er—rehearsal going on?" inferred Dave.

Polly coloured up.

"How fooling it does sound now," she grimaced. "Oh, I wish I never had let myself in

music fell upon Dave's ear with full force, and he had a vision of various Morcovians giving their different ideas of stage dancing. Then there was a break in the music, and a change from singing to cries of welcome. No need for Polly to say: "Here's Dave, girls!" They came rushing at him. Madge jumped up from the piano, to cross over and accord him her greeting.

"So Jack couldn't manage it?" Betty commented, when all the hub-bub had died down. "Hard luck! But it's something to have you, Dave."

"Yes, bekas, we can get him to rehearse with us!"

"How long can you stay, Dave?" voiced several—eagerly.

"Oh, until six; that is, if you really——"

"Splendid!"

"First of all," said Polly, "you mustn't go by what's going on now. I don't know why they're



"I'll go and get the parts, and then——" Polly broke off in astonishment as the door burst open, and Jack Linton entered the music room. "Ought you to be here?" Polly asked, doubtfully.

for things! But if you really won't have any tea, you must come up to the music-room."

"Wouldn't you really rather that I pushed off?"

"No, why?"

Dave's answer to that was a gesture implying mistrust of himself as an acquisition to any party.

"Do you good—you old owl," Polly suddenly smiled, with all the freedom of long-established friendship. "I suppose you're still swotting at Greek and stuff? Oh, come along up; Betty and the rest would never forgive me if I let you go before they'd seen you."

So Dave ascended with her to the noisy music-room, fingering his tie on the way as if he were being taken to interview his own headmaster.

The Fourth Form musical comedy party was trying out another number, with Madge at the piano, when Polly preceded the Grangemoor boy into the crowded room.

For a moment the singing and the piano-

all here. I'm not nearly ready for them, and neither, I'm sure, is Madge! My idea, Dave, was to see you and Jack to-day about the parts you are to take. They're upstairs in Study 12, copied out; I'll pop up and get them presently."

"You're for it, Dave," Helen Craig warned him. "Polly's made up a song for you to sing."

"I haven't!" dissented Polly, noticing Dave's dismayed look. "At least, it's one for Jack and Dave to sing together——"

"Oh, in that case!" nodded Dave—brightening. "Er—Jack showed me your letter to him, Polly. So I've got a fair idea of what the play is about."

"I'm so glad," said Polly sweetly. "I'm so awfully glad that somebody has a fair idea what it's all about. I'll slip up for those parts, and then perhaps——"

She broke off, open-mouthed, startled by a figure in the doorway.

"Jack!"



And every other Morcovian echoed the cry.

There he was, still wearing his greatcoat, whilst his cap was half-rammed into an outside pocket. A school scarf was wound about his neck, and he looked rather hot.

"Hallo, girls," he said breathlessly, advancing into the thronged room. "Well, Polly, I see you've made a start with it. Sorry I'm—late."

He had just time for a side glance at Dave; for a smile that seemed to say: "Don't look like that!"—and then Polly broke out tensely:

"But, Jack, ought you to be here?"

"Oh, that's all right," he answered, with his usual jollity. "I'd have been here sooner, too, only I had a puncture."

"You haven't ridden over from Grangemoor?" cried Polly, for that school was many miles away; a matter of two hours' hard riding.

"Well, yes," he nodded carelessly. "But never mind. Great thing is, I've got here. Oh, and I've seen Miss Everard, although I didn't stay to hang up my coat, wanting to let you know at once that I was here. Hasn't put you out, my being late, I hope?"

"No, Jack—oh, no-o," Polly said slowly, whilst she gazed at him uneasily. "But you can't have had any tea?"

"I'm all right—"

"He must have some tea," said the "Merrie Morcove" chorus, as if that were a line in the play.

"I'll see to it!" shrilled out Naomer, darting away. "I get a tray to bring up, queek! I bring you a cream bun from Study 12, too, Jack, as ze special favour!"

