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The Schoolgirls' Own 2^d



**SNEAKING OUT OF
THE SCHOOL!**

(An exciting incident in the
fine long complete Morecove
story inside.)

A fine out-of-school story of Betty Barton & Co. of the Fourth Form.



BOARDED OUT AT BARNCOMBE!

By MARJORIE STANTON

"Ah, bah! He is no good, this one. He has no jam inside him, no cream-nozzings!"

"The weal thing, Naomer—yes, wather!" Paula enlightened Morcove's royal scholar from the desert lands of Africa. "The old original hot woll, bai Jove! With a pat of buttah—most intwiguig!"

The gong sounded for breakfast, and Polly led the cheering.

"You're your proper self this morning, Polly," was Betty Barton's comment.

"Meaning that I was a nasty cross-patch last night? Well, I felt fed-up!" protested Polly. "We were so nicely settled here at Modena. We didn't want Cora Grandways to be sent along—nor yet Cissy. I must say it, although Cissy Norton is my cousin. The pair of them together are going to spoil it all—if we let them. But we won't!"

"Wather not!" beamed Paula, rising up. "Ba: Jove, these wolls are weally warm! I don't know why I have been presented with them—"

"Present for a good child!" said Polly, affectionately throwing an arm about the duffer's shoulders as a move was made for the dining-room. "But don't eat them all—at least, not all at once."

"Ewivolous cweature! Howevah, I wejoice that your spiwits are westered, Polly, deah. Personally, I feel gwand. It's a tweat boarding in Barncombe!"

"Especially when the 'bus breaks down and can't fetch us to school—like yesterday!" chuckled Polly. "But it will be here on time this morning, worse luck!"

"Deployable!" agreed Paula. "The gweat dwawback of school life is that you have to be always wacking your bwains over work."

"Provided you've got any, Paula!"

"I always have plenty of work, Polly—"

"I meant brains—here!" said the madcap, poking a finger at her own bobbed head.

At the dining-room doorway the batch of girls encountered Miss Redgrave, and also Mrs. Mackay, the Scotch lady who ran the boarding-house. Their chummy mistress the girls had already seen on rising, but "the Mackay," as she had been flatteringly dubbed, had to be bidden a boisterous "Good-morning!"

"You young ladies are looking no so bad, Ah'm thinking!" commented Mrs. Mackay delightfully. "An' it puzzles me, ye ken, what should ha' made the two itherers feel a wee bit unweel lh' marning."

This was an allusion to Cora Grandways and Cissy Norton. Those two girls, who had only come in from Morcove School overnight, had complained of feeling not up to much this morning.

"Lucky girls!" the rest of the Fourth Form called the chums of Study 12 when it was known that they were to "board out" at Barncombe during alterations to the school. But it was luck that was destined to be short-lived, as this splendid tale will show!

Jolly For The Juniors!

POLLY LINTON, out before breakfast, came rather roguishly to the counter of the Barncombe Creamery.

"Have you any hot rolls?"

"Yes, miss—"

"Oh, then, a dozen, please!"

The eager purchase meant no reflection on the fare provided at the Modena Boarding-house, where Polly and some of her school chums were being quartered during alterations at Morcove.

The bulging bag with which the madcap of the Fourth Form speedily departed was simply the outcome of a desire to get fun out of life. Polly, back at Modena, dropped the paper bag into Paula Creel's lap.

"Thanks, thanks! But what's this, Polly, deah?"

"Look and see!"

The elegant duffer did so.

"Hooway! Gweat wejoiceings! Hot wolls, bai Jove!"

"What ees that?" cried impish Naomer, bursting upon the scene. "Ooo, one for me—queek, queek!"

"Breakfast, Naomer—"

But Naomer had already helped herself with more eagerness than politeness. She took a bite, then made a face.

So Miss Redgrave, adopting the usual course in such cases, had given them leave to stay in bed awhile, being excused school.

"I can't see much wrong with them myself," the youthful mistress said, "but I know that Miss Somerfield would wish me to be on the safe side. They'll get up later in the morning, and feel better as the day goes on, I expect."

"But won't you be coming along with us in the bus, Miss Redgrave?" asked Madge Minden, as they took their seats at table. "Your second day away from the school!"

"I am waiting to get through on the 'phone about it," was Ruth Redgrave's answer. "Miss Somerfield may not like me to leave Cora and Cissy. There is the 'phone!" she added, jumping up as the bell rang. "Don't wait, girls!"

"An' dinna fail to make a good breakfast, my dears. I leave you to it," said Mrs. Mackay, departing in the wako of Miss Redgrave.

That young lady, stepping to the hall telephone, spoke into the instrument:

"Morcove School? Miss Redgrave speaking. I would like a word with Miss Somerfield, please. What—engaged?—Who is that speaking, then? Perhaps you could take a message?"

The answer was one that brought a troubled look into the listener's face. She spoke again, with all the heart gone out of her voice:

"Good-morning, Mabel Cunliffe! The message, then, is this."

And in few words Ruth Redgrave explained about Cora and Cissy, asking for instructions.

Miss Redgrave's Rival!

AT the other end of the wire, in Morcove School, Mabel Cunliffe suddenly went away from the telephone with a jaunty step.

Although she had said that the headmistress was engaged, that lady was alone in her private room when the assistant-mistress got to it.

"Miss Redgrave has rung up. I quite thought you were engaged, so I took the message," Mabel Cunliffe said silkily. "It is only to say that two of the girls are off colour this morning—not up yet. So shall she remain at Modena, or come along to school with the others?"

"She should certainly stay to keep an eye on those two girls, if—"

"I can manage all right in her absence, Miss Somerfield, if that is what you are thinking."

The remark sounded very sporting. Miss Somerfield was not to know that this auxiliary mistress hoped to supplant Ruth Redgrave in the school, if only it could be managed!

"It's good of you to be so willing to carry on!" the headmistress exclaimed gratefully. "It means a stiff task, we know, for you are quite new to the school."

"The hardest task is a pleasure, Miss Somerfield, when one gets on well with the girls, and I think I am doing that."

"I'm sure you are. Very well, then. It will be far better, tell Miss Redgrave, if she remains in Barcombe for the present."

Mabel Cunliffe had a jauntier step than ever as she returned to the 'phone. Those two girls, Cora and Cissy, had unwittingly done her a service by pretending illness this morning. For it was only pretence, most likely. They were that sort!

So she was saying to herself, and to a certain extent she was conjecturing rightly, Cora and Cissy would have felt foolish if the doctor had been brought to them!

But it was a mistake to imagine that the two impostors had "unwittingly" served Mabel Cunliffe's own artful purposes.

