

**"ROBBED OF THEIR TRIUMPH!"** MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE MORCOVE STORY INSIDE

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

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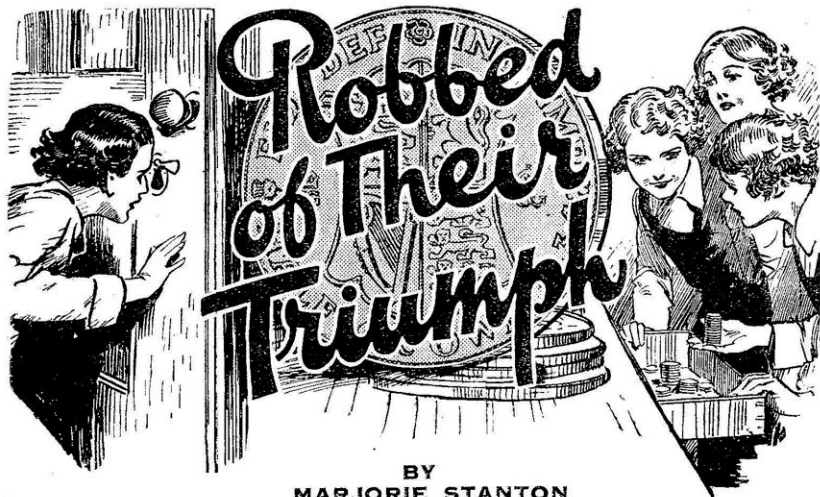


**Jill Interrupts the Impostor's Act!**

A dramatic incident from this week's instalment of our wonderful stage serial.

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Powerful LONG COMPLETE Story of Betty Barton & Co., the Chums of Morcove School



BY  
MARJORIE STANTON

#### Someone Must Fag For Her!

"THAT'S a goal, Bunny—you watch!"  
"So it is—GOAL!"

Bunny Trevor shouted the word as loudly as that. At the same time she flourished her hockey-stick. And some of the other players on the field at Morcove School, as they stopped for a "breather," burst out laughing.

The joke was that Bunny was carrying on as if everything had been depending, just then, upon the winning of that goal.

Skilfully enough had Betty Barton, Polly Linton, and one or two others contrived to get the little white ball between the posts. But this was only a practice game the girls were indulging in, and it was not the custom to shout like players carried away by the excitement of some important, desperate match.

"You can always get goals, somehow, when it's not a match!"

That was Betty, with a little laugh, inviting a jesting response from Polly. But Polly, during the brief standstill, was not looking in the mood for flippancies.

"Going to stop now?" Polly suggested.

"Oh, another five minutes, dear," Betty pleaded. "It's only twenty to one, and we've nothing else to do before—"

"No, nothing else," Polly nodded, and her glum look seemed to add: "Worse luck!"

But the ball, after all, was not to come into play again. The hockeyists found a signalled: "Just a moment!" being given by some school-mate who was obviously a message-bringer from the schoolhouse.

"Betty, or one of you other Study Twelveites," this girl cried as she came running on to the

field of play, "will you go up to Vanessa Ducerane's study?"

"To whose study?" jerked Betty. "Vanessa's?"  
"Yes. She gave me the message; that's all I know."

The chums of Study 12 exchanged glances. Vanessa Ducerane! It was a name that meant a lot to Betty & Co. at this time. Vanessa Ducerane—a senior, and one with whom the chums had a certain bone to pick!

"I'll go—"  
"No, I will!" Polly's voice quickly followed Betty's.

"All right, then—yes," Betty readily assented. "You go, dear."

It might have amused some of Polly's chums to

**POLLY LINTON'S allies are robbed of their triumph! And to make matters worse Polly is faced with a schoolgirl's greatest humiliation—EXPULSION!**

see her striding away to the schoolhouse, gripping her hockey-stick as if it were a club with which she meant to "go" for Vanessa Ducerane.

But Betty and the rest could not smile, although they sensed the grim, warlike mood of one who could not be, these days, her-usual madcap self.

They knew so well all that there was to account for Polly's moodiness.

That hockey-stick of hers was cast aside as soon

as she was inside the vast schoolhouse. But if there had been chums accompanying Polly, they would have seen her looking as fierce as ever as she went up two flights of stairs to the seniors' quarters.

Halfway along a carpeted corridor she came to Vanessa's door, gave a testy rap with the knuckles and went in.

"You sent out some message or other, Vanessa, about wanting one of us?"

"Oh, is that you, Polly! Yes—you'll do."

It was like Vanessa Ducrane to speak very airily. She was one of the very few seniors who, as seniors, held the girls of Betty & Co.'s Form in contempt.

"I'm having a friend to tea this afternoon, Polly, and I thought I'd get one of you kids to lay tea for me and clear up afterwards. You can do that for me?"

Polly nodded. Seniors were not supposed to fag other scholars; but a bit of help like this, if asked for nicely, was seldom, if ever, refused. It could not be said that Vanessa had asked nicely just then. In fact, she had spoken in a tone implying an order more than a request.

But it was going to suit Polly's purpose very well to dance attendance upon this high-and-mighty senior, later on.

This Vanessa Ducrane, who would have all Morcove believe her to be so very "select" and grand! Whereas, if the truth were known—

Ah, if the truth could be made known! An end, then, to Polly's present unhappiness; that was what it would mean, and how much more besides!

"Well?" Vanessa snapped. "You don't seem very willing."

"Oh, I'll do what you want, right enough," Polly answered, restraining a black look. "What time?"

"As soon as you are out of school, this afternoon. Then I can spare a minute, before my friend turns up, to show you where things are."

"I shan't want to know where the silver teapot is that you bought at our Rummage Sale for the Hospital Fund," Polly flashed, still facing Vanessa in spite of a dismissing nod. "I know where that is."

The senior laughed.

"Oh, do you!"

"Yes," disgustedly. "In a dealer's shop in Barncombe! You've sold it!"

"I'd a perfect right to do so?"

"Perfect right!" Polly retorted fiercely. "If you had let Miss Merrick buy it, she would not have sold it. She said, when she was bidding, that she was buying it to keep it."

"But I bid higher than Miss Merrick; that was all!" Vanessa smiled proudly. "Really, Polly Linton, I don't see what there is to complain about there. The Hospital Fund benefited all the more."

"The Hospital Fund—a fine lot it has benefited, when more than half the money from the sale was stolen!"

"Yes, quite," Vanessa nodded. "But I had nothing to do with that!"

Polly kept a still tongue, now, behind clenched teeth. But, oh, how she longed to retort with a bitter: "Didn't you!"