"Your majesty!" Jack bowed his thanks to the Imp, and there were peals of laughter.

Even Polly was failing to detect any absence of the usual levity in her brother. Only, Dave Lawder did not look happy, and that was a disquieting circumstance.

"Oh, well, you know your own business best, Jack!" the madcap shrugged at last. "As for me—I've got enough to bother about."

"If you will do these things, Polly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pretty cool," Jack complained, to the further delight of all the girls, "to go and bag me and Dave for parts. Seems to me, Dave and I have simply got to stand to be shot at in the play."

Polly nodded, smiling sweetly.

"That's it! To get it across to the audience, what a grand, jolly school Morcove is, I found I had to have a couple of schoolboys who try to pick faults in it, but of course they come off worst every time. One boy is rather a silly mutt—"

"Dave's part, eh?"

"No, yours!"

"Thank you," said Jack, making as if to go. "I'll say good-bye, Polly."

"Oh, won't you stay for the cream bun?" said the madcap teasingly. "And to see how nicely we can get on without you? With Dave's help, of course."

"I don't mind staying for the cream bun," conceded Jack, keeping the peals of laughter going; and he started to shed his greatcoat. "And any advice I can give you girls, in a professional capacity—you're welcome to it. I don't like the title to begin with. 'Merrie Morcove!'"

Polly drew herself up.

"What's wrong with my title, pray?"

"Alliterative!"

"Never heard of the word," said the Morcove playwright.

"You two, when you get together," Betty was saying, when there occurred another dramatic surprise for all. Miss Everard, by her serious looks, as she suddenly came upon the scene, silenced them.

"Jack Linton, you are wanted downstairs," said the Form-mistress distressfully. "Someone is there from your school—a prefect. Gerald Renard, I think, he said his name is."

"Oh, is he here?" Jack responded, calmly enough. It was Dave—as Polly for one quickly noticed—who looked troubled.

"Right, Miss Everard, and thank you; I'll go down and see the chap," Jack added, calmly taking up his greatcoat and scarf. "No, Dave, you needn't—"

"Jack!" the girls heard Dave exclaim in a queer tone.

"You stay, old son," Polly's brother very stolidly insisted; and he walked out of the room by himself.

Miss Everard had gone away, yet the silence endured. Polly's schoolmates were noticing that she, after letting her eyes follow Jack to the door, had turned them upon Dave again.

"What is all this, Dave?" she asked impatiently.

"Oh, I wouldn't interfere, Polly," he advised, quite steadily. "If you'll excuse me, girls, I'll go down."

There was still that dramatic silence as he now walked out. A few moments went by—perhaps half a minute—before Polly gave a stamp of the foot, exclaiming:

"I don't understand! I must go down, too! Who's this Renard fellow—this Grangemoor prefect—butting in? I'm going to see!"

And instantly she was gone. By whisking the door shut behind, her she implied that she wanted none of her chums to follow her. Down to the ground floor she rushed, to find that her brother and Dave must have had to seek Prefect Renard in what was known as the interviewing-room. The hall was deserted, and she heard the boys' voices coming from that room.

"You'll get back by the way you came," she heard the prefect saying to her brother, as he neared the door. "We don't want you, Jack Linton, on the six-forty train from Barncombe, you chose to break out and do the whole journey by bike. So you'll go back all the way by bike, and if you're late—"

Polly was the interruption, as she strode in. Her eyes flew to the owner of the bullying voice, and he returned the look superciliously.

She saw a tall senior, whom she could not remember having seen before, often though she had visited Grangemoor. He had not the look of a bully, and she could imagine his being able to make himself very attractive and to stand well with the masters. But already she hated him. For this fellow to have talked to Jack in that tone; for him to be looking at her in that superior manner. As if to say: "What do you want, kid!"

"I'm Jack's sister," Polly said, allowing no time for formal introductions to be made. "And what I want is to know—what you mean by it?"