"Ciss!" whispered Cora, as the pair of them lay in adjoining beds.

"Well?"
"Can't you imagine how pleased Miss Cunliffe is feeling about our staying away from school? I mean to say, it's keeping Miss Redgrave away for the day—and I am sure of one thing, if others aren't. Miss Cunliffe is all for ousting Miss Redgrave!"

"The mean cat!" said Cissy.
But she laughed, as if she thought it rather a joke.

"Would you rather have Miss Cunliffe than Miss Redgrave for a permanent mistress, Cora?"

"Rather! Miss Redgrave is getting so hard to take in!" chuckled the Grandways girl. "As for the new assistant-mistress, I believe she would wink at a good deal if one played up to her the right way. Hark!"

They both sat up in bed. Below in the street the school's private bus had announced its arrival by a warning blare of the horn. As they listened, Cora and Cissy heard all the commotion made by Betty & Co. as those girls came away from the breakfast-table.

"School for them!" exclaimed Cora. "What a scream—"

"Sh! They're coming to the bed-room, some of them!"

"What if they are?" grinned Cora. "We'll let them see how ill we feel—he, he, he!"

Then Cissy laughed. It was all she could do to get her face straight again before Polly, Madge, and one or two others entered.

"Don't make a row in here," objected Cora in a suffering tone, "when you know how queer we are!"

"Not much wrong with you!" Polly stated her opinion scathingly. "If I wanted a whole day off, I'd ask for it, not wangle it!"

"Oh, dry up!" retorted Cora. "Run along to school, like good little girls. We shall feel better when you're gone."

"No doubt!" said Polly drily. "Able to get up and have a nice slack-about!"

"I'm ill!" groaned Cora, putting her face into the pillow. "And it's all because of the food at this place! We didn't want to come here—did we, Ciss?"

"Oh, no!"
And Cissy also hid her face amongst the bed-clothes, she was in such fits of laughter.

Polly had only come to find a clean handkerchief. She hurried away, and all the others went with her, excepting Paula. Force of habit made the elegant one linger in front of the dressing-table mirror.

Suddenly Cora bobbed up her head.
"Hallo! Not gone yet? Look sharp, Paula, or else—"

"I shall not huuwvy myself for you, Corwa. I—Ow!"

"He, he, he!" tittered Cora, whilst Cissy chuckled just as subduedly. "Good shot with the pillow!"

The downy missile having knocked Paula's hat over her eyes, she certainly looked a humorous object.

"Outrageous!" she said wrathfully. "A couple of fwauds, that's what you are, pwetending to be ill!"

"Oh, I am so bad!" complained Cora, sitting

up and holding her head. "Paula, bring me a wet towel for my forehead, please!"

"Wubbish—"

"Paula, I didn't think you could be so hard-hearted. Do as I ask, please!"

"You can't be ill, or you would not act about."

"I'm not acting about—keeping cheerful under difficulties. Paula, do—"

"Oh, all right!"

To good-natured Paula it seemed a trifling thing to have to do, so she soaked a towel and brought it across to the sham invalid.

"Thank you so much, Paula," sighed Cora. "I'll remember you in my will. Don't leave me yet. I am so bad—failing fast!"

Splash!

"He, he, he!"

"You—Ow!" gasped Paula, clawing away the wet towel that had been slammed hard in her face. "You wetch—you ungrateful wetch! That's what I got for helping you!"

"That's what you get, yes!" tittered Cora. "And clear cut before you get some more—he, he, he!"

It took Paula a full minute to recover her usual elegant appearance. All the time both "patients" were in silent convulsions. Bestowing upon them a disgusted look, Paula at last hurried away, to rejoin her chums in the waiting bus.

On the stairs she met Miss Redgrave.

"Have you been in to Cora and Cissy, Paula? How do they seem now?"

"Oh—or—I hardly like to say!" the elegant one said, truthfully enough. "As regards yourself, Miss Wedgrave, are you quite weal this morning?"

"Yes—why?"

Miss Redgrave looked rather startled.

"We geals have wondered if you had a good night's w'est. You had wather a nasty upset about something last evening?"

"Paula, you must not refer to that again, please! Do your best at school to-day."

"Yes, wather! And I'm looking forward to meeting the auxilliawwy mistwess. They say she is a weal wipper!"

Then Ruth Redgrave was left alone on the staircase. She heard the 'bus go off with its load of youthful humanity. The last sound of that boisterous departure died away, and still she remained in that rapt state.

So, she was thinking, that was the term which the Form had found for the new auxiliary mistress—a real ripper! They little knew!

When They Got Better!

MISS CUNLIFFE—were they going to like her or not?

That was one question which Betty and her chums were asking themselves before they had been five minutes at school that morning.

There was another question. Was Miss Cunliffe going to like them?

It certainly seemed as if she meant to treat them rather differently from the rest of the Form.

At the start of morning school the auxiliary mistress made a few remarks to the Form about the previous day's half-holiday and the match with Stormwood School.

In talking about all this, Miss Cunliffe seemed to be addressing herself to all the girls excepting Betty & Co. She was on extremely friendly terms already with those girls whom she had been handling from the hour of her arrival at Morcove. Betty and the other Modena boarders were thus

made to feel as if they had been away from school, not a day, but a month!

They had the unpleasant feeling that they had dropped out of everything.

At first they tried to believe that Miss Cunliffe did not intend to pass them over like this, but before morning school was over it had become pretty clear that she was deliberately slighting them.

Why?

"Can't make it out," said Polly. "She is showing an edge towards us—"

"Sharp as a razor—yes, wather!" sighed Paula. "Bother it! I strongly w'esent being tweated as an interloper, bai Jove!"

"She might at least remember that Betty is Form captain," murmured Madge. "I think we had better remind her."

"If you do, I'll never speak to you again," threatened Betty grimly. "Oh, what does it matter, so long as any prejudice against us isn't because she is down on Miss Redgrave herself!"

That uneasy remark left some of them rather aghast. Could it be so? Had they, in Miss Cunliffe's mind, become a batch of girls specially associated with Miss Redgrave? And was that the reason for this "dead set" against them? For a "dead set" it was!

"We must wait and see how she treats Cissy and Cora," advised Polly. "If it's a case of treating all who are with Miss Redgrave at Modena in this fashion, it will mean—well, what Betty has said!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Cissy and Cora will be at school in the morning, for a cert.!" declared Madge.



AN ARTFUL "DODGE." "Don't make a row in here," said Cora in suffering tones. "When you know how queer we are!" "Not much wrong with you or Cissy," Polly returned flatly. "If I wanted a whole day off, I'd ask for it, not wangle it like this!"

