

PACKED WITH THE STORIES ALL SCHOOLGIRLS LOVE BEST!

The Schoolgirls' Gown

2^d



THIS
DAINTY
COLOURED
STAND-UP
PHOTO
of
ANNA Q
NILSSON

the popular film-star.

Given Free Inside!

This lovely
coloured photo
stands
6½ inches high.



Another splendid tale of Lena Daunt and Madge Minden at Morcove.

SCHOOLGIRLS AT STRIFE!



By MARJORIE
STANTON.

Wanted on the 'Phone!

"COME along, girls! Come along, when the bell has been going for the last two minutes!"

It was Miss Redgrave, in as impatient a mood as the Fourth Form at Morcove ever saw that chummy mistress of theirs.

She had suddenly appeared amongst some half-a-dozen girls who were at the school gateway, watching the road.

"We are looking out for Madge Minden to come along from Barncombe with Lena Daunt."

"Well, girls, if they are late that's no reason why you should be!" laughed Miss Redgrave, starting to shepherd the batch of them up the drive. "Lateness is a privilege only day girls may enjoy!"

Polly Linton chuckled.

"You hear that, Paula?"

"Yes, wather!" was Paula Creel's sighing response. "There's a great deal of twuth in that remark, bai Jove! Madge and Lena don't have any getting-up bell to dwag them out of bed."

"Anyhow, they have all the fag of getting here," Polly recoiled brightly. "So that makes us quits. Talking of fag, I see it's open-air drill this morning."

"Howwows!" groaned Paula.

Miss Redgrave smiled serenely.

"What's the matter with physical jerks for first lesson on a bright morning like this? Hurry up! Hurry up! We are keeping the others waiting."

Not that the others, as Miss Redgrave must have seen, appeared to mind. At the spot where

Miss Redgrave's scholars were waiting quite contentedly, gossiping in twos and threes. Betty & Co. made a dash, however, to atone for their lateness, and then the Form lined up, numbered off, and formed fours.

Miss Redgrave, taking charge, had a good many amused girls in front of her. Of course, the Form simply loved this open-air drill. A

thousand times better than, say, maths! But Paula—

Paula Creel could not feel quite happy. To elegant Paula the various evolutions were a great trial always. And this morning—was it by mere chance?—she found herself in the rear line with rascally Naomer on her right and Polly Linton on her left.

Paula had a dread of all sorts of things happening to her when she was in those positions which render it so easy for anyone to give you a touch and over you go!

"At the word of command," announced Miss Redgrave, presently, "the Form will rise on tip-toe."

"Howwows!" breathed Paula.

She had a suspicion that there was a sort of wireless communication going on between her right and left hand neighbours.

"At the word 'two' you will gently lower the body, remaining on tip-toe. We shall repeat the exercise several times. Now, girls—hands on hips!"

They all obeyed with well-trained uniformity. "Rise!" commanded Miss Redgrave. "Steady, there! Paula, your heels are scarcely off the ground!"

"I wegwet—"

"Higher still, Paula! Now then, girls, slowly and together—two!"

Instantly there was a good deal of suppressed tittering as more or less jerkily the girls lowered themselves. One or two knees gave a loud crick. Paula gasped.

"Keep perfectly still," said Miss Redgrave when they were all down. "Now up! Now down again! Paula—"

"Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exploded the Form, as Paula, having received a surreptitious nudge from Naomer, rolled over sideways against Polly, who promptly toppled the duffer backwards.

Miss Redgrave had to look stern, although she felt amused.

Lena Daunt's companionship is making Madge Minden more and more unhappy, but she feels in honour bound not to breathe a word to her chums about it—a decision that only increases her dilemma, as you will see when you read this fine story.

"Of course, Paula, you would!"
 "Yes, wather, Miss Wedgwave. I had a pwe-sentiment! The twuth is——"

"No talking, Paula!"

"I quite understand, Miss Wedgwave, but——"

"I said no talking!"

"Pweicisely. Howevah——"

"Paula, you will stand out of the square and follow the exercises apart from the others."

"Dweadful—dweadful!" groaned the elegant one.

At this moment the two day girls from Barn-combo came riding in at the school gateway on their bicycles. They did not appear to be in similar moods. Lena Daunt looked as light-hearted as she was pretty. Madge Minden's face, on the other hand, seemed stern set.

The two girls had first to put their cycles away and then discard their outdoor things. Walking away from the cycle sheds to go into the school-house, they both looked to where their Form mates were being drilled.

By this time Paula was a solitary figure, trying to do everything in unison with the others, but always a second too late. When they were swinging up their arms, Paula was stiffly at attention; when they were at attention, she was frantically floating her arms to the skies.

Lena smiled derisively.

"Who's the duffer getting into such a muddle over there? Paula, I suppose? What a scream! Just look at her!"

Madge's smile for Paula was a fond one, lasting only a moment. Then, as if she had not much heart for anything to-day, she became as troubled-looking as ever.

Perhaps a glance in the mirror, after she had taken off hat and coat, suddenly appraised Madge of her gloomy looks, for then, by a big effort, she put on a cheerier expression. She and Lena did not have to join in the drill. It was ending as they returned to the open air, Miss Redgrave telling the Form to be in class inside two minutes.

"Madge—Lena, you are late this morning!"

"Yes, Miss Redgrave," was all Madge responded, regretfully.

"So sorry," pleaded Lena, smiling sweetly. "I had a bad puncture coming along."

"It's all very well," Miss Redgrave said, with the frowning smile that made censure from her so easy to bear. "You should start in time to allow for punctures."

Lena laughed, and turned to say "Morning, all!" to the numerous girls who were close at hand. A stranger could have been quite sure instantly that Lena was very popular in the Form.

Madge was greeted affectionately, but she did not come in for so much attention, being a girl they had all known for a long while, whereas Lena was "new." This was only her second week at Morcove.

"What you mean by being late?" demanded impish Naomer, making a playful dash at Lena.

"Raskikkle, not to be in time for ze physikklo jerks!"

"But I'm in time for maths, the next lesson," grimaced Lena.

"As if you minded maths!" cried Polly. "You could do all the work standing on your head!"

"And then I'd look a nice object, wouldn't I?"

"Hownows, yes!" agreed Paula. "But it will come to that in the end, geals. It's dweadful, the way we are wushed about! I weally don't know sometimes whether I am standing on my head or my heels. Madge, I shall become a day geal, like you. Yes, wather!"

"I think you had better stay as you are," smiled Madge.

"Now, Madge!" Betty Barton sang out. "You know very well you are quite enjoying being a day girl this term, with such nice people to live with as the Daunts! By the way——"

"Are we going into school, or not?"

That was not what Betty had been going to say. But now that someone had raised the point, a general rush for the schoolhouse took place.

If anyone this morning had a dread of maths and the rest of the lessons, it was Madge Minden.