The tall prefect kept his eyes upon her, and she let him see that she wished him to do that, so that he might appreciate her furious indignation.

## The Fight!

THE prefect started a smile that was one-sided.

"I see," he remarked, very blandly. "And so it runs in the family, does it? The same cheek that I've had from your brother; the same—"

"Cut it out, Rennard," struck in Jack fiercely. "Or what you'll get from me will be a dashed good hiding, so now then! But we can't have a scene here. Polly, you go away! Take her out, Dave!"

"The idea!" flamed Polly, with a stamping side-step that put her beyond reach of Dave's coaxing hand. "I won't be treated as if I'm of no account—in my school!"

"Certainly not," smiled the prefect airily. "It's for Jack to go away—and not wait to be told a second time. I really must apologise, young lady! but your brother has got to understand that what I say I mean. I ordered him to stay in bounds this afternoon—"

"You ordered him!"

"I think you know I'm a prefect," submitted Gerald Rennard blandly. "There, we don't want any unpleasantness. Your brother has got his work cut out, to bike back in time to be reported."

"I imagine," said Polly, with an annihilating look, "you rather enjoy reporting fellows?"

"No. Mistake, I assure you," Rennard said suavely. "I haven't that reputation at Grangemoor. Have I, Lawder?"

"Let's end this," Dave implored, huskily. "Jack—Polly—"

"Oh, shut up!" exploded Jack, and he strode out into the hall, there to snatch up his great-coat and cap once again.

"I'll ride with you," Dave said, starting to help his chum into the coat. "One sec., and I'll get my things, and then—"

"Lawder, you have to go back on the six-forty, with the other fellows," spoke Rennard, sauntering forward. "You and I will go along together to Barncombe."

"Well, then, you must let Jack come—"

"My dear chap, don't argue!"

Polly was now watching Dave's face, marking how it worked under his repression of some very complex feeling; but in a moment she had Jack standing before her, his coat put on all anyhow his hand held out.

"Ta-ta, Polly. I—I've got to go. I can't explain, except that he's a prefect, you know."

"He's a beast!"

"Shut up," her brother advised. "And look here, no getting worked up about this. Best of luck over the play, and: I'll do my best for you, of course; but—"

By a resigned casting down of his clenched fists, he as good as said again: "I've got to go."

"Very well, then; good-bye, Jack," his sister murmured. "You must write to me, that's all."

"Bye," Jack said moodily, and crossed to the outer door, where Rennard had now stationed himself.

"'Afternoon, young lady!" the prefect called to Polly. "Very sorry and all that."

And he followed Jack into the open air.

Dave had run to get his outdoor things from that visitors' cloak-room. He was quickly back, winding and knotting his school scarf mechanically.

Polly went up to him.

"You've a button coming off your coat, Dave—"

"What? Oh, yes—er—doesn't matter, good-bye Polly—"

"Stay, and let me sew it tight, before you lose it, Dave. Oh, Dave," she whispered, "must you go at once? I want to know what it means—that prefect, with his knife into Jack! I want you to explain—"

"Polly, I'm sure I'd better not. Look here, though, if it's going to make you worry; do remember that Jack's always got me."

"That's all very well; but—what has Jack done?"

There came a peremptory: "Lawder!" from the porch.

"Bye, Polly!" said Dave, with a kind of grim composure.

She shook hands with him; and then, in her headstrong way, she flashed across to the outer doorway. Rennard was hands in pockets in the porch, watching Jack preparing for the long ride home to Grangemoor.

"Look here!" Polly demanded the prefect's attention, and he faced round.

"Hallo, you again!"

"There has never been any difficulty about my brother coming to Morcove until to-day. I am sure it was all right, so far as his Housemaster was concerned. Grangemoor and Morcove are on the best of terms—"

"Oh, quite!"

"My brother and Dave Lawder are going to take part in a play we girls are getting up," Polly impetuously remarked. "And are you going to be so—so mean, so caddish—as to interfere?"