But those two girls were to reappear in the school even sooner than that—for reasons quite unexpected!

Away in Barncombe, early that afternoon, Miss Redgrave had another word with the couple as to how they felt.

They had got up for dinner, and their appetites had been good. Pulse, in either case, normal; tongues quite clean! Besides, the pair themselves were eager to assert that they felt ever so much better now. They couldn't imagine why they had felt so "off colour" first thing.

"Anyhow, you cannot go to school this afternoon. It would not be worth while," Miss Redgrave decided. "But you must get out for some fresh air whilst the day is bright. Be back by four o'clock. I would come with you, but I have something else to do."

"Thank you, Miss Redgrave!"

Upstairs, getting their things on, the artful pair were chuckling with joy. Two hours off—two hours in which to gad about in Barncombe, whilst other girls were "swatting!"

"I knew we'd work it!" exulted Cora, as soon as she was out of the house with Cissy. "Fresh air is always the first thing ordered after a stay indoors. This is the life for me!"

"And me! What I hate about Morcove," complained Cissy, mincing along High Street with her crony, "is its being so far out. At Modena the shops are so close handy."

Even as she said it, Polly Linton's cousin halted in front of a costumer's inviting window. She and Cora began then a very jolly saunter through Barncombe's shopland, treating themselves to a few purchases in the fancy goods line that would make them a "cut above" the rest of the Form. Nor did they fail to drop in at the famous Creamery for boxes of choc.

All this, however, occupied only half an hour or so. Before three o'clock they were hovering near the attractive picture palace, scanning the advertisement placards and the framed photographs.

"I say, they've got rather a good one this week!" Cora exclaimed. "I don't mean this travel film. That's a bore, I expect. But—"

"I could do with a sit down, anyhow, Cora."

"So could I!" grinned the Grandways girl. She nudged her schoolmate. "Shall we?"

Before answering, Cissy looked this way and that in the High Street. Then, with a mixture of daring and fear:

"Well, shall we, Cora? It's not allowed—"

"Oh, bother! Come on!"

And in they went.

There was only a scattered audience in the darkened hall. Cora and Cissy were "flushed" by a girl attendant to a row of the best seats which they could have almost to themselves. On the screen a "comic" was being flickered through, and it was funny enough to set the pleasure stealers laughing at once, whilst they rustled open boxes of choc.

At frequent intervals, during the next ten minutes, Cora and Cissy gobbled up the sweets, at the same time tearing their eyes from the white screen to cast a rather guilty glance around.

It was not that they were in fear of anyone actually belonging to Morcove coming in. Only there was just the risk of someone who was friendly with Miss Somerfield being here, and of its reaching Miss Somerfield's ears that a couple of Morcovians had been seen in the place.

The picture palace, of course, was out of bounds,

except by special permission granted to parties of scholars with a mistress or senior in charge.

Suddenly the comic film ended, and after some advertisements had been flashed on the screen by the lantern the travel film began.

Then suddenly a violent nudge from Cora seemed to tell Cissy, in an alarmed way, to "Look!" The attendant was showing a late-comer to the best part of the auditorium, and it was—Miss Redgrave!

Cissy's heart gave one great thump, and then it seemed to miss a beat.

Both girls shrank down in their seats, and kept their faces down. In dire panic, they were wondering—would they be seen? Would they be able to sneak out, enjoying their usual luck? Perhaps Miss Redgrave would not think of looking around the dark hall. The film was being reeled off. It was very fascinating, and so—

But no, it was not to be.

The mistress was suddenly getting up from her seat, to come round into their almost empty row. She had seen them!

"Come outside, you two!"

That was the subdued, yet angry, command which suddenly fell upon the culprits' hearing. Aware of being looked round at, although Miss Redgrave had spoken so softly, meekly the bold pair of ten minutes ago scrambled clear of the seats. Followed by their irate mistress, they reached the deserted, picture-hung entrance-lobby.

"So," Miss Redgrave began, with withering disgust, "this is how you abuse the liberty I have given you! Not well enough to go to school to-day, and yet you can steal into the cinema! Sent out for fresh air, you at once find your way into this picture palace! I am ashamed—angry beyond words!"

"We—we felt tired—"

"Cissy, such a paltry excuse! Nothing excuses you, and you must not expect me to overlook it. You will be ready to start for Morcove School in five minutes. Go and get your things!"

"Won't it be too late to do anything in class?" Cora remarked cheekily.

"You are not going into class. You are going before the headmistress!"

Cora then felt as frightened as did Cissy. They were "for it" now, and no mistake. Having caught them in the act, under such flagrant circumstances, Miss Redgrave was really bound to report them. It was as much as her position was worth not to do so.

She hated "telling" as much as any scholar hated it. As a mistress, however, she had her duty to fulfil, however unpleasant, and in this case what claim for pity existed? None!

Even Cora and Cissy were bound to feel that they would deserve all they got.

Within the five minutes Miss Redgrave had a hired car at the kerb in front of Modena. Cora and Cissy came out in a crestfallen way. No more Modena for them, that was certain!

"Have you got everything?"

"Yes, Miss Redgrave"—submissively.

Not another word was said. The car drove off, with Miss Redgrave sitting, ominously silent and stern, opposite the miscreants. Her every feature expressed the painful resolve to do what such a flagrant case demanded.

Afternoon school had just ended when they reached Morcove. Girls rushing out to get a scamper before tea stopped dead at the sight of Miss Redgrave escorting those two juniors, with their tell-tale looks, into the schoolhouse. Cora,

for one, was wishing the earth could open and swallow her up.

It was the thing she most hated—to look caught out in front of others!

At that moment Miss Cunliffe was strolling away from the Fourth Form class-room, a junior on either side of her. She was resting a hand chummily on each girl's shoulder, whilst silkily continuing some talk about work or play. Suddenly observing Miss Redgrave and the crestfallen pair, she gave a start, then became all smiles for her colleague.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Miss Cunliffe sweetly. "What's the trouble?"

"I shall explain that to Miss Somerfield," was Ruth Redgrave's answer to the false-friendly inquiry. "This way, you two!"

A few moments more, and the headmistress was hearing all about it.

"I would have been out with them," the Form-mistress explained earnestly, "only I rather thought of taking all the Modena girls to the cinema to see that travel film. That is why I was paying a preliminary visit this afternoon. If the programme seemed a good one, my idea was to give the girls a little treat—to make up for what they are missing by being boarded away from school."

"Quite! I would have approved such a course entirely," the headmistress said. "You two girls, there is not the least excuse. Miss Redgrave should have been able to trust you. She did right in letting you go out for an airing. You did very wrong in flouting discipline, abusing kindness. Well, you will remain at school, and be gated for a week."

The very punishment they had expected! No more Modena for them. For a week, no going outside the school gates even!

"Let me add this," Miss Somerfield resumed, after an annoyed turn about the room. "I expressly let you two replace a couple of the other girls at Modena, so that Miss Redgrave should not have, perhaps, a too intimate batch of girls to see after. It was suggested to me—by Miss Cunliffe—that it would answer better, from Miss Redgrave's own point of view; but I would have done better to leave that original batch of scholars intact."

She added sharply:

"Tess Trelawney and Helen Craig will return to Modena! Those two girls, like Betty and the others, can be trusted, whereas these two cannot. But I want to see them all before they go back by the 'bus.'"

Adhering to this statement, fifteen minutes later Miss Somerfield came out to where all the girls, under Miss Redgrave, were lined up close to the 'bus.

"Attention!" murmured the Form-mistress, and Betty & Co. were hands down and chins up instantly.

Miss Somerfield, with an air of needing to be sternly impressive, reviewed the line of girls steadily, then spoke.

"Things have happened to-day to make it necessary for me to remind you, girls," she said gravely, "whilst at Modena you must be on your very best behaviour. Be extra careful not to do anything that will bring discredit upon yourselves or the school. See that you live up to the faith that is being placed in you. Jump in, girls!" was added, with such a sudden change to a pleasanter tone that the chums gave a cheer as they stormed the 'bus.

"Hurrah! Come on, Tess—Helen!"

"Yes, wather! Gweat wejoiçings!" beamed Paula. And she continued, as she floundered to her seat: "We didn't want Cora and Cissy hanging around at Modena. Too twying for words, bai Jove!"

"I say, look!" exclaimed Polly gaily.

In the act of joining them inside the 'bus, Miss Redgrave was being kept in talk for a moment by the headmistress. The girls saw the Form-mistress look brighter, and then, as Miss Somerfield impulsively shook her by the hand at parting, it was as if the sun had come out in her face.

"Hooway! That's bettah! Fwiends all wound—what? And if only I could have a little more woom, bai Jove— Thanks, thanks!"

But someone was watching that farewell hand-shake who did not find the spectacle as pleasing as did the chums—Miss Cunliffe! From a window of the schoolhouse, she saw all those signs of restored confidence, and affection even, between the headmistress and Ruth Redgrave, and in her heart of hearts Miss Cunliffe raged jealously.

"Not so easy to do as I hoped, it seems!" was her sullen murmur to herself. "Never mind, if I keep on— And so I will, too. If I could not bring her down in the old days, I will manage to bring her down somehow—now!"

And her face as she said it showed the ruthless nature which would help her to carry out the vindictive vow!

At It Again!

"CISS, I can't stand this! I'm fed up!"

It was the second evening following upon the return of Cora and Cissy to Morcove School. They were in their study, sitting opposite each other at the table, their books spread open for work.

"No, bother it!" muttered Cora, pushing back her chair and jumping up. "Being brought away from Modena was bad enough, but this gating

She let an eloquent pause testify to her feelings, and then resumed sullenly:

"I feel as if—oh, I don't mind what I do, Ciss! For two pins, anyhow, I'd slip into Barncombe for some chocs, and things, and chance it! I wonder— Here, come with me, Ciss!"

Never had Cora opened her study door in stealthier fashion than now. With extreme caution, she went the few steps needed to take her into the main corridor, Cissy creeping after her.

Next second they were inside all that remained of Study 12—just the bare walls, and even the outer wall, with its window, had been practically demolished by the builders' men. Scaffolding had been rigged up by that all-but-gone outer wall, with a ladder leading down.

"Remember what I said when they started on this job, Ciss?" whispered Cora. "It would be easy for us to climb down to the ground! And then—how soon one could be off and away!"

Cissy nodded.

"So easy to get back into the schoolhouse," daringly added Cora. "I say—"

"Yes, but you know the risk there always is," demurred Cissy uneasily. "It's when you are in the town—bound to run into someone!"

"Oh, you've got to chance something! No need to go along High Street. Any tobacconist's and sweetstuff shop in a side-street is good enough. Ciss," exclaimed Cora recklessly, "I'm going to do it! You needn't, if you're windy."

"It's not that I am—"



A SHOCK FOR THE GUILTY ONES.

Suddenly a violent nudge from Cora made Cissy turn round in alarm. The attendant was showing a late-comer into a seat nearby. And it was—Miss Redgrave!

"Well, anyhow, I'll go alone—I prefer to!" the Grandways girl exclaimed testily. "It will be better if you stay and make it all right for me, if I'm asked for. I shall take an ordinary bike."

"But, Cora, is it worth it? Just for the sake of—"

"Yes, it is! I don't choose to go on like this, if you do. I never have put up with such a rotten time, and I never will. Sh! You go back, Ciss!"

With that whispered advice, Cora, as she crept from the derelict study, turned to the right to go along to the stairs. A couple of minutes, and she was back in her own study, hat and coat ready for putting on. She grinned.

"I'll let 'em know, Ciss! Here, do my bit of French for me whilst I'm gone! And what do you want if I get to the shop?"

"Oh, anything in the chocolate line!"

"Gaspers?"

"If you can get decent ones."

"I won't call at Modena, to give Polly your love," smirked Cora, hastily donning hat and coat.

"But I would call there for two pins, and dare them to give me away!"

"Cora, you wouldn't be so mad! With Miss Redgrave in the boarding-house—"

"Wrong!" the Grandways girl chuckled. "Miss Redgrave is here in the school. I heard her voice just now, as the maid opened the door to her."

Cissy's brows went up.

"Why is she here, Cora?"

"Ask me another! All I know is, it makes it all the safer for me in Barncombe. Provided I look out for her on the way back, I'm all right. She'll be coming along in a car, so I shall have warning."

This left Cissy gazing in a sort of speechless wonderment at Cora, now ready to be off. There was a cool audacity about the Grandways girl,

a sheer love of doing a lawless thing because it was lawless; that almost took Cissy's breath away.

"Ta-ta, and be good!" Cora said, flourishing a hand. "And expect me when you see me!"

Again she stole round to half-demolished Study 12—this time alone. Cautiously closing the door behind her, she trod warily to that side of the room which gaped open to the night. Her hands went to the ladder, with its rope lashings. She swung herself on to the rungs, and then—down and down she clambered, strange figure in the moonlight!

Reaching the ground, she made a rush for the cycle-sheds, at the same time noting a waiting car near the main porch. That, of course, was Miss Redgrave's car, waiting to take her back to Modena. But why had Miss Redgrave come upon this evening visit to the school?

That was a question that Betty & Co., in the Modena sitting-room, had already debated in vain!

They knew nothing, except that Miss Redgrave was still not quite her old bright self these days. For some reason or other, she seemed to be finding it rather worrying to be quartered at Modena.

As for the chums themselves, they were having a fine time.

Spending sufficient time every day at school to keep "in the swim," they were yet able to revel in the novelty of their out-of-school environment.

"Didn't Study 12 look just awful this morning, when we looked in there?" Polly suddenly broke out, as Madge Minden got up from the Modena piano. "But, anyhow, we'll get a new Study 12 in the end. Meantime, this is good enough for me."

"Extremely comfortable, I must say!" beamed Paula, making herself still more at ease in a large armchair. "Pwep. done in record time, piano in the woom, and—er— Yes, Naomer, deah, what is it?"

"'Eet is that I not able to find ze game of draughts."

A kind of shudder went through Paula.

"Last night you play ze draught with me, Paula, and now—where is he?"

"Er—er—" Paula looked uncomfortable.

"Don't be wastless, Naomer. Don't be always wanting to play dwaughts. It is an impwoving game, I want you. Howevah, wather weawisome—what?"

"Not when I beat you!"

"As she always does!" chuckled Helen.

"Yes, wather; for the reason," argued Paula, "that I weally cannot bwing my mind to gwapple with dwaughts. Er—wouldn't you like, Madge, to play again? So westful!"

"Madge can play whilst we play ze draught, when we find him. I go to find him."

"Deplovable! Naomer," groaned Paula, "I—weally, I—I don't think you will find the dwaughts."

"Why not?" asked Naomer, suddenly standing squarely and suspiciously in front of the beloved duffer. "Why you say I not find him?"

"Because—er— That is to say, Naomer, I have an impression that I— My weollection is—yes, wather—that I put them somewhere, in fact!"

"Then where?"

"Ah, where?" breathed Polly dramatically.

Naomer, after studying Paula's face very hard for several moments, said simply:

"Get up, duffer!"

"Er—"

"Get out of ze chair, plis!"

"Now, look heah," Paula said agitatedly, "don't wowwy me, Naomer! Wun away, theah's a deah! When you find the draughts I will— Ow, dwop it! I won't— Naomer, I wefuse! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was a great peal of laughter as Naomer, making short work of the elegant one's resistance, pulled her out of the armchair on to the floor. The merriment rose to shrieks when the dusky scholar, whipping away the seat cushion, disclosed the complete game of draughts, board and all!

"What you mean by it, eh?" Naomer rounded upon the still dishevelled Paula. "You hide them from me on ze purpose!"

"Pwactically speaking, Naomer, ye-yes. But be reasonable; be— Ow!" as Paula found herself belaboured with the cushion. "Dwop it! Stop it! Ow! I'll play!"

"Queek, queek, then—queek!"

And so there was peace again. Paula recovered her restful chair, although she could not loll back. Naomer sat close by, and Paula's agony was increased by her own lap having to serve as a table for the draughts-board. The game began, and every now and then there would be a groan as Paula had to think out a move.

Then suddenly, when a few more moves must complete the game, with an easy win for Naomer, Paula was not even allowed to endeavour to think.

"Queek, queek! You move him to there, and then I shall take you—see?"

"Yes, wather!"

"Go on, then, queek—queek!"

"Dweadful!" sighed the long-suffering one. "Wait a bit! I must think this out. I must put my hair to wights, Naomer. I just want to— Half a second! Healp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For Paula, squirming to get out pocket-comb and mirror, had tipped the board and pieces to the floor. Up jumped Naomer, and down on the floor went her late opponent, pushed there by a dusky hand.

"Because you do eet on purpose! Because I am winning—"

"Nunno—ow!"

"Yes!"

"Healp! Geals, geals!"

"Order, there!" requested Polly, slamming shut a book and jumping up. "You'll have the Mackay complaining the noo. And is that Miss Redgrave, back from Morcove?"

She nipped to the window, which looked on to High Street. The car which had been audible did not draw up at the kerb. It went humming past, but Polly lingered at the window, admiring the moonlight.

Then it was that, with a shock of surprise, she saw a girl of her own age—a Morcovian—boldly walking by on the opposite side of the way. Cora Grandways!

Polly's first impulse was to flash round and tell her chums. Then she decided to say nothing. It would only worry them, even as it was suddenly worrying her, to know that Cora apparently had broken bounds again to-night!

"What sort of a night out-of-doors, Polly?" asked Madge, sitting down to read.

"Oh, rather jolly!"

Polly answered as casually as inward agitation would allow. Holding the thick winter hangings of the window aside as she peered out, she was

thus drawing the attention of anyone going past in the street, and Cora impudently looked up at the window and waved.

What folly it was, thought the Study 12 girl, ignorant of the fact that Cora knew Miss Redgrave to be away from Modena. Was Cissy also in the town? In any case, there was Cora, for one, liable to be caught by Miss Redgrave at any minute.

"Either Cora will be seen in the town, or else she will run into Miss Redgrave on the Morcove road! Unless," Polly added to herself, "I run out and warn the girl to look out for herself!"

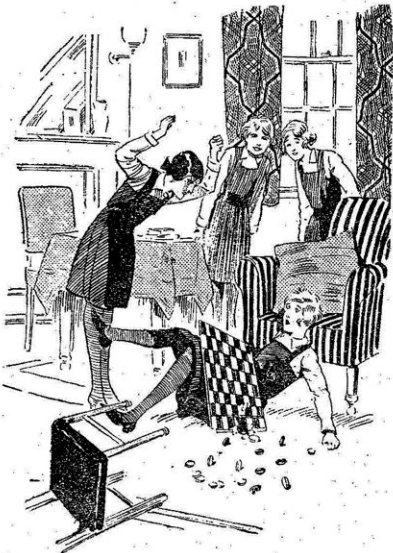
A moment later Polly wandered out of the cosy sitting-room. Her mind was made up. Even though it was Cora again, the girl must be warned to be on the look-out going home.

On the ground floor Polly sought the little lobby that served as a cloak-room. Rushing into outdoor things, she passed to the hall door and let herself out into the moonlit High Street.

Then she ran, light of step, along the pavement, fully expecting to overtake Cora. Was that girl rejoicing Cissy in the town? Had the pair of them broken bounds, using the motor-cycle and sidecar? Where, anyhow, was Cora now?

Hardly any of the shops were still open, and Polly peeped in at the doorway of a little newsagent-confectioner's, thinking that Cora might have gone in for a book or a box of sweets, but it was not the case.

Hurrying on, a sudden glare of light from the Creamery's windows reminded her of the dancing held every evening in the newly-opened ball-room on the first floor. Was Cora there? Surely not!



THE END OF THE GAME. "I must put wights," murmured Paula. "I—heap!" In getting out her comb and mirror, the duffer tipped the draughts board to the floor and next minute Naomer was upon her with a howl of rage. Then Paula joined the game of draughts—on the carpet.

Or at the cinema, a little further along, on the opposite side of the street?

"Oh, I don't know why I bother about her at all!" Polly fumed; checking for a moment. "Serve her right if she does get expelled for some fresh bit of disgrace! She has been asking for it long enough!"

And yet—

No, turn back she could not. It seemed so mean, not to warn the wayward girl of the special risk there was. And all the time there was the miserable fear that Cissy, too—Cissy, her own cousin—might be doing just the same as Cora.

—Impetuously Polly crossed the street, bearing towards the garish entrance to the picture palace. She was going to ask the person at the ticket-desk if a girl had just paid to go in.

"And if she has—if Cora is inside, with Cissy perhaps—well, I must go in and fetch them out!" Polly decided grimly. "It's no use. I simply can't leave them to get what they deserve! I—"

"Stop! What girl is that?" came the sudden, peremptory cry—one that caused Polly to flash about on the cinema steps.

There she stood in the full glare of the numerous coloured lamps, and there on the pavement below the few shallow steps was Miss Cunliffe!

Of all persons—Miss Cunliffe!

It was a disaster for Polly, and she knew it!

A Plot—But Whose?

CORA GRANDWAYS, having shopped quite well in Barncombe, was riding back to Morcove with the right amount of caution.

At the first sight of a car coming along from the direction of the school she was going to dismount and hide.

Meantime, she made splendid speed along the dry, moonlit road. Altogether, she had quite enjoyed her latest escapade. It kept her grinning to think how boldly she had strolled past Modena, even waving her hand to one of the girls who chanced just then to look out of the window. Nothing like letting Betty & Co. see what cool cheek she had!

Besides, it had really been quite safe. Miss Redgrave was at the school!

Nor did the Grandways girl have any little scare about an approaching car. She met nothing, and she was to find when she got in bounds again that the Form-mistress' hired car was still standing on the drive. Cora saw it whilst stealthily putting away her machine.

Then, round to that scaffolded portion of the great schoolhouse, with its handy ladders, went the reckless girl.

Proud of herself, she suddenly minced into her own study minus hat and coat; looking as if she had only been downstairs for a minute. And Cissy gave a marvelling cry:

"Well!"

"Everything all right?" grinned Cora. "Only a little after eight! So now you see, Ciss!"

"Got my gaspers?"

"Got everything," was the triumphant answer. "We're stocked up for a week, Ciss. But has it been all right here?"

"Well—yes and no," answered Polly's cousin. "It won't be known—I think it's safe to say that, Cora. But, just after you had started away, a strange thing happened. It seems that Miss Redgrave was brought to the school this evening on a false telephone call. She is still here, and they are trying to find out if any girl in the Form sent the message!"

"Did someone come here—"

"Miss Redgrave herself looked in. She had been right through the Form, asking questions. I hope I made it all right about your not being on hand. Said you were somewhere about the place!"

Cora's strong nerve was shaken now.

"Whoever could have played that trick with the 'phone?" she muttered. "Why should anyone want to fetch Miss Redgrave from Modena?"

"Well, I don't see why suspicion should fall on you, Cora."

"No. Except that it may be thought I fetched her away from the town, because I wanted to— to run in there this evening. But—oh, they can't suppose anything of the sort. As if I would fetch her along the only road between here and Barncombe, at the very time I was wanting to cycle along it!"

"Anyhow, it's not suspected that you've been out of bounds, I'm certain of that," Cissy declared. "The idea is, I believe, that someone did it to oblige Betty and the rest at Modena."

"You mean—"

"Sent the 'phone call, so that Miss Redgrave would leave the Modena girls on their own for an hour or two! If there has been anything like that," added Cissy, brightening, "the Modena girls will be in for it. For, just as it happens—a thing they could never have reckoned with—Miss Cunliffe has gone into Barncombe this evening."

"My word, Ciss! I hope she didn't see me! I was only on the look-out for a car that held Miss Redgrave!"

"I shall laugh," grinned Ciss, "if Miss Cunliffe has seen some of the Modena girls out and about. She is down on them—we've noticed that." She paused a moment, then: "I tell you what I'm beginning to wonder. Did Miss Cunliffe herself send the message, so as to put temptation in Betty & Co.'s way?"

"What? And then go into Barncombe herself—"

"To catch them in the act—yes!"

There was a pause. Cora and Cissy, after looking at each other, exchanged winks.

"I shouldn't be surprised," chuckled Cora, at last. "Miss Cunliffe is out to make trouble for Miss Redgrave, it's certain. And one way for her to hit at Miss Redgrave is through Betty & Co., isn't it?"

"Quite," nodded Cissy. "As those girls are under Miss Redgrave."

Up jumped Cora, suddenly rubbing her hands together joyously.

"Ciss, that was it, you may depend! And since Miss Cunliffe is like that, doesn't it promise rather well for us? Jolly good luck to her. I'm on her side all the time."

"Ditto me, Cora!"

"But why hasn't Miss Redgrave gone back?"

"Waiting to have a few words with Miss Cunliffe, perhaps!"

Nor was Cissy far out in that conjecture. Ruth Redgrave, harbouring a suspicion in regard to the false 'phone message which she dare not divulge to the headmistress, was waiting in the hall for Mabel Cunliffe to return to the school.

All efforts to trace the sender of the message had proved in vain. One thing only had been proved, namely, that someone in Morcove School itself, shortly after tea, had rung up the Modena number. The exchange operator had been able

to testify to that when Miss Somerfield herself had put through an inquiry.

At last there was a ring at the bell, and Ruth herself hurried across the hall to open the porch door. Looking bland and pretty, with a good colour after a brisk cycle-ride in the keen night air, Mabel Cunliffe stepped inside, exclaiming:

"Hallo, Miss Redgrave! I've been wondering whenever you came along to the school this evening—the very evening! I decided to cycle out to Modena and spend a little while with you!"

Before Ruth Redgrave could answer, Miss Somerfield appeared upon the scene.

"Back at last, Miss Cunliffe!" she greeted that young lady cordially. "And now, I wonder if you can throw any light on this mystery?"

"Mystery?"

"Miss Redgrave is here, simply because she was told, at Modena, that a 'phone message from Morcove had come through, asking her to come along at once. I myself sent no such message. With my approval, Miss Redgrave has waited for your return, to ask you—"

"But I know nothing about any telephoning!" came the bland disclaimer. "How could I, when I went for a run into Barncombe on purpose to catch Miss Redgrave at Modena? If I had phoned at all, I would have phoned for her to expect me there!"

"Naturally," agreed Miss Somerfield. "Well, then, what an annoying thing it is! A pure hoax, surely, committed by some girl in the school," frowned the headmistress. "If I find out—"

"Miss Somerfield, is it feasible that any girl would do such a thing?" Ruth exclaimed spiritedly. "It could only be for the sake of putting me to needless trouble and expense, and making me look foolish. Morcove girls are not like that."

"We certainly have not had anything of the sort before," murmured the headmistress. "But there it is—proved by the exchange operator that someone at the school sent the message; and so—Yes, Miss Cunliffe?"

"There is something that may account for it," the auxiliary mistress answered softly. "But I would rather not say it in front of the girls. I—If we could go—"

"My room," the headmistress suggested promptly, and led the way.

With a fast-beating heart Ruth Redgrave followed, feeling a deepened mistrust of Mabel Cunliffe. What was coming now?"

"It is just this," that young lady resumed, when the three of them were in the private room, with the door closed. "On my way to Modena, I got down in High Street to call at a shop or two. As I was walking past the cinema, I caught one of our girls going in."

"What?"

"Impossible!" Ruth cried out wildly, only to receive a silencing gesture from the headmistress, whilst Mabel Cunliffe protested demurely:

"It is ridiculous to talk like that, Miss Redgrave, when I am stating the actual fact. The girl was Polly Linton—"

"No—I mean to say—"

"Ask her, when you get back to Modena, and she will admit it—she must," shrugged Mabel Cunliffe. "I made her return to the boarding-house with me, and there I found that the other girls had known nothing of her slipping out. They may have been telling the truth—"

"May have been!" gasped Ruth Redgrave. "But, Miss Somerfield, you at least know that

Betty and the others, whatever their faults, are truthful! And as for Polly Linton being out in the town—there must have been some good excuse! There must have been!"

"She could not give me one, and that is all I know," observed Mabel Cunliffe. "And it was not a case of being out in the town simply—"

"No," Miss Somerfield exclaimed sternly. "The girl was going into the cinema! Miss Redgrave, I am grieved. It is not your fault—I am not suggesting that it is. But—"

"I am inclined to think that Miss Redgrave has been simply tricked," put in Mabel Cunliffe blandly. "The 'phone call—obviously, some friend of Polly's in the school was persuaded to put it through, so as to give Polly the chance—"

"Impossible!"

"Oh, all right, if you will keep on saying so!" Mabel shrugged again. "I merely suggest it, as being the obvious explanation."

"And I am very much afraid, Miss Redgrave, that really is the truth of the matter," broke from Miss Somerfield sadly. "A plot between two girls—one at Modena, the other at Morcove! Polly must be brought before me in the morning. But I need to do something more than punish her, that is evident. This unavoidable boarding out is not going to become the means of scholars doing as they please."

"They are not doing that—"

"Miss Redgrave, you have the same high opinion of those particular girls that I have always retained, up to now. It appears, however, that even those girls are inclined to get out of hand, just because they are lodged in the town. It must stop. I cannot keep on changing from one batch of girls to another. But it occurs to me that I might change—the mistress in charge!"

The words gave Ruth Redgrave a shock that left her deathly pale. The headmistress was looking at her—not unkindly. In that look, however, as in the words just spoken, there was a hint of something to come that would leave Betty and her chums at the mercy of—Miss Cunliffe!

"Modena" Means—Misery!

"WELL, if she is coming back to-night—why doesn't she come!"

Polly Linton spoke, just after the town chimes had dinned out half-past nine.

Paula Creel, rousing from a dozing state, remarked dismally:

"Personally, girls, I wather dwead Miss Wedgweave's return."

"You needn't," said Polly. "I'm not afraid of Miss Redgrave. She's fair!"

"Gwanted, Polly deah. Howevah, in the pwsent instance, it weally looks as if even Miss Wedgweave is bound to awwive at an unjust conclusion. What weason can you give for being caught on the cinema steps?"

"None!"

"Deplovable catastrophe," groaned Paula. "It's not wight. It ought to be known that you were merely trying to save Corwa from being caught out of bounds."

"It ought to be known—yes," sighed Betty. "But who is going to tell?"

"I'm not," stated Polly flatly. "And neither are you girls. You know very well we can't tell!"

"Perfectly true," assented Paula mournfully. "But most wiling yes wather."

"Of course"—Helen joined in the talk with

desperate optimism—"there is just a chance that Miss Cunliffe may not report it after all."

Then Naomer made a remark, proving that she was not fast asleep on the hearthrug, as it might have been supposed she was.

"Ah, bah, that Miss Cunliffe—I detest her! I zink she zink we zink all the world of Miss Redgrave. And so she zink we not zink enough of her!"

"Hownows, what is the geal saying?" gasped Paula. "I must twouble you to wepeat that, Naomer, dear."

But Naomer, closing her eyes again, snored.

"How wretched it will be," deplored Betty, "if you are parted from us, Polly all on account of to-night's business! We have lost poor old Dolly—she's in the san. at the school, getting over that sprained ankle. If you're the next to have to leave Modena—Hark! Car stopping!"

"Hooway! At least, I don't know whether to wejoice or not," confessed Paula, sitting up and arranging her hair quickly. "After all, though, Miss Wedgware is a twick. She can be twisten—"

"Listen!"

The door of the motor had slammed, and now the voice of someone giving orders to the chauffeur came up from the street.

In an appalled manner, the startled chums looked at one another.

"That's not Miss Redgrave," whispered Helen. "It's Miss Cunliffe—back again!"

"Deploable! Oh, geals, what does this mean?" They were soon to know.

Tr-r-ring, ring! went the door-bell furiously, and no sooner was Miss Cunliffe admitted than the horrified chums heard her sweep past Mrs. Mackay, in the hall, with some haughty remark, and then come running up to the sitting-room.

The door flashed open; she strode in, and her looks were those of suddenly acquired authority. In the sharpest of tones she began at the dumb-founded girls:

"Stand to attention! Polly Linton, in the morning you are to go before the headmistress. The rest of you—understand that there is to be no more flouting of discipline, now that I am in charge here!"

In charge of them! Their hearts sank. A sort of gasping exclamation from Paula Creel made Miss Cunliffe ask sharply:

"What were you saying, Paula Creel?"