She was no more in the mood for class work than she had been in the mood for that jollity which, as usual, prevailed amongst her schoolmates.

And the sad thing was that, morning after morning, it seemed that she would be coming to the school she loved, every bit as sick at heart as this.

That glib excuse of Lena's for being late had been a sheer untruth! If the pair of them had been so behind time, it was simply because of Lena's refusal to get up punctually this morning.

Madge herself would have started away in advance of Lena, only that girl, after coming down late to breakfast, had flown into a rage with her sister Kitty, quite upsetting that much-tried little mortal. So Madge had felt bound to stay around, doing her best to soothe the nine-year-old, who was so often tormented by her sister.

Still feeling very upset herself because of that recent scene in the home, Madge wondered how Lena could possibly be so double-faced as to mingle gaily with her schoolfellows now, as if she never knew what it was to be anything but sweet-tempered.

But that was just like Lena. A very torment at home, and yet such a sweet girl in the school!

In the whole Form, was there a girl who had not become very fond of Lena by now? She was popular with the Form mistress, and popular with Betty and all the others. What else, indeed, could be expected? Morcove only asked that a newcomer should prove herself to be sporting, sociable, keen, with a strong sense of fair play; and in the eyes of Morcove to-day Lena Daunt was all this!

Only Madge was to know that the heart of one of the kindest of mothers was being almost broken by Lena's behaviour at home.

Only Madge was to know how heartlessly Lena treated that younger sister of hers, a child who deserved the most loving care. For Kitty was not only a charming little girl, full of pretty ways and affectionate; she was inclined to be delicate, for which reason her tuition at present was going on at home.

With the class-room books in front of her, poor sick-at-heart Madge did her honest best at the work. She was not a brilliant girl except at the one thing which was a passion with her—music. Now, whilst she wrestled with the lessons, it did not ameliorate her secret misery to realise how easily Lena got through the work.

At twelve o'clock Miss Redgrave called softly to Lena as that girl was going out with the rest of the class, and Madge was quite sure that the Form mistress had nothing to say in the nature of a complaint.

"Well, Lena," smiled Miss Redgrave, whilst the room emptied, "I only wanted to let you know that I am particularly pleased with your work. Go on as you have been going in the last ten days, and you will be a great credit to the Form."

Lena's response to that was a look of gratification with a good deal of mock-modesty that Miss Redgrave, however, took to be the real thing.

"You are not lined or anything, are you?" asked Betty as Lena came back amongst the Study 12 chums, with her jaunty step.

"No. Why?"

"Miss Redgrave kept you back for something."

"Oh, only to say nice things about my work," shrugged Lena smilingly. "Sort of thing I can't stand. Are you getting some hockey practice? May I come?"

"Of course, Lena!"

"Yes, wather!"

"You coming, Madge?" Polly asked that girl.

"Very well, I will!"

"That was Madge's smiling answer—one that kept her loving chums blind to the painful time through which she was passing.

She had intended to slip away unnoticed to the music-room, but now that she had been asked she felt bound to go out with the others to the games field.

There for the next half-hour she was a secretly contemptuous witness of the way in which Lena was laying herself out to charm Betty and the rest. Lena was in brilliant form, and coming off the ground at the close of practice the girls were saying that if she played like that in their next match Morocco would be bound to win.

Another half-hour remained before dinner, and now Betty and Polly took Lena up to Study 12. Madge had to come, too, because there was a cake to sample, for mere friendship's sake.

In a few minutes the study was crowded out. Paula, lolling in the easy-chair, had Naomer perched on one arm-rest and Madge on the other. Polly had swung on to the edge of the table, and was making dance motions in the air with her feet as she took her full share in the talk. Lena, sitting near the window, was pretending not to notice that Tess Trelawney was doing a rapid pencil sketch of her.

Strangely mingled were Madge's feelings at this moment. It was so good to be here in the favourite rendezvous of the Study 12 coterie. And yet it was so greatly spoiled for her by the presence of Lena.

It made her blood boil to see how Lena was revelling in the friendship of these other girls, which she so little deserved. They had only to find out how differently she behaved at home, and their liking for her would change to disgust. It was the sort of thing that no nice-minded girl could stand.

But would Betty & Co. ever find out that side of Lena's character? One thing Madge had quite settled in her own mind, and that was that it was not for her to show up Lena before them all.

Suddenly the door was tapped and opened, and one of the parlourmaids stood revealed.

"If you please," she began rather breathlessly, after a hasty run upstairs, "one of you is wanted on the telephone. Miss Lena—"

"Me?" cried Lena astoundedly.

"Yes, miss. It's your mother, I fancy, with something urgent to tell you."

In a flash Lena was gone from the study, and after the parlourmaid had departed there was a surprised silence amongst the remaining girls.

Why, they wondered, was Mrs. Daunt suddenly ringing up from Barncombe to speak with Lena?

Lena Takes Charge

AT last Polly spoke, turning to Madge. "They have no telephone at Lena's home, Madge, have they?"

"Oh, no! Mrs. Daunt must be ringing up from a call-office."

"And you can't imagine what it is about?" asked Betty. "I mean to say, I hope everything is all right."

"Was there anything wrong when you left home with Lena this morning, Madge?" asked Tess, pencilling away at the sketch from memory.

"Things were just as usual," was the only answer Madge could give without departing from the truth.

Nothing wrong at home! It was terrible not to be able to tell her chums that Lena was always making everything go wrong at home. She deserved to be shown up. And Betty & Co. should be told. But the oft-pondered reasons for keeping silent were in Madge's mind at this moment.

Apart from the fact that "telling" was always



JUST LIKE PAULA! Paula tried frantically to do everything in unison with the others, but she was always a second too late. Lena grinned derisively, but Madge had a fond smile for the duffer.

hateful, there was another distressing aspect of the matter. The moment Betty & Co. knew that Lena made everybody else's life at home a misery, they would feel so awfully miserable on her—Madge's—account. That she wanted to spare them for as long as possible.

Then, again, it would make things so much worse at Lena's home, for her fury against Madge, if ever that girl told, would be a bitter and unending one.

"Hark! It's Lena—coming back!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, geals, she must have had some exciting news," was Paula's drawled comment on the sound of a quick, light step in the corridor.

Then the door flashed open. "I say, what do you think?" panted Lena. "I've got to go home at once!"

"What?"

"Madge, you must come, too."

"Home at once? Why, Lena—why?"

"Mother has been suddenly called away by telegram," rushed on Lena. "An old friend of hers—one she has known since they were girls together—is ill. Very ill! Mother 'phoned to me just then on the way to the station. She is catching the one o'clock from Barncombe. Madge—"

"I'll come," Madge said, with a full realisation of what was in store. "It means that we shall have to carry on at home whilst your mother is away."

"Well, there's Elsie, the maid, of course," Lena said pleasantly for the sake of impressing Betty and the others. "We shall go on all right! Pull together, won't we, Madge?"