"Come on, Lawder, come on!" said Rennard, pointedly ignoring Polly.

He and Dave went away together, to where they could recover their machines, and before Polly had left off watching them, closing the porch door, something in the situation had been divined by her that increased her alarm. Rennard was not "down" on Dave. Very definitely, the prefect's malice was concentrated upon Jack—and why, why?

She felt a shakiness as she turned back to the stairs, passing a sweeping hand through her hair. It would take very little to make her cry, she knew. Yet all Morcove would agree that she was not given to doing so.

"Brute!" she stigmatised Rennard, slowly mounting the stairs. "Spoiling everything."

At the half-landing she paused to look out of the window. Dave and the prefect were pedalling down to the gates, but Jack had gone—no, he hadn't!

Polly's peering eyes went, in her renewed excitement, so close to the window pane that her breath fogged the glass. She rubbed it clear, and watched on. For, Jack had got down from his bicycle just beyond the Morcove gateway. He was putting his machine aside, and so she guessed his intention. Outside Morcove's gateway, he was going to have the row with Rennard that had been out of the question inside.

Sure enough, she saw him make signs to the pair to stop, after they had cleared the gateway. Dave instantly dismounted; but Rennard would have ridden on, only Jack simply pulled him off the machine.

Polly's heart pounded. A fight! Already Dave, trying to come between the two, had been brushed aside. They were going for each other—

Jack and the prefect. She believed Jack had struck him across the cheek. Be that as it might, they were fighting each other all over the road.

She wanted to rush downstairs, and on down to the gateway; yet she had to stand and watch from that window. Ah, one of them was down already; Rennard—gone down like a shutter!

It was all over after that. She saw that Rennard did not get up to renew the combat. Her brother, obeying Dave's imploring gestures, was swinging his bicycle round for riding away.

Even so, Polly ran downstairs again, and out by the front porch.

"Jack—oh, Jack!" she was panting aloud, as she tore down to the gates. "What have you done now! Oh, what is it all about? Don't go, any of you."

But they were gone, all three of them, when she reached the gateway.

It might have been all a dream, the scene was so peaceful now. A foretaste of the happy spring-time was in the mellow air, at this sunset hour. A robin sang his sweet song. But the roadway showed the marks left by that fierce scuffle; she saw where Rennard had measured his length upon the ground. She knew what a terrible thing it might be for her brother; knew that this was some personal feud, without knowing the cause of it; and suddenly she became quite unstrung and gave way to tears after all.

#### Waiting and Wondering!

IT surprised the rehearsalsists when at last Polly came romping back to the music-room, ready to carry on with the joyous work.

She had been such a long time away, they had thought she must have come in for some upset!

But here she was again, quite her normal jolly self and meaning business, as she let her school-mates know.

Not even Betty was allowed to suspect that for once Polly had been crying; that she had had to wait a good ten minutes for traces of the sudden grief to pass away. Nor would Polly, if she could help it, let even her best chums know, or let the personal upset interfere with "Merrie Morcove."

There was all her usual mock-despair and playful upbraiding as she resumed charge. And, no girls did get on well under the personal supervision of the play's gifted authoress!

She was the life and soul of things during this preliminary try-out. The going over certain chorus parts once again, after hearing some of the characters render dialogue with the aid of their written parts, showed how really well the whole medley was progressing.

The Form adjourned after a good two hours of useful team-work, feeling keener than ever about "Merrie Morcove." It was full of witty lines; the songs were being given really charming tunes by Madge. Rehearsals every night for the next three weeks, then, and as several girls put it, they would have something to be proud of!

"Pretty good going, Polly!" cried Betty, coming into Study 12 a couple of minutes after the adjournment. "You are the one! Aren't your ears burning? They should be; such things are being said about you and your wonderful play!"

Naomer had got the corner cupboard open.

"Yes, and now, plis, a refresher for everybody. But, why ze diggings, Polly, did your brother go off before I could get him his tea?"