"Well? Why are you hanging about—"

"That silver teapot was given to the Form Sale by Pam Willoughby. It was a real antique, worth twice as much as you bid for it!"

Polly was saying this so as to keep herself from saying something else.

"And Pam, when she was generous enough to put the teapot in the sale," Polly spoke on, "didn't reckon to see it trotted off to a dealer's shop by the girl who had bought it. To make a profit on it—"

"Oh, that will do! Now, before I box your ears—clear out! Your tongue, Polly Linton!" the senior dryly added. "You ought to learn to—"

SLAM!

Polly, out of the study by now, had banged the door behind her violently. She walked away with a stamping step.

The twitting allusion to her, Polly's, tongue, had only infuriated her all the more. Vanessa, given to lying though she was, had been speaking truthfully enough just then!

"As if I needed to be reminded—it is always my tongue!" ran Polly's mind. "It was all through my saying things that Effie Barnard got sacked from the school, over that theft of the hospital money! Ugh!"

Yet next moment the rueful look was giving place to a smile. It might be a strange, fierce smile, but it was at least something better for Polly's chums to see when she rejoined them in Study 12.

They had come up to the study whilst she was with Vanessa.

"Bit of fagging for this afternoon," Polly announced, retaining that significant smile. "A friend coming to tea."

"Oh? The Jessel girl, perhaps!"

"That's what I'm hoping," Betty was answered. "Anyway, I'll do the fagging—with pleasure! It may lead to something!"

"So long as it doesn't lead to your giving away your suspicions, Polly."

"I shan't do that, girls. But I did say a word just now about that teapot. Well, I felt I must!"

"There you go!" smiled Bunny.

"Oh, it was safe enough for me to do that," Polly grimaced. "But, I tell you, that Ducrane girl has a face—a nerve! We'll have all we can do to prove our case against her. She coolly remarked that SHE had nothing to do with the theft of that money!"

Some of Polly's listeners gasped dismayedly.

"Why, you didn't hint, Polly, that we—"

"As if I'd be such a goop! But I did remind her—quite safely—that the Hospital Fund was all the poorer on account of that theft."

Some uneasy laughter was followed by a big pause. It seemed to Betty and the rest that Polly's tongue had, during the interview with Vanessa, touched upon dangerous topics.

At last Betty spoke gravely.

"Well, Polly, we know you want to do this bit of fagging for Vanessa. But do be careful!"

"Yes, bai Jove—"

"Bekas you never know, Polly!"

Polly was a bad hand at accepting friendly warnings, even from Betty and other "brainy" members of the chummyery. But when it came to being counselled by that amiable duffer, Paula Creel, or that little imp of a Naomer—

"Grrr!" Polly rounded upon those two chums. "Do you two girls think I want any advice from YOU?"

She laughed, to let it be known that her annihilating scorn was a good deal make-believe. And then:

"Better than hockey—fagging for Vanessa!" she muttered, walking about the study. "Gosh, it's time I got a chance to undo the harm I did Effie Barnard. And at last—somehow, I feel the chance has come!"

## The Baiting of a Trap!

**T**WO very affected voices came to Polly's hearing at a little before four o'clock that afternoon.

One was Vanessa Ducrane's; the other—yes, Polly was sure it was the equally put-on voice of Doris Jessel, that ever-so-grand friend of Vanessa's whose home was in Barncombe.

At the moment Polly was putting the finishing touches to the tea-table, in Vanessa's study. She had been alone in the room for the last ten minutes. Vanessa had gone downstairs to await the arrival of her friend; now the senior was bringing Doris to the study.

"Haven't asked anybody else, Doris; hope you don't mind?"

"Oh, that's all right!" the swagger friend was loudly answering as the door opened to let in both well-grown girls.

"Perhaps I'm a bit early, Van," the high-pitched voice continued, whilst Vanessa—before dismissing Polly—gave a critical glance to the tea-table. "But the going was good and so I rather trod on the gas, coming along."

Doris Jessel was old enough to hold a driving licence. Evidently she had turned up in her mother's car, and wished Polly to be aware of that fact.

"Hallo, though!" And now the stylish young lady, recognising Polly, burst out laughing. "Ha, ha, ha! Why, you are the very girl who called upon mother the other day—about Effie Barnard!"

"Did what?" Vanessa exclaimed—just as if she had not been at her friend's house when Polly called upon Mrs. Jessel!

"This kid—your fag, I suppose—wanted mother to give Effie Barnard a situation, although the girl, it seems, was sacked from Morcovo School for stealing," Doris drawled. "Nothing doing, though. Well, I mean to say, Van; how could mother?"

"Course not! You must have been crazy, Polly, to think of it! But—er—the table is ready, is it? Oh, but where are the things from the Creamery! They should be here by now," Vanessa frowned.

"Nothing has been sent up yet, so—"

"Then scoot down, Polly, and find out; look sharp!" the senior commanded. "The delivery van should be here by now, anyhow."

The Study 12 girl did not need to be told that the Creamery's roundsman usually called at the tradesmen's door, just before tea-time every weekday.

The bakery man was, as it happened, getting rid of much more than a huge consignment of bread for the school, when Polly got to the back door, after a scamper through the kitchen regions.

"Name of Ducrane," droned the roundsman, taking another carton from his delivery basket.

"Here!" Polly answered. "I want that, please."

"One-and-eight to pay, miss," requested the roundsman. "So it's marked. Sorry to trouble you, but you know what the rule is."

"Oh, yeah!"

Cash with order or on delivery was the rule which the Creamery was asked to enforce, by the school authorities.

And now, as Polly went flying back to the seniors' quarters, she was rather like her true madcap self again. There was no roguish desire to humiliate the detestable senior in front of Doris Jessel. If Polly's spirits were mounting, that was simply because she and her chums needed to test the financial position of Vanessa, and this was a chance to do so.

As she re-entered the senior's study, after tapping, she found both girls reclining in easy chairs. Polly being "only a fag," they took no more notice of her than if she had been a servant.

"All right, then, Van," the Jessel girl was saying grandly. "If you'll be at the Yews by two, on Saturday, I'll have the car ready. If I can't have mother's new Roysler, then we'll make do with the Stannard. She's still good for forty."

"I shall love it—Exeter!" Vanessa nodded, getting up. "Are those the cakes, Polly? Then you can get the boiling water, and that will be all."



Vanessa Ducrane switched on the torch so that she could see the contents of the open drawer—that same drawer from which she had stolen the hospital money only the other night! But this time Vanessa's object was a much more cunning one than mere stealing.

"I had to pay—"

"What!"

"One-and-eight, or he was going to take the stuff back," Polly said demurely. "So I paid him

"Oh, right! ask me for it presently—I can't bother now!"