"I'll do my best," responded Madge, going from the room quickly.

"You can't even wait for dinner in school?" deplored Betty, addressing Lena. "I suppose you feel you must get back to be with your sister Kitty?"

"Oh, yes," nodded Lena. "I wouldn't like Kitty to be left with only Elsie for company. She's such an affectionate little thing—awfully miserable when our backs are turned. Besides, there are lots of things I shall have to do. Bye-bye!"

"And you won't be here to-morrow?" conjectured Polly, as they followed Lena out of the study.

"Fraid not, but I'll try. Madge, of course, ought to be able to get to school."

Lena scampered ahead, and ran downstairs to the coat lobby. There she found Madge, who had made an even quicker descent to the ground floor. Of the two girls, it was Madge who seemed to be taking the upset the more seriously. But then, as Betty & Co. recognised, Madge was always so serious, whereas Lena was just the opposite.

There was just time before the gong went for dinner to see the two day-girls off at the gates. As Lena and Madge pedaled out on to the high-road, the others called sympathetic remarks.

"So sorry this has happened, Lena."

"Yes, wather!"

"Hope you get on all right, both of you!"

"Let us know if there is anything we can do!"

"Yes, you can always 'phone, you know. Good-bye, Lena—Madge!"

They both looked round as they rode off side by side. Lena waved gaily, but Madge merely snatched that farewell look, thinking what a splendid batch of chums they were, back there at the school gateway.

Time had been when she was with them from morn to night during term. She had been a boarder herself in those days—one of the inseparables of Study 12. But now—dearly was she paying for her readiness to do the thing that her father had suggested, out of kindness to the Daunts! But she was never going to write and tell her father that it was far from being a bed of roses, her living with the Daunts.

He knew Mrs. Daunt to be a widow with two children meriting friendly interest. And, whilst that good woman and the younger child were so pleased and grateful to have her, Madge felt that it was "up to her" to carry on.

Very different already was Lena now that she was riding alone with Madge. It would have been a good thing, undoubtedly, if fate had decreed that the girl should be caught out by some of those who at the school felt such reason for admiring her. Lena was more than chilly towards Madge—frigid!

"It is a sad upset for your mother, Lena," Madge compassionately exclaimed when they had covered a couple of miles in silence. "I hope her friend will make a good recovery."

She added, after a pause:

"Has your mother had to go far on this sudden journey?"

"London," Lena responded tersely. "Madge, it's no good grumbling if you can't go to school to-morrow."

"I'm not grumbling—"

"You seem precious grumpy! As if this were my fault!" Lena exclaimed tartly. "All I know is you'll have to turn to, like the rest. We can't leave everything to Elsie!"

"I'm the last one to want to do that, Lena."

"Oh, you are! Glad to hear it! So long as you don't look upon yourself as a guest, to be waited upon hand and foot whilst mother is away!"

After this quite uncalled-for warning, Lena preferred to ride the rest of the way to Barncombe in silence. Nor did Madge make any further attempt at conversation. Obviously, it was no use. Lena, the moment she was out of the school, was at daggers drawn with her.

As Madge hopped down from her cycle-saddle, later, at the gate of the Daunts' home, the cheery front of the house and the knowledge of how bright and beautiful was the interior made her think what a shame it was that Lena should be so tiresome. But for Lena's trying ways, it would certainly have been one of the happiest homes in the land.

There was no need for the two girls to give a ring at the bill. There was Kitty at the front window. She rapped the pane, then flew to open the door.

"You had a 'phone message, then, from mother, Lena? Isn't it sad about her old friend, Miss Jackson? But why have you come home, Madge? Mother didn't want you to be bothered. She—"

"You hold your row!" was Lena's prompt beginning, whilst she pushed past her sister into the house. "Have you had dinner, Kitty? Because I haven't!"

"Elsie hasn't started laying it yet," said Kitty. "She has been rather put about, of course."

"Yes. Well, you'd better go and help her," the elder sister spoke back on her way upstairs. "You, too, Madge!"

Pretty cool, that! But Madge was going to keep the peace, if possible. In Kitty's pale, eager face, though it had such a glad look of welcome home, there was a trace of dread. Now that her mother had been called away, this younger sister evidently expected a reign of terror.

Off came Madge's hat and coat in the hall. Without bothering to go upstairs, she took Kitty by the hand and said:

"Come along, dear, and we'll see what we can do!"

They reached the kitchen, and there was Elsie, the servant of the house, sitting in front of the stove, her smart little feet upon the steel fender, reading a book. Some sausages were frying. Now and then Elsie was turning them; otherwise, she was not exactly exerting herself.

"You are going to lay the table now, Elsie?" Madge felt bound to ask.

It was past half-past one, and she supposed that Lena was feeling as famished as Kitty looked.

Elsie looked round, without closing her book.

"What?"

"Dinner?"

"It's cooking!" Elsie jumped up now, gave the frying-pan a violent shaking, and slammed it

back again, causing a great spluttering. "I can't do everything!"

"If you want any help——"

"I don't want any hindrance, I can tell you that!" Elsie said, not minding how insolent she was to Madge.

For Lena could be relied upon to side with the servant. They had a kind of working agreement that answered admirably.

"Now, what's all the row about down there!" came Lena's sudden shout from upstairs.

Her bed-room door banged; she whirled downstairs. Reaching the kitchen doorway, she looked at Elsie, then at Madge.

"Well?" demanded Lena. "Have you only come home to start bossing the show? I said you were to help—not give orders!"

"Lena!" burst out little Kitty, indignation getting the better of fear. "Oh, how can you? I was here——"

"You always are—under one's feet! Get out, anyhow!"

And Lena, rushing at her sister, sent her headlong up the passage.

"You'll get the same, Madge, if you are not careful!"

"Will I? Oh, Lena, for goodness' sake let's have a little peace." Madge pleaded, with hard-won composure. "Trouble has called your mother away, and when there is trouble most people want to pull together."

Lena gave a sudden laugh. She repeated it in a shriek tone.

"You hear, Elsie? We are all to be very good, Madge's orders! Here, hurry up with dinner!" she continued, slamming the pan of sausages about excitedly. "I want to get out for the afternoon. What price the pictures this afternoon, and a theatre to-night?"

Madge withdrew to the dining-room and took out the cloth. She and Kitty spread it, and found most of the things for the dinner-table, whilst Lena became involved in ominously subdued talk with the maid.

Home, Sweet Home!

AT last Lena came mincing into the dining-room, with her sneering smile, and Elsie followed with a loaded tray.

No sooner were the sausages and the vegetable tureens set out than Lena, presiding, began to glory in disorder.

Snatching a fork, she speared one sausage, and cast it on to a plate. It bounced off, and whilst Lena shrieked with laughter, Elsie picked it up from the floor with her fingers.

"Yours, Kitty!" said Lena, pushing the plate across. "Whoa! Come back!" she chuckled, chasing other sausages round the dish with the fork.

