

DO YOU KNOW PEGGY? You'll meet her inside—and love her!

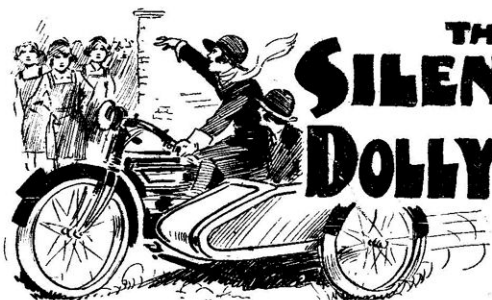
# The Schoolgirls' Own 2<sup>d</sup>



## Morcove Makes Merry!

(A laughable incident from this week's splendid Morcove story inside.)

A FINE LONG COMPLETE MORCOVE TALE TELLING OF—



# THE SILENCE OF DOLLY DELANE!

By  
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STANTON.

*For days on end, now, Grace Garfield has clung on to the fortune that belongs by right to Dolly Delane, both reluctant and fearing to say the word that will put things right. But now that Dolly's eyes are opened, what course does she take?*

### Study 12 is "Spent Up!"

AND so Dolly is getting here by the six o'clock train, Betty?"

"So Miss Redgrave says, Polly. What about going to meet her when the time comes?"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove, geals, let's show our regard for the deah geal—what? You know how I personally shall welcome Dolly back to school!"

This beaming remark from Paula Creel drew the teasing eyes of madcap Polly Linton upon her.

"Oh, yes, we know!" Polly said sweetly. "It will be a treat, won't it, Paula, to have the good old Doormat back again? Someone to help you with your prep.—we know!"

"Er—er—as regards prep.—"

"Oh, no speeches, Paula!"

"You have made a reflection upon me, Polly, deah, that rather wouses me. And when I am woused, I am woused!"

Elegant Paula even sat upright in the easy-chair, such was her indignation.

"It is true, Dolly Delane did come to my rescue with the work just once. But she has been away for ten days, and I have managed beautifully!"

"You have," agreed Polly blandly—"by managing to get one or another of us to help you, instead. But never mind! We do it for love, Paula, my pet. Rather than see you fade away—"

"Thanks, thanks!" was mollified Paula's murmur. "It is true I am extremely wun down, wewy thin—"

"Thin! What do you call this—thin?" asked Polly, suddenly taking Paula's right arm, above the elbow, between finger and thumb. "Thin?"

"Wowp!"

"You're as plump as—"

"Healp! Dwoip it! Oh, Polly, deah, you are a

twial, an affliction! Do let me enjoy this present half-holiday for once! Let me wewest."

"So she shall, the pet!" chuckled Polly, toppling Paula sideways in the chair and slamming a cushion over the neat head. "Go to sleep—"

"You widiculous eweature—"

"And keep warm," purred Polly, taking up the hearthrug to drape it over the oft-teased duffer. "Hush thee, my babe—"

"I wprost! Once and for all—"

"Good gracious, she's dangerous!" gasped Polly, jumping away as Paula heaved, at wild-eyed. "Look out, Betty!"

But Paula did not "go" for Polly. She knew better than to do that. Instead, she produced her pocket-comb and mirror, and set her rumpled self to rights.

"Well, come on, down to games!" proposed Betty blithely, picking up a hockey-stick. "But if the afternoon keeps as fine as this, I shall feel like a run down to the seashore. What's the frown for, Polly?"

"Bother! I'm only thinking," grimaced that girl. "what a nuisance it is that the entertainment over at my brother's school is coming off this afternoon! I would have loved to go!"

"Well, then, is it too late?"

"Oh, some of us could do it—if we had a car of our own!" was Polly's glum response. "It's miles from here, as you know, much too far for riding. And the school 'bus is engaged."

"If you had spoken sooner, Polly, we might have hired a car," suggested Betty. "I'm a bit spent up, still—"

"And I'm broke, absolutely broke to the wide," Polly announced sadly. "until next week. We're all spent up, Betty. I thought of that, and it's why I knew that getting over to Jack's school for the afternoon was abso. impos.!"

"Unfowtunately," sighed Paula Creel, "I also am in wather similar circumstances—yes, wather! Except for a modest half-crown, which any of you geals is welcome to bowwow, my financial resources are, practically speaking, nil—for the present, anyhow!"

"We have all been too extravagant," was Betty's comment. "No, we could never afford it to-day, that's a fact, Polly. Well, coming down?"

"Oh, yes!" cheered up Polly, and she was her joyous self again as she grabbed her hockey-stick and skipped from the room.

The school chimes were ding-donging two o'clock

—a time at which, on half-holidays, the girls usually set about putting into practice their plans for the "halfer." As Betty and Polly and Paula emerged upon the Fourth Form corridor, they found lots of other girls coming away from their studies. Many were ready for a bit of hockey; others were off for a cycle-ride or a ramble.

"Polly has been saying," Betty remarked to Madge Minden, Tess Trelawney, and a few others, "that we might have made up a party to go by car to Jack's school, only—we can't afford it."

"It would have been jolly," Madge agreed, with one of her pensive nods. "But I certainly couldn't have afforded it."

"Nor I!" laughed Helen, whilst Tess and Trixie ruefully murmured to the same effect.

"After this," said Polly, with mock gravity, "we will be more careful. "I shall start a money-box —"

"Bai Jove, bwilliant notion!" approved Paula.

"Yes," said Polly, smiling sweetly at the duffer, "and every time you want to use our armchair there will be a small charge."

"What!"

"To cover wear and tear—"

"Wear and tear, bai Jove! What about my fwocks, Polly? If I sent in the bill for every fwock that you and Naomer have pwactically wined with your pwpetual wumpuses, I—Ow!"

And poor Paula almost collapsed to the floor as that impish sprite Naomer Nakara suddenly took a surprising flying leap and landed on the duffer's back.

At this instant a certain girl came away from one of the studies—not to go towards the stairs. She came past Betty and the others, making for the blind end of the passage. As she passed the batch of chums her eyes went down, and Betty & Co. regarded her coldly.

Yet it was only some ten days ago that this girl, Grace Garfield, had been an admired and welcome member of the Study 12 coterie. That she was out of favour now the veriest stranger could have told. That she had done something to be ashamed of was also apparent.

After she had gone by, and had passed out of sight at the far end of the passage, where a short side-passage led to just one odd study, Betty exclaimed reflectively:

"There's the girl who can never be spent up! Grace Garfield, with that five thousand pounds which the Cranford people gave her, as a reward for saving their Daphne's life—she will always be in funds!"

"All the same, we are not going to her, to ask her—" began Polly spiritedly, to be interrupted by Paula's emphatic:

"Wather not, bai Jove! Even if we could bwing ourselves to bowwow, geals—just tempowawily—we would never bowwow fwom Gwace!"