Very airy, that answer. But hadn't Vanessa rather looked uncomfortable, as no girl with plenty of pocket money need have done?

Polly, on watch, had noticed—a sudden nettled look!

In Study 12, five minutes later, she made mention of all this.

"And when I go back to clear away for her," the madcap rattled on quite gaily, "I'm going to ask her for that money! If it were any other girl, I wouldn't dream; but—"

"Eef I had been you, Polly, when she couldn't pay I would have stuck to ze cakes!" piped in Naomer. "Bekas, we could have done with zem here, for tea. I never," said Naomer, as they all sat down, "saw such a mis'ble killection of left-overs!"

"Well, there it is!" Betty smiled. "We can't go in for dainty teas whilst we are all clubbing together to get enough money to buy back that teapot! Er—Polly dear, have you chanced to let Vanessa know that Study 12 is saving up to buy that teapot from the dealer to whom she sold it?"

"No," said Polly; "but I am going to drop a hint!"

"Yes, well," said Pam, "it might be as well." They all seemed to think so. There was Bunny's hearty: "Hear, hear!" and Paula's: "Yes, wather!" whilst Madge Minden and others nodded and smiled to the same effect.

Suddenly Polly indulged in a scornful outburst against Vanessa Ducrane.

"But how disgusting it is! To see her setting herself up to be as well off as that swanky Town girl, when she must know she can't afford to keep pace with her. They have fixed up to go to Exeter on Saturday afternoon. We know what that means; shops, a cinema, and they must be the best seats—money flowing like water. The Jessel girl can afford it all; but it is certain Vanessa can't."

"Exeter on Saturday, you say?" Betty gravely murmured. "Then on Friday night, girls—well, we shall be prepared, anyway."

"That's the idea," Bunny sparkled.

"Bekas, as you said ze other day, Betty, 'Once a thief, always a—'"

"Sh! Naomer was hastily silenced by several of her chums.

And after that there was such a pause as meant that many of these girls were experiencing painful thoughts.

It was not that any of them were troubled with scruples about the setting of a trap to catch Vanessa. That crafty senior had got to be caught, if ever poor Effie Barnard was to be righted.

True, it might be possible to right Effie, in the end, without Vanessa's guilt being made known in the school. Betty could see a way of achieving this. But Study 12 would never be as blissfully ignorant as the rest of Morcove. Always it would be the chums' well-kept secret—that a Morcove scholar had sunk as low as that.

By and by Polly went back to Vanessa's study, on the floor below. The senior and her friend from Barncombe were gone from the room; but a peep out of the window enabled Polly to see the Jessel car still on the gravel in front of the porch. She inferred that Vanessa was showing Doris

round the school. In that case, the senior could be expected back in the study very soon, having said good-bye to her friend.

Meantime, the temporary "fag" was free to do all the clearing up. As it was Vanessa for whom Polly was having to do everything, she might have been bad-tempered enough to break some of the crockery during the washing-up; but one thing kept her in the sweetest of humours. There was that one-and-eightpence to be asked for!

The senior, when she did come in, was as offensive as ever in her studied insolence.

"Done everything? No, you haven't! Look at those crumbs on the floor! Just a scurry round won't suit me, let me tell you!"

"I wasn't hurrying," Polly calmly remarked. "I wanted to be here when you got back. To ask you for that one-and-eightpence."

"Oh—bother you!" Vanessa muttered, flushing again. "Do you think I needed reminding? I'm not so silly as to suppose that one-and-eight is as little to you as it is to me!"

"Then can I have it, please?"

"What? Er—I haven't change now; but don't worry! I'll look in at Study 12 with it presently—"

"Oh, you needn't put yourself about to do that," Polly sweetly responded. She was quite certain that Vanessa, anyhow, was simply not good for one-and-eightpence even, at this moment. And yet the senior was under promise to go on an expensive trip to Exeter next Saturday.

"As a matter of fact, Vanessa, I don't want the money in any hurry. It will be quite all right if you let me have it—say, about the middle of next week."

"Next week? What on earth do you mean, kid?"

"My chums and I are saving up to buy back that teapot from the dealer. We don't feel like letting it go to a stranger. We are all clubbing together in Study 12," Polly was at pains to explain, "but, of course, we can't get enough money straight away."

"I see! But, really, Polly Linton, it doesn't—"

"We have two pounds already, though, saved up! It's in Study 12. Every day, one or another of us is able to add to the fund! But we shall have to wait until next week to complete the amount."

Polly noticed; this time her garrulous tongue was not being checked. Unless she was greatly mistaken, her remarks about money being saved up—kept in Study 12—had started a train of thought in Vanessa's crafty brain.

If this showing-off senior were the girl Study 12 suspected her to be—she would take the bait! She was even taking it—now!

"So, really, Vanessa, I would rather you went on owing me that shilling or so," the madcap added, on the point of going away. "It will keep me from being tempted to spend it."

Again, no response from Vanessa! Glancing back, as she went from the study, Polly detected a crafty look upon the senior's face.

"And I know—I can tell," Polly said to herself, "exactly what she is thinking!"

"Once a Thief—"

NOR was Polly out in her reckoning. Vanessa Ducrane, left to herself in the study, closed the door with a thrust from a toe-tip. Then she dropped down into an easy chair—to go on thinking.

Money, being saved up by Study 12—being kept in Study 12 until the total sum required had been collected. But the last contributions would not trickle in until after next week-end. Polly had said so. Meantime—

In Study 12, in one of those same table-drawers where the hospital money had been placed that night after the rummage sale, there was already a considerable sum. By, say, Friday night—three or four pounds most likely.

Vanessa said Friday night to herself, because she was thinking of the following day—the Saturday “halfer”—and of her engagement to join Doris Jessel in the joy ride to Exeter. Doris would make Exeter the occasion for a spending fit.

“Whilst I—”  
At this moment, hardly a shilling with which to bless herself—and yet she had allowed Doris Jessel to suppose that she, Vanessa, would also be in funds on Saturday.

Nothing to be expected in the meantime, either, in the form of a remittance from home—nothing. She had worried all the money she could out of her parents. They were not really well-off! had begged her not to be so extravagant, knowing that any Morcove scholar could be popular and happy without “making a splash.”

But there, next Friday night, in Study 12, would be several pounds in loose cash.  
“Creep down in the night and take it? Why not?”

Why not, when, after all, one had been able to take that other money from that very study without coming under the slightest suspicion!

And it was so easy—for a senior! It didn't mean sneaking away from a crowded dormitory, where some other girl might be wakeful. As a senior, one had one's own cubicle.