"Hot dog, Madge? There's nothing else, anyhow! Have you got yours, Elsie?"

"No, miss."

"Take away the dish, then. We shan't want any more," grinned Lena, now that she had helped herself and Madge. "What are you staring like that for, Kitty?"

"Elsie is having——"

"What's it to do with you what Elsie is having?" Lena flared across the table. "Greedy little pig!"

"Lena!" pleaded Madge.

"What's the matter?" laughed Lena. "I'm not going to pamper the kid, if mother does."

Poor Kitty took up her knife and fork, then laid them down again. She looked ready to cry with the distress of mind caused by her sister's

spitefulness. It was not that she herself would want a second helping. Her appetite was poor enough, alas! She was thinking how rude and unkind it was towards Madge to let the maid take away the dish to the kitchen like that.

After the outburst of provoking rudeness, Lena suddenly became very grand and dignified. The meal proceeded uncomfortably, and it was a great relief to Madge and Kitty when they all three rose from the table.

A moment afterwards, Elsie demurely brought in coffee on a small tray.

"Thanks, Elsie," said the elder sister of the house, sinking back in an armchair whilst the coffee was being set at her elbow. "How are you off for groceries and things?"

"There are several things we need, miss."

"All right. You had better go out into the town and order them. I leave it to you, Elsie."

"Thank you, miss. Mistress left some ready money with me."

"She did? Oh, I'll take charge of the money, Elsie," announced Lena eagerly. "You can have anything that you order put down."

"Very good, miss."

"Lena, I heard mother say," interposed Kitty uneasily, "that we were to pay cash——"

"There you go again!" the elder girl exclaimed, glaring at her sister. "Do you think I am going to have all the ready money spent at once when we don't know how long mother will be away? Supposing something happens!"

"But——"

Lena snatched a cushion and hurled it at Kitty, who dodged aside. The downy missile skimmed the sideboard, sweeping off a silver and crystal epergne. Smash!

"There! Now look what you've done, Lena! One of mother's wedding presents! Oh, you are terrible!" And Kitty burst into tears at last.

"Cry-baby!" laughed Lena. "All right, Elsie; let me have that money presently."

"Yes, miss."

"I say, Madge, just pick up those pieces, will you?" requested Lena, sipping her coffee. "Elsie has a lot to do."

Madge came away from the window, pale and sternly composed.

"I don't mind how much I have to help, Lena. But understand, I won't be ordered about! And I am not going to stand by and see you make the home a misery for Kitty whilst your mother is away!"

"Oh, you are not?"

"No, I am not."

Lena sprang up.

"Do you think I care about you?" she panted. "Interloper—that's what you are! I shall do as I please, no matter what you do—so there!"

"I would like my chums at Morcove to see you like this!" broke from Madge fiercely. "For Kitty's sake——"

"Oh, dry up! If you were a bit sporting, I could be different. You make me furious!" Lena blustered, striding away.

On the way up to her room she called down to the kitchen:

"Elsie! Never mind about the washing up. Get your things on and go into the town, or the meat and groceries you are ordering won't be delivered until the morning!"

"Very good, miss."

No sooner had Lena reached her bed-room, slamming the door, than Madge went out to the kitchen.

"Elsie, it is not my place to interfere——"

"Well, no, miss," agreed the crafty maid demurely. "Of course, Miss Lena is in charge."

"But you must realise it is not my place either to be left to clear up the dinner things. You can spare ten minutes to save the house from getting untidy, and—"

"I must do as Miss Lena says, miss!"

Madge turned her back upon the girl and walked away. This Elsie was absolutely despicable! There was no hope of getting anything done in that quarter.

Back in the dining-room, Madge found Kitty stifling the last sobs as she knelt to sweep up the fragments of the broken epergne. She and Madge did not speak, but in silence they mourned the misery that Lena found such delight in creating.

Suddenly, when those two girls were clearing away—for, if Lena would not let Elsie do the work, there was nothing else for it—Lena descended from her bed-room, dressed for going out.

"That's right!" She approved the others' industry whilst she stroked on a glove. "I shall be back for tea. This evening, Madge, I shall want you to come to the theatre with me. There's a good travelling company this week, and I don't like going alone."

"I shall not come to any theatre, Lena!"

"You won't?"

"Certainly not!" Madge said, standing up to her full height. "Why should I, simply to companion you, whilst Kitty would be left alone?"

"Oh, all right! It doesn't worry me," Lena said, and stalked out.



LENA TAKES CHARGE! "Have you had dinner, Kitty?" Lena asked. "Elsie hasn't started laying it yet," said Kitty. "Then you had better go and help her," flashed Lena. "You too, Madge!"

Five minutes later Elsie, the maid, quitted the house, dressed in her smartest coat and hat. There was nothing to condemn in her liking to look nice. But what wonder that Madge's blood boiled again as she saw that girl mincing out for the afternoon, having done nothing since dinner!

"I do think it's just awful," mourned little Kitty later, standing at the sink with Madge, "that you should have to do all this dirty work! Leave it to me, Madge—"

"Certainly not! But between us, Kitty, dear, many hands make work light. And presently we'll have such a nice afternoon. What would you like to do, Kitty?"

The little girl wiped dry another plate or two before she answered, with her nervous little laugh:

"I'm afraid you'll think me silly, Madge. But I—if you would like it too, Madge—I would like you to give me a music lesson."

"Funny little girl! I'm no teacher."

"But you play so beautifully, and I—I want to be able to play like you!"

Madge laughed uncomfortably. Praise to her face always embarrassed her greatly. She hated it, although in this case it was so obvious that Kitty was speaking straight out of her heart, without any idea of "gushing."

So, when they had restored the kitchen to spic-and-span condition, and had tidied themselves up, they repaired to the drawing-room.

The piano was closed, and Madge instantly experienced a sudden throb of dismay, fearing that Lena had spitefully locked the cover again and gone off with the key. But suddenly Kitty, with a roguish wink, whipped the key from her frock pocket.

"I thought I would—in case, Madge," laughed the youngster. "I know what Lena is."

Madge sighed to herself, thinking:

"But no one at Morcove knows what Lena is. And tell them—oh, I dare not!"

The Green Frock.

IN the Fourth Form class-room at Morcove School pens were racing over paper, now that the clock on the wall pointed to five-and-twenty past three.

Not a scholar there wished to be the one to hinder Miss Redgrave, if she were so minded, from letting out the class to the very second!

"Betty Barton!"

"Yes, Miss Redgrave?"

Looking up sharply from her work, Betty had only to receive a beckoning gesture, and she darted from her place, taking her stand in front of the mistress.

"Miss Somerfield has sent me word, Betty, that she has to go into Barncombe immediately after school to make one or two calls. There will be room for you and two other girls in the car if—"

"Oh, lovely!"

"If you would like to drop in at the Daunts' place and see how Lena and Madge are getting along."