"A name that scarcely suits her now!" muttered Tess bitterly. "Dis-Grace, more likely! Really, though, it's too bad of her—"

"Yes, wather! A gweat disappointment, geals—a weal gwief—"

"That she should have got so chummy with Cora Grandways!" chimed in Polly disgustedly. "She'll be sorry in the end—bound to be!"

"Meantime, she doesn't seem to be getting much pleasure out of the friendship—if you can call it that," said Helen Craig. "When Grace was one of us she seemed ever so happy, but now— I can't make it out! All I know is, she has done no good for herself."

And truer words than that could never have been spoken.

At this very moment Grace Garfield was entering the study of Cora Grandways, feeling anything but happy. If Cora had become Grace's most constant companion in the last week or so, it was not because the alliance had been sought by Grace. Anything but!

"Nice afternoon!" Cora greeted the other girl, with a wide grin that was meant to be a pleasant one. "D'you know what we're going to do, Grace?"

"I suppose you want me to come out with you —"

"Want you! You might as well say 'mean to make you come out!'!" handsome Cora interrupted, with a sort of playful impatience. "Do buck up, Grace, and try to be less as if I were keeping you on a chain!"

She added, in a lowered tone:

"You know very well, Grace, I gave you my word that I would not be always reminding you about the little affair which made me feel that you might—er—be my chum. And I'm sure I have not twitted you about it—now have I?"

"No," Grace answered huskily. "But you don't seem to understand, Cora, that doesn't make much difference. All the time I am with you I am—"

"Longing to be with Betty & Co., I suppose?" laughed Cora. "But now I really am twitting you! Look here, Grace. You know there's a public entertainment being given at Jack Linton's school. It's some special day or other. We are going over there. My motor-bike and sidecar will get us there in an hour, at the outside."

"You really want to go, although—"

"I'm going," declared Cora, her eyes suddenly



### SHUNNED—BECAUSE OF CORA!

"There are Polly and the others!" cried Jack Linton and, without another word, dashed off to greet them, leaving Grace and Cora Grandways by themselves. In fact, Grace realised, Jack seemed only too pleased to get away from them!



agileam, "if only to have the laugh over Polly Linton and the rest! They can't go—haven't the money, and haven't motor-bikes and sidecars! Aha, Grace, we're people to be envied, aren't we? I always have been able to afford any treat I wanted, and you, now that you have got the five thousand pounds— What's the matter?"

She grinned.

For Grace had winced sharply as that reference to the five thousand pounds was made. With a flush of shame in her cheeks, she stood turned away from her unwelcome schoolfellow for several moments. Then she looked at Cora, making no attempt to keep the misery out of her eyes.

"You do manage to taunt me, Cora, about the thing you know I have done!" Grace exclaimed huskily. "I am not getting any pleasure out of the money, and you know I'm not."

"I only wish I had never fallen to the temptation of keeping it when I found that it was a reward which should have gone to Dolly Delane. I would give anything to be out of the awful position I am in! But it is too late—it's too late now to think of owning up!"

With the full enormity of her injustice towards Dolly Delane overwhelming her again, the remorseful girl suddenly dropped down into a chair at a table. She was on the point of weeping, but Cora strode close to her and spoke bracingly.

"None of that, Grace! Don't be a sniveller! I don't want a chum who is always down in the month I've enough of that in my sister Judy. You come along out with me, Grace! Come on, and we'll have such a time that you'll soon forget."

"Forget!" echoed Grace dully, as she got up from the chair. "And Dolly Delane coming back to the school to-day! She's on her way here now, from her home in Hampshire. She's going to be with me again in that study which we share. Oh, what am I to do? How can I go on with it all?"

"But you have just said," Cora exclaimed impatiently, "how can you own up? Oh, Grace, you are silly to fret like this! If it were me, I wouldn't care a jot!"

Perhaps not! It would have been just like Cora Grandways not to care a scrap, even if she had been guilty of a thing as heinous as this that the other girl had done. But Grace Garfield—she still had a conscience that was capable of smarting.

Grace Garfield was caring, right enough. Only, this was her appalling conviction now. As regards owning up, it had indeed become—too late!

#### Checkmate for Cora!

CORA'S motor-cycle "started up" as if it meant to behave itself to-day.

Certainly the engine began with a bang, bang, bang! that could be heard by all the girls on the games-field, but this initial explosion was only usual. And Cora rather liked to make the terrible din, just to keep other girls in mind of the fact that she boasted this very expensive aid to getting about.

The engine sweetly running, Cora started out from the cycle-sheds in flyaway fashion. Simply to goad Betty & Co. she did a figure-of-eight movement on the games-field, with the exhaust belching smoke. Grace, in the sidecar, felt more ashamed than ever, seeing how disgusted the hockeyists looked.

"Well, good-bye, all of you!" Cora jeered at the objects of her malice, as she steered for the gateway. "We're off to your brother's school, Polly Linton, to enjoy the entertainment! Ha, ha, ha! Wouldn't you like to be us?"

Polly turned to the others.

"What did she say? Going to Jack's school for the entertainment? Ugh!" raved Polly, quite losing her temper. "And here am I—here are a whole lot of us— Ugh! Don't speak—don't breathe a word!"

But Betty took the risk.

"Never mind, Polly!" she said, with a laugh. "Another time—"

"She has done this on purpose," fumed Polly, glaring at the motor-cycle and sidecar, which was just going out through the gateway, "because she knew we couldn't go!"

Cora looked back, waving mockingly.

"Can I take your brother Jack any message, Polly? Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the malicious one.

And then to the occupant of the sidecar:

"Well, Grace, we're off! Ten-past two. Heaps of time, for the concert doesn't begin till three-thirty."

Grace did not answer, but she made a desperate attempt to appear keen on the jaunt by nodding and smiling. As for conversation, the noise of the engine rendered talking difficult. Moreover, it was not advisable to have much to say to Cora whilst she was driving. The pace was too hot.

Mile after mile they sped along, and truly the ride itself was a glorious treat for the two girls to be getting. Spring had come again to the beautiful world of Morcover, and this afternoon the sun was shining brilliantly.

In secret, Grace was wishing that something would happen to prevent their reaching the school. She knew she would feel like sinking through the earth when, in company with hateful Cora, she came face to face with Jack, amongst the rest of the fellows.

For Jack Linton knew all about Cora Grandways, her lawless, malicious nature, her standing feud with Study 12. He disliked the girl. What would he think of a girl, then, who had been one of the Study 12 chums the last time he saw her, and who was now going about with Cora?

"Hi, Grace, did you see that signpost?" sang out Cora presently.

"No, I—I wasn't looking."

"Only five miles now! We shall stay to the public tea, of course, Grace. The journey back is nothing. Easily get in before dark. My word, what fun a motor-bike is!" exclaimed Cora, starting to roar up a hill.