Vanessa suddenly stood up, rubbing her open hands together. Her gleaming eyes, her crafty smile—these proclaimed the daring decision.  
“I'll do it!”

And then suddenly she burst out laughing to herself. Ha, ha, ha, so very funny! That Polly Linton, by doing this bit of fagging this afternoon, should have put one in possession of such valuable information!

“That tongue of Polly's again,” Vanessa chuckled, sauntering out of the study. “The same tongue that was so quick to accuse Effie Barnard of the theft of the hospital money! And who, I wonder, will Polly be so ready to accuse next time? On Saturday morning, when they find there has been another theft in the night; whom will Polly accuse then—I wonder?”

The inward laughter did not end, even though Vanessa had had her thought of poor Effie, the girl so unjustly “sacked” from the school.

Never mind that Effie was suffering shame and loss of work on account of a theft which she, Vanessa, had committed. So long as one had managed to get somebody else blamed—good enough! Besides, a mere servant-girl; “a common skivvy!” As if one could bother about a girl of THAT class, whether she suffered or not!

Vanessa, now that she saw such a fine chance of committing a second theft just as successfully as the first, felt quite jaunty. It was a buoyant mood that did not take the form of sociability. Rather did she feel inclined to spend the last half-hour before dark in sauntering about, out of doors, all alone—secretly exulting over the easy means of putting herself in funds in time for Saturday afternoon.

Two or three pounds; perhaps as much as four pounds!

“Er—excuse me, miss—”  
She flashed round.

As the hesitant words had told her, it was a stranger wanting to speak to her. The stranger was a well-built girl who had, a few moments since, entered by the main gateway.

Vanessa had only to realise that this other girl was “no class,” to put on a very superior air.

“Yes; what is it?”

“Er—miss, do you happen to be a mistress?”

“I? No! I'm a senior!”

Vanessa's tone implied that that was something far grander than being a mistress.

“Oh, I see, miss. Then, I'm sorry—”

“But why? What? What have you come about?”

“Oh, well, I—I just thought I'd better, miss,” was the smirked answer. “I'm Kate Barnard.”

### Vanessa Senses Danger!

“BARNARD? No relation to the girl who—”  
“Yes, miss; Effie's sister, that's who I am! I felt I had better call at the school about a girl named Polly Linton.”

“Oh? Then perhaps I can do something?”

“It's like this, miss; as I dare say you know, it was all through Polly Linton that Effie got the sack—”

“Yes, I know! But your sister did steal the money, didn't she?”

“She says she didn't, miss, and mother and I believe her, anyhow—”

“Well, of course, you would! I can't wonder at that. But—er—”

“But the harm's done,” Kate spoke on fiercely. “Or at any rate, it's not making it any better for Polly Linton to keep on calling at our home in Barncombe, to sort of say she's sorry, and all that! I won't have it, anyhow, and that's why I made up my mind to come to the school about it, so there!”

“I see! But—”

“We don't want her popping in and out to try and say nice, comforting things to our Effie! That's why I want to see one of the mistresses about telling Polly Linton to keep away! If Polly Linton is so sure, as she says she is, of being able to right Effie after all, then let her get busy and do that, not keep on talking about doing it!”

Vanessa was secretly experiencing a sudden pang of excitement.

“You say that Polly has been talking as if she hoped to—”

“Promising our Effie over and over again that it will be all right in the end—yes! I don't know a bit what the idea is, neither does Effie! Polly Linton won't explain; she only keeps on saying that she and her chums have an idea who did really take the money, and if only Effie will be patient and wait a bit—”

“I—see!” Vanessa muttered, paying eager heed. “Oh, I see!”

“I suppose there is to be some trap set for the real thief, and that's all right, of course; serve the real thief right! But, after all, it's only more talk, and what I say is, let's have deeds, not words! Time enough for Polly Linton to come butting in at home when she has really—”

“Look here, Kate Barnard,” the senior broke in tensely. “You needn't trouble to see a mistress. As I told you, I'm a senior, and I can do everything you want—oh, I can, easily! We seniors; it's our job, don't you know, to keep kids like Polly Linton in order.”

"Right-ho, then, and I won't trouble any more, Miss—or—"

"Ducrane—Vanessa. Ducrane is my name. 'Bye," she threw out, and grandly stalked away.

But inwardly, as she hurried to her study, she was experiencing none of the calm she displayed outwardly.

A trap to be set for the real thief! So that was the game now, was it? Right!

The guilty-minded girl gasped to herself as she realised what a narrow escape hers had been. If—if it had not been for that encounter with Kate Barnard just now, she, Vanessa, would have walked right into the trap!

For, was there any doubt that even now the trap was laid for her?

That second lot of money in Study 12! The remarks thrown out by Polly Linton about its being kept there!

Vanessa sat crouching forward in her chair, sliding one open hand against another, as her habit was when her crafty mind was busy. And now her expression was a tigress one.

"Yes, I see it—I see it all," she nodded to herself. "They were to lie in wait for me, to catch me in the act that second time!"

She bounded up from her chair suddenly, just as if someone had entered the study; she hissed words, just as if Polly herself were there.

"It won't come off, my girl! That's all! You and your chums—you can lie in wait when the time comes; and welcome. But—you won't—get—me!"

From this it was a leap of her mind to the daring, revengeful idea—why not "get" Polly herself in return? As a clever hit-back! But—how?

Wait until Friday night, and then—No! Too risky. Much better not to be out of bed oneself on Friday night, when the Study 12 girls were certain to be away from their dormitory. Far better to do something before Friday night.

Another moment—or two and Vanessa's plan of action was all clear to her.

She sat down at once to get off a letter to Doris Jessel. It was a brief note, candidly telling Doris that the writer was "spent up" just at present, but did so want to do the run to Exeter next Saturday, and go to a few shops. Could Doris lend her a pound for a few days?

"You know, dear, I shall have the money for that teapot any time now. The dealer said it was bound to sell quickly. You remember, he couldn't find enough money to do a deal with me, so I had to leave it with him to be sold on commission—"

Vanessa nodded and smiled as she read over the letter before gumming it up in an envelope.

Who, after this, could ever accuse her of being a girl ready to stoop to thieving, when Doris Jessel could be called upon to bear witness there had been a candid little note asking for temporary help?

It was a letter to make her, Vanessa, figure as a girl who would far rather sink her pride—and all Morcove knew how much pride she had—than be tempted into taking what was not her own!

"Thank goodness, girls," Polly was saying to some of her chums in Study 12 at that moment, "I do feel so different about everything now! I feel—"

"Owch!" Paula yelped, ducking her head to dodge a book playfully hurled by Polly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The treat it was to Betty and

others, to find Polly recovering her madcap spirits like this! Paula herself was as delighted as any.