"Thanks, Miss Redgrave! I'll tell the others, and we'll be ready!"

A minute after this, the Form mistress gave the word that meant a joyous slugging of books and a general uprising. Away surged the high-spirited Fourth-Formers, Betty for one in the midst of a clamorous mob of chuns.

"Hooray!" cheered Polly when Betty had explained. "That's nice of Miss Somerfield."

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, what a pleasant surprisio for Madge and Lena. If there's time, gals, we can—"

"Invite them out to tea at the Creamery, yes!" cried Betty. "But what do we do—draw lots for the treat, or what?"

There proved to be no more need to do that than there was for Betty to say who exactly should go in the car, as she was fully entitled to do. Tess, Helen, and others at once agreed that the ones to go should be Betty, Polly, and Paula.

So in a few minutes those three girls were going out to the fine car owned by Morcove's head-mistress. That lady took her seat amongst them, and away they went, purring smoothly along that country highway which the scholars so often traversed on foot or "push-bike."

Meantime, at West View, Barncombe, the strife had started afresh.

Lena was just back from an hour or so at the cinema.

"Whore's the tea?" she wanted to know. "It's gone four, and no tea laid!"

"When Elsie comes in—" began Madge firmly, but Lena flared out:

"Never you mind about Elsie! She's out shopping, with my permission. You'd like that girl to be cooped up—"

"Oh, don't be so foolish, Lena!" Madge could not help exclaiming wearily. "I've said before I'm not the least like that."

Lena drew off to the door, to go upstairs.

"Kitty, if Madge won't get the tea, you must! If it's not ready by the time I come down—you look out!"

Then the tyrant of the home scampered up to her room, and shut herself in there. She laughed, thoroughly enjoying the game she was having. After removing her outdoor things, she opened her handbag and took out two theatre tickets.

"There we are!" she chuckled. "Question is, what shall I wear? And Elsie—if Madge won't come—what is Elsie to wear?"

Lena stepped to her hanging cupboard, and stood debating with herself. Very quickly she decided which of her several party frocks she should wear. There was a rose-coloured one which she had worried her widowed mother into buying only recently. It was quite the best in her wardrobe—would look extra pretty in the glamorous light of the theatre. But how about Elsie?

"It's awkward, taking her into the stalls," pondered Lena. "I don't suppose she has any frock exactly suitable. She's only a skivvy, of course! And I don't feel like letting her wear anything of mine. I wonder?"

Next second Lena slammed shut the cupboard door, and did a little dance of delight. She had received an inspiration.

With a wide grin, she presently stole out on to the landing and listened.

Madge was still downstairs with Kitty.

Into Madge's room Lena fitted, and with lightning haste she went through that girl's wardrobe. A few moments more, and one of Madge's evening-frocks was slipped from the hook, to be rushed away with by Lena.

Then the lawless girl thought it high time to go down and get her tea.

She came to the room where tea was usually laid, but the table was bare. Madge and Kitty were standing by the fire.

"Whore's my tea?" cried Lena, furiously. "Didn't I say I wanted it? Kitty—"

"When Elsie comes in—"

"That's Madge, teaching you to cheek me!" hissed Lena, striding across the room. "You'll lay tea at once, Kitty, or—"

"Wait! Madge has not said a word about you,"



MADGE MAKES A STAND! "That frock you are wearing, Elsie," said Madge quietly, "it is one of mine!" "Is it, miss?" returned Elsie innocently, though she must have known when Lena had given it her.

was Kitty's spirited cry. "But I made up my mind. It isn't fair! You—"

Smack!

"Oh, Lena—"

"Yes, and there's another!" panted the elder sister, giving Kitty a second hard slap on the head. "What it's coming to—"

"Lena, stop!" interposed Madge.

And then the young fury turned upon her.

"I shan't stop because of you, Madge Munden!" "You'll leave your sister alone, you detestable girl! I have stood enough! Now you will just behave a bit decent, or else—"

Kitty suddenly screamed: "Lena!" as the girl's hand flashed aloft, intending a slap at Madge.

At the very same instant the bell rang. Tr-r-ring, ring!

Lena dropped her hand, looking suddenly frightened.

"Someone at the door! Oh, well, go and see, one of you!"

Madge did not move. She was looking fixedly at the girl who had been going to strike her just then. Kitty went from the room, took a few moments in the hall to pull herself together, then went to the street door and opened it.

Next second she came rushing back.

"Madge! Some of your chums from Morcove!" "What?" Madge exclaimed incredulously, whilst Lena turned pale.

"I suppose we may come in, girls?" was the

laughing remark with which Betty suddenly appeared, with Polly and Paula.

"Hel-lo!" Lena promptly greeted them, sweetly. "Well, I never! But—" "Bai Jove, we trust this is convenient, you gals?" Paula beamed. "We don't wish to put you out. Wather not! Can you come wound to the Cwearmy to tea, you thwee?"

"Yes, Lena—Madge—" "Oh, but you must have tea with us! Of course you must!" cried Lena. "We—we are a little late. I—I was just going to help get it! Do sit down, and it won't be a second! However did this happen—this jolly surprise?"

Polly, as she dropped into a chair, drew Kitty to her.

"So you are Kitty! Coming to school at Morcove some day, aren't you? I want to whisper!" And, with her lips to Kitty's ear: "How do you like Madge?" Polly asked excitedly.

Then Kitty put her lips to Polly's ear. "Madge is wonderful! If it weren't for Madge—"

"Kitty, I want you!" Madge suddenly called the youngest out of the room.

The request was calmly voiced; but Kitty, when she ran out to Madge, found that girl trembling with agitation.

"Yes, Madge?"

"Listen, Kitty," the Morcove scholar breathed tensely. "Not a word about—you know what—these girls from my school!"

"But—"

"I know how you feel, Kitty, but I ask you not to say a word. If you tell them, it will only make Lena worse than ever towards you."

"I can't help that, Madge. It's only fair," Kitty said passionately. "The way Lena is treating you—"

"Kitty, you must not say a word. If you do, these chums of mine will be miserable on my account, and it will be all the worse here. I can't have that. Promise!"

"Madge, I—I—"

"If you care for me, Kitty, dear, promise!" implored Madge, whilst, in the room that held the unexpected visitors, Lena could be heard saying blithely:

"Our maid happens to be out for the moment. She has worked so hard to-day, she deserved a run! Won't you take your things off? Tea—"

"Lena, you are not to bother—"

"Nonsense, Polly! I was just going to get it, in any case. We'll soon get tea for all, won't we, Kitty?" Lena cried, taking out the cloth and spreading it.

And for the next half-hour she was quite angelic again.

Did she really know what hypocrisy it was, this sudden change of front just because Betty, Polly, and Paula were here?

There were moments when Madge had her doubts. But time after time there seemed to be proof that Lena was consciously enjoying the pose.