Again miserable Grace lapsed into thought. She would burn with shame when Jack should confront her presently, and yet the only alternative to keeping Cora company had been a course that meant far, far greater disgrace!

At a distance—a full mile away, across the lovely Devon countryside—she saw a train puffing towards Barncombe. It could not be Dolly's train, but it reminded her that Dolly was arriving at the school by-and-by.

Back from the rural home that was so hard hit by bad times in the farming world! The Delanes were going through distressing days, impoverished through no fault of their own. And it was their own daughter, Dolly, who should have had that five thousand pounds!

"Why did you—why did you keep silent when you knew you were not entitled to the money?" Grace's conscience seemed to be shrieking at her again. But there was another inward voice answering frantically:

"How could I own up now, after being silent for so long? Oh, no, no; I must go on, just drift on! And as for Dolly—"

Five thousand pounds!

Ample money with which the girl could have seen her father through the crisis, and Dolly would have been just the one to want to spend the money like that. But no, it was no use; she could not have it. Too late—too late!

On the last stretch of their quick run from Morcovie they found a good many cars, apparently bound for the great public school which was Jack Linton's. The entertainment was an annual event, and, although it came at rather an unseasonable time for things of that nature, it never failed to draw scholars' parents and other interested folk.

Finally, Cora was hugely annoyed at having to crawl behind some very fine cars, whose drivers simply would not hurry up!

"One would think we were a wretched funeral, Grace! Thank goodness, there's the school at last!"

At an orderly pace the cars turned in, one after another, at the grand entrance to the drive, and Cora had perforce to do the same. Very annoying, because her idea of an arrival was to whizz round through the gateway, with a great blaring of the horn, and then go roaring up the drive to the porch.

The latter it was impossible for her to reach on the present occasion, so numerous were the cars and other vehicles already lined up on the gravel. So Cora, not to be balked of her bit of showing-off, impudently rode the machine on to the playing-field, pulling up under one of the shady trees.

"Three o'clock—not so dusty, Grace!" was the proud comment on the pace at which they had come along. "This jigger will be all right left here, so now to find Jack Linton, if we can; and if not—well, we'll ask for him!"

"Cora, you are not going to—to have the check to get hold of Jack Linton!"

"Whyever not?" was Cora's airy retort. "What did I come for, if it wasn't for the sake of making Polly mad? And it is going to make her mad—ha, ha!"

"You had better be careful!" Grace exclaimed, in sheer desperation. "Jack may snub you!" "Oh, no," dissented Cora confidently; "not with you on hand, Grace! That's where you come in useful—ha, ha! You're a friend of his. Ha, ha, ha!"

The blood surged into Grace's cheeks again, then ebbed away.

Even as Cora and Grace were walking off the playing-field, to mingle with the host of people going in at the school's main entrance, half-a-dozen boisterous fellows came into view.

Perhaps there was something they had to do in connection with the entertainment, with all speed, something that was amusing them vastly. For they were joking and laughing as they went tearing across to a detached building—the gym., as both girl visitors knew it to be.

And then suddenly one of the boys pulled up sharply, gazing towards Grace and Cora. Instantly telling his chums to go on without him, he came across to the girls.

"Why, what's this?" Grace heard him begin amazedly, whilst she looked anywhere but at him. "How did you two get here—together?"

"Oh, the outfit, Jack—record run!" was Cora's vivacious answer. "We weren't going to miss the doings, Grace and I!"

"Grace and you?"

In that puzzled, almost shocked exclamation Jack was plainly expressing just what Grace had expected—his surprise at her being with Cora.

"You—you came with Cora, did you?"

"Yes, Jack. I—she—the sidecar—she wanted a passenger."

"Huh!"

"Oh, but Grace and I are great friends now, aren't we, Grace?" was Cora's brazen cry.

"Where's Dave Lawder, Jack?"

"Busy!" was the terse reply from Polly's brother. "And so am I, come to that. We've got to dress up for the show. We come on early. And so—"

"See you later, shall we?" Cora suggested prettily.

"I don't think so—no."

Jack hated to be rude, even to Cora. But at this moment he was highly annoyed—perplexed. If he checked in the act of hurrying away, it was only to gaze hard at Grace, ignoring the other girl.

"Er—Grace—you—I mean to say! I should have thought you would prefer to come with the rest—Polly and Betty and the others."

"Oh, but they are not coming! They can't!" crowed Cora. "You see, they were all spent up, and—"

"What do you mean? But they are coming—of course they must be coming!" burst out Jack fiercely. "Didn't I get the loan of a car, so that it could go and fetch them?"

"What?" gasped Cora and Grace astoundedly.

"A car went off from here at one o'clock. It's the car owned by a chap's parents who are spending the day here. It should be back here with Polly and the others any minute now, and—Hurrah! Look!" Jack broke off, in an altered tone of wild delight. "Here they are!"

The delight was his alone. Grace only looked more distraught than ever. As for Cora Grandways, she could hardly wait until Jack had rushed to meet the car-load of joyful Morcovians before mouthing savagely:

"Oh, bother it! Polly and the lot of them—they've got here, after all!"

#### Jack's the Boy!

"YES, wather! Bai Jove, Jack—"

"Ooo, yes; queek—queek! Zank you zo much, Jack!"

"Brothers," said Polly, bounding out from the car, "are some use, after all! You were a sport to send the car for us!"

"I see Cora Grandways," remarked Tess.

Jack grinned.

"Then I guess you see someone who is feeling pretty savage! If you girls hadn't turned up—and Cora here! I could tell how she was crowing over you."

"Where's Dave?" asked Polly. "Not that I want him!"

"Dave is at present going through the process of corking his face. He is Uncle Sam in the Fourth Form Nigger Troupe. And I must be off, too," regretted Jack. "But I'm jolly glad you've got here. See you after the show!"

He ran a few yards, then came back.

"By the way, what's Grace Garfield doing, chumming with Cora? The last time I met Grace she was friendly with all of you. She'd just come into that windfall, and—"

Polly made a sad sign to him not to press for an explanation.

"Grace knows what she is about, we suppose. Anyhow, Jack, we don't!"

"Huh! I see!"

With that he streaked away once more, and the

next time the girls saw him was when the Fourth Form Nigger Troupe took the stage in the school's vast central hall.

It was a screamingly funny "turn." As fast as the audience stopped shrieking with laughter over some gag or other, they were set going again. Naomer Nakara was in convulsions as she watched.

Jack, as a corner-man, with the bones, seemed to single out Betty & Co. for a special grin now and then, and, as his mouth had been made to look as large as a letter-box with red paint, the effect, in Polly's words, was "killing."