"Yes, wather, Polly deah; fire away!" the beloved duffer beamed, in such "welfare" that she was quite prepared to act as an Aunt Sally. "Anything, wather than that you should go on gwieving!"

"And I zink we might have a clove corjool all round, just to celebrate," said Naomer, gravitating to the corner cupboard. "Bekas— What ze diggings, though, I was forgetting! No clove corjool!"

"No anything, is there?" chuckled Betty. "Nothing—sweendle!" grimaced the dusky one, having opened the corner cupboard. "Skeersly a blessed crumb!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "All for a good cause, kid," Betty reminded Naomer, who was very ruefully turning away from those bare shelves. "You know where the money has gone that might have kept us stocked up!"

"Into this drawer!" Polly gaily cried, tugging open the one on her side of the study-table. "Look at it, girls; two pounds, roughly, already—"

"And by Friday night!" put in Tess.

"Ah," Polly said, "that will be the time, girls—Friday night! When there has been time for a bit more cash to be added."

"Yes, I think we can safely afford to wait till then," Betty said. "She won't do anything before then."

"Oh, no!" was the agreeing chorus. But Study 12, although it had every reason for so thinking, was mistaken—and fatally mistaken, too!

THAT very night, after the school had marched away from Big Hall to go upstairs to bed, Vanessa Ducrane came swiftly and silently along the corridor which led to Study 12.

The lights in this corridor had been switched out for the night; all the girls who occupied studies in this part of the schoolhouse had mounted to their dormitory. Vanessa, as a senior, with her own cubicle to go to for the night, could safely be seen about for a minute or two after the juniors had retired, although it would never do for her to be seen going to or from one of their studies.

So, swiftly and secretly, she had flitted down this dark passage and was now in Study 12, with the door closed and the room lights still switched off.

From her pocket she drew a pocket torch, clicked it on, and shone the bright ray into a pulled-open drawer.

The selfsame drawer from which she had stolen the hospital money that other night! And now—

Here it was, the sum of money so far collected by the chums for the purpose of buying back that teapot from the dealer in Barncombe; only two pounds or so, at present, but still—

"Quite enough for my purpose!" Vanessa took out the money, all in loose silver as it was. As she handled the shining coins her fingers itched to be able to keep possession of the money. But no!

Much as she longed to keep the money for herself, and easy though it would be for her to do that, she was going to forbear.

Suddenly the brilliant torch-light caused Vanessa to notice something peculiar about one of the silver coins. It was a half-crown, with a new-looking scratch—two lines, crossed.

Ah, marked money? The girls had even marked some of the coins, had they?

Yes; here was another coin—a shilling, this time, bearing a scratched cross.

Vanessa was giving a savage smile as she hastily gathered up all the money and pocketed it.

Switching out the torch, she padded to the door, opened it, and next moment knew herself to be quite safe from any chance of discovery.

She mounted to the floor above and reached her own cubicle in the seniors' sleeping quarters, all without encountering anyone. From that dormitory which Betty and Co. shared with the rest of their Form Vanessa had heard some light-hearted talk and laughter, and she felt sure that the Study 12 girls were themselves in merry mood to-night.

"But in the morning, perhaps," she said fiercely to herself, "you'll be smiling, my girls, on the other sides of our faces!"



Headlong Polly's friends raced after her, but they were too late to stop her. "Thief, that's what you are—thief!" she panted as she halted before Vanessa Ducrane. Quite unruffled the senior listened to her tirade.

Now, in the privacy of her cubicle, she could safely take another look at the second haul of cash.

Her crafty intention made it very necessary that she should separate any marked coins from the rest. There proved to be only three. She would get rid of those first thing in the morning—throw them away out of doors before breakfast. As for the rest of the money—

Other inmates of the huge schoolhouse may not have been awake when the chimes ding-dong'd the midnight hour; but Vanessa was wide awake, thankful to hear at last the measured stroke of the hour bell following the four quarters.

Bong! the last deep-toned note died away.

And yet—even then, she felt bound to wait a while longer. The midnight chimes might have caused some light sleeper to stir—in Betty and Co.'s dormitory.

But when another melodious ding-dong had sounded, Vanessa rose from her bed, put on dressing-gown and slippers and crept away.

And with Vanessa, as she crept to the juniors' dormitory, went all the money she had stolen a few hours since—except the marked coins!

### Polly Does It Again!

"HERE! Oh, my goodness—Betty, Betty! All of you!"

Polly, as she cried out as wildly as all that, was turning away from a pulled-open drawer in Study 12 to rush out into the passage.

It was that early hour in the morning when girls came down one after another from the sleeping quarters as fast as they finished dressing.

Betty had at this moment turned into the study corridor, with Pam, Madge, and one or two others. At sight of Polly, just outside Study 12's

doorway, beckoning frantically, they came on in an alarmed rush.

"Why, what, Polly—what?"

"The money, girls—gone!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Stolen, in the night—yes, stolen!" Polly spoke on in great excitement. "Every penny of it!"

"Last night!" Betty muttered. "Although it was not Friday night!"

"The bait taken," said Madge—"already!"

"Look!" Polly cried, pointing to the rifled drawer. "See for yourselves—gone, all of it!"

"Does it make any difference?" Pam voiced calmly. "If the money's gone, don't we know who took it?"

"We do," Betty said fiercely. "That it was taken last night, when we expected it to happen on Friday night, only makes this difference, girls.



We were not about to catch the thief in the act!"

"No, but some of the money was marked!" Polly reminded her chums, with that grim smile of hers. "And now, how thankful I am that we did mark some of the coins! If we hadn't done so, then—that thieving Vanessa—"

"Sh, Polly—"

"But why?" the headstrong one rushed on as loudly as ever. "We know it's Vanessa! Didn't I make a point of telling her, yesterday, that we were keeping money in this study?"

"Yes, but—we haven't caught her in the act," Betty gravely commented. "It's true, she doesn't know that some of the money was marked. But now, it looks to me as if we shall have to be awfully careful—"

"Careful?" Polly stamped. "Go to her now, I say, and accuse her to her face! And if she denies it, get her searched—and the marked money found upon her!"

"That's all very well, Polly, but—"

"But what, Betty?"

"Who is going to do the searching? You know we hoped to catch her in the act on Friday night, in which case we could have agreed to let her off if she would write an anonymous letter to Miss Somerfield, clearing Effie Barnard about that other theft. Now, however, if we hadn't marked some of the coins, just in case—"

"But we did mark them!" Polly burst in again. "And they are upon her now! And so, we've got to do the next best thing, that's all! Effie's got to be righted! If we can't do it now, without disgracing Vanessa—well, it can't be helped! That isn't our fault! We would have if we could! But the horrid thief was in such a hurry to get hold of the money, she—she couldn't even wait until Friday night! She— Oh, I'm going to find her, right now!"

