

Noble

"WHEN WEDNESDAY MEANT EXPULSION!" Dramatic LONG COMPLETE
Morcove Story in This Issue

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

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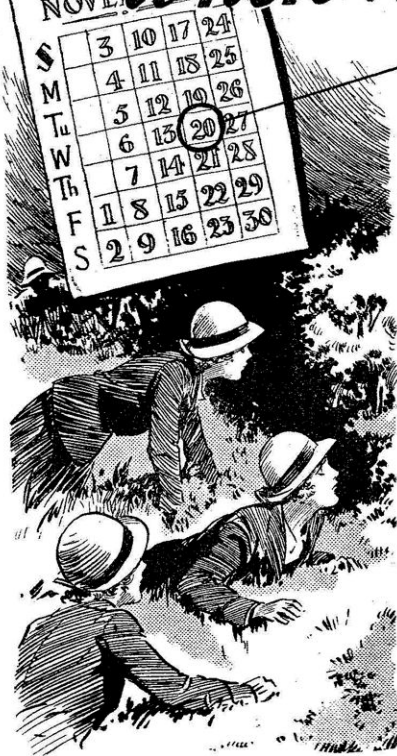
**TRAPPED — IN
THE TUNNEL
OF SECRETS!**

See "An Outcast On
Mystery's Trail," Inside

Meet That Priceless Prankster "HER HARUM-SCARUM HIGHNESS!"—Inside

Enthralling LONG COMPLETE Story of Morcove School, Featuring—

When WEDNESDAY



The time draws near—
only two more days, and
then — “Good-bye” to
Morcove School for ever!
That is the startling fate
which faces Polly Linton,
and from which there
seems no escape!

“We shall have to prepare her,” was Pam’s grave murmur. “It’s all over the school, quite suddenly. Fay and Edna Denver found out about her, and—”

“They would!” Betty frowned. “Trust the Denver sisters to glory in spreading such news as that! I have been in the library, this last ten minutes, or I suppose I would have become aware of what’s happened.”

Both girls walked down the corridor together; but Pam turned in at the study which she shared with Helen Craig, leaving Betty to go on to Study 12.

Pam’s thought was: “Best to leave it to Betty.” Of all Polly Linton’s adoring chums, there was none who could handle her better than the one of whom she was fondest.

Betty, entering Study 12, saw Polly all by herself in the study, pounding a fist upon an envelope that had just been gummed down.

“Yes, finished, Betty!” was Polly’s blithe remark. “Just a few lines—well, it became a page or two before the end—to Jack! But now I’m free.”

She looked at her wrist-watch as she hitched back her chair and rose.

“And it’s just half-past twelve. They told me Effie Barnard would be arriving between half-past and one. So I’m going down to—”

“A moment, dear,” Betty broke in, heeling the door shut behind her. “Then I’ll come down with you, shall I? I don’t suppose Effie will come in at the main gateway—”

“She won’t, but I think she should!” smiled Polly. “I think the whole school should have been paraded to give her a cheer! However, we’ll see what we can do—eh, Betty?”

“Oh, rather! But—”

“But what? Here, Betty, why are you—looking—”

“Want a stamp for that letter, Polly? I can let you have one. And then—as Effie is bound to come in at the side entrance, we might just as well go down the side stairs to—”

“To avoid meeting other girls—is that it, Betty?” spoke on Polly. “Out with it! I can tell by your looks—”

“I am so awfully sorry, dear, but since you must be told—the Form has found out.”

It was Betty, speaking those words, who looked upset. Polly, hearing them, simply laughed. But

No Longer Popular!

“I SAY, Betty—”

“Yes, Pam?”

“What are we to do about Polly?”

“Why, how do you mean?”

“The Form, Betty, has just found out!”

“It has! Oh, my goodness!”

And here, at the stairs’ end of a long corridor in Morcove’s great schoolhouse, these two scholars stood looking at each other in mutual dismay.

Betty Barton had come upstairs to go to Study 12, when Pam Willoughby met her with the news. “The Form has found out!”

Those few words—and yet what a volume of meaning they held!

“Where is Polly now, Betty—do you know?”

“In Study 12, I think. She said something about wanting to write a letter—”

BETTY BARTON and CO., the Famous Chums of the Fourth Form

Meant EXPULSION!

it was not the sort of laugh that Morcove usually associated with her, its recognised madcap.

"Found out, have they, Betty? Then we WON'T go down by any back stairs—certainly not!" Polly smiled fiercely. "We'll go down and out by the front porch, and we'll hold our heads up, Betty—I mean I will! And—"

"Oh, Polly dear—wait, though; just a moment longer! Look here," Betty rushed on, standing between her chum and the closed door, "wait until I've collected Pam and Madge and Tess and the rest of our crowd. I'll get them all, so that they and I can be with you—"

"Rabbits!" Polly laughed wildly. "You think I want a bodyguard! But tell me—how did it get round the school, then?"

"Pam feels sure that the Denver sisters—"

"Those dear, sweet sisters! What we do owe to them, Betty!"

"How they could be so unkind as to—"

"Oh, don't begrudge them their pleasure, Betty! Just imagine the joy it must have been to them to be first with the news! Girls, have you heard? What DO you think!" Polly cleverly mimicked the spiteful tatlars. "It was Polly Linton who stole both lots of money from Study 12—just fancy, Polly! And she is to be expelled, too! Next Wednesday!"

Breaking off, Polly suddenly and playfully pushed Betty away from the door.

"I'm off down to welcome Effie Barnard back to her job in the school! Never mind anything else; Effie is cleared, righted, and—"

"But, Polly—"

No use Betty's voicing that detaining cry! Headstrong and spirited as ever, Polly was already running up the corridor, to go down to the ground floor by the main stairs.

As Betty herself dashed out of Study 12, to go in pursuit, Pam came out of the other study. They ran together, with Polly ahead, sprinting so as not to be overtaken.

Three seconds later the pursuing pair came upon Madge Minden, Tess Trelawney, Paula Creel, and Naomer Nakara, all looking minded to give chase to the chum who had flashed by them on a landing.

"Yes, come on, all of you," Betty urged. "She is going to have half the Form round her as soon as she shows herself out-of-doors—"

"Hark!"

For, even whilst they were still racing down the great staircase, sounds were reaching the girls from the open air; sounds as of a hostile demonstration.

When next they saw Polly she was no longer running. Instead, she was to be glimpsed walking quite slowly in the midst of a crowd of other girls who moved along with her.