More than once she found an excuse for going from the room for a moment, and Madge felt that it was because the girl could no longer keep a straight face.

As for the visitors, they enjoyed themselves immensely. All too quickly for them the moment came when they must be off, being under orders to go back in the car with Miss Somerfield. They were to look out for their headmistress at the Town Hall.

"I say, it is rather a lark for you," Polly re-

marked, on the point of going away. "This lovely little home to yourselves!"

"Bai Jove, Madge, I want to change places with you—yes, weally!" declared Paula. "Nothing like home if you want to be quiet, what? No wumpus; ewewything so peaceful!"

"Mind you behave," jested Polly. "No jazzing about, just because Mrs. Daunt is away! There's one thing—if anyone can be trusted, you can, Madge!"

"But can she?" was Lena's silvery cry. "What about— Shall I tell them, Madge? Ha, ha, ha! To-night, at seven-thirty!" Ha, ha, ha!"

The three visitors stopped dead on their way to the street door. Lena had let fall a hint that was startling. Betty in particular looked scared all at once.

"Do you mean the theatre? Oh, Madge, surely not! You know, if Lena doesn't, that no Morcove girl is allowed to go to the theatre without a grown-up companion. There'd be a fearful rumpus!"

"I'm not going to any theatre," Madge said, with an impatience that seemed to have anger in it. "Don't take any notice of—of what Lena says."

"You were only joking. Is that it, Lena? I thought you must be!" Betty smiled, in a relieved way. "Miss Somerfield is most strict about that sort of thing. And the rule applies to day girls as well. Well, we must get along!"

"With extweme wegwet, Lena, and thanks for a wipping cup of tea! You have a chawming home—chawning!"

"Ta-ta!" Lena called after them as they hastened away in the twilight.

Madge and Kitty did not see her again until close upon seven o'clock. Then she came down, dressed for the theatre. Her outdoor coat was not yet buttoned, and there was a sight of the evening-frock which so became her.

"Are you coming to the theatre, Madge? If so—"

"You have heard me say—"

"Oh, all right! Then I must take Elsie," was the cool remark with which Lena again effaced herself.

Kitty crept close to Madge, exclaiming distressfully:

"She ought not to be going, Madge, even with Elsie. Mother would not allow it if she were at home. How did Lena get the money for the tickets? Oh, what a worry it all is!"

Madge echoed the child's sad sigh. If Lena chose to do this thing, there was no stopping her. She—Madge—could only determine that when Mrs. Daunt came back she would have to be told about Elsie. The alliance between that girl and Lena was one that must be ended.

A little while after, Madge and Kitty heard Lena and the maid pass out of the house. Their tripping steps and their mirthful talk died away as the garden gate clicked shut behind them, and then Kitty asked sadly:

"Shall you wait up for them, Madge?"

"I'll think about it, dear. Don't you worry your little self, anyhow."

"Ah, but I can't help it!" sighed Kitty as she took up a book and sat down to try to concentrate on it.

Madge drifted away. She felt she must spend a few minutes upstairs in her room, nastering her dejection. It was certain that Kitty would soon tire of reading, and then she would have to be a bright companion for her.

In her own little room, the girl who had become

a day scholar at Morcove first stepped to the window and stood peering out. There was little to be seen, however, now that night was upon the town. She moved about the room, finding little things to do, and at last she opened her wardrobe, to see if a bit of work with needle and cotton could occupy her downstairs.

As she drew open the cupboard door, a shock went through her.

"Why, where's my green frock?"

For a moment or two she stood aghast, simply astounded that the frock was no longer hanging with the others.

Then the truth flashed upon her, and such a fury of indignation seized her as she had never known before.

"It's that Lena!" she panted fiercely. "She has had the cheek, the audacity, to borrow that frock of mine for Elsie to wear at the theatre!"

Beyond All Bearing!

A MINUTE later Madge was still alone in her bed-room, still raging with righteous indignation.

It was abominable of Lena to have done such a thing! And Elsie, to have had the impudence to wear the frock, well knowing that it had been bestowed upon her for the evening without its owner's knowledge!

"Wait up for them? I should just think I will wait up for them after this!" Madge muttered passionately. "I'll have this out with them!"

On top of this angry resolve there came another. She had better not let Kitty know. There was enough misery for the poor child without this!

So, during all the hours Madge was brightly companioning the younger sister of the house, not a word passed about the borrowed frock. At Kitty's usual time for going to bed, the Morcove girl persuaded her to go up. For a time, however, there was no getting Kitty to shut her eyes and go to sleep.

It had been such a jolly evening, after all, that Kitty wanted to stay awake, prattling away to the always affectionate girl who had gladly drawn a chair to the bedside.

But at last the little one dropped off, after more and more pleasant yawns had interrupted her drowsy voice, and then Madge could draw the coverings up to that pretty head, drop a last light kiss upon the glossy hair, and steal away.

Half-past nine.

There was a long time yet to wait, even though the local theatre closed much earlier than did theatres in London. Madge settled down, after making up the fire, and tried to read. It was impossible!

Now that she was alone, the anger that had been so desperately fought down in the presence of Kitty overwhelmed her again.

Ding-dong, ding-dong! came the chimes from the distant Town Hall clock at last.

Ten o'clock! And what an age it seemed to be after that before Madge at last heard some footsteps in the quiet road.

She jumped up from her chair and went out into the hall. Madge knew that the two girls had provided themselves with the latchkey; but she was not going to let them slip indoors and up to their rooms unmet.

So, the moment she heard voices in the porch, she whipped open the door. Then she stood back a few steps, locking Lena and Elsie up and down in turn.

"That frock you are wearing, Elsie," Madge

said quietly, so as not to awaken Kitty—"it is one of mine!"

"Oh, is it, miss?"

"You know very well——"

"That's where you are wrong, to begin with!" burst out Lena, sharply. "How do you know that Elsie knew?"

"She must have known!" Madge protested furiously. "Elsie knows what frocks you've got, and she has seen all mine! It's abominable impudence, and I am not going to stand it!"

"Oh, dear!" chuckled Lena. "Shut that street door, Elsie; we don't want the neighbours to hear."

"She'd better not begin at me!" threatened Elsie. "A nice thing when I only went to the theatre to make a companion for you, Miss Lena!"

"That's quite right," nodded the daughter of the house. "And I told you to wear that dress."

"Then just understand, Lena——"

"Look here, you go to bed!" that girl flared out at Madge, with such disregard for sleeping Kitty that it was painfully evident all further remonstrance was out of the question. Lena was not going to care what sort of a midnight row took place. She would even enjoy it.

Poor Madge! In such circumstances, what else could she do but go back on the spirited resolve to settle with both girls then and there? There was something far worse than the humiliation of submitting quietly, and that was the disgrace that an argument at this late hour would entail.

She went to bed, but could not get to sleep—nor whilst Lena and her useful ally were still downstairs, chatting over their after-theatre supper! Even when the brazen pair had parted for the night, and all was dead silence at last, Madge remained wide awake.