But before the troupe finished its successful "turn" there was one item which was listened to with well-deserved gravity. Dave Lawder, as "Uncle Sam," sang an old plantation song that was very deep and tender. He and his voice suited the song, and there was quite an emotional hush for a moment after he had finished. Then the applause broke out.

"Bravo, bravo! Encore!"

"Bravo, Dave!" yelled Polly, waving a handkerchief, whilst Naomer hammered the floor with her little feet.

"Encore!"

"Ooo, yes; queek—queek!"

Dave would only bow again, however, and then efface himself along with his fellow minstrels. Time simply would not permit of encores when there were so many items in the programme, to say nothing of a speech from the Head.

At five o'clock the audience dispersed, to find a nice public tea in readiness in the great dining-room. The Head and his charming wife were at Home to everybody, and a very sociable half-hour it was, scores of visitors walking about, cup and saucer in one hand and a sandwich in the other, to talk with one another; whilst others made up little friendly parties at the tables.

Nor did the Morcovians lack happy encounters with many people, old and young, whom they had met before. There were, in fact, so many "How-do-you-do's?" that Betty & Co. had to be careful to bear the time in mind. They wanted to be back at Morcove to welcome Dolly when she arrived, and at present they had no idea how their return journey was to be made.

"That's all right!" Jack informed them serenely, when the girls had run him and Dave to earth just outside the schoolhouse. "I've ordered a car."

"Brothers," said Polly, "have all the money. How do you do it, Jack? I believe it must be your articles in the school mag."

"Mind you, it's not a posh car," warned Jack—"just one we chaps hire now and then."

"Will it take the lot of us?" was Polly's sudden misgiving.

"Oh, bound to! Seven hefty fellows came home in it from a footer match the other day. Truc, one of us was riding on the grid."

"Was that you?" asked Madge.

"Your powers of deduction, Madge, are really remarkable!" And he bowed. "It was me—I. Sorry! And, unless I am much mistaken," he said in a Sherlock-Holmesy manner, "here is the car. So say good-bye to Uncle Sam—"

"Ooo, yes; queek—queek!"

And Naomer made as though to fling her arms about staid Dave's shoulders, as if that studious youth really were her uncle.

"Naomer!" Polly censured the excitable one. "Now, if I did that— Good-bye, Dave, and don't study too hard! Look at our Paula, worn to a shadow with over-study!"

"Yes, wather!" sighed the elegant one. "Fwight-

ful week, Dave! I don't get any healp, either. I— And naow what's the joke, geals?"

But they wouldn't tell her. The hired car, a very ramshackle antique, had pulled up close to where they were bidding good-bye to the two boys. Jack, as if to exaggerate the awful appearance of the vehicle, became as pompous as a footman whilst handing in the girls. Five of them fitted themselves in quite nicely; then it became a matter of negotiation, so to speak.

"It will be all right," declared Polly, "if Paula sits on the floor. Get in, Paula!"

"Howwows!"

"No," said Jack; "I would suggest Paula making the third on that side, with Naomer on her lap."

"Dwoadful, dwoadful!" groaned Paula.

"Well, it's either that or walking," Polly remarked grimly, on which the elegant one resignedly got in.

"Even now, with Madge next to the driver, there's not room!" realized Helen dismayedly.

"Healp!" came from the already crowded interior. "My fwock, my hair—ow!"

"Wait a bit," said Jack. "I know! Paula, you and Naomer must both sit on the floor!"

"Ooo, yes; queek—queek!"

"Heah, stop it! I won't— Healp! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There we are!" grinned Jack, as he assisted Helen and Trixie into the packed car, last of all. "Are we right? What about you, Madge?"

He ran round to exchange a special handshake with her as she sat sedately next to the driver.

"At the word of command," said Jack—"go!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good-bye!"

"Healp!" came a last faint shriek from the interior, mingling with all the laughter. "Stop—ow! Dwp it!"

"They're off!" vociferated Jack. "Cheerio! Pleasant journey!"

And even sober Dave burst out laughing as the ancient motor groaned away, very low down on the springs.

After they had watched the vehicle lumber out of sight, Jack linked an arm through Dave's, to walk off with him.

"Quite a decent affair it's been, Dave. Pity the girls couldn't stay longer, but I know they wanted to be back in time to meet Dolly Delane. It would be wretched for her to turn up at Morcove and find all her chums away. Hullo, though—blow!"

The vexed word and an attendant frown was caused by his sudden sight of Cora.

"That girl still here, bother her!"

She came mincing towards him, with Grace dawdling after her. Jack very nearly did a right-about-turn. Nothing short would counter Cora's impudence.

"Have the others gone?" she began sweetly, knowing perfectly well that they had. "Jack, we must be off now."

"Yes!"

"I wish you'd give an eye to my motor-bike before we start, Jack, just to see that it's all right."

"Where is the thing?"

Aloofly he stalked to where the famous "outfit" was stationed on the grass. Without a second's waste of time, he got the engine started, then opened the door of the sidecar, ready to hand in Grace.

Her eyes were cast down again in shame as she let him assist her into the other girl's sidecar. It was not like him, the brother of Polly Linton, to

be so very curt. But she knew—only too well she knew why it was! His feeling was, since she had chosen to chum up with Cora, he had no time to waste on her.

Chosen!

As if she would ever have been found going about with Cora had there been any choice in the matter! But he was not to understand that.

"So long!" he said brusquely, whilst Dave, at a little distance, nodded farewell. "Mind the other traffic on the road, Cora."

"As if I don't know how to drive!" retorted Cora, putting on an air now that it was no use her being sweet to him. "We are going to take our time, anyhow, about getting back. We're in no hurry, even if the others are!"

"They want to be back in time to meet Dolly Delane," said Jack. "But that doesn't trouble you, of course."

And those words—his last to the two girls before they drove away—were another stab for Grace.

It seemed to her that he could have said nothing with a keener thrust in it.

For what else did the return of Dolly Delane to Morcove School mean for her—Grace Garfield—but greater trouble than ever?

re-enter Dolly!

"WELL, Dolly, here you are, then! Had a nice journey?"

"Yes, thank you, Miss Redgrave!"

"And how well you look after your change of air! I am afraid you won't find many of the girls upstairs, Dolly, but they should soon be in now."

The Form-mistress gave one of her nice smiles and passed on. She had a genius for being about at the right moment. It would not have been Miss Rodgrave not to be on hand like this, to save Dolly from the depressing effect of arriving back at Morcove to find no one to welcome her.

Taking up her one bit of luggage, Dolly mounted to the Fourth Form quarters, where indeed all seemed desolation. These evenings in early spring were a natural temptation to Morcove to stay out-of-doors as long as possible, and Dolly was neither surprised nor hurt that no one else was about.

Dumping her bag upon the floor, she went to her study window and looked out over the games-field. Plenty of girls were to be seen down there, either playing games or sauntering about, and some were Fourth-Formers—only, she could not see any of her particular chums.