"Polly—stop!"

But Polly, impulsive as ever, was already out of the study, flying up the corridor. For one moment Betty and the others stood exchanging dismayed glances.

"She'll be saying things—like she did about Effie," Betty muttered anxiously. "Why can't Polly wait—take time to thing?"

The simple answer was, of course, that Polly was—Polly!

They rushed out after her, but only caught her up when she was above stairs, in the seniors' quarters, speaking wildly to Vanessa, who stood in pyjamas at her cubicle entrance.

"Thief, that's what you are—thief!" Polly's chums heard her shouting as they breathlessly came upon the scene. "You've been to Study 12 in the night—you have, you thief! You, the same girl who took the hospital money! You knew that poor Effie Barnard had been accused, sacked—"

"Has this girl suddenly lost her reason?" Vanessa icily inquired of Betty and the others. "You hear what she is saying? Is she quite mad, or what?"

"No, she isn't—"

"Oh, isn't she?" sneered Vanessa, drawing herself up. "Then you are backing her up, are you? I'm a thief, am I? Good! I will—"

"What's all this row about?" another voice suddenly interposed; and there was Morcove's head girl, Ethel Courtway.

Vanessa was late in getting dressed this morning. Ethel, like the rest of the seniors, was fully dressed—would have been downstairs by this time, but she had heard the row starting.

"Well?"

"These kids, Ethel—they're crazy!"

"I'll hear what they have to say, anyhow. Betty?"

"It is like this, Ethel. After Effie Barnard was sacked for stealing that hospital money, we were suddenly convinced—only we couldn't prove it—that she was not the thief after all. We suspected a certain girl—"

"And so we set a trap for her!" Polly panted. "As we had a perfect right to do. Don't you understand, Ethel, we simply had to think of Effie, had to get her righted—"

"Yes, I quite understand that. But—"

"This—this is the girl we suspected," Betty spoke on, pointing to Vanessa; "this senior. It's very terrible, Ethel; but there is not the slightest doubt—"

"Oh, isn't there?" laughed Vanessa. "In other words, you can prove it this time, can you?"

"Yes, we can!" Polly flared out again. "By having you searched, as we demand to have you searched—now! Ethel—it must be done—before this wicked thief can use any of the money she took from Study 12 last night."

"I took no money—"

"You did, Vanessa!" Betty unhesitatingly accused the senior to her face. "And, unluckily for you, some of the money was marked! We were ready for you, one way or the other. We didn't want any public scandal, but it's got to be that now—"

"Not for me," Vanessa smiled, shaking her head. "No scandal for me. Er—Ethel"—very airily—"I think you will agree, if the money was taken by me, I haven't had much time to spend it, have I?"

"She has had time to hide it!" Polly suddenly realised. "And that is why she can afford to be so calm!"

"But remember, you girls," Ethel said quietly, "Vanessa is not in the position of a girl who has been previously accused. This accusation of yours, whether right or wrong, must have come as a surprise to her."

"I don't know that anything can surprise me," Vanessa drawled, "that Study 12 does! But go ahead! Shall I stay here—not move an inch—until I have been searched? And my cubicle, and my study?"

Ethel Courtway spoke with quiet authority.

"If you are wise, Vanessa, that is what you will do—wait here. A mistress must be fetched. Betty, will you find your Form-mistress? Thanks!"—as Betty sped away.

Miss Merrick was soon upon the scene, and after that proceedings became private. There was nothing for excited girls to gain that would satisfy their curiosity by any hanging about on the stairs.

But sufficient had been overheard by one girl and another to cause a tremendous sensation throughout the school.

Another theft from Study 12! And Polly Linton—she had been at it again, with that tongue of hers! As before, when chums of hers would have preferred not to be in too much of a hurry to launch an accusation, Polly had "boiled over!"

More than this was being said everywhere in the school, for much more was known.

Polly had accused Vanessa Ducrane! The Study 12 girl's furious accusation had been overheard by dozens of others. Well! It was to be hoped, for Polly's own sake, that she had made no mistake!

So Morcove gossiped, during one of the most sensational half-hours that had ever occurred, before breakfast.

Fay and Edna Denver, with their usual malice towards Study 12, tried to spread a belief that Vanessa Ducrane would come out of the whole thing with flying colours. But the general feeling was one of: "Not so sure!"

Very few girls would have been ready to vouch for Vanessa's honesty at all times. Her conduct had not always been above reproach. She had been found out over lies—often. Above all, she was given to making an extravagant display, when really she did not come of a wealthy family.

In other words, Vanessa went beyond her means, and anyone who does that is, of course, liable to fall into temptation. Moreover had to think of all the possibilities, there must be no jumping to the conclusion that Vanessa simply MUST be guilty, because she MIGHT have been pressed for money.

Breakfast-time passed off without any development. Then came the march-in to morning school—and no one's suspense relieved!

Polly and her chums were amongst their Form-mates again, with not a word to say. Perhaps they had been warned that not a word must be said at present. But why? other girls were wondering. Surely, by this time, it should be known one way or another! Rather rough on Vanessa if she were innocent—not to have been publicly absolved from blame by this time.

Was there, then, some suspicion still attaching to her? Was Miss Somerfield— But, of course, Miss Somerfield must be dealing with the matter! She couldn't be letting it slide—a thing like that!

"And yet, here we are—all in class as usual!" Many a girl belonging to Betty and Co.'s Form was saying that to herself, when lessons had begun. Nor were the chums of Study 12 themselves free from amazement that it was so—"classes as usual!"

Betty, for one, was very uneasy. More than ever she wished that there had been no publicity. When they found that the money was gone, they should have decided to inform—not Vanessa, but the headmistress! But there, Polly had got the bit between her teeth like that again.

No use blaming her. She was like it, and always would be! Besides, one must make allowances for her raging desire to see Effie Barnard righted.

At the mid-morning "break," Betty and Co. had nearly all the rest of the Form round them, trying to get them to talk.

It was one insistent, "Do tell us!" which Betty answered again and again by saying that there was nothing to tell. The matter was in the hands of Miss Somerfield now, and that was all Study 12 could say, because that was all they knew.

As for Polly, she had lapsed into the glum silence of one who has rash utterances to rue.



"I won't stay here to be so insulted!" Polly flared out, but instantly Miss Somerfield rose and drew her back into the room. "Stand there! How dare you, Polly!" she said sternly, and Polly knew she would never be able to convince the headmistress of her innocence.