She had wistful thoughts of all the chums lying asleep in the old dormitory at Morcove School. Full well Madge knew what joy it would be to her if only she could be, once again, a boarder at the school.

But she had thoughts of Kitty, too—how greatly that bright little spirit needed someone to make up to her for a selfish sister's treatment.

And so, in spite of all the miseries of the day, Madge's last thought of all was that she would still carry on.

Can It Be True—of Madge?

MORNING again, and—gracious, what was the hour when the wintry daylight seemed so strong in the bed-room?

Madge reached for her watch, then sprang out of bed. With all the haste of one who is ashamed to have overslept, she made her toilette.

It was half-past eight, and yet all was silence downstairs. Kitty was getting dressed—could be heard singing away like a lark in her bed-room; but there was not a sound from either Lena or Elsie.

Suddenly:

"Stop that row in there, Kitty! I want to get to sleep again! And bring me up a cup of tea presently! D'you hear?"

Then Kitty came away from her bed-room, just as Madge emerged from hers.

"Morning, Kitty! How awfully late we are—at least, I am!"

"You'll never get to school this morning," laughed Kitty. "But does it matter? They know that you and Lena——"

"Don't stand about gassing, out there!" shriled

Lena from her warm bed. "That cup of tea for me—sharp!"

Kitty took no more notice of this than did Madge. They both hurried downstairs, and next moment the gas-stove was going wump! as Madge put the kettle on and some rashers under the grill.

That done, Madge felt entitled to return upstairs and tap at Elsie's door.

"Are you getting up, Elsie?"

"Oh, is it time to get up, miss? I'm sorry. I've got a headache!"

"You'll soon work it off," said Madge, giving the advice that had often been addressed to malingerers like Cora Grandways at school.

Then she turned to go downstairs again, but suddenly Lena, in a dressing-gown, was confronting her on a landing.

"What right have you to give orders in this house?" began Lena. "You leave Elsie alone! If she's got a headache—"

"If!" Madge said scornfully.

Then Lena "went" for her school mate. It was impossible for Madge to avoid a scuffle, such as the other's sudden, ill-tempered fury.

Kitty, downstairs, was just then carrying a tray to the breakfast-table. Knowing what the sudden "rumpus" on the landing meant, she became so unnerved that she set down the tray clumsily. It tilted steeply; cups and saucers spilled to the floor—crash!—and then, in trying to save the rest, she all but turned the tray upside down.

Crash!

"Oh, dear; oh, dear! More things of mother's!"

Paula, Naomer, and Tess—all in great delight. It was great fun for them, this business of keeping in touch with the day girls whilst Mrs. Daunt was away!

"Look here, I tell you what!" Polly proposed towards the end of the brisk run. "I'll go direct to the Creamery, to reserve a table for our lunch. Otherwise, Lena and Madge will say we must stop to lunch with them, and we don't want to give them all that trouble."

"That's the idea," agreed Betty. "We gave them enough trouble yesterday, allowing them to give us tea."

"Bai Jove, what I would like to do is to dwag them out to lunch with us," beamed Paula—"Kitty and all. We'll twy!"

So, a few minutes later, Polly hopped down from her saddle outside the Barncombe Creamery, and popped inside to reserve a table. She was out again in a second, remounting to ride back slowly along the High Street.

Those few yards along the quaint main street of the town, before turning out of it to make for West View, took her past the Theatre Royal. Usually, it had such a forlorn aspect, but to-day there was an air of life and prosperity about the place. Polly was glancing aside at the placards and photographs advertising the current attraction, when she became aware of a young woman hailing her to stop.

Polly drew in to the kerb and dismounted, whilst the young woman ran up. She appeared to be a cleaner about the theatre, and was possibly a programme-seller at the performances.

ANOTHER FINE FREE GIFT NEXT WEEK!

The third of our fine coloured stand-up photos of film stars.

DON'T MISS SECURING IT!

wailed Kitty, and she burst into tears. "Lena—stop it, up there! Oh, how awful it is!"

At which moment of misery and strife, in what might have been such a happy home, all was after-breakfast fun at Morcove School.

Betty & Co. ran down to the gates, to wait for Lena and Madge; but the two day girls did not show up. Little surprise was felt. Even with a capable maid in the house, the mother's absence was bound to make a difference.

But the Study 12 coterie ran back up the drive as soon as the bell for first school sounded, feeling sure that one, if not both day girls, would turn up presently.

"Lena may decide to remain at home all day," conjectured Betty. "She would feel it was up to her, as the daughter of the house. Madge may show up."

And the others agreed. Madge was in a different position altogether, and was the very last one to want to interfere.

The morning passed, however, and still nothing was seen or heard of either day girl. At the mid-day dismissal, the Form-mistress spoke to Betty on the way out of the class-room.

"I suppose Lena and Madge are getting on all right at home, Betty, but I would like to be certain. Would you care to run into Barncombe by bike—you and two or three others—and call at West View?"

Another unexpected jaunt for Betty & Co.! Off they went, barely a minute later—Betty, Polly,

"You're a Morcove scholar, miss? I know, by your clothes."

"Yes. Why?"

"I thought I'd catch you as you were passing and tell you, miss. Some young lady from your school dropped a letter in the auditorium last evening. I found it this morning, cleaning, and I was wondering what to do about it."

"But no girl from Morcove School was at the theatre—"

"Oh, yes, miss, excuse me," insisted the theatre attendant. "For here's the letter that I found. Would you take it—if you know the girl, as I expect you do?"

Polly seized the note with a shaking hand. It was a letter that had been through the post; an old one, by the date of the postmark, addressed to:

"Miss Madge Minden,
Morcove School,
North Devon."

One of Madge's letters from her father, last term!

Polly took her eyes from the envelope, to find the theatre attendant regarding her amusedly.

"So I was right, miss? Of course, when there was that address to tell me! I didn't read the letter, mind you! Will you let your chum have it?"

"Oh, yes—yes! But—how did she come to be at the theatre? I mean to say—"

"There were two girls, I noticed, when I was selling programmes; one called the other 'Lena.' I should say it was them," said the young woman. "The Lena-one, she was in a sort o' pink; the other had a green frock, if I remember aright."

Polly nodded. She remembered Madge's green frock.

"All right, and thanks ever so! I—It's just as well—I mean—"

"Yes, miss, I quite understand!" smiled the young woman as Polly flusteredly remounted and rode away.

There was very little of the madcap in Polly's looks as she pedalled round into the road where the Daunts lived. It cost her a big effort to look cheerful as she met the other girls, coming away from West View.

"Well?" Polly asked eagerly.

"We only saw Madge at the door," announced Betty, dismounting with the rest. "Lena has

things from one another. I've just discovered that Madge was at the theatre, wearing her green frock. Lena was with her."

"Polly! But however do you know this?"