"Yes, Polly?" said Betty, with earnest solicitude now that they were back in Study 12. "Nothing much the matter, I hope?"

"I—I really didn't quite understand myself," Polly answered, with desperate carelessness. "Some prefect fellow came for him, as you know."

To stave off further questioning, she made a show of great activity. It appeared as if she were having a grand Saturday-night clear-up in the study. The MS. of the play was stowed away in a drawer, along with various oddments that had littered the table. Then she slammed out her books for prep.

"Do part of it to-night, anyhow, Betty!"

"I suppose we had better," agreed the captain lightly. "About the play, Polly dear; I couldn't help thinking, when your brother was here for those few minutes, what an acquisition he'll be. You and he have only to be your natural selves in the play and what a hit you'll make."

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Screamingly funny! And then, bai Jove, there's Dave," remarked amiable Paula, reluctantly getting up to come to the table and take her look at lesson books. "So gwave, so sewious; such a foil, bai Jove, for Jack!"

"Well, that was just my idea," nodded Polly; and, for appearance's sake, she took a mouthful of cake to eat, whilst starting prep.

Her studymates—they little knew! To her own great relief she had contrived, by keeping such a great grip on herself, to leave them blissfully ignorant. Little did they dream that—oh, that it had been an upset which she could not get over!

For her to think of the play, now, was to think of parts that looked like having to be cut out. The very best bits, doomed to be sacrificed, since there was that hateful prefect at Grangemoor, with his "down" on Jack—certain to put every obstacle in the way.

The play was all about Morcove; and Morcovians, of course, were to be all to the fore in it. But, as she had told the Form—and the girls quite appreciated this fact—"Merrie Morcove!" demanded at least one or two characters drawn from outside the school. Otherwise, much of the dialogue would not be half as witty and funny as it should be.

But it was very little thought that Polly could give to the play to-night. Her chums would never know what an effort it had cost her to return to the music-room and be so enthusiastic. Her brother, victim of that prefect's concentrated vindictiveness—and why, why? That was the trend of her mind.

She must find out—why? She must get a letter off to Jack, the earliest she could not hope for a reply at the earliest before Tuesday. Two days of suspense in store. Two days and three nights—for she would be awake to-night, and every night after until she did hear from him, wondering what was at the bottom of the personal feud, and could Jack hold his own?

Could he hold his own? Even now the question was rendering her inwardly frantic. In the ordinary course, and against ordinary school-fellows—yes! But this enemy of his was a prefect. It made all the difference. Jack, it was certain, had done no good for himself by knocking down the fellow; but it was like Jack, and she admired him all the more for having done it.

"Like striking a superior officer," she thought. "Fatal! But—if I were a fellow, I'd do the same, if he gave me cause!"

In due course, the school was rung down to prayers, and then it was that Polly found handsome Cora Grandways sauntering close to her. It flashed upon Polly then that if Cora had had a brother, and the brother had been at Grangemoor, he would have been another Gerald Renard. So very good-looking, so dashing and "upish," and yet—so capable of enjoying a vendetta!

"So your brother didn't turn up this afternoon, Polly?"

"Yes, he did."

"Oh, he did?" said Cora, quite unabashed by Polly's crushing retort to the ill-natured comment. "I was in the Creamery at tea-time. A lot of Grangemoor fellows were having tea, and I heard it said that Jack Linton had been gated for the afternoon—by a prefect, I fancy!"

"Jack was gated, and he came along all the same!" said Polly triumphantly.

But she knew she was walking away as hastily as this, feeling what a humiliation it would be to have to say more. And if she felt it as a humiliation, that her brother had been forced to go when ordered, what about Jack's own humiliation?

In a quiet hour on Sunday she wrote to him, dropping the letter into the post-box with the fuming thought:

"Nothing from him until Tuesday morning." That night she lay awake wishing that Grangemoor could be reached in half an hour by bicycle—wishing that the play could be shelved!