Once again Polly was wishing that she had not been born with such an unruly tongue.

It was no consolation to her that, in the heat of the moment, she had meant to follow up the accusation by having Vanessa searched there and then.

She had actually imagined that she and her chums would do the searching! Such a thing could never have been, as she was realising now. If only she had realised it at the time!

Then came Fay and Edna on to the games field, where so much gossip was going on, with a bit of news.

"Just heard something in Vanessa's favour, anyhow," Fay boasted, whilst her sister glinted spiteful eyes at the chums. "Vanessa has offered to prove that she had asked her Town friend, Doris Jessel, for the loan of a pound for a day or two!"

"But that," cried Etta Hargrove and others, "only proves that Vanessa was hard up!"

"Is that all you think?" sneered Fay. "Don't you see it proves that Vanessa—when we know how proud she is—had even lowered her pride to ask for a loan from that grand friend of hers!"

"And as if Vanessa would have done that," added Edna, "if she knew there was money to steal, and had made up her mind to steal it! No; I think Somebody will have to be more careful what she says, after this!"

"I really think she will HAVE to!" Fay agreed.

And both sisters, treating Polly to a mocking smile, walked away.

The babel of talk began afresh. Whether or not Vanessa was guilty, and whether, if guilty, it would be proved against her now, was still the core of the excitable debate when the bell rang all the girls back into school.

"Classes again!" moaned the Form. "With all this to think about!"

Polly, at any rate, was not called upon to struggle with school work for the rest of the morning. At about half-past eleven, Helen, the parlourmaid, made an unwonted appearance in the Form class-room with a message.

"Polly Linton, to report to the headmistress at once!"

Like an understanding "Ah!" from every girl in the desks, was the sighing sound which went about the class-room.

Polly sent for!

That, for a certainty, meant some development—at last!

### Called to Account!

"YES, Polly, I want you!"

Miss Somerfield's expression, like those first words of hers, suggested that she had been waiting here in her private room with some impatience.

In fact, she looked altogether put out—a rare state for her to be in. But then—was it to be wondered at? Polly thought, as she closed the door behind her and then walked forward. Not nice for any headmistress, to have had one scholar accusing another of theft!

"Polly, a question I must ask you. How much money have you?"

"None, Miss Somerfield."

"None?"

"Well, only a few coppers, at most. I had a two-shilling bit on me yesterday, out of which I paid one-and-eight for something delivered at the school on Vanessa's account. She owes me that still. So I would have—fourpence," Polly smiled, finding it amusing to be so exact.

But Miss Somerfield did not relax her stern expression.

"Then what about the money in your locker in the dormitory, Polly?"

"Where, Miss Somerfield?"

"In your own locker in the dormitory, Polly! The sum of one pound, sixteen shillings—all in silver, wrapped up in a handkerchief of yours."

Polly's parted lips worked, but they emitted not a word. She stood dumbfounded by the shock of what Miss Somerfield had said, and during a dramatic silence she stared at the headmistress. Slowly, that stare, meeting Miss Somerfield's steady gaze, became a fierce one.

"Money," the scholar voiced at last, "in my locker? Then I know nothing—nothing whatever about it, that's all!" she suddenly flared out hotly.

"But," the headmistress submitted sternly, "can there be any doubt that it is the very money that you allege to have been stolen? One pound, sixteen shillings, Polly! The exact sum, according to what I was informed at breakfast-time, less the three marked coins."

"Oh," Polly jerked, "the marked coins—not with the rest? Now I see!"

"I am afraid I have seen a reason, Polly, why those marked coins were not found in your locker," came the cold response. "No girl, being aware that they were marked, would wish to keep

them—naturally. And you—you did know that there were some marked coins?"

"Know? Of course I knew! Why, I myself marked them! But what is the idea, then, now?" Polly rushed on furiously. "Is it imagined that I robbed my own study, my own chums? That I took all the money, but took care not to keep the marked coins? Miss Somerfield, if THAT is what you think, then I—Oh, I won't stay here another minute, to be so insulted! I won't!"

"Polly Linton—"

"You may be my headmistress; even so, I'll not stand for such a thing as this!"

Polly was striding away to the door as she said it, passionately. But before she reached the door the headmistress drew her back.

"Now, stand there! How dare you, Polly, treat me as if—"

"Then how dare you look upon me as a thief? Next, I suppose, it is to be said that I took that other money!"

"In both cases, Polly, you were custodian of the money. In both cases you were the first to denounce another girl as being the thief. There was Effie Barnard, whom I dismissed; and now, to-day, it is a senior against whom you have made charges. What am I to think about Effie now, when—"

"You can take it that Effie was innocent! I'll be only too glad if you will—"

"I am going to treat her as the victim of a grave miscarriage of justice. Vanessa has emerged from the strictest inquiry as a perfectly innocent girl, and it is only fair for me to assume that in Effie's case, too, the charge against her never should have been made. As for who has been the thief—"

"I have, have I?"

"Polly, the money reported this morning to have been stolen in the night has been found in your locker."

"As if," Polly laughed wildly, "I would put money there that I had stolen! When the lock itself is broken, too!"

"I admit it seemed incredible to me—until it was pointed out to me that you had no reason to fear that your belongings would be searched. There has been no search, on suspicion, Polly. You are not too tidy, ever, in the dormitory, and this morning the matron herself found a housemaid having to do far more clearing up after you than should be—"

"I'm sorry if I gave anyone any trouble—" "I, too, am very, very sorry, Polly, about all this," was the grieving answer. "It was then that matron herself, putting something away in your locker, came upon the money. There is another thing about its being there. I cannot forget, Polly, that you have many friends who scarcely ever let you out of their sight."

Polly stared.

"I—I don't quite understand, Miss Somerfield—"

"Could you have found an opportunity, very easily, early this morning, of going alone—say, out of doors—"

"But I tell you, I didn't have any stolen money to be hidden away out of doors or anywhere else! If the money was found in my locker, then it was put there, that's all! It's an old trick—"

"Resorted to, Polly, in very different circumstances from those that have prevailed this morning. I may tell you that there has been special vigilance, put in force by me as early as eight o'clock this morning. It is no use, and now I must ask you—"

"I've already said I know nothing about the money, Miss Somerfield—"

"Wait to hear my question, Polly. Have you been in any pressing need of a big sum of money lately?"

"No!"

"Your brother, at Grangemoor; has he—"

"No! And it wouldn't have made any difference if he or I had needed a thousand pounds! I wouldn't steal a penny from anyone! Yet you believe I first robbed a hospital fund, and then robbed my own chums! Oh, I—"

"Control yourself, Polly, for I am anxious to spare you by letting nothing go beyond these four walls. Effie Barnard I can re-engage, without needing to say more than that I am quite satisfied we did her great injustice and are anxious to make full amends. As for Vanessa Docrane, you must write an apology which, in fairness to her, I must put on the green-baize board."