A final spurt, and Betty and the rest of the madcap's loyal chums were with her.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?" was Betty's panted protest.

"Ashamed—why? Got it wrong, haven't you?" came the twitting voice of excessively pretty Fay



By Marjorie Stanton

Denver. "WE have done nothing to be ashamed of!"

"We only want to ask her—is it true that she's to be expelled?" protested several of the demonstrators in a chorus.

Their tone implied that they had not the slightest doubt about its being true. To ask Polly if it were so was as good a way as any of registering popular scorn. So the ironical questioning began afresh:

"Did you, Polly—but did you steal that hospital money?"

"And the second lot of cash, Polly—not that as well, surely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's the captain?" Betty exclaimed, stopping dead with Pam and the rest, whilst Polly calmly sauntered on. "Where's Etta?"

Then Polly turned round.

"What does it matter?" she said to her distressed chums. "They think they've a right to say it—so let them say it!"

"Well, haven't we the right?" Fay Denver promptly challenged. "Isn't it the headmistress'

own decision that you took both lots of money? Then why shouldn't any of us, who have any regard for our own school—"

"Oh, you," Polly cut the spitfire short; "you and Edna—a fine lot of regard for Morcove you have always had!"

Betty had made way for another girl, Etta Hargrove, this term, thinking it time to let someone else "have an innings." And a very good captain Etta was proving; only she was not here to cope with the scene.

"We're not going to have you following Polly about! If you don't go away, all of you—"

Betty broke off, not because she was being shouted down. It was just the contrary—a sudden, dramatic hushing of the entire crowd, followed by a rapid dispersal.

All this was so like what would have happened if a mistress had been in sight that, for a moment, Betty supposed that Miss Merrick herself had suddenly appeared.

Then, with her chums, she saw—realized that the very worst thing had happened. Effie Barnard was upon the scene—Effie, the very girl who had been invited to return to her situation at the school, as one who had previously been wrongfully dismissed!

Here stood the young woman in full view of Betty & Co., now that the crowd of demonstrators had melted away. It was obvious that Effie had been, for a few moments, on the fringe of that crowd, unnoticed. And so—she must have heard!

Her looks, indeed, bore out all this. Where was the gladsome expression, the joyful smile with which, surely, she had come along on foot from Barncombe, carrying her bit of luggage? She must have been happy then, whereas now she was stricken with horror; mute and still—transfixed—staring at Polly.

It was Polly who instantly went up to her, speaking in delight.

"Hallo, Effie, so there you are! Back again—the job you liked so much, yours to go on with once more! And my chums and I—we are all, all so glad!"

"Yes, miss, and thank you," Effie said faintly. "But—but what were all those other girls saying about you, just then?"

Effie's Gain—Polly's Loss!

POLLY'S smiling composure, even in such a moment as this—wonderful!

So her friends were thinking, as they heard her answer Effie promptly and lightly:

"Oh, nothing that concerns you, Effie! Just a bit of teasing, don't you know; a bit of fun—"

"Fun, miss? But I can't see how it could have been fun—at least, not for you! Weren't they saying that you stole the hospital money?"

"Burr!" Polly closed the talk. "Here, let me take your bag, Effie—you have carried it far enough, I'm sure! And now, girls; all together! Three cheers for Effie Barnard, now that she is—"

"Oh, please, no—please!" was Effie's entreaty, before the first cheer could be given. "I shouldn't be in this part of the grounds, really; but—on my way along the tradesmen's path—I saw what was going on, with you, miss—to Polly—in the midst of it all. So I—I came across—"

"Then you shouldn't have!" Polly retorted, mock-solemnly. "You'll get the sack again, Effie—ha, ha, ha!—and it won't be my fault this time! Now let me carry your bag round to the back door for you."

"What it means, Effie," the madcap broke out,

as soon as the pair of them were going round to the side door, "a couple of ill-natured girls in my Form have been telling others that I took that hospital money. That's all."

"But how dare they, miss! Surely, to say such a thing as that—"

"Oh, well! After all, Effie, wasn't I the one who said, at one time, that you had taken the money? Wasn't it all my fault that you got the sack?"

"But that was altogether different, surely? You were bound to think I was the thief. Everything looked so black against me. But how can any of your schoolmates possibly have the right to say such a thing about you? Or—or have they been given the right," Effie suddenly asked in a shocked tone, "by something that has happened, to—to—"

Polly shrugged. "I suppose it does come to that, Effie. But don't worry. I'm not, 'Fortune of war,' that's all! You see," Polly spoke on, "to right you, my friends and I knew that we must set a trap for a certain girl, over another sum of money. Well, that girl was even trickier than we suspected. She rumbled the whole thing, Effie! Result, a hit-back at me."

A nod of understanding from Effie left Polly thankful that no more need be said. But Effie, silent as they walked on together, looked as agitated as ever. The door by which she had to enter was soon reached, and then Polly voiced a parting remark:

"Well, best of luck, Effie! You'll find they are going to make a great fuss of you—as is only right! Oh, you will go on fine after this. Job for life; I'm not joking—"

There could be no further talk. Suddenly a couple of Morcove domestics were in the back doorway, all smiles at sight of Effie. One took her bag eagerly; the other took her by the arm, whilst from both came delighted cries.

Polly, turning away, heard not only those first welcoming cries to Effie, but was aware of the hubbub which prevailed in the kitchen a brace of seconds later.

And, although she did not see all this, she had a mental picture of what was taking place in there; so many members of the domestic staff—cook, and parlourmaid Ellen, and other favourites with the school—all congratulating Effie on being back again. Righted! Her character cleared, a letter of Miss Somerfield's in her pocket, making handsome amends for what had been such a great miscarriage of justice!

And Polly was glad, although her efforts to put matters right had resulted in her own downfall.

No Nearer the Truth!

ON one of the walls of Study 12 hung a calendar with one date marked by a cross.

Betty found her eyes flying to that calendar as she came into the study, half an hour before afternoon school. And Betty looked irritated.

"Oh, dash it! Girls"—she spoke round to sundry chums who were following her in—"I'm going to take that calendar down!"

"Want any help?" Bunny inquired, so that all could be sure that she, too, found the thing offensive.

"Bai Jove, geals, it would be a welief—yes, wather!" sighed Paula Creel. "It has been pwopefully getting on my newwes over the week-end."

"Yes, bekas every time you look at eet, you see ze ring round next Wednesday!" shrilled—

Naomer. "And we don't want to be reminded of—"

"Hi, whoa!" the hearty voice of Polly interrupted, as she now whisked into the room. "What are you doing, Betty?"

"Unhooking the beastly calendar, to—"

"You leave the calendar alone!" the madcap sweetly commanded, and playfully shouldered Betty away from it. "After Wednesday—do what you like with it, girls. Perhaps I shan't be here!"

"Yes, Polly, sweetie!" ejaculated Naomer. "Bekas zis is Monday, and ze day after to-morrow is Wednesday!"

"And I've done nothing yet—nothing to right myself in the eyes of Miss Somerfield," Polly rejoined sweetly. "Don't I know it—don't I?" shouting again. "Then what the— All right, Betty darling! I merely ask that allowance be made for the way Paula and Naomer do rile me!"

"We make allowance for more than that, Polly," said Betty, smiling sadly.

"So, Polly—queek!" shrilled Naomer. "Why not jolly, well make ze apology to Vanessa Duerane?"

"Do wha-a-a-at!"

"Bekas, what ze diggings, you know Meess Somerfield said, eef you would apologise to Vanessa, zen you needn't have to be eggspelled! After all, you want zat one-and-eight Vanessa owes you, don't you?"

"It looks to me as if you want me to throw that party," the Madcap mock-fiercely retorted. "As a matter of fact, I couldn't ask you, kid. Girls, fancy a one-and-eightpenny spread, and Naomer as one of the guests!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If the worst comes to the worst, Polly," said Betty earnestly, "we chums of yours will give the party—"

"One moment," the madcap requested. "Did I hear a snivel? Is there some girl— You!" she rounded upon Paula, who was furtively applying a handkerchief to her eyes. "You are at it again, are you?"

"No—owch, Polly! I only—dwaught!—chilly!—wunning at the eyes!"

At this moment, when the madcap was starting to apply her own remedy for the beloved duffer's low spirits, the door opened just wide enough to let some girl, belonging to the Form, announce curtly:

"Polly Linton—go to Miss Merrick!"

Then the door banged shut. It was one of the recent demonstrators who had further demonstrated the general feeling against Polly.

"Bang!" Polly echoed the rude closing of the door.

The door came in for another slam, but this time it was one of Polly's own usual high-spirited slammings as she went to obey the summons.

Those left behind in the study found themselves laughing, then changing to deep sighs.

"How wonderfully she is bearing up, girls."

"One would almost think she has something up her sleeve," Bunny pondered aloud.

"But she hasn't," Betty said very gravely. "There's the calendar which she herself marked, telling us how the time is flying; telling her as well. And only an hour ago she was saying—nothing done yet."

They found themselves all turning to look towards the calendar.

"Next Wednesday," murmured Judy Cardew. "And already it's Monday."

ON a floor below, Polly tapped at a door as she passed inside, inquiring sweetly:

"You wanted me, Miss Merrick?"

"Yes, Polly I do— Yes, Polly."

Miss Merrick may have felt bound to speak without the endearment; but when it came to bestowing a look that should imply lost faith in this particular girl—she just couldn't!

"Polly, before dinner there was some bit of disorder out-of-doors which had to do with you?"

"Oh, was there?"

"You must have had nearly all the Form round you—"

"I didn't want them, Miss Merrick!"

"No, Polly. It meant, in fact, that the Form had found out about the disgrace you are in. I am very, very sorry that the whole thing is now



The group of girls passed by Polly as if they had not seen her. It was fresh proof, if proof were needed, of her great unpopularity with the Form.

all over the school. Miss Somerfield was most anxious—since you could not be sent home at once—that nothing should leak out in the meantime. Why I have sent for you, Polly—”

“Yes, Miss Merrick?”

“You cannot go home sooner than Wednesday; it is out of the question. But now that everyone knows, we cannot have you subjected to—”

“Oh,” Polly laughed, “as if I mind!”

“Listen, Polly, now that you are here, I will mention one point. If you would write that apology to Vanessa Ducrane, you would not have to go home on Wednesday. The headmistress could see her way to—”

“Yes, Miss Merrick, I know she could. But I can't see my way to apologise to Vanessa, and so there we are!”

“You know, Polly, the refusal to apologise can only be construed in one way by the whole school. It means that you adhere to your accusation against Vanessa, that she took the money.”

“So I do.”

“You must not say that, Polly! It has been your persisting in the charge that has grieved Miss Somerfield more than anything else. There was not a tittle of evidence entitling anyone to suspect Vanessa Ducrane.”

Polly did not attempt to answer.

“There are other things I shall have to say to you, Polly, but this is not the time. They are best kept until Wednesday. You must go now, that is all, and be in class just as usual at two o'clock.”

Polly went out. Suddenly, on the staircase-landing, she saw Vanessa Ducrane, sauntering towards her study. The very senior whose name had cropped up just now; the very one who, Polly and all her chums were certain, had committed both thefts.

Vanessa, noticing Polly, was not going to let herself be spoken to; but her slighting glance put the madcap on her mettle.

“Just a moment!” she hailed the senior challengingly. “You owe me one-and-eight! That pastrycook's bill I paid for—”

“And you,” Vanessa wheeled round to retort very loftily, “owe me an apology.”

“Miss Somerfield may think so,” Polly said fiercely. “I don't!”

“Then you'll be going home Wednesday? Better let the one-and-eight stand over until then,” Vanessa laughed heartlessly. “You may need it for the journey.”

“Oh, very funny,” Polly commented. “And a good excuse for not paying up now—because you haven't got even one-and-eightpence! ‘Vanity Van,’ too grand to live! The senior who only mixes with rich—”

“I'll box your ears, you young monkey!”

“I wish you'd try!” And Polly stood nearer. “For then—wouldn't I just go for you, big as you are!”

Vanessa, putting on the most disdainful look, walked away, and it became Polly's grimly humorous resolve that she would make another demand for that money at tea-time.

Meanwhile, she had to return to the Form quarters, on the floor above, to prepare for afternoon school. As she went round the half-landing, on her way up, several girls of her Form came by, going down.

Pointedly, they side-stepped to give her a wide berth and kept their faces turned from her.

She stood still, looking after them as they descended the flight of stairs.

No-tittering came, to allow her to think that

after all, it was being done for a “joke”—a little thing, pleasing to little minds.

No, they meant it seriously. They were girls who counted for something in the life of the Form; girls whose good opinion it was well worth having. Until to-day she had stood high enough in their esteem; but now—

“And next Wednesday they'll be glad to see the back of me.”

Polly was wincing now; paling, too, as she realised afresh how close she was to the appointed time for her expulsion.

Day after to-morrow, and yet—

“I'm no nearer to being able to clear myself than I was a couple of days ago. I am only nearer,” she said—“to Wednesday!”

She Must Have Money!

AT the close of school, that afternoon, “Vanity Van” went straight from the seniors' classroom to the telephone-box in the front hall.

It was a certain number in Barncombe which she rang up, taking care to keep the glass door of the sound-proof call-box tightly closed during her conversation.

The result of the bit of telephoning could not have been very pleasing. When, two minutes later, she gained the privacy of her study, Vanessa closed the door with an air of being in no mood for company.

What to do for money?

That was the harassing thought which accounted for her heavy frown. What to do for money? when even now that antique dealer—both him—had not sold the teapot. Until he did sell it, she could get nothing out of him. He had only undertaken to find a buyer for it, on commission.

Spent up; not even a sixpence to be going on with! And that was a nice position for a Moroccan girl, a senior, to be in—especially a senior who was all for keeping up appearances, making a show!

Doris Jessel, her swagger friend in the town, had lent her a pound last Saturday, when they were making the afternoon run to Exeter. But every penny of that was gone—of course it was. With Doris herself spending so freely, one had to treat that pound as something to be got rid of. Or what would Doris have thought?

Vanessa sat down, only to rise up again almost instantly—restless, worried.

Almost she wished now that she had kept the money which she had taken from Study 12 the other night.

“Fool that I was to get the wind up just because I had found out that the money was intended as a trap to catch me! After all, I did take the money without being caught. So I might just as well have stuck to it.”

And yet—no, perhaps not such a fool, after all. “Easy to be wise after the event!” At the time, it had seemed as if it might be her utter ruin if she kept the money. So, instead, she had used it to hit back at Study 12, for having planned to trap her.

And how successfully she had hit back, too! There was that for consolation. Polly Linton, that impudent young kid, was to be expelled—and serve her right.

Only that girl was not yet gone from the school, and it was to her that one was humiliatingly in debt for such a trifling sum: A mere one-and-eightpence, and yet she, a senior, could not pay up! It was sickening, maddening! Soon it would be a joke all over the school: Vanity Van, unable to find—

Tap, tap! the study door was rapped, and then it came wide open, revealing Polly Linton.

"Vanessa Ducrane, can I have that—"

"Get out of here!"

"That one-and-eightpence which has been owing to me since—"

"If you don't clear out of here, Polly Linton—"

"But I want my money! You've got one-and-eightpence—surely you have! A girl as rich as you!"

"You—you—" Vanessa raged, and brought her right hand round to fetch Polly a smack on the head.

But Polly dived, and the hand only hit the door-edge.

To feel her fingers tingling after that misspent blow infuriated Vanessa all the more. She swooped and seized the junior, and next moment they were scuffling together.

"Stop! Vanessa—stop that, I tell you!"

Breathless, wild-eyed, she let dishevelled Polly go free, then faced the girl who had intervened.

It was Ethel Courtway, Morcove's head girl!

"You know, Vanessa, that sort of thing is not done!"

"I don't care!" panted the irritable senior. "Haven't I had enough to put up with from this kid? Isn't she the one who accused me last week of stealing money that she herself had taken?"

"But all that has been dealt with," Ethel said composedly.

"You have been given satisfaction by the headmistress; what more do you want? Polly, you shouldn't have come here—"

"But Vanessa owes me one-and-eightpence," the madcap explained, her roguishness returning. "It's been owing since last week, when she had her town friend to tea, and I had to pay the pastrycook's man, at the back door, for things for tea!"

Ethel looked towards Vanessa, who had turned her back to her.

"You owe Polly that money, Vanessa?"

"I've told her; when she has given me the apology which is owing—"

"That's absurd, Vanessa. The one thing has nothing to do with the other. Give Polly the one-and-eightpence and let her go away."

"I—I haven't any change at present."

"All right, then. Polly, come to my study and I'll pay you, and Vanessa can pay me by-and-by."

"Thanks, Ethel," said Polly with the smile of an angel; and they went away together.

Then, left to herself, Vanessa Ducrane looked more desperate than ever.

What to do now, when she had implied that she had money on her, but no small change! What was going to be thought if she could not repay Ethel Courtway before an hour or two was out? Such a trifling sum—and the smallness of it was what made it all the more humiliating!

So again she found herself wishing; if only she had stuck to that money taken from Study 12 the other night! Even the marked coins would have been a help.

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No. 512



No. 513

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No. 514



No. 515

Suddenly she sat down, becoming quite still.

Those marked coins—she knew where they were. Realising at the time that it would never do to place them, with the rest of the money, in Polly's locker in the dormitory, she had disposed of them quickly and secretly by throwing them away in a shrubbery in the school grounds.

Possible to get the coins back? If so, she could get them changed in Barncombe. The scratch-markings were very faint—only to be seen if looked for. The scratches had caught her attention that night because she was using a pocket-torch. But no one receiving one of the coins across a counter in Barncombe would be likely to notice anything.

Two half-crowns and a shilling—six shillings in all. Again, what a trifling sum, and yet—what it meant to her at a time like this! All her pride at stake!

Supposing, then—supposing she went down to the shrubbery, recovered the coins, and then did a quick run into town on her cycle?

"I need only buy a penny stamp at the post office—the busy hour, too—and that will change one half-crown. Then, at some shop or other—"

She ended her crafty ponderings and jumped up from her chair.

It was her excited belief that she could carry out this project at once. No need to feel uneasy because of the daylight. In any case, she could not go seeking the castaway coins by torchlight, after dark. Besides, if she waited until then, she would be too late for a subsequent run into town.

Vanessa waited in her study only long enough for the general tea-time to cause all other scholars to be indoors, even if they were not cosily settled in the various studies.

Then she went downstairs, put on her outdoor things, and went out to the cycle-sheds. Luckily, she had got rid of the marked coins whilst sauntering along a shrubbery path which scholars sometimes used to get from the cycle-sheds down to the main gateway. It was a short cut, out to the main road.

Ten seconds later she abruptly checked her machine and hopped down from the saddle. There, on the winding pathway which had shrubs growing on either side of it, she leaned the bicycle against the stem of a young tree, and made pretence of fiddling with some part that was giving trouble.

The coins were near the spot where she had paused, amongst the ground-foliage. She reckoned that they were lying close together, for she had let them fall, all at the same time, from her hand, before breakfast on the morning after the theft.

And now, feeling it safe to do so, she stooped away from the bicycle and extended a searching hand to fumble after the marked coins.

Almost instantly her fingers touched one of the half-crowns. It was a good start, she felt, and she smiled, still groping to find the two other coins.

Ah, and here was another—what luck! Only the marked shilling this time; still—

"Hallo! Something you've lost?"

Vanessa, her heart seeming to turn right over, writhed round to see who was there—when she had felt so certain that she was alone!

She had to turn to look, even though she realised that her cheeks must be scarlet, her eyes wild with fright.

Then some of the terror passed off. She saw that it was no schoolmate of hers who had come upon her like this.

It was, after all, only Kate Barnard, and what

did she matter, when her sister Effie was only a "skivvy" in the school?

Someone to Silence!

"ER—hallo!" Vanessa responded, forcing a grin. "Where did you spring from?"

"Oh, I've just walked out this way—"

"To visit your sister, is that it? I see!" Vanessa was being amiable to mask her agitation. She spoke on, airily, whilst resuming pretended attentions to the bicycle.

"I expect you and your mother are terribly glad Effie has got her job back?"

"Not half, we aren't! But I've been wondering," said big Kate Barnard, standing nearer to crouching Vanessa and the bicycle, "who really did steal the money? I had nothing to do, so I thought I'd walk out this way and see if my sister could tell me anything, now she's back in her job. I've just been with her—only just left her—"

"I see. But—excuse me—"

"And Effie could tell me quite a lot! It seems she met that girl, Polly Linton, just after dinner, in the schoolhouse, and Polly Linton, she said as how—"

"Oh, look here, I really don't want to hear about all this," Vanessa exclaimed peevishly. "I—"

"In a hurry, are you? Can I help you, then, miss?"

"No, thanks."

"Was it something that came off the machine, that flew into the leaves, just there?"

"What?"

"You were feeling about for something, when I first saw you—"

"Oh—er—yes—but I've got it now, thanks."

"I thought you still seemed to be feeling, when I spoke?"

"No," Vanessa disclaimed, flusteredly, rising up to ride on again. "And now, you must excuse me, but I am in a hurry."

"But—you must excuse ME, miss; I'd like a word—"

"What!"

Vanessa found her startled exclamation going unanswered for the moment; found Kate Barnard looking her straight in the eyes. It became a battle of looks, which Kate Barnard won. She recognised her victory by nodding and smiling.

"Miss, you don't want to ride off for a minute. You had better not, for I would only have to see you some other time."

"See me? What about?"

"About this, miss. What do you take me for?" Kate scornfully demanded. "Think I'm so silly as to not know what the little game was?"

"I don't understand you! How dare—"

"Oh, none of that to me!"

Then, to Vanessa's renewed terror, the other girl crouched down at the edge of the path to start feeling about in the close-growing foliage—just where Vanessa herself had fumbled to find the coins.

Kate did this, keeping her eyes all the time upon the senior. There was a smiling, looking-up at that white-faced girl, whilst the groping hand still rustled amongst the leaves.

A few moments of this, and then Kate, with a chuckle, held up a coin.

"Here's a half-crown—just fancy, what luck! Just where you were searching, too! Oh, and it's got a mark on it—a cross! Funny thing, my sister Effie was telling me just now all what Polly Linton had been explaining to her, only a couple

of hours ago; about how they set a trap with money, in Study 12, and some of the coins were marked!"

"Idiot!" Vanessa stamped, and was going to remount her machine to ride away, but the other girl caught her by the arm.

"Here, just you wait! This is one of the marked coins—of course it is! And you've got the others——"

"I deny it! I——"

"Oh, all right, you haven't got them, then. In that case, you won't mind coming along to the schoolhouse to prove to someone that you haven't got them? You won't mind being searched, I take it? You!" Kate laughed, as Vanessa could only stand abject and silent. "There was nothing wrong with the bike to make you get off here.

Effie's sister chuckled. "You don't like my having them, do you? Mean to say, I might make it awkward for you? Well, then, like to have 'em back, right now, in exchange for—how much have you got on you, miss? Can you do me ten shillings?"

"No!"

"Something less, then—on account—and I give you my word I won't let it be known that you——"

"I can't give you anything," Vanessa almost groaned. "I—it—just as it happens, I haven't a penny upon me!"

"What, you haven't! My, and, by the look of you, anybody would think you had bags of pocket-money. Oh, well," Kate shrugged, "temporarily short, perhaps?"



Completely losing her temper, Vanessa DuCrane seized Polly and attempted to strike her. Neither of the contestants noticed the tall girl who had appeared in the doorway. It was Ethel Courtway, head girl of Morcove.

No reason, anyway, why you should have to be so afraid of being seen—as I saw you, and wondered why it was! It made me creep along to see more. And—do you know what I saw, just before I let you know I was here? I saw you pick one coin, and then another, out of the ivy there."

She stood a step nearer.

"So now—you haven't got two marked coins, do you still say? When I know full well you have! Come on, miss; you just hand them over!"

"I won't! If I have got them, that is only—only because I have been finding out certain things about that theft. As a senior, I—I——"

"Miss, stop all that, for it's only lying, and give me those two coins. You had better!"

And, as soon as Kate had said that, Vanessa gave in. With a beaten look she held out the coins for Kate to take. They had been clenched in Vanessa's right hand all the while.

"Thanks! That's the three of them, then,"

"That's it. Look here, if—I——"

"Right—ho, miss; I get you! It's only what I was going to suggest," Kate winked. "I'll see you again—soon. Here, what about making an appointment? How about to-morrow evening, just before dark, out there on the moor?"

"But——"

"You look out for me and I'll look out for you! We can't miss each other, like that. So long, then." Kate abruptly terminated the whispering. But, after taking the first retiring steps, she came back.

"Miss, you really can manage to buy back the coins to-morrow evening, I hope?"

"Yes—at least—oh, yes," Vanessa rashly promised. "Somehow——"

That last word was said under her breath to herself. And her whirling brain, as she found herself left alone on the shrubbery path, carried on the word into a complete sentence:

"Somehow—I must!"

NO sooner had both girls gone from the path, the one riding and the other walking, than someone came stealing out from behind some of the shrubs.

For a moment or so she stood looking excitedly in the direction which Vanessa Duercane and Kate Barnard had gone.

Then she whipped about and ran towards the schoolhouse.

One Last Chance !

TEA had been on the table in Study 12 this last five minutes, and now Betty and others were only waiting for Polly Linton to come in.

"I am afraid it means," Betty murmured, "she has felt a bit down, all at once, and hasn't wanted us to know."

"That's about it," Pam feelingly agreed. "Gone for a stroll by herself to shake off the blues."

"All ze same, we are not going to start without her—not ze bit of eet!" Naomer stoutly declared. "I am dying for my tea—don't care! Bekas—"

"Hark! Here she is, girls!"

Even as Betty took an eager stride towards the door, intending to throw it wide in a welcoming way, it came open and Polly walked in—all smiles!

"Pouf!" she panted. "Any chance of a cup of tea?"

"It's made, dear. We were only waiting for you," Betty cried. "Been for a stroll out-of-doors?"

The madcap nodded.

"Felt I must," was the laconic response which convinced her chums that she really had been feeling "down." And then:

"Girls," said Polly, "you may be pleased to know! I am not going to be expelled on Wednesday, after all!"

"What! Polly darling—oh!—bai Jove—"

"Bekas—"

"Has something come to light, then, Polly?" several of them clamoured. "Have you been told—"

"Oh, no! I am merely making the prediction—touch wood!" And Polly rested her finger-tips upon Naomer's glossy dark head. "Anyhow, girls—listen to this!"

"And have this, Polly, whilst you're telling us!" Pam said, offering a cup of tea which she had hastily poured out for the latecomer.

"Thanks! Girls, you remember the marked coins? Vanessa went to get hold of them just now. She is as hard-up as all that! I was doing a mouch round out-of-doors, when I saw Vanity Van go to the cycle-shed. Just because it was Vanessa, I couldn't help watching her—not that I expected her to do anything more than ride away to Barncombe. But she went into the shrubbery path, and I noticed she didn't come out at the other end."

"And so—what, Polly?" Her listeners were shoulder to shoulder in a ring round the madcap. "What, then?"

"I made my way to the shrubbery, and—got one of the biggest shocks I've ever had! Not an altogether pleasant one, either, girls. Vanessa was having to hand those marked coins to—who do you think? Effie's sister Kate!"

There was an astounded silence.

"And now Kate Barnard has got them," Polly spoke on, guarding her voice, "and Vanessa, if she wants them back, has got to buy them back."

"Good gracious!" Betty gasped. "You mean—"

"The price of those marked coins is the price of Kate's silence—yep," Polly nodded. "Pretty awful, that, isn't it? Effie's sister—that's what I am thinking all the time."

"Effie's sister," echoed Madge and others, distrustfully. "And if Effie ever finds out that Kate has done such a thing—it will break her heart—"

"I was thinking of that, even whilst I listened in the shrubbery," Polly said grimly. "It's why I didn't rush out upon them both. Somehow, I simply couldn't, since it was—Effie's sister."

Betty frowned.

"But haven't you missed a great chance of getting yourself cleared?"

Polly shrugged.

"If I had to let that chance go by, for Effie's sake—there is another chance coming. This time to-morrow—"

"What, Tuesday evening?" jerked Betty, glancing at the calendar.

"Yes—the evening before Wednesday!" Polly grinned. "Vanessa is to meet Kate Barnard—and I know where—to buy back the marked coins."

"But how," gasped Betty, "can Vanessa pay the price, if she is simply stony?"

"I've thought of that," said Polly. "And it has given me an idea."

"I hope you are not thinking of baiting another trap for Vanessa?" said Pam. "For I don't feel that it would answer."

Polly shook her head.

"Nothing like that, girls. She'd never venture to this study again to steal. My idea, this time—let her find some money!"

"What! Oh!"

It was quite a sensation. In a flash, all Polly's chums were realising that there was the greatest difference between a reliance upon Vanessa to stoop to thieving again and causing her to "find" money that had really never been lost!

"And we have money in hand for the job, too," Betty joyfully exclaimed. "Miss Somerfield has returned the money that was found in your locker, Polly, as it belonged to all of us."

"Only, it's all in silver, and what we want is a note—a pound-note would be best," Tess suggested. "Still, we can easily manage that."

Nor was it more than an hour later when a pound's worth of the silver had been exchanged for a pound-note.

Betty had done the innocent "deal" with matron, and now it was a question when and how to "lose" the note, so that Vanessa and no other scholar would be certain to find it.

Throughout that evening, Study 12 was on the alert for an opportunity; but a sufficiently promising one did not occur. The nearest the chums had got to doing it was when they found that Vanessa was taking a bath, about a half-hour before call-over.

But even then Betty & Co. had to forbear. Other seniors were using their bath-rooms, and there could be no certainty of a "dropped" note being found by Vanessa when she was only one in a batch of girls bathing at that time.

The result was a good deal of lying awake, in great perplexity and anxiety, on the part of the chums that night.

They had now only to-morrow—Tuesday! And they only had until tea-time, or a few minutes later, on that day—the last day before the one appointed for Polly's expulsion. Soon after tea,

on the Tuesday, Vanessa was due to go off to meet Kate Barnard. Unless Vanessa had money in her pocket by then—the vital transaction would not be completed! And, unless it was completed, with the chums on hand as secret witnesses—the last hope would be gone!

So, when another morning had come to Morcove, the chums had thoughts to render them noticeably quiet, in a dormitory where so many other girls were as lively as crickets.

Fay and Edna drew attention to this seeming glunness on the part of Betty & Co. "Getting close to Wednesday now! Only to-day, and then

Very likely, too, all those girls who felt fully entitled to show no pity for the supposed thief of the Form, imagined that Polly hurried away from the dormitory only because she could no longer hold up her head. An impudent pretence of injured innocence had broken down at last!

But Polly had hurried away for a quite different reason—as her chums were soon to know. She rejoined them downstairs, fifteen minutes later, in a prancing state of delight.

"Done it, girls!"

"What!"

"I had a sudden hunch whilst dressing. Vanessa is nearly always one of the last to get out of bed. I crept to the seniors' quarters, upstairs, and—I did the trick! Nearly all the other seniors had come away from their cubicles when Vanessa came from hers. She saw a pound-note lying on the passage-floor—"

"And picked it up?" jerked Betty and others.

"And picked it up!"

Study 12 went whoopee, then. It seemed to the chums that the battle was as good as won. Vanessa, they now knew for certain, had got money enough with which to bargain with Kate Barnard. Now it was simply a case of being present, in secret, when the meeting should take place towards nightfall.

Four o'clock that afternoon found certain of the chums going off from the school as if for a cycle-run into Barncombe.

But machines were soon being concealed, and then the riders themselves became dotted about on the moor, with acres of brown bracken and dark green gorse to afford them cover.

One here, one there, so they remained safely screened—waiting and watching!

Morcove's old, familiar chimes ding-dong'd five o'clock, and neither Vanessa nor Kate had turned up. Ding-dong! again at the quarter-past; and Polly, one of those who waited, was not without the poignant thought: "Failure now, and this time to-morrow I shall be at home—as the girl expelled for thieving!"

Half-past five, and then, in the early twilight,



"Here's half-a-crown, and it's got a mark on it!" said Kate Barnard in mock amazement. "Just where you were searching, too!" Never had Vanessa Ducrane known such stark terror. It was all too clear to her that Kate had guessed her guilty secret.

with its autumnal mistiness, a figure could be seen coming on foot from the direction of the town. It was the figure of a well-grown girl—Kate Barnard, leaving the road, to start sauntering about on the moor.

Another minute, and Vanessa herself was in evidence. She appeared with dramatic suddenness, having come from the school very stealthily.

There was a moment, soon after she had been sighted, when the guilty senior passed between Betty and Polly in their separate hiding-places.

Unseen by her, they could see Vanessa glancing nervously this way and that as she hastened to meet Kate Barnard. The latter was steering towards Vanessa, through the dying bracken.

Betty and Polly were nearer than any of the other ambushed girls to where, a few moments later, Kate and the senior began the fateful interview. But that Study 12 pair were not near enough to overhear what was passing.

Never in their lives had they made more cautious movements. There was a creeping forwards on all fours, foot by foot and yard by yard, as if their very existence depended upon their not making the faintest sound. And it was at least the grim fact that Polly's whole future was, at this critical time, in the balance.

A too-hasty movement, a betraying sound, and Vanessa would be running one way, Kate another. The bargain would not have been completed; the marked coins would still be in Kate's possession—

which must mean that nothing would ever be proved.

But at last the voices of the two who were in conversation became audible to Betty and Polly—and still their presence was unsuspected.

"Well," they heard Kate Barnard come to the point boldly, "what can you give me for the coins?"

"Ten shillings—"

"Oh, you can do me better than that, miss—come! I don't see why I should let you off for as little as that, when I know what it means to you! I want—"

"Dash you, then—a pound!" Vanessa wildly offered, fumbling in a pocket. "Here you are, and it's all I've got, so—"

"Oh, that's better, miss!" as the currency note came on show. "All right, then; after all, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush! And so here, you are—the two half-crowns and the shilling."

Vanessa, as she tendered the pound note with her left hand, made a furious snatch at the marked coins with her right. She looked them over, pocketed them, and was going to mouth some curt word in farewell-for-ever to Kate Barnard, when—

"Stop! Stand still, both of you!"

And, suddenly aghast, both girls realised that two Morocco juniors had risen up from the heather, not six paces distant, whilst at least three more juniors were also bobbing up, to come running this way.

Destiny's Doings!

VANESSA'S crafty brain must have told her instantly what to do.

Even as Betty and Polly drew closer, expecting the one guilty girl to be as tongue-tied as the other, they found that the senior was ready to say threateningly:

"Wait a bit, for I warn you all! If you say a word about this at the school—I'll get this sister of Effie Barnard's sent to prison!"

It was a threat which took terrible effect upon Kate Barnard. She went as white as death.

"I mean it!" Vanessa rushed on fiercely. "I can get her sent to prison for demanding money with menaces. And she is Effie's sister, remember!"

"It's a lie that I have—have demanded money like that!" Kate cried out hysterically. "I never did anything of the sort! She knew I had the marked coins, and she offered to—"

"Liar, yourself!" Vanessa raged out. "And you'll find that lying won't save you! If these girls say anything about me, then I shall—"

"Vanessa, stop, I tell you!" Betty interposed sternly. "There are five of us study-girls here, to bear witness. You have just given Kate Barnard a pound note in exchange for the marked coins. You were desperate to get them back—and we know why."

"You see," Polly said blandly, "I was in the shrubbery about this time yesterday!"

Kate Barnard gave a despairing lift and fall of the hands. The words told her that yesterday's menacing demand had been overheard, and she was not surprised to see Vanessa give a triumphant smile.

"Oh, you were, were you?" Vanessa laughed at Polly. "So much the better! I'll have you for a witness, then, that this Barnard girl did menace me! That is, unless you girls all agree to say nothing at all!"

"It's likely we shall do that," Betty said indig-

nantly, "when it would mean that Polly must still be expelled as the supposed thief. No, Vanessa; the whole truth has got to be made known at last—as it can be, at last! Miss Somerfield has only to be told that you went to look for those marked coins yesterday, knowing where they were, in the shrubbery, and she will understand—everything!"

For a long moment Vanessa stood mouthing a lip, glaring at Betty as being the chief of the five juniors who were there.

"In spite of what I threatened?" Vanessa faltered at last. "Look at this Barnard girl! Do you want to see her had up on such a charge? Remembering she's Effie's sister!"

Then Kate Barnard burst into tears. She moaned and wept wildly. It was such a fit of hysteria, due to the fear of being sent to gaol, that during the next minute or two she took no part in what went on—was even ignorant of Vanessa's suddenly agreeing to go away with some of the juniors.

The terror-stricken girl was still wailing and whimpering, with both hands up to her eyes, when she felt someone plucking her by the arm. Then, dropping her hands away from her tear-wet face, she found that it was Polly Linton who had come close to her. As for the others, Vanessa included, they were gone!

These two, after all that had happened between them, left alone together like this; what a touch of destiny it was!

POLLY ended the tense silence.

"You have a pound note of ours, Kate Barnard. Let me have it, please."

"Why should I? No, I won't! You can all do your worst—"

"That's being silly. We are going to do our best to save you from the consequences—of course we are, if only for Effie's sake. We wouldn't have her know—"

"But that senior has threatened—"

"Yes, and her threat will come to nothing. Even if she tells Miss Somerfield everything—and it is quite likely Miss Somerfield will have to be told everything—even then, I can come between you and the law. Even if the headmistress should feel like informing the police—I shall be able to beg you off."

"You!" Kate gasped. "How can you feel like—like doing anything to save me?"

"There is always Effie to be thought of. Besides," Polly added, "I don't believe in—revenge."

Kate Barnard turned her face away, the tears again trickling down her white cheeks. Coals of fire, that word "revenge"! She was thinking of a certain revenge she had taken upon this very schoolgirl, only a few days ago—

"But I want that pound note," Polly resumed. "It will have to be produced at the school. My chums and I will need to prove that Vanessa picked it up this morning and kept it, saying nothing. We can prove it was our money, because it is a note with an ink-splash—as was pointed out to matron, when she let us have it last evening in exchange for silver."

Kate Barnard, sighing in a despairing way, thrust a hand into her pocket and drew out the note.

"There you are, then, Polly Linton."

"Thanks. That's all, then. Except that I hope you'll never do such a thing again, but go straight, remembering that you have a good mother and a sister like Effie."

"Wait! It isn't all," panted Kate Barnard, as

Polly started to walk away. "You—you really mean it; that about begging me off, if the worst comes to the worst?"

"When I say a thing, Kate Barnard, I mean it."

"Then, before you go, listen to me," the conscience-stricken girl spoke on vehemently. "As true as I stand here, Polly Linton, I am going straight after this! Oh, don't I see how you could have had your revenge on me, and instead—"

She broke down and cried wildly again.

"Mother told me I would be sorry some day!" she sobbed. "And her word has come true. I am sorry now, Polly Linton; sorry that I ever hit at you, through that brother of yours at Grangemoor School. But I'll do my best to make amends in that direction—I will! I'll let his headmaster know that he didn't do the damage to those new buildings in Barncombe that evening. I managed to get your brother into that row, and he was called for it—I know he was—"

"He took the caning without a murmur—"

"All the more reason why I should let it be known that he never deserved the thrashing," Kate spoke on, in a breaking voice. "And I will! I'll go back to the town now and write to his headmaster. No; I'll ring up, to save time, and so make it all the sooner!"

She was going away as she said it.

And so, when Polly set off at last, full pelt for Morcovoe School, in every step of hers there was that gladness which had been in her look for Kate, just then—a gladness beyond all telling!

An Apology—For Polly!

NOTHING leaked out at the school during that evening, and in the Form there was a very natural belief to account for the great jollity going on in Study 12.

It was taken for granted that Betty and Co. were "cheering to keep their spirits up!"

Polly's last night in the school, this—so it was supposed. Well, her chums might have been expected to carry on a desperate levity, implying unwavering faith in her. But girls in other studies were saying that for their part they would only be glad when it was all over.

Then, at final assembly in Big Hall, came the bombshell.

A brief speech by Miss Somerfield took precedence of all routine matters. She was, she said, very happy to announce that a certain scholar who was to have been "sent down" to-morrow had absolutely vindicated her innocence. The headmistress was not going to enter into details. Let it suffice that Polly Linton had emerged from the affair with flying colours.

Such an unchecked hubbub started, Polly herself did not know that she was being called upon to go up to the dais, from which Miss Somerfield was speaking.

Then, when Betty and others gaily pushed their adored madcap upon her way, the vast assemblage became noisier than ever.

In the chums' Form there were many girls who did not know where to look, now; they felt so ashamed of the lengths to which they had gone in displaying their scorn for Polly as a convicted thief. But there were others who, having been only sad over the disgrace Polly was in, could now give ringing cheers of honest relief and joy.

These were proper spirited girls who would be begging Polly's pardon presently, even as the headmistress was now apologising to the madcap—in front of the whole school.

Polly, who had chosen expulsion rather than give an apology where she knew it not to be due; and now she herself was receiving—a public apology!

Trust Morcovoe to realise what a tremendous triumph this meant for Study 12's madcap! Nor were Polly's own best chums having to lead the cheering. There was Ethel Courtway, the school's head girl, vying with Miss Merrick and others to do that!

"Hurrah, hurrah-h-h!" cheer after cheer rose to the rafters of Big Hall. "Polly Linton, hooray, hurrah! Bravo, Polly!"

Proud and happy moment for a schoolgirl, after so much undeserved opprobrium, to hear herself acclaimed like that! And Polly was proud, happy—all the more so because she knew that this great hour had done more than bring her justice.

From Miss Somerfield's own lips Polly had heard that information had reached the headmaster of Grangemoor School, entitling Jack also to a public apology. Grangemoor's Head had been on the 'phone with Miss Somerfield.

So Kate Barnard had kept to her word, as Polly had known she would.

It was proof, if proof had been needed, that Kate really did mean to play the game from now onwards, as she would have every chance of doing. For, at any rate, no action was being taken to call her to account for that serious slip which had placed her on the wrong side of the law.

It might have been otherwise, but Polly, asked by the headmistress to name any favour that could be granted, as some compensation for the recent injustice, had asked only for that. Complete silence about Kate Barnard's dealings with Vanessa Ducrane.

It was to be so, and Effie would never know. Effie, going on most happily and successfully in her job at Morcovoe School, and finding out for herself as time went by into what a steady, industrious life her sister had settled down!

As for Vanessa Ducrane, it had needed very little diplomacy on the part of Miss Somerfield to render that thrice-guilty senior silent about Kate Barnard.

Realising that Polly was so set upon Kate being spared, Miss Somerfield had secured Vanessa's silence by agreeing to let her finish the term—it was to have been her last, in any case—instead of being summarily expelled, with the certainty that the school would put two and two together.

More cheering, when the school was out of Big Hall, going up to bed. Wild scenes in the Form dormitory when Polly, escorted by her loving chums, appeared upon the scene!

And still the best, for Morcovoe's madcap, was to come.

She could look forward to slipping down early, next morning, to seek out Effie and have a happy little chat with her. And more besides—much more, to-morrow.

To-morrow, Wednesday, the day she was to have been expelled, and instead—Polly could count upon her own brother finding her still at Morcovoe.

It was all fixed up—for to-morrow. At the very hour in the afternoon when she might have been turning up at home, as a girl expelled from Morcovoe, her brother and his pals would be there, to talk about it all and share in all the joy!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

(Grand new series of Morcovoe stories begins next Tuesday. See page 632.)