"Madge dropped a letter in the auditorium—when she pulled out her handkerchief, I suppose—and it was found by a cleaner this morning. It was addressed to Madge, at Morcove, and so the woman could easily trace the whole thing to a Morcove scholar!"

"Have you that letter now, Polly?" asked Betty quickly.

"Yes. I don't know what to do, I'm sure. What would you girls advise? It's an old one, of no value, I dare say. Shall we—destroy it? Give it back to Madge, and she'll know that we—well, we've found her out over a bit of deceit."

Tess drew in her breath with a painful hiss.

"Deceit—from Madge! How is it possible?"

"Bai Jove! Incweddible, geals!" murmured Paula.



CONVINCING EVIDENCE! "Here's a letter I found after the performance last night," said the theatre cleaner. "It belongs to one of your girls." Polly stared unbelievably. It was addressed to Madge Minden. Then she had been to the theatre in spite of her denial!

stayed in bed this morning. Doesn't feel up to much, it seems."

"And how did Madge look?" questioned Polly.

"Rather—queer."

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, geals, I thought there was something extwernly queer about Madge. So flustered—what?"

"Did Madge say what she did with herself last evening?"

"Oh, yes!" said Betty. "Stayed at home all the evening and amused Kitty."

There was a pause. Polly turned her machine round and walked on, wheeling the bicycle, as the others wheeled theirs. Then suddenly she checked.

"Madge could not have been at home all last evening, girls. She was at the theatre."

"What? Madge at the theatre?"

"Bai Jove, Polly—"

"But it's really the case," came from Polly unhappily. "It's no use! We can't keep these

"But there is no getting away from this letter, and what Polly tells us," frowned Betty. "I wonder if Lena was so wanting to go to the theatre that she made Madge give way?"

"Yes, wather! Geals, I much pwefer to think that Lena—"

"So do I," broke in Polly glumly. "Only Madge need not have fibbed to you girls just now about being indoors all last evening. Did Lena persuade her to deceive us?"

"We've no right, certainly, to suspect Lena of anything of the kind," demurred Tess. "She's a good sort."

"In any case it doesn't say much for Madge if she did let herself be persuaded first to go to the theatre, and then to deceive us," was Polly's disgruntled comment.

They moved on again, making for High Street, so as to get their lunch at the Creamery. As they went by the theatre, the placards told them what last night's piece had been.

"Gilbert and Sullivan," murmured Betty. "The Mikado." Of course, no one is fonder of Gilbert and Sullivan than our Madge."

"Wather, bai Jove! It must have been a great temptation, geals. Madge is such a lover of music!"

"But why didn't she make a clean breast of it?" exclaimed Polly. "It's the sort of thing— Oh, I'd better not say any more. But I would never have thought it—of Madge!"

"No," said Betty sadly, "neither would I. Shall we have the whole thing out with her next time she is at school? She and Lena together!"

"Oh, let it go—I would!" sighed Tess. "I for one would feel so—so upset if Madge—our Madge—had to admit it all."

"But this letter?" fumed Polly. "What about that? Are we to destroy it and say no more? Handing it back to Madge means that— Yes, Betty?"

The Form captain had been seized with a certain idea, causing her face to brighten.

"I know, girls! Here's the town post-office. Stick the letter inside a new envelope, address it to Madge at the school—"

"Bai Jove, geals—"

"Disguising the handwriting, you mean?" broke from Polly. "So that Madge will never know where the letter was found, or who has sent it back? That's the idea, Betty! Half a sec! Take my bike, one of you, please!"

And promptly Polly darted into the central post-office, to buy a stamped envelope at the counter.

Then, standing at one of the telegram desks, she wrote the address in a round hand that might have been anyone's. She inserted the fateful letter, gummed up the new envelope, and—flick!—it was gone through the slot.

Moodily she rejoined her chums.

"What do we do now? Lunch? Don't know that I want any!"

"Polly!"

"Well, it is so rotten to feel that Madge—"

"I know," sighed Betty. "I suppose it really is Madge—not Lena—who is mostly to blame. Lena's a new girl; she would not realise how strict the rules are. But Madge—"

"You yourself reminded Madge, Betty! Besides, Lena has told us no fib yet, Madge has!"

"Dwop it, geals! Oh, please," Paula fairly groaned. "You don't realise how misewable it makes me!"

"What I say is, wait till we have asked Lena!" came from Tess desperately. "See what she has to say!"

They were not to be kept waiting long. Half an hour later, as they came away from the confectioners', a girl came at them with an eager rush, and it was Lena.

"I heard you were in the town, so I came out to find you, feeling much, much better," she informed them sweetly. "And this turn in the open air will soon make me quite all right!"

"Lena," came Betty's blunt question, on the instant, "were you at the theatre last night?"

"Yes. Why? Ha, ha, ha! Didn't Madge tell you?"

The other girls looked at one another.

Here was Lena, frankly owning up, whereas Madge had done just the reverse!

That was how Betty and the rest saw it all, and this was the moment for them to feel sadly convinced that Madge—Madge alone—deserved the blame.

Only to see how lightly Lena treated the matter was to feel that, as a new scholar, she really did not appreciate the gravity of the offence. And, anyhow, she was not telling fibs.

"If Madge didn't tell you," smiled Lena, "perhaps you had better not let her know that I told you. I suppose she—she didn't like to tell you?"

"We shall not say anything to Madge," came Betty's response at last, in a pained voice. "Let it rest, that's all."

"Are you angry with me?" Lena asked them, with all the air of a pretty penitent. "Was it really wrong of me?"

"Well, of course, being a new girl, I suppose you didn't realise that it was breaking a school rule," said Betty. "But Madge—she has been at Morcove so long—she knows."

"Well, I'm sorry!"

"So are we," Polly rejoined moodily. "More sorry than we can say to know that Madge, of all girls, should have lied to her chums!"

Lena did not ask for enlightenment, although there was a good deal in the others' remarks that puzzled her.

They seemed to be under the impression that Madge also had been to the theatre, and had told a lie in saying that she had not.

Anyhow, Madge was in black disgrace with her chums of Study 12 apparently. And that, from Lena's point of view, was all to the good!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Poor Madge! The harder she tries to help matters in Lena's home, the blacker things seem to look for her. What will be the outcome of this fresh seed of doubt against her that Lena has sown in the hearts of Madge's best chums? You must on no account miss next Tuesday's fine story of the Morcove girls, entitled: "Distrusted by the Form!"

FREE WORKING TOY



RUPERT, THE CHICK, On His Rocking Horse

This splendid novelty toy is made in strong card, printed in bright colours, and can be rocked to and fro like a real rocking horse. It is altogether fascinating. Little children will love it. Rupert is the famous character who appears on the front page of CHICKS' OWN every week. His adventures are a real delight to the little ones. Be sure to ask for

CHICKS' OWN

On Sale Tuesday, Feb. 1st

2d.