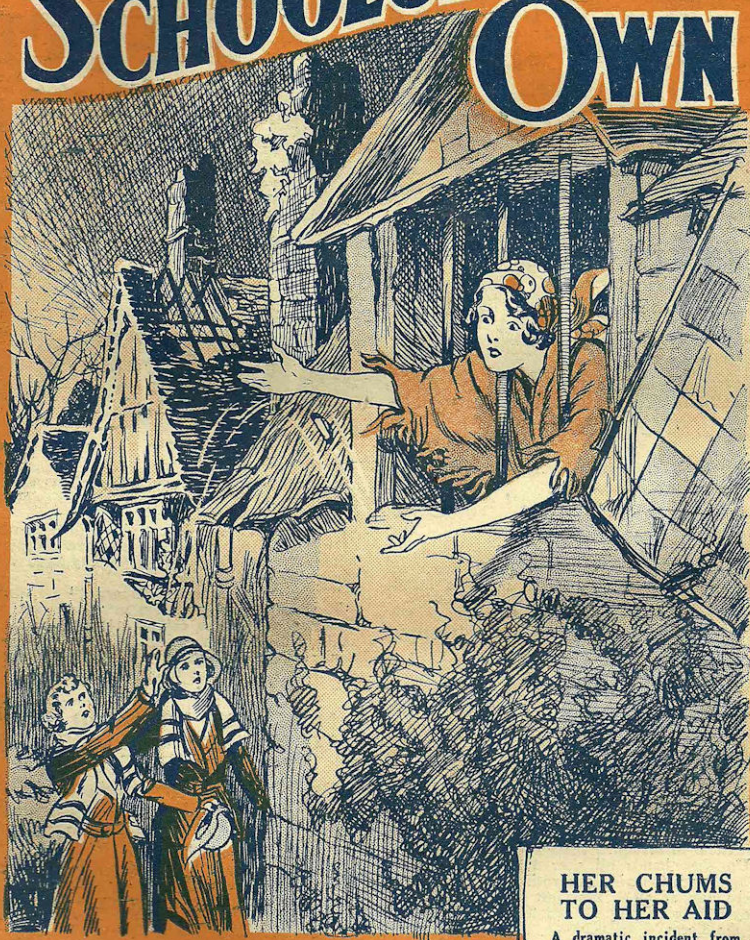


"THE GIRL WHO RAN THE SCHOOL" DRAMATIC MORCOVE  
SCHOOL STORY INSIDE

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



## HER CHUMS TO HER AID

A dramatic incident from  
Margery Marriott's grand  
school-adventure story inside

No. 783, Vol. 31.  
Week ending  
February 9th, 1936.  
EVERY TUESDAY.

Meet HER HARUM-SCARUM HIGHNESS in This Issue

Enthralling LONG COMPLETE Story of Betty Barton and Co.—



“Carried Unan.!”

“ANY more speeches?”

“Yes-s-s!”

“No-o-o!”

“Order! Or-der!”

Amidst all the hullabaloo going on in a certain class-room at Morcove School, this evening, two girls turned to each other in fits of laughter.

“I say, we are making a row!”

“Worse than usual! But what does it matter! First evening of term!”

“But—what about the headmistress who has taken Miss Somerfield’s place for a few weeks? She mayn’t like it!”

“She must do the other thing, then!”

“Now, girls,” said Etta crisply; “the vote is on my proposal, seconded by Polly Linton, that Betty Barton be re-elected captain of the Form.”

“Hooray! Hurrah!”

“Bekas—”

“Sit down, kid!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Those in favour?”

Up shot hands all over the big class-room. Where were the girls not voting for Betty—were there any at all? Yes, just two or three, but they were girls who counted for little in the life of the Form.

Such an overwhelming vote it was, fully a dozen of Betty’s keen supporters began to yell instantly:

“Carried—hurrah! Carried unan.!”

But Etta meant to be strictly formal. She first counted the poll in favour of Betty. Then she requested:

“Those against?”

“One—two—three—oh, and one more, four!”

“Ha, ha, ha! Booh!” the huge majority for Betty derided Fay and Edna Denver—those detestable sisters!—and the two other dissentients. “Booh!”

“Thank you!” said Etta with a politeness which drew more laughter as the four hands dropped. “Result! By a majority of twenty-three votes, Betty Barton is captain—”

“Once again—hurrah! Hooray!”