Another rehearsal to-morrow evening, and one could imagine the effort it would mean!

If only her part had been all over when the play was written! But she was in the play, and already a remark of hers, about getting somebody else to take her part, had been greeted with amazement. Why should she want to drop out? She could not tell them why; best to leave them in happy ignorance. And who was there to take her place, with any chance of making a success of the part? So they had put it to her, and she had been at a loss for an answer.

"For you not to be in the play,

Polly, would be like playing Hamlet with the prince left out!" Betty had laughed.

"Oh, rot!"

Still, she knew that she was relied upon to be the leading comedienne, and so there it was. She must carry on—of course she must, when the whole thing had originated in her mind! If anything, it was all the more up to her now since there was this likelihood—not yet divulged to the Form—that Jack's part would have to be dropped, and no end of revisions would have to be made.

She sighed, lying there in her bed with closed eyes, waiting for sleep to come. Full well she knew that any trouble of Jack's; whilst it was bound to be her trouble, too, would never be considered sufficient reason for the play being abandoned.

"You're a nice one," she seemed to hear the Form quite reasonably complaining. "You started the thing, and we've already gone to a lot of trouble—and now you want to throw it up!"

So, at the appointed hour on Monday evening, she took charge for a second rehearsal. The girls were all so high-spirited and enthusiastic, she wondered at their not suspecting forced enthusiasm where she was concerned. But nobody seemed to be noticing anything in her that was out of the normal. All went well. Girls had become quite fluent in their parts; the chorus had acquired the right stage-sense, and was no longer a hopeless mob.

It was almost frightened Polly, in secret, to realise what a hold the play had taken upon the Form, and what a great amount of study was being given to it.

To be the one to want to drop out—no! Oh, that would be too awful! And there was Tess, meanwhile, giving all available time to the scenery. Think of all that having to be scrapped!

"Polly, I'd like you, after school, to give me five minutes," Tess came up to her to say, first thing on Tuesday morning.

It was the time for giving out letters, and Polly was waiting, feverishly anxious.

"The shed adjoining the gym, Polly—I've got the first scene pretty well advanced—"

"I see. Yes, well—I can't be bothered—I mean—"

"I see. Yes, well—I can't be bothered—I mean—"



Tess Trelawney was trying hard to gain Polly's attention for a matter concerning the Form play, but the latter was waiting eagerly to see if there was a letter for her. At last it came! "Letter for you, Polly!" someone called out.

"Polly Linton!" her name was cried by some schoolmate with a letter to spin across to her. "Catch!"

From Jack!

She forgot Tess' presence completely, walking off the instant the letter was in her hand.

The next to see Polly was Betty, just before class, when Polly came in, her face convulsed with a distress that was beyond concealment, her eyes swimming. Mutely she held out a letter for Betty to read.

"Grangemoor School,  
Monday evening

"My dear Polly,—Thanks for yours. Yes, I was sorry not to be able to stay any time at all last Saturday. I am sure the play will be a crasher.

"I got back all right, and you shouldn't get the wind up about me. I'm all right. That prefect is being like that at present, that's all.

"Hope to be over soon; meantime all the best. Old Dave is swotting away, as per, whilst I write this, and I've got a dickens of a lot to do with a special exam. in the offing, so no more now.

"With love,  
"JACK."

Such was the breezy screed from which Betty raised her eyes, to meet Polly's gloomy stare.

"I don't see anything wrong in this, Polly."  
"Betty, it's not what it says, it's what it doesn't say. When I wrote on Sunday, saying he must explain. Oh—"

"Explain what?"  
"You've got to be told!" Polly exclaimed worriedly. "I have been keeping it back, so as not to worry you. Jack's fighting some terrible battle, I'm sure—with that prefect who was after him on Saturday. A prefect, Betty! That means—you can understand what it means!"