"Er—nothing exactly—"

"You were saying something!"

"Weal, then, I wather fancy I was giving expression to my surprisic. Miss Wedgware is not returning to Modena?"

"No, she is not. Miss Somerfield has decided that someone is needed who will not favour and pet you."

Betty demurred gently:

"But Miss Redgrave has never done that. She—"

"How dare you!" flashed Mabel Cunliffe. "If that is the headmistress' conviction, what right have you to contradict it?"

"Because, for once," spoke out impetuous Polly, "Miss Somerfield is mistaken. We have never been petted or—"

"Haven't you! I have been long enough at Morcove to know all about that," the auxiliary mistress said tartly. "Now go to bed, all of you, and not a word, mind! Stop! Is that how you all go out from my presence?"

"How do you mean?" asked Betty, in mettlesome fashion. "It's the way we always—"

"You'll go out in proper order. Form up—quickly, now! Now, left turn! Stop again!" And she strode to Paula, shaking her by the elbow. "Don't you know your left from your right? Get into order. What's the matter with you?"

"I—I— You wather distwact me—"

"Impudence! It is high time, I can see, that you were all taken in hand." She stepped to the door and set it wide open. "By the right—march!"

Such an order, given in the confined space of a boarding-house sitting-room, was too absurd for the girls to be able to keep straight faces. They were making all sorts of mirthful contortions as they went out in step. On the landing, Naomer began to exaggerate this soldierly marching by bringing her knee almost up to her chin at every step.

Two or three others did the same.

"The Morcove goose-step," Polly said, sotto-voce.

"Dweadful," groaned Paula.

"Keep it up," grinned Polly; and on the stairs she began to stamp. "Left, right, left, right!"

That was too much for the others. Naomer, for one, went off into a sudden shriek of laughter. The rest giggled uncontrollably.

Then, on the landing serving their couple of bed-rooms, they encountered "the Mackay." That worthy dame gave a lift and fall of the hands at seeing the girls in such martial order.

"Hoots! An' whaur's Miss Redgrave? Will she no come back again?"

"Hush!" Polly said dramatically. "No talking! Good-night, Mrs. Mackay!"

"Good-night, Mrs. Mackay," cried the others; and then, as they separated into the two groups belonging to the pair of bed-rooms: "Good-night!" they called to one another. "Good-night!"

Up from the sitting-room landing came the tart command:

"Didn't I say no talking!"

There was silence after that, except that two bed-room doors were banged shut violently. In that room which she was sharing with Betty, Naomer, and Paula, Polly began to sing softly—put in mind of the tune by what Mrs. Mackay had said.

"Will ye no come back again,

Will ye no—oh come back aga-ain?"

"Chorus," requested Polly; and her chums took it up. What was more, the girls in the next room joined in:

"Better loved ye canna be;

Will ye no—oh come back a-gain-n-n-n?"

Hardly had that last drawn-out syllable died away than the door of the room occupied by Polly and the other three flew open.

"Didn't I say no talking?"

"We were singing," said Polly.

For a moment Miss Cunliffe was inarticulate.

"If I have any more impudence from you girls, I shall know what to do. You, Polly, will write me a hundred lines by Saturday. In five minutes I shall return. Be in bed by then, all of you!"

She withdrew from the room and closed the door after her, and Paula was going to voice an exclamation of woe from sheer force of habit, but Betty and Polly both made a sign—that meant:



CAUGHT! "Stop! What girl is that!" The sudden cry caused Polly Linton to flash round in the very act of entering the cinema. And of all persons it was—Miss Cunliffe!

"She's listening!"

Sure enough, after a few seconds of dead silence, they could hear Miss Cunliffe going downstairs.

Heavy sighs broke from the four girls whilst they started to undress. Polly relieved the misery by roughly dropping one shoe thump to the floor, and then the other—thump!

"That's not talking, anyhow," she said softly. "Frightful catastrophe," sighed Paula. "Are we really to remain to Modena under that tew-wow?!"

If so, it will be one great wound of misery!"

"Cheer up," grinned Polly. She tapped at the parting wall. "No talking in there! Well, Betty, what do you make of it?"

"Further outlook, unsettled!"

"Yes, wather. Big depression approaching. I've got it already," lamented Paula in a guarded tone.

Equally guardedly, Betty continued:

"It is Miss Redgrave I'm anxious about. I don't like the look of things. This Cunliffe person seems to be getting it too much her own way."

Polly nodded, looking very serious all at once.

"I don't believe she will rest until she has ousted Miss Redgrave. What a shabby thing, to get taken on as a temporary, and then try to grab a permanent job at another's expense."

"She'll never do it, though," frowned Betty. "We must see that she doesn't."

"Yes, wather. Bai Jove, geals, the pwspect of having that tewwow for a wggular mistwess is too dweadful for—"

"Sh!" motioned Betty and Polly in the same instant.

They all four listened. The conviction that Miss Cunliffe was softly coming upstairs again caused them to proceed with their undressing, exaggerating the stealthiness.

The result was such a dead silence that, from the landing, certain tell-tale creakings were plainly audible. And suddenly Polly remarked, loud enough for the prowler to hear:

"It's only the cat!"

"Yes, wather. Wetchted cweature; she ought to be—"

Open flashed the door again.

"Fifty lines, every one of you, for talking! Why aren't you in bed?"

"Because we are undressing," said Polly.

"Didn't I say—"

"Five minutes—yes," Betty agreed composedly. "Give us a chance, please."

Miss Cunliffe took her stand at the doorway, evidently counting the last seconds of the allotted time. At the risk of exceeding the limit, all four girls more or less leisurely completed their undressing and got into bed, and instantly the light was clicked off.

"Good-night!"

The bleak remark went unanswered. For five minutes after the junior mistress had gone away there was complete silence in that bed-room. Then, in a reflective tone, Polly Linton murmured as she shook up a pillow:

"I'm thinking about Miss Redgrave, girls."

"So am I," sighed Betty.

And, far into the night, they still went on thinking about the one who had so endeared herself to them.

Would she be able to hold her own against this newcomer? Would they be able to help her do so?

So they wondered amongst themselves, uneasily, even as Miss Redgrave herself was wondering how they were going to fare, now that they had come under the charge of one whose idea was to strike at her—through them!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

It seems as though the joys of boarding-out at Modena are to become nil now that Miss Cunliffe has come on the scene. And what of the Form's own popular mistress, back at Mercove under a cloud? Can the chums do anything for themselves and her? Next week's fine story will show. It is "Mercove's Misfortune." Don't miss it.