"Apologise to her!" Polly ejaculated indignantly. "But, Miss Somerfield—"

"Polly—"

"I'm sorry, but I must utterly refuse, Miss Somerfield, and so that is all there is to it!"

"Then, since you refuse, my only course will be to send you home—expelled."

"All right; do that!"

"Come, come, Polly! I am thinking of your parents—the great regard I have for your dear mother. Don't compel me to do this thing! Vanessa is guiltless, and an apology to her is due from you."

"She is not going to get it!"

"A public apology, after the publicity of this morning's accusation, she must have, Polly!"

"And I say I can't apologise, so there!"

It was a deadlock now. There they stood, headmistress and pupil, silent whilst a battle of looks went on. Polly, although upset, was neither hysterical nor tearful. She simply looked recklessly defiant.

"Very well, then; you will have to go home. I happen to know your parents are in London and not expected back at Linton Hall until next Wednesday. You will be sent home, Polly Linton—next Wednesday. You understand?"

"Yes, Miss Somerfield!"

"You quite understand that it is your refusing to apologise to Vanessa that is getting you expelled?"

"Yes, I understand that, too!"

"Then there is nothing more to be said."

Miss Somerfield's dismissing nod was as sad as her voice had been. Polly, giving a slight bow, marched away to the door. She opened it; then, pausing, she faced round.

"Hospital money—and you believe I took it! Money my chums had subscribed for something else, and you believe I took that as well! And it means you think I accused Effie Barnard—that girl!—when all the time— Oh!" Polly broke off with a sobbing cry and floundered away, drawing the door shut behind her.

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No. 512



No. 513

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No. 514



No. 515

VANESSA DUCRANE had not been required to attend classes, this morning. Fair allowance had been made for the upset she had suffered.

So, at a moment when Polly was going upstairs to Study 12, she and the senior chanced to meet.

No one was by to witness the encounter. All other scholars were still in class.

Only Vanessa saw the look which Polly had for her. Only Polly saw the smile which Vanessa gave—heard her laugh as she passed on, both smile and laugh implying:

"So much for you, my girl!"

### Polly Can Smile!

BUNNY TREVOR, first in the race upstairs after the midday dismissal, stopped dead with surprise as soon as she had thrown wide the door of Study 12.

"No, girls," she called back to Betty and others, who were swarming down the corridor; "Polly isn't here!"

They crowded into the room, only to have Form-mates of theirs surging about the door an instant later. Polly's own particular chums were not the only scholars by any means who wanted to know—well, the latest!

"Oh, beat it, some of you," Betty entreated. "She's not here, as you can see, and we know no more than you do!"

Nor was this uncertainty and suspense to be relieved until forty minutes later, by which time the general hanging about had ended. It was a fine midday, luring girls out to the games field. Polly, having slipped into the schoolhouse by a side door, was able to mount to Study 12 without being seen.

Then, as she walked into the study—all smiles—her chums bounded up from chairs or forsook their table-edge perches, exclaiming thankfully:

"Polly! At last, dear!"

"Bekas, what ze diggings, Polly! Where have you been, when you know very well—"

"I have been into Barncombe, girls," was the blithe announcement, "to let Effie Barnard know that she is to be given her job back—at once."

"It really is all right, then, about everything?" Betty joyfully inferred. "Miss Somerfield is satisfied that the girl who took last night's money also took the other?"

"Splendid!"

"Miss Somerfield," Polly spoke, when all the delighted outcry had died down, "is satisfied that I took last night's money—and the hospital money as well!"

## THE FATEFUL DAY!

Polly Linton or Vanessa Ducrane — which will have to leave Morcove?

Don't miss next Tuesday's splendid long Morcove story:

"When Wednesday Meant Expulsion"

by MARJORIE STANTON

Study 12 gasped:

"Wha-a-at!"

"And I have the pleasure of informing you," Polly smiled on, "that next Wednesday I am to be—expelled."

"Polly!"

"Howwows!"

"Bekas—"

"You're joking, Polly!" cried Bunny.

"I'm not."

"You must be! You don't seem upset!"

"Why should I be? I wanted Effie Barnard to be righted, and righted she is. As for my being saddled with both thefts—I didn't touch a penny, and so I am not going to care two hoots even if—"

"Oh, but explain!" Betty and others clamoured, still looking horror-struck. "You—you!—saddled with both thefts?"

"Last night's money, girls, was found, by chance, in my locker this morning. Vanessa, I am told, is innocent, quite innocent! A public apology is owing to her, from me, so I am told. And I have told Miss Somerfield that I mean to go on owing it."

Polly's pausing resulted in a stunned silence.

Then Betty, looking aghast, whipped about to the door.

"I'm going to see Miss Somerfield about this! Oh, but I must! We can't have you—"

"You won't have me—after next Wednesday," Polly said, at the same time catching hold of Betty to prevent her rushing away. "At least, not unless I can clear myself in the meantime. Five days I've got. Think I can do it? Anyhow—have a good try! Gosh, if I don't!"

Again that intense silence.

"Well, zis is a swendle!" Naomer quavered at last.

"That Vanessa," Betty said, clenching and unclenching her hands, "I am not going to say it, but we all know what to think—"

"And so, perhaps," Polly smiled, "you won't be surprised that I have refused to apologise? She owes me one-and-eight; I'll owe her the apology!"

Polly, in a moment, had changed to a state of passion.

"Effie's righted! And isn't that everything— isn't it, girls, when I felt ready to do anything to right her? You think I am going to be down, you think I can look miserable, when, only half an hour ago, in that girl's home in Barncombe—I only wish you'd been there to see the joy it gave Effie! I raced any message Miss Somerfield may have sent off to Effie—"

"But, Polly," broke in Madge tremulously, "did you tell Effie—about yourself?"

"No, I didn't tell her that. Why spoil her happiness! You, Betty, said just now—that Vanessa! She has done it on us once, girls; she has done it on us twice," Polly said slowly and fiercely. "But if I don't see her expelled instead of being expelled myself—next Wednesday—then I've got no more spirit in me than this duffer of ours!" She suddenly turned to kiss the crown of Paula's drooping head. "And no more brains, either!"

The playful words, only achieved by Polly's desperate stoicism, could not win a smile.

After a moment, she turned to a wall calendar.

"Make a note of it, girls! Next Wednesday—Vanessa Ducrane or Polly Linton to be expelled. One or the other of us it must be, and so you can all go on wondering which!"