"Yes, dear." Very gravely Betty answered. "Listen," spoke on Polly tensely. "I could get nothing out of Jack on Saturday; the prefect himself was—oh, a brute to Jack! I don't believe Jack will ever be able to get over to Morcove about the play. He'll always be prevented somehow. That prefect can, if he likes, and he will! Can't I go over to Grangemoor to-day, Betty? Oh," Polly stamped, "I can't stand this! Nothing is worse than being in the dark, only knowing that one's brother is having to fight alone."

"He's not alone, Polly. He's got heaps of chums. Above all, there's Dave."

"They're no use! Dave himself is no use—"

"Dave, no use?"  
"Not in this case, I'm sure. I could read that in Dave's own eyes last Saturday. You don't know what I went through in those few minutes," gulped Polly. "Oh, and I don't want to worry you—upset you with my troubles. You, Betty—even you can't see that there's any real reason for my feeling so worried on Jack's account?"

"Well, since you ask me, Polly, I would try not to imagine things. Supposing Jack has got on the wrong side of one of the prefects—"

"It's worse than that; the fellow is worrying the life out of Jack! He is out to smash Jack! You weren't there on Saturday," Polly fumed on; "I was, and I could tell! And another thing, I saw Jack knock the prefect down outside our gates."

"Oh!" said Betty, startled.

"And serve the fellow right, I say. After coming here to humiliate Jack in front of us. "I know what I will do!" the worried girl suddenly decided. "Phone through to Dave. He won't be in school yet; anyhow, they must fetch him out, if he is. I don't care! Only let me get him on the 'phone, and I'll simply make Dave tell me!"

Miss Everard said that Polly might be allowed to use the 'phone—"As a special favour, mind!"

"Grangemoor, four-seven, please!" Polly asked, rushing to the 'phone.

She could feel calmer, hearing no warning sound of the lines being engaged. It would be all right; she was going to get the school, and so she would get Dave. Thank goodness, there was someone like Dave at Grangemoor; Jack's devoted chum, and one's own firm friend into the bargain. There was no one else at Grangemoor in precisely the same category as that.

"Hallo, hallo? Grangemoor School? Oh, if you please, can I speak to David Lawder?" Polly spoke into the instrument eagerly. "Lawder, yes, please. L-A-W—"

She was suddenly rigid, open-mouthed, standing with the receiver excitably tilted.

"In hospital? Dave Lawder? But why—why?"

The low voice of a servant spoke again, calmly, but with great feeling.

"Master Lawder met with a bad accident on the games field yesterday, miss. He'll be laid up for some time, they think."

Oh, poor Dave! Oh, what a world it was, all at once. One thing after another.

"Can I fetch anyone else to the 'phone, miss? But just a moment."

"Hallo, yes, what is it!" rapped out a masculine voice, next moment. "Who are you?"

"Miss Linton—"  
"Who? Do you mean Polly Linton, Jack Linton's sister?" the question came harshly. "Gerald Rennard speaking. I'm a prefect; what do you want?"

"Can I speak to—my brother?"  
"No, you can't! Ring off, please!"

"Botheration!" she raged, as she came out of the telephone box.

All Morcove was in class now. Her own Form had started a singing lesson. The girls seemed to be putting all their heart into it, welcoming a singing lesson for once. Ah, of course, the play, with all its song parts and choruses—

The play! And Dave in hospital now, so his part must be scrapped. The whole thing must be pulled to pieces and put together again. They must not expect to have either Jack or Dave. Well, she must get the revisions made some time—

"Oh, but I can't!" her mind revolted against the idea. "When I am so worried about Jack! He has lost Dave now! No, at break I shall tell the girls I must drop out of the whole business."

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

What an unenviable position it is for Polly! Torn between her longing to help her brother and her desire not to let down her chums of Morcove, she scarcely knows what to do for the best. Be sure to read next Tuesday's splendid long Morcove story, entitled "Her Offence to the Form!" There is another charming Photo-Card, of Marilyn Miller, with next week's issue of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, don't forget.