Betty, Polly, Madge, Tess—where were they? And Paula and Naomer? Above all, where was Grace Garfield?

Not that Grace could be deemed a friend—now. Friend! When it had come to Dolly's knowledge at last that Grace Garfield had been unfairly sticking to that vast sum of money, the five thousand pounds!

To see homely Dolly Delane at this moment, looking so very patient and good-tempered, who would have imagined that she had come back to Morcove with the right to denounce Grace Garfield?

Yet so it was.

Many another girl in Dolly's place would have been furiously eager to stand face to face with the study-mate and supposed chum who had been proved a cheat.

It was no small benefit out of which Dolly had been cheated by the other girl. Five thousand pounds! A fortune in itself, more than enough money to save the threatened home in this time of crisis. Yet here she stood, by no means certain



**A GENTLE HINT.** "If the money has only proved your undoing, Grace, you would have been better without it!" said Dolly Delane. Would it take effect on her deceiving chum? she wondered!

even now as to how or when the money would be hers.

There was to be no angry denunciation of Grace before all the school—no accusation, even in private. If Dolly had been that sort of girl—all for looking after her own rights, and inclined to be vindictive—well, she would have claimed the fortune before this.

At least several days ago she might have taken action, as, indeed, Daphne Cranford herself had wanted her to do. But Dolly, whilst her eyes had been opened to all that sudden wealth could do for her and her people, had not been blind to what the exposure would mean for Grace.

Denounce the culprit? How could she? Ah, no, there was a better way than that of getting her due! So Dolly had instantly decided in her own generous way. Let Grace have a little more time; give the girl the chance to own up at last. And if this did not answer, then the girl must be made to own up! For even that course would be better, a thousand times better, than a denunciation.

Very quietly a few minutes went by, with the twilight creeping on at last, and Dolly still alone in the study, pondering the position to which she had returned. She and Grace, study-mates again! Grace still keeping the fortune, and she—Dolly—waiting, patiently waiting for conscience to get the better of avarice.

Then suddenly there was all the familiar commotion of lots of girls storming back into the school-house. High-spirited cries and counter-cries, the scampering of many light feet on the stairs, then the skittish rush of at least four or five girls down the corridor.

Dolly's door flew open.

"Oh, I say, we are so sorry, Dolly!"

"Yes, wather!"

"We quite expected to be back in time to meet you, but our hired car broke down on the way!"

"Dreadful experience, Dolly! Theah was I, wolling about on the flooh, bai Jove, and— Bai Jove, though," beamed Paula, "haow aro you after the west cure—what? Lucky geal!"

They were all flocking in upon her, the dear old chums. In between asking her how she was, and saying how bonny she looked—and how were all the cows and pigs at the farm?—they explained their surprise treat of the afternoon, and-how Jack Linton had chartered that car to bring them home.

"The most awful old bloater-box you ever saw!" chattered Polly. "Burst tyres—well, we expected that! But when it came to running backwards down a hill, and misfiring—"

"So that we had to come the last mile on one cylinder!"

"To say nothing of a fractured magneto or something!"

"Dreadful, dreadful!" groaned Paula. "And theah was I, Dolly, hardly able to breathe. The geals tweeked me as a footwarmer, a cawwige wug! I'm a weck—a wuin!"

"But you are here, that's the blessing, dear," Polly reminded the long-suffering one. "Just in time to start your prep!"

"Howwows!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, say in ten minutes' time," conceded teasing Polly. "Dolly, you must come along to Study 12 and help drink the lemonade."

"Ooo, yes; queek—queek!"

And they bore her off with them, gaily and proudly. Here she was again, their Dolly the Doormat! In Study 12, Paula became quite eloquent. In their might have had to submit to a very big-worded speech, only Paula, refreshing herself with lemonade and sherbert, swallowed the wrong way. Whereupon she left it to Betty and the others to say the rest, and fell back into the easy-chair—"pwostwate!"

When the first excitement had died down, Dolly asked a question—quite carelessly, but it was a very awkward one for the girls.

"And where's Grace Garfield?" asked Dolly.

"Er—"

"Er—oh, Grace! She—"

"Yes—er—"

They all got stuck like this. Then Betty, seeing no help for it, broke the news as gently as she could.

"The fact is, Dolly, whilst you've been away Grace has rather changed—towards us, that is. We don't know why. She was all right for some time after coming into the fortune, so it can't be that. Anyway, she—she goes about with Cora now."

"With Cora Grandways?"

"Dreadful, dreadful!" lamented Paula, putting away her pocket-comb and mirror. "Haow Gwace can have taken up with Corwa I weally can't wealise. We were fwriends all woumd—yes, wather! She had a gweat fwriend in you, Dolly, deah. How-eh—"

"Sh!" Polly gestured suddenly.

There was the sound of a girl walking past the closed door, to go to the study room! the corner.

"That's Cora, just come in," nodded Betty.

"And Grace, I suppose, has gone to the study she shares with you, Dolly."

"I'll go and see," came very softly and calmly from that girl. "I want to see Grace."

Did Grace know whose quiet step it must be when she heard it in the passage? She did! Guilt made her feel that now—now the moment had come when she must nerv: herself. She was

to stand face to face with the girl whom she had robbed of her due!

Desperately, and only just in time, she took a grip on herself. The study door opened, and Dolly strolled in.

"Hello, Dolly! So you're back!"

"Yes, Grace."

"Everything all right at home?"

"It might be worse."

Dolly made that answer, feeling that it was good policy not to present too cheerful a view of things. She wanted to bring every influence to bear that would urge Grace into a voluntary renunciation of the fortune.

The talk hung fire. Grace forced herself to meet the other's eyes, and, strangely enough, a smile was exchanged. That was because the one girl was desperately masking her guilt, whilst the other was so generously refraining from the stern accusation which it was in her power to make.

At last:

"You have been over to Jack Linton's school for the entertainment, Grace?"

"Yes."

"But not with—the other girls?"

"No, Dolly. I—I went with Cora—for once. Her sidecar—she offered me the ride."

"But haven't you," bore on Dolly gently, "been going about with Cora a good deal whilst I've been away?"

Two red spots came into Grace's white cheeks now. Her eyes fell. Then she tossed her head, exclaiming:

"So Betty and the rest have been—saying things!"

"Not unkindly, Grace. They are so very sorry—as I am—that you have taken up with Cora like this. There is no change in Cora? She is just the same as ever? Well, then, why do it, Grace?"

"Oh, I—" Grace moved about the room; she shrugged. "I'm afraid I'm not in the mood to argue about it, Dolly! If I choose to be a bit friendly with Cora, there's nothing to stop me!"

"Is there nothing, Grace? What about your friendship with the other girls? What about backing up the Form? A girl who is going to consider that cannot exactly choose to be friendly with Cora. But—"

"But what?"

"It means, I suppose, that you no longer care for fair play and all that? You'll throw in your lot with Cora, although she makes a boast of doing all she can to upset the Form, getting a blow in at Study 12 when she can!"

Again the secretly wretched girl turned her face away. That allusion to fair play—how it had cut her!

"I'm still your study-mate, even if I, like the others, am no longer your friend," Dolly said in a pained whisper. "And I am going to say this, Grace. If you have joined up with Cora because she's got heaps of money, as you have, it won't bring you any happiness. You'll get no fun out of it."

"Oh—"

"If the money has only proved your undoing, Grace, you would have been better without it," Dolly spoke on, intending the words to sink into the unwilling listener's mind. "It was meant to be a reward to a girl who had done something—decent."

"What do you mean?" panted Grace.

For the moment she feared that Dolly must have formed a suspicion.

"You know what I mean," said Dolly. "If anyone



would be glad of money, I would. But I hope I'm not boasting when I say that I'd hate to put money before—fair play!"

"Oh, that'll do! If you've only come back to lecture me, like a—like a prig, I shall find another study!"

"You can't, Grace!"

"Yes, I can! Cora would have me in with her, come to that. I'll go to her now—yes, I will!"

"Grace, stop! You won't go to Cora!" was the commanding cry with which Dolly checked her study-mate on the way to the door. "I'll go to Cora, not you!"

"But—but—" Grace gave a mirthless laugh. "That's cheek! What do you mean—you'll go to Cora?"

"I shall not say—"

"Because you can't! Oh, I—I'm fed-up with you!" cried Grace, and she slammed out of the room.

Dolly did not go after her, although she guessed that the guilty girl was even now hurrying round to Cora's study. She herself would have a talk with Cora, but not now. No, that would not be advisable, when Grace might be tempted to listen at the keyhole. About one thing, however, Dolly's mind was quite made up.

She was going to put a stop to this undesirable alliance. She and she alone could do it, for the simple reason that she and she alone had suddenly realised how it had come about.

"Yes," she whispered to herself in great agitation, now that she was alone. "It must be so! I could almost read it in Grace's eyes—how she hates going about with Cora. She's not done it of her own free will. It's simply because Cora knows—something!"

In a minute Grace came back, to find Dolly looking as calm as ever. And now Grace herself had gained a certain bravado.

"I've arranged it!" she threw out curtly. "I shall move round into Cora's study to-morrow. Judith Grandways can come in here with you, if you like. She's more your sort than I am—now."

A reckless laugh followed the words. It was as if Grace were saying:

"Think what you like of me! I don't care!"

Not a word answered Dolly. This so that Grace would think she herself had scored, and there was therefore no need to be on the alert. The plan answered, too. Later on in the evening Dolly was able to go round to Cora's study with the assurance that Grace would not know that an interview was taking place.

It was getting on for call-over. Judith Grandways, her "prep." long since finished, was away from the study—quietly reading in the school library, most likely. Cora, all alone, was sprawling in an armchair, feasting on chocolates. The floor was dotted with little balls of rolled-up silver paper, peeled from the chocolates.

"Oho, wonders will never cease!" the detestable girl commented on Dolly's quiet entry. "But I forgot. We were companions in misfortune, Dolly, of course we were! You and I, the only ones to be laid up that time in the san. Have a choc?"

"No, thanks!"

"You should. Aren't you feeding up after the illness? I am!" chuckled Cora, dipping her hand into the box that lay in her lap.

Dolly declined to answer, keeping her eyes, instead, upon Cora's face, with its mocking smile.

"Well?" asked Cora.

"You have just mentioned that we were the only two in the san. that time. I have not forgotten,

Cora. Something, in any case, would have made me remember, all at once, that when you were ill in the bed next to me you rambled in your sleep."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes. You talked about a letter—time after time about a letter."

Cora, in the act of taking another chocolate, suddenly desisted. She stared, changed colour, and then got up.

"But what was there in that?" she remarked, with forced derision.

"I can guess what was in the letter that it should be on your mind so," Dolly answered steadily. "I know for a fact that it was something



**DOLLY IN A NEW LIGHT.** "Answer shall!" Dolly Defane said fiercely. "Do you know that Grace Garfield has no right to the reward? Yes or no?" Cora Grandways quailed before this new and threatening Dolly.

about a runaway horse. Cora, that letter had to do with the five thousand pounds reward which Grace has been enjoying!"

Up went Cora's head, whilst her eyes glared at her schoolfellow threateningly. Yet, when Dolly moved a step nearer, Cora retreated.

"Answer me—you shall!" Dolly said fiercely. "Do you know that Grace Garfield had no right to the reward? Yes or no, Cora—come on!"

"What on earth—I mean to say—really, Dolly! Oh, I see," Cora had the nerve to jeer, "you have got it into your head that—that you should have been the one to have the money! Well, I never!"

"It isn't a case of suspecting; I know for a fact!" was the answer Dolly flashed. "Whilst I've

been at home I have met Daphne Cranford herself. She would gladly come to the school, if I wished it, to tell all Morcove that I, not Grace, should have had that money. But you are not answering me. Yes or no?"

"I—I—"

"You have—you have found out," Dolly said in a stern whisper. "You have known for some time, and it has given you a hold over Grace, you sneak! I guessed as much when I learned this evening that Grace had been going about with you."

"Dolly, look here, if you say much more—"

"Wait!" was the stern word that set Cora quailing again. "You have some idea of letting Grace share this study with you? She is not going to share it, not going about with you any more! You'll tell her, before we go to bed to-night, that you have changed your mind—see?"

"Will I tell her?" flared out Cora, suddenly striding close to the other girl. "You give your orders to me, do you?"

"Yes, I give you my—orders! And wait a bit!" Dolly spoke on, as calmly as ever. "I haven't finished yet!"

There was a gasp from Cora. Then—silence.

Eye to eye as she was with this other girl, she knew that she had met her match at last!

#### Grace Realises the Truth!

THE dramatic silence was soon ended. Dolly spoke again:

"Now that I have put this spoke in your wheel, Cora, you may perhaps think it just as well to tell Grace that I know I am entitled to the fortune?"

"And so I shall!" burst out Cora, in sullen rage. "Since it's not worth my while to shield her any longer—"

"You'll not say one word!" Dolly commanded in as stern a tone as before. "I don't choose that Grace should be heartlessly shown up, either by you or anybody else. I have told Daphne Cranford herself that we must give Grace the chance to come to her senses about it all. If I can keep silent for Grace's own sake, you had better be silent—for yours!"

"For my sake? How do you mean?" exclaimed Cora insolently.

"If you speak out, you will be interfering with what I intend. Once again, I choose to give Grace a fair chance to own up of her own accord. If you spoil the plan, Cora, you know what I shall do? I'll give YOU away in front of the school—I mean it!"

It was another staggering blow for handsome Cora. Once more she was left agasp with dismay.

"So be careful!" warned Dolly, drawing off to the door. "I mean it, make no mistake about that! If you interfere with my plan, which is for Grace's sake and the sake of the school, I will have it known that you shared her guilty secret, encouraged her not to own up, and then you'll be—expelled!"

It was all that Dolly wanted to say, or had need to say. She went out, leaving behind her a girl who was beaten. There had always been a tigress in Cora. Now she was a tigress whose claws were cut!

Outside the study Dolly smiled qucerly. She was not enjoying the triumph, but was very upset. She, the homely girl, was all for a placid life. But Fate had put her in this very difficult position, and she knew that she was called upon to be very brave and patient and tactful.

She could have the fortune whenever she liked to claim it. But she would wait, still giving unhappy Grace her chance!

Next morning there was evidence of how the stern scene with Cora had taken effect. Grace, as airily as she could make the announcement, remarked that she would not be "co-ing" with Cora, after all, in the latter's study.

What was more, Grace hinted that her "friendship" with the generally detested girl was at an end. Tactful Dolly received this, the expected news, with no triumphant smile. She merely answered that she was sure it was for the best, as all the Form would say.

There were, indeed, great rejoicings on the quiet in Study 12. Betty and the others had tact enough not to say too much to Grace herself. They showed by their manner that if she would take up her former life with them the little lapse would be forgotten. Grace came back to the fold, as it seemed to them, a sadder and a wiser girl. She was not at her ease, of course, but the chums thought they knew why.

Yet what they knew—how little it was, compared with what time might yet bring to light!

Ill at ease! The words only feebly described Grace's innermost feelings.

Cora's way of being suddenly "off" with her had aroused no suspicion in Grace's mind as to any action by Dolly or someone else. She merely supposed that Cora had ended the alliance, finding that there was not much fun in it, after all. The menace in that direction seemed to have died down, and it was a kind of miserable relief for Grace to be mingling with Betty & Co. again. Only—

Her study-mate! There was Dolly always on hand, always the quiet, good-tempered one, as of old. And to be with her, the victim of her cheating, was torment!

If only Dolly had given cause for Grace's hardening her heart, what a relief it would have been! So Grace often thought to herself, sighing wretchedly.

If only Dolly had been different from what she was! If she had been mean, selfish, grasping, unworthy in all sorts of ways! But she was in every respect so worthy. Grace found her talking more freely about the struggle that it was at home. As the days crept by, there was many a talk started by Dolly that made the guilty-minded girl squirm with secret shame.

And then suddenly something happened that gave Grace the biggest shock of a lifetime.

Of all the upsets and scares that she had endured since she knew herself to be in wrongful possession of the fortune none had been as violent as this.

It happened one morning about a week after Dolly's return to school.

Grace had come down early from the dorm, after another of her wretched nights. The post was in, and was just being sorted out. She went to that corner of the main hall where a parlourmaid was allotting the letters to their different sections in the rack. Until the sorting out was ended it was no use Grace's asking the parlourmaid if there were any letters for her. So she stood by, and as she looked on at the deft handling of the letters, the great shock came.

"What's that letter, Ellen? That one, yes!" "Not for you, miss," said the girl in cap and apron, taking it away from the scholar who had caught at it. "For Dolly Delane."

"Er—yes, so I see," floundered Grace confusedly. "I—I made a mistake."

But she had not made a mistake in thinking instantly that the handwriting on the envelope was familiar. She knew it—only too well she knew!

A letter had come for Dolly Delane from—  
DAPHNE CRANFORD!

Grace drifted away, her brain reeling.

Now, indeed, the hour of reckoning had come, she felt.

Daphne Cranford, in France, as the foreign stamp evidenced, was in correspondence with Dolly Delane! Daphne had not written to her—Grace—the supposed rescuer, but to Dolly!

From this, it was a sudden leap of Grace's tormented mind to the belief that Dolly knew—had been aware for some time how the reward had been wrongly bestowed. Everything, of a sudden, seemed to point to it.

"Ever since she came back from her ten days at home!" Grace pondered, in great agitation. "Oh, now I see—I see how it is all accounted for! She has been keeping on about the hard times to make me own up. And Cora's breaking with me—that was Dolly's doing. Dolly must have put two and two together immediately she came back to school. She has been waiting—giving me a chance!"

It was too much for Grace, and suddenly—alone, as she was, in the open air—she burst into tears. How was she to face Dolly now—now that it was so clear that the girl knew?

ever? Even now Dolly might be resolving that this should be the last day for keeping silent!

"Then how shall I go about it—how?" Grace began to ask herself frantically. "Tell Dolly first? Go to the headmistress before I say a word to Dolly? If only I could do it in writing—a letter! It is so awful, having to stand before someone, and—and say straight out—"

To think what this meant turned her brain giddy and her heart sick. She felt that she would rather be shown up, after all, than confess. But if it could have been done by a letter— And why not?

"Why not put it into writing, and then—then run away?" was the desperate thought that suddenly seized her. "Isn't that the thing to do—the only thing? I'm done for here, in any case. And I can't—I can't bear to face it out—oh, I can't. But I wouldn't mind so much their knowing when I'm gone."

Another moment and her mind was desperately made up. It was going to be the cowardly thing, but that couldn't be helped.

The one way out for her now, the only way, was



**A SHOCK FOR GRACE.** "What's that letter?" asked Grace, catching at one that Ellen was putting in the rack. "Not for you, miss," said Ellen. "For Dolly Delane." Grace's heart gave a great thump—Daphne Cranford writing to Dolly! What did it mean?

No, it was all up with her—Grace—now! Go on another day, another hour, under the eyes of the girl she had wronged, knowing that that very girl knew of the wrong—impossible!

And yet—

The old appalling alternative alone remained—full confession!

As if to remind Grace of those whose esteem she was to forfeit, there came happy-hearted sounds from the schoolhouse, talk and laughter floating out from one of the dormitory windows.

Morcoe had risen to another day of work and play. Her schoolfellows were full of fun, but let her come out with the whole shameful story and all this gaiety would soon be changed to anger—fierce scorn for her.

But confess she must. Not to do so would be to throw away the very chance which Dolly had been giving her in mercy. That girl had waited patiently, but could she be expected to wait for

a written confession, not to be found until after she had flown!

#### When Darkness Fell!

**F**LIGHT from the school! Grace's mind could do nothing else now but busy itself with this desperate plan.

The more she pondered it, the more needful and feasible it seemed. She must flee the school before her name had become coupled with every term expressing indignation and disgust. She would go away stealthily this evening, as soon as it was dark.

A letter, left behind in the study, would contain the confession. Another letter to her parents would beg their forgiveness, and implore them not to worry on her account. She had done this thing and she must suffer!

Nor, as this fateful day wore on, did Grace have cause for faltering in her panicky decision.

She found that Dolly had not a word to say about having heard from Daphne Cranford. That silence seemed to be all part of the other silence—as, indeed, it was. There could be no doubt about it. Grace said to herself; Dolly really was maintaining a noble silence, hating the idea of making an accusation.

Whilst there was still a possibility of her—Grace—owning up, Dolly could not bring herself to lay claim to the fortune.

And so, with every precaution against her rash intention being suspected, the hard-driven girl made her preparations.

On the quiet, she packed up a few necessaries into the smallest possible bit of luggage. But this was not all. She took steps to provide herself with money.

Sorrowfully she realised that, strictly speaking, every penny she could lay hands on rightly belonged to Dolly. It was lavish pocket-money, provided out of the interest on the fortune. But she dare not run away penniless.

She was making restitution over the fortune as a whole. Surely, then, Dolly would not call it still cheating to have retained a few pounds?

There was mellow evening sunshine upon the ivied walls of the schoolhouse and upon the teeming games-field when she came cycling back to Morcove, after a run into town to draw a little extra out of the Post Office Savings Bank. Some of the girls hailed her from the field, where they were playing a brisk practice game. She merely waved in response, riding on round to the cycle-shed, and Polly Linton, out of breath with violent exercise, panted at Dolly:

"That was Grace, but she isn't very sociable to-day. I hope she doesn't think we are remembering that Cora affair? She should come and get a game with us."

"Oh, let her alone!" advised Dolly serenely. "It's all right."

For Dolly had the feeling that the hour was at hand when Grace would do the best thing for herself and for the good name of the school. It had been an uneventful day, but Dolly had sensed a desperate, remorseful state in her study-mate.

Slowly but surely the girl was being forced to own up. Only let her do that, and then how eagerly would Dolly plead for pity to be shown!

The hockey came to an end only when the sun was down and the sunset light was fading from Morcove's lofty walls. Even then, so genial was the calm springtime evening, the girls stayed out-of-doors. At last, however, there was a stampede back into the schoolhouse—a boisterous chasing one another upstairs, and a rush to the Study 12 cupboard, to see what it could produce in the way of lemonade for thirsty souls.

"Ah, thanks—thanks! Most agreeable!" beamed Paula, accepting her tumbler. "Weal, geals. I will just sit down for a half-minute before starting pwep."

"You mean before getting us to help you do it?" corrected Polly, sitting on the edge of the table, legs a-swing.

"A most uncalled-for remark, weally!" Paula protested warmly. "I would not dream of asking the assistance of you geals. I pfer to rely upon my own bwains—yes, wather! But—er—if you should have a minute to spare, Dolly, pwesently—"

"Oh, yes!"

"There is no occasion to laugh!" Paula censured Polly and a few others stiffly. "In asking Dolly to—er—just look in pwesently I was merely wishing

to show her a—er—wather intwesting pwblem—yes, wather!"

"I'll come whenever you like," smiled Dolly. "Do! I am sure you will be amused. It requires a little working out, I'm afraid. How—evah!"

It ended in Dolly's spending the best part of an hour with Paula in the latter's study. For the elegant one, after showing the Doormat that very interesting problem, drew her attention to a rather stiff bit of French. And then some Latin.

"And now I'm through!" Paula beamed, when at last she closed her books for the night. "Bai Jove, have I kept you long, Dolly? There was weally no occasion for you to stay—oh, no! But you agwee, don't you, it's been intwesting to watch me get so much work done? Full marks to-morrow—yes, wather!"

Dolly was looking greatly amused as she came away from that study to go to her own. Swiftly, however, the smile faded as she thought what the next few minutes might be going to produce.

If—if she had deduced aright, and Grace had been on the verge of a confession all day, then surely it was to come now!

The anxious girl could imagine how it would be. She and Grace, alone together once again; Grace's suddenly blurring out the whole thing, simply because another night of sleepless misery was not to be borne. And so at last the wrongdoer would have done that much to atone for all the weakness and deceit. She would be deserving of the pity which she dare not implore.

Dolly passed into the study. But the other girl was not here. Instead, there was a note upon the table, and at sight of this Dolly fell into a great tremble. Somehow, she had no need to snatch it up and look at the handwriting on the envelope to know that this was for her—from Grace.

With that immediate sense of this being some fateful note, Dolly started to read, and a little cry of horror burst from her. The first lines told her.

Grace had fled the school!

"Oh, she has run away—gone off, without saying a word to anyone!" Dolly moaned dismayedly as she read on. "A thing I never expected, never reckoned with for a moment—she has run away after confessing!"

In wildest alarm, the horrified girl started towards her closed door, to rush and tell the others. Then she desisted, and turned back to finish reading the letter.

"... By the time you find this on the study table, Dolly, I expect Miss Somerfield will have found the note I have left behind for her. Oh, how sorry I am for the upset it is going to be, but much more sorry for what I have done in being silent for so long! You will never forgive me, Dolly..."

"But I do—I do forgive!" was Dolly's distressed outcry, as if Grace were even then in the room. "I would have shown you, Grace! Oh, come back—come back! We will all forgive you!"

It was an anguished cry that Grace, alas, could not hear! She was gone, and had been gone, perhaps, these last two hours!

Dolly rushed to the window and drew the blind aside.

It was dark night out there, and her remorseful schoolfellow a fugitive fleeing through the night!

Gone, and what would happen to the unhappy girl ere she was heard of again—who could say? The blind dropped back into place, and Dolly came away from the window, heaving a tragic sigh.



So much for her well-meant silence throughout the past week or so! Never, surely, had good intentions resulted more disastrously.

She had hoped and believed that, given time, Grace would bravely own up. Never once had she feared that the confession would only be in her hands—after the culprit had run away!

Once again Dolly read the note from beginning to end. Then, with wild alarm rushing upon her again, she ran from the room.

Study 12 held its usual happy concourse at this moment. Dolly burst in upon her high-spirited chums, and every blithe voice was silenced, every smile changed to a look of horror, by her electrifying cry:

"Betty—Polly—all of you, Grace Garfield has run away—yes, gone off since nightfall! She's not going home, she says! She's not coming back to the school!"

"What?"

"Good gwacious!"

"Read this, if you don't believe me—read it!" Dolly sobbed, holding out the letter. "And then you'll understand!"

They read it, and the appalled silence which followed the reading of that farewell letter was evidence of how well, indeed, the chums understood all—at last!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

What is to happen now? Grace's guilty secret at last out, and she herself a runaway from the school! You cannot afford to miss reading a word of next week's fine Morcove story. It is full of exciting happenings, and is entitled "Paying for Her Deceit!"



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