The tremendous jubilation meant no slur upon Etta, as the former captain. Things had been said at to-night’s meeting to leave Etta in no doubt as to the success she had been, during the later half of last term, as a stop-gap.

## MADELINE DOLLOND WANTS TO BE “BOSS” OF MORCOVE—

“Betty!” was now the general cry. “Betty! Come on, Betty—speech!”

“Spee-eech! Spee-eech!”

“Bekas—”

“Sit DOWN, kid!”

And once again that dusky scholar, Naomer Nakara, was seen to lose her balance, as she stood on a seat, throw up her hands and collapse. Once again, it was upon that elegant member of the Form, pretty Paula Creel, the dusky one tumbled, much to Paula’s discomfiture.

Betty Barton, helped up by madcap Polly Linton and sparkling Bunny Trevor, got on to a desk-top. Tradition demanded that it must be so!

“Girls of the Form,” Betty began—and then some terrific cheering started.

“Hurrah! Good old Betty—hooray! Betty Bar-ton! Hurrah!”

## —the Chums of Morcove School



## By Marjorie Stanton

"Order, please—for the cap.!"

"I do thank you, girls, very much, for—for all this," Betty rather floundered, for she had not that vanity which means the airy recital of a prepared speech of thanks. "Most of all, I feel how nice it has been of Etta Hargrove—to be the one—"

Loud cheers for Etta!

"Weren't you nice to me, when I took over, last term?" Etta called out lightly. "Well, then!"

Loud cheers, now, for Betty! She gestured for silence, and resumed:

### —BUT SHE'S GOT TO "BOSS" BETTY BARTON FIRST!

"So here we are again, girls, back for another term at the dear old school, and you've got me again for captain—for better or for worse!" (Laughter.) "Another term—"

"Hooray!"

"We'll start in again; you know what I mean, girls! Whether it's class-room, studies, or the field—"

"Hurrah, yes! Up, the Form!"

"There's just one thing," Betty added, and suddenly keen attention was being paid. "To our surprise, when we got back to-day, we found that for the time being we had lost Miss Somerfield for our headmistress. It's a great honour to Morcove that Miss Somerfield has been invited to attend that World Conference of Head Teachers in America. And I think it would be nice if we passed a resolution at this meeting—"

"Hear, hear!" and great clapping. "Yes, yes! Bravo, Betty!"

Betty then went on to say what sort of form she thought the message to Miss Somerfield, now on her way to Boston, U.S.A., might take.

The captain's wording was applauded, voted upon, and adopted by another fine show of hands. After which the proceedings might have terminated, only the Form had its own traditional way of going "whoopee."

A sing-song was started. A blackboard, nicely clean in readiness for the start of work to-morrow morning, became more and more decorated with caricatures done in chalk, and there was some steeplechasing over the desks.

But Betty, for one, much as she loved a bit of fun, was not going to hang about now.

"I ought to see about getting the message off to Miss Somerfield at once," she explained to tall Pam Willoughby and one or two other less turbulent spirits. "We can't afford to cable it, so we must catch the first possible mail."

"Her address, Betty, in Boston?"

"The temporary headmistress will be able to tell me. I thought of going along now to ask her."

"Chance for you to see more what she is like, Betty!"

"Oh, I think we shall find her all right; she seemed to want to get to know all of us, when she addressed the school, after tea."

"A widow," murmured Judy Cardew, who was one of those now sauntering to the class-room door with the captain. "Seems funny to have a headmistress who has been married! And I suppose that daughter of hers whom we have seen about the place to-day will be staying on?"

"What did you think of the daughter, Betty?" asked Pam quietly.

"Madeleine Dollond? There again—she seems to want to be nice. Anyhow, I don't suppose it will make much difference to us what she is like! Even the loss of Miss Somerfield for a bit can't affect us much. We are under Miss Merrick—that's the great thing!"

Betty left the class-room then, but as she closed the door she was surprised to see Madeleine Dollond coming towards her.

"What's going on in here?" Madeleine asked haughtily. "There seems to be a great deal of noise."

"It's a Form meeting," Betty explained, smiling.

Madeleine did not answer. She merely made a movement as though to enter the Form-room. "I wouldn't go in there now, if I were you," Betty said. "It isn't usual for anyone to intrude during a Form meeting."

"Oh, you needn't worry about that," Madeleine Dollond said haughtily. "I'm different from a Form-mistress."

And, shaking off Betty's hand, she went into the class-room.

### "Poor Old Morcove!"

**M**ADELEINE DOLLOND, entering the crowded class-room, closed the door behind her as if she meant to stop.

That she had not "budded in" with any idea of complaining about the noise, was proclaimed by a most ingratiating smile.

Even so, very few of the girls relaxed their frowning looks. It was felt by all that this twenty-year-old daughter of the temporary headmistress had far too much of a taking-charge air!

"Been holding a meeting, have you, girls? Wish I had known; I would have looked along sooner! That girl who has just gone out—"

"She happens to be the one we have elected as captain," spoke up Polly, as a warning to Madeleine not to say anything derisive about Betty.

"Oh, your captain, is she? But what are you going to do now that the meeting is over?"

The question was put far too patronisingly for the Form's liking. And so Etta Hargrove was ending a rather chilly silence when at last she answered:

"Go up to the studies, most of us, I suppose, and—well, see about getting ready for the morning."

Madeleine Dollond laughed.

"Oh, the morning! You girls don't want to bother about anything more to-night! Nobody has been giving you prep to do this evening—surely?"

"No, but—"

"Here!" Madeleine said, and walked to where she could seat herself at the Form-mistress' desk.

"Stand round me, girls! Now I'll tell you something! If it has been all work, work, work, at Morcove, then things are going to be different right away! A month from now, you won't be able to believe you are still at Morcove School. Mother and I will have so improved it!"

"Mother—AND you?" said Bunny, nudging girls beside her in secret.

Madeleine Dollond nodded.

"Oh, yes, I shall be having a good deal to do with the running of Morcove," came her airy announcement. "I was with mother when she had her own school—the one she has recently sold. So I know her methods. A new system—awful word, but don't let it frighten you!"

"We're not frightened," Polly gave the assurance, so demurely that some of the others nearly tittered.

"Less routine and more time for self-expression; that's the system I am going to help mother introduce here," Madeleine Dollond grandly imparted. "Games, for instance; if a girl doesn't want to play games, well—she needn't!"

"But," voiced several, "games never have been compulsory at Morcove!"

"I know, but if there are some girls all for games, then others may feel that they should be the same, and it's absurd! Hockey," said Madeleine Dollond disdainfully; "as if it were as important as football is at a boys' school! Oh, no; what you girls want is to do things that will fit you more for later on in life."

"Do you mean—business training?" someone asked.

Madeleine Dollond tipped forwards in her chair as she burst out laughing.

"Business training! Oh—no! I mean, as the daughters of well-to-do parents; as girls who will be taking their places in Society by-and-by! I want to see you learning how to be—well, social successes!"

"When you say 'I,' you mean—your mother?" Bunny roguishly inferred.

"Same thing, really; that is to say, I shall be acting a good deal for her, I always do! The school we had when mother sold it—ah, that was something like a school for young ladies! Their parents thought us so wonderful—the way we did things!"

Pam Willoughby suddenly went away as if it were a waste of time to listen. No sooner had she got clear of the class-room than she had Polly Linton and Judy Cardew overtaking her.

"Talking a lot of rot, wasn't she?" Polly grimaced.

"I lost patience," Pam shrugged. "What does she want us to do, then—shirk games?"

"I don't think we want to see any new methods at Morcove," Judy murmured. "But surely, as a mere temporary headmistress, Mrs. Dollond would never think of introducing her own ideas?"

"Especially if they are as cranky as that," Polly scathingly rejoined.

On an upper landing, before turning into the long corridor serving all the Form studies, the three girls glanced behind and then looked at one another, in surprise that all the rest of the Form were not to be heard stampeding upstairs.

"Surely that Dollond girl hasn't still got them all round her?" Polly exploded. "Telling them what a new place Morcove is going to be—now that her mother is in charge?"

Pam gave her serene smile.

"Perhaps Miss Merrick is having to listen to the lecture, too!"

Polly laughed.

"I can see Miss Merrick putting up with a lot of talk like that! But now—I wonder if Betty's come up yet?"

Betty, who might very likely have been in Study No. 12, was not in her own study either, so it was obvious that she had been detained downstairs whilst seeking that wanted address.

"Very funny," Pam laughed, "if Betty is being lectured with the same sort of talk from Mrs. Dollond! Hallo, here comes Madge and Tess."

The three sauntered up the corridor to meet these two chums, whose usually serious faces held scornful looks.

"We came away," Madge said in a very significant tone. "But—I don't know what the school is coming to!"

"Why, how do you mean?" Polly jerked.

"Miss Merrick came in and—well, just hinted in that nice way of hers that we ought to get to our studies now. But that Dollond girl said she was sure the headmistress didn't want us to bother about anything to-night. Anyway, Madeleine Dollond wanted us to see the room she's got—next door to the one that is Miss Somerfield's. Quite a lot of them have gone along."

"But did Miss Merrick like her authority being so flouted?" Judy exclaimed.

"She did not," Tess frowned. "But she is a lady—and Madeleine Dollond isn't! Somehow, I don't like the look of things," Tess added, passing into the study which she and Madge shared.

Madge herself nodded a "See you later" to the others and joined Tess in that study. Then Polly and Pam and Judy separated for the time being. The madcap was the only one to go to Study No. 12, where for a minute or two she busied herself with some unpacking.

Then the unusual absence of all other chums suddenly took disagreeable effect, and she plumped down into a chair as if her spirits had suddenly sunk.

But now Betty came in.

"It mayn't be my study, but there is room for me at present!" was her prompt comment, given with a wry smile. "You know where Paula and Naomer are? Polly, it sort of staggered me—when I came away from Mrs. Dollond's room just now. Madeleine Dollond must have got most of the Form in some room next to the headmistress."

"For part two of the lecture: 'How to Run Morcove,' I wonder you didn't go in, Betty!"

"I'm afraid," said Betty gravely. "I had had enough of talk like that from Madeleine Dollond's mother. Is Madeleine herself inclined to—"

"Inclined! She's full of it. And according to her, we needn't trouble about the morning! Just do as you please!"

Betty nodded.

"I got that address, anyway. And I am going to get that letter to Miss Somerfield into the post-box. I'll write it here."

Instantly the captain was seated at the table, and as the wording of the formal note had been settled at the meeting, Betty should not have been more than five minutes, at most, getting the missive written and ready for the post.

But Polly, giving a glance to her best of chums now and then, noticed a strange resting of the pen time after time. Betty sat there as if her mind had strayed from the task in hand.

"Penny, Betty!"

"What? Oh—nothing!"

But these two had not been such close friends for so long that Polly could be put off with such an evasive answer as that.

"There is something, Betty! Now, what is it?"

"Oh—don't pester me, dear! I'll just finish this."

Betty's pen raced on after that. But again Polly was aware that there had been no promise to confide the "something" when the letter should be finished.

Suddenly, just as Betty was gumming up the envelope, they both heard peals of laughter, a jabber of mirthful voices—a sample of that boisterousness which had been so noticeably absent.

With pounding steps, some of the girls who had

just come upstairs came careering down the corridor.

The door of Study No. 12 flew open and Naomer bounded in, followed by a beaming Paula and gurgling Bunny.

### Too Good to be True!

"BEKAS, ze greatest joke in all your life!" yelled Naomer deliriously. "A treat, too gorjus! Ooo, I hope we go on like eet! Bekas—"

"What do you mean—treat?" Polly demanded, with one of her humorous scowls. "Treat—to be kept hanging round that Dollond girl, listening to a lot of—"

"Wrong! Bekas, we all went to her room, and she asked us if we'd like something, and she touched ze bell, and we all said what we would like—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Yes, wather, haw, haw, haw! Oh, deah, most amusing! And most agreeable, too—yes, wather!"

"Here, let's get this right," Polly said, after exchanging a glance with Betty. "You mean to say you had a hand-round?"

"Biscuits and milk, yes!" Bunny giggled.

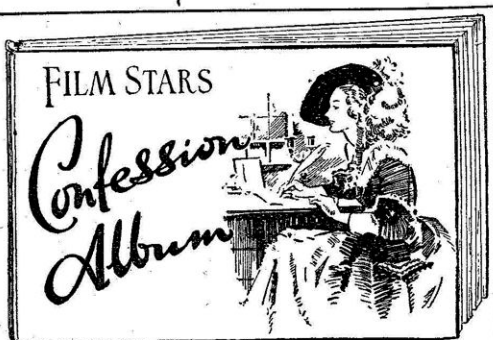
"No!" cried Naomer. "Bekas, I said I would prefer a cup of cocoa. And I got him, too—gorjus! Ze parlourmaid had to bring him! She had to bring everything!"

"And you should have seen Ellen the parlourmaid's face, when the order was given," Bunny bleated, lying back in a chair. "Oh, very funny—ha, ha, ha! We're to have biscuits and milk every evening—"

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"And at break in the morning, if we want it, bai Jove!" Paula further imparted to an amazed Betty and Polly. "Not that I am likely to require any extra meals. I hev always found Morcovve diet sufficiently nouwishing, yes, wather!"

She shook up a cushion.

"But I must say, galls," settling her pretty head again, "I welcome the new wule—a half-hour break in the mawning, instead of the old fifteen minutes, bai Jove!"

"Half an hour!" gasped Polly. "Well, that's all right, of course! Oh, I've no quarrel with that! More time for games!"

"For those who want games," Bunny mirthfully qualified. "There's to be no compulsion!"

"There never has been," Betty put in sharply.

"No, but now—oh, it's all to be different," Bunny laughed on. "Hallo, Pam!"

There were nods of welcome for Madge and Tess as well as Pam, these three girls having quietly entered. Then Bunny continued:

"The temporary headmistress—so her daughter says—wants us to remember what we will be some day!"

"How can some of us know what we will be?" asked Madge staidly.

"Of course not, and that's the scream," Bunny rippled. "Anyway, we are to prepare for being beautiful ladies!"

"She said that?" Pam voiced incredulously.

"Words to that effect, as the policeman said," Bunny nodded.

But Pam suddenly walked out, deep in thought, and then Betty picked up the letter to take it down to the school post-box.

Out in the corridor, these two who had just left Study No. 12 became aware of a vast amount of

hilarity going on in other studies. Not the least doubt; the new regime with which Morcovve was threatened was amusing some girls as much as it was enchanting others.

"Pam, got a moment?"

"Yes, Betty."

Reaching Pam's study, they both went in, closing the door behind them.

"Pam, it's something—something I don't like to tell Polly at present, but I feel I can tell you, and ought to."

"Sit down, won't you, Betty?"

"You know as well as I do, Pam, that Polly's the dearest girl in the world, but she is so fiery. She can't wait to be certain about a thing, and so very often she tells the world before she should."

"What is it, then, that you are afraid to tell her?"

"Something that I have already begun to suspect," was Betty's whispered answer. "The temporary headmistress and her daughter are both frauds!"

### Under Suspicion!

PAM only lifted her brows. She was not a girl to go in for extravagant signs of surprise.

"What makes you think that, Betty? I've been feeling they must both be cranks. But—frauds?"

"When I was with the headmistress just now, asking for that address, she kept me talking. And so I happened to notice some typed papers on her desk and some photographs of a large house. The papers gave particulars of the house, which is for sale. I could see a line that said: 'Suitable for a high-class school.'"

Judging by her looks, Pam might not have been grasping the other's meaning at all. Yet after a moment's silence came the understanding murmur:

"If that's the idea, Betty, how artful; how surprising!"

"If? That's just it, Pam. You see, this is only a sudden suspicion, and so I must be careful not to say anything in front of Polly. She's so outspoken always. We'd have her suddenly telling Madeleine to her face—and then the fat would be in the fire! But, mind you, as soon as I can be more certain, then I shall feel free to tell Polly and anyone else."

Pam took a thoughtful turn about the study. Then she stood still.

"The thing to do, Betty, if only we can, is to find out if Mrs. Dollond really is a possible buyer of that property. If she is, then it's certain she does mean to open a girl's school."

"And so hopes to get a good start off by taking a lot of girls away from Morcovve!"

Betty's subdued voice was fiercely scornful. "Pam, it will be an abominable thing if girls get so dazzled by the nice time Mrs. Dollond gives them here at Morcovve that when she opens her own school they will want to be sent there."

"I know what you mean, Betty. Morcovve's loss is to be the new school's gain. It's a real danger. A good many girls will simply fall for all that is being held out to them. They won't see that it is just a cunning dodge—"

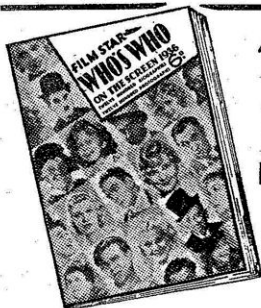
"Throwing a sprat to catch a whale!"

"That's it," Pam nodded. "How fortunate, Betty, that you saw those papers on the desk just now. Otherwise we wouldn't have seen the danger."

"She covered them over, by the way. I thought that seemed a bit suspicious."

"Where is this property that she may be going to buy?"

"Only two miles from here; the main road out



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of Barncombe, going to Swanlake, takes you past it. Southmoor."

"Southmoor? Oh, of course, I know that place well! Betty, the first chance we get we'll do a run on our bikes and call there. A big property like that," Pam whispered on, "is bound to have a caretaker. We could find out by asking questions carefully."

"That's the idea!" Betty was eagerly agreeing, when they both heard someone in the corridor asking loudly to be directed to Pam Willoughby's study.

"That's the Dollond girl now, Pam. She's coming to speak to you."

Next instant the door opened, and Madeleine Dollond came in with a kind of gushing dive which the Form was soon to recognise as being peculiarly her own.

"Oh, Pam Willoughby! I'm told that you're fond of riding. If you like to have a pony over from Swanlake, that will be quite all right. We shall be starting a riding school this term in connection with Morcove."

"No, thanks," Pam smiled, looking at Betty.

"But why not?" Madeleine Dollond gushed on. "Better surely than hockey and other rough games. So much more ladylike."

How that word jarred upon Pam.

"I've no desire to be ladylike," she serenely announced. "And hockey is good enough for me in term-time. I think when you've had time to see how we do fill up our time you'll realise that there is no great call for changes."

"Oh, but we are dropping lots of things! I don't think some of you girls understand the intention—"

"The captain and I quite understand—at least, so we feel."

Again Pam looked at Betty, smiling. Madeleine Dollond should now have turned to Betty, but she continued to ignore her. And Betty thought, "She has no use for me!"

Betty went a few moments later to her own study, as captain, simply because she felt troubled about coming changes which must, in the long run, be so bad for the school she loved. After some tidying up activities she sat down to think—hard.

The assertive voice of Madeleine came in to Betty frequently whilst sitting here in the study. It seemed as if the headmistress' daughter was doing a round of all the studies—ingratiating herself, dining at one batch of girls and another that Morcove was going to be so different this term. So much better.

"Better?" thought Form-captain Betty. "I doubt it!"

Suddenly her own door opened, and it would have been Madeleine Dollond who entered, only as soon as she saw who was here she said a hasty "Sorry!" and went away.



"It isn't usual for anyone to intrude during a Form meeting," Betty explained. Madeleine Dollond tossed her head. "I'm different from a Form-mistress," she answered icily. "Don't worry about me!"

Another sign!

Then came the voices of Madeleine and the Form-mistress, and instantly Betty was up from her chair and opening the door to be able to hear better. It did not mean eavesdropping. Miss Merrick and the Dollond girl were having a little argument that was not of a private nature. Betty only listened because, in her love for the school, she wanted to hear how Miss Merrick came off in the argument. Miss Merrick, the Form's adored mistress, was for Morcove—the old Morcove—first and last.

And, after all, it seemed that the Form-mistress did not get the last word. A clash—there had been a definite clash. Result: A loud-voiced remark from Madeleine closing the discussion:

"Then I must refer you to the headmistress, that is all, Miss Merrick. I know my mother wishes it to be as I have said—not your way."

"And that," Betty muttered to herself, "bears out what I was thinking just now. Miss Merrick—in fact, all the under-mistresses—may be helpless. As paid assistants, they must obey or go! Well, I don't get any pay as captain. That makes a difference. But I'm sorry for Miss Merrick."

Next morning proved an eye-opener for the entire Form. Even the class-room was no longer Miss Merrick's to rule in the old accustomed way.

For one reason and another, Madeleine Dollond was in and out every ten minutes. Betty & Co. could tell that Miss Merrick's authority was greatly diminished already. The way things were going, it would soon be a thing of the past.

Although, however, only a few heartless girls, such as Fay and Edna Denver, failed to feel sorry now for the Form-mistress, a good many scholars could pity her and yet feel hugely amused.

Human nature being what it is, was it a wonder that girls chuckled over drastic changes which promise to give them such an easy time?

This morning the Forms had all enjoyed the extra length for "break." They came out of class at midday to find a new time-table posted on the green baize boards, and according to this there was to be practically no afternoon school.

Instead of classes the most fascinating alternatives were offered.

Nor were the mornings still strictly reserved for hard work in school.

A riding-class was to be formed, and girls belonging to it would come out of school at half-past ten to change into riding kit and then be off and away on the saddle.

Then there was to be more attention paid to dancing. Three times a week the school was to have the afternoon use of the ball-room at the Headland.

"Oh, come on out to the field, some of us," Betty suddenly suggested. "A bit of hockey prancer, girls."

"Right-ho!"

The captain's rallying cry was being answered by more than her own particular chums. Even so, the muster out of doors, a couple of minutes later, was a meagre one.

Betty ran back to beat up a few more. It was the first time, ever, that there had not been enough players offering to make up two sides.

Indoors again, she soon found most of the girls who used to be off out to the field directly after the midday dismiss. Some agreed to come along with her as soon as she appealed to them, others needed more persuasion. They were not so sure, they said, that they wanted as much hockey as last term.

But at last the little white ball was in play. A smart bully-off had started one of those bustling games which, even as mere practice, Morcove had always delighted in.

The old enthusiasm began to manifest itself. The players were not sparing themselves. Many a laugh of pure enjoyment was a panted laugh.

Then suddenly there was an arresting cry:

"Stop, please! Just a moment, girls!"

They all, checking to a standstill, stared in one direction. Here was Madeleine Dollond—butting in!

"Bother!" Polly fumed, standing a pace or two from Betty, who simply kept mute and still.

"What on earth does she want now!"

"Sorry!" Madeleine Dollond pleaded, advancing across the grass. The apology was to all of them, not to Betty as captain.

"Er—Biddy Loveland! Aren't you down for the dancing this afternoon? And you, too, Pat Lawrence?"

"Yes, Miss Dollond."

"Then do you think you should tire yourselves now? If I were you, I wouldn't; make yourselves unfit for anything."

Betty walked towards the intruder.

"We have always looked upon hockey as something to keep us fit."

"I dare say! One of the old ideas," said Madeleine Dollond, with a toss of her pretty head. "A rough game—thick ankles—we know all about hockey. It will be better," she called out, turning her back upon Betty, "if you all stop now. You've had enough."

Most of the players turned to their captain, to

find her walking round so as to place herself in front of Madeleine Dollond!

"Miss Dollond, I don't see how we can meet other schools, this term, on the hockey field, unless we practise!"

"No? Well, you mayn't be going to meet other schools—on the hockey field, anyhow!" was the reply that was meant to crush Betty. "Games aren't everything."

"But—"

"Oh, I can't argue!"

With that, in a laughing tone, Madeleine Dollond stooped to pick up the white ball. She walked away with it, insisting:

"Come on, Biddy—Pat—all of you!"

Polly, as one of those who were openly refusing to budge, flung down her hockey stick.

"Rotten!" she said out loud.

"Wait a bit," Betty said, deadly calm.

And she, the captain, was suddenly seen to race across to the schoolhouse.

She came back in less than two minutes, throwing up a fresh hockey ball to catch it, again and again, as she walked past Madeleine Dollond and the few girls who had left the field.

"Here we are," Betty said, dropping the fresh ball to the turf when she had rejoined the other players.

"She's turning round to look!" Bunny gurgled. "Let her look," said Betty, taking the bully-off with Pam. "I've no objection!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Betty and Pam did not fail to get to "Southmoor," for the urgent reason that was in their minds, later than four o'clock on the afternoon of this same day.

#### "This House For Sale!"

"NOW, Pam, I wonder! Is there a caretaker on the place? If not—we're done!"

That was Form-captain Betty's anxious murmur, as she and her confidante hopped down from their bicycles at the entrance to the private drive leading up to the empty house.

"Here's an agent's board, Betty; let's see what it says."

The vacant property was important enough to have justified a lengthy notice in painted letters on a big black board. "This Desirable Mansion" was offered with so many acres of grounds as being "very suitable for a School or other Institution."

Some general particulars were given, and then came a line which caused Betty and Pam to feel that their luck was out—badly.

No caretaker living on the premises, after all! For keys, one had to apply to a house agent in Barncombe.

"So that's that, Pam! What a rotten shame!"

"Yes, but we might take a look round, anyhow?"

"Oh, rather! For a cert," Betty continued ruefully as they wheeled their bikes up the drive, "a caretaker could have decided us about that suspicion. If the Dollond pair are angling for this property, they have already had one look at it. If only there had been a caretaker to show them round, he would have known by their talk whether they meant to open a school or not. And so we could have got to know, through him—Hallo, though!"

It was quite an excited breaking off by Betty—at the sound of a car slowing on the road as if it were going to turn in here.

Pam also had noticed that significant sound.



Like Betty, she checked and looked back towards the entrance gateway; and then both girls, quick as a flash, were rushing their machines into concealment behind some shrubs.

"I do believe it's the Dollonds!" Betty breathed.

It took them a moment more to put the bicycles safely out of sight; in the next instant after that the two girls themselves were crouching down—hiding.

Miss Somerfield's own car it was which turned in at the gate—one so familiar to Betty and Pam that the first sound of it, just now, had caused them to think that it might have brought the Dollonds here this afternoon for another look over the property.

The two girls took it for granted that the temporary headmistress was having the use of the car during Miss Somerfield's absence abroad.

And now the car went gliding past on the weedy drive, and the sheltered watchers saw Madeleine Dollond at the wheel and her mother lolling in a back seat.

It was a thrilling sight for Betty and Pam, when it surely meant that there WAS something in their grave suspicions after all!

Instantly the car was gone from view, round a curve in the drive, and the two girls met each other's eyes.

"Shall we get after them. Pam?"

"Oh, rather. They have the keys, I suppose."

"Come on, then!"

Nor were the two girls experiencing the slightest scruple about trying to overhear any talk. Things had already come to such a pass at Moreove School that it would be doing that school a great disservice not to seize this chance.

Moreove—their own old school, menaced like this! Threatened with a changed "regime," the effect of which could only result in lasting harm—and all to suit the cunning, selfish plans of the Dollonds!

Every step of the way to the forlorn-looking mansion, Betty and Pam had bushes to screen them. They came, stealthily, to where they could see the car, left standing in front of the porch.

A front door, badly in need of painting, was ajar, with a bunch of keys dangling at the lock. The Dollonds had gone in; their voices issuing faintly from an empty room on the ground floor.

Caution made the two chums wait until they knew that mother and daughter had gone upstairs. Then, dodging behind one shrub and another, slipping this way and that adroitly, they got to the front wall of the house.

A final darting rush to the porch, and they were in!

On tiptoe they stole to the foot of the stairs at the back of the large entrance hall.

In that vast, empty house the slightest word to be spoken was bound to assume a hollow loudness. After a few moments, talk came down to the listening girls.

"And this room, mother—it would make another dormitory?"

"Oh, yes; sleep six in there, easily!"

"Or, would it be better to have down the partition and make one large dormi of this room and the next?"

"We might do that, Madeleine, certainly."

"Best to avoid pokiness anywhere. We don't want girls complaining—after what they've been used to at Moreove—"

"Sh!"

"Oh, it's all right, mother. Who can hear us!"

"You left the front door open downstairs."

"Yes, but who is there to come in? Anyway, we'd know; in an empty house, the slightest sound carries! Let's go on."

At the foot of the bare staircase, Betty and Pam suddenly took swift retiring steps—on tiptoe.

The flurry of their stealthy return to the bicycles was at an end in a minute, and then came the first exchange of whispers.



"Aren't you down for dancing this afternoon?" Madeleine Dollond demanded of Biddy Loveland and Pat Lawrence, as the hockey players stopped. It was clear to Betty Barton and the others that the daughter of the temporary headmistress only wanted to interfere.

"You satisfied, Pam?"

"Satisfied!"

"Then there's no need to keep this to ourselves any longer. Our chums must be told—Polly included, of course. I don't care now if Polly does say things to Madeleine Dollond herself, in some burst of anger. I am in the mood to do just the same myself," Betty added, with a fierce smile. "The sooner an end is put to their game the better."

Remounting outside the gateway, the chums pedalled away at top speed.

As there was a risk of the Dollonds overtaking them on any hasty run back to the school, Betty and Pam took care to go by back-roads little used by motors. This meant a little longer for the journey; with the result that they finally entered Study No. 12 to find only Paula and Naomer there, and a little tea left in the pot.

"Bekas, what ze diggings, we waited and waited!" Naomer shrilly explained. "Wondering where you two had gone, all on your own and without saying a word! Polly is disgrusted, I can tell you!"

"Where is Polly now?" Betty blandly inquired. "Gone down to ze gym with Bunny and some of ze others," Naomer announced. "Bekas, zey were feeling ze more everybody is encouraged to slack about, ze more zey feel like doing ze same as last term."

"Pwecisely," beamed Paula, from the depths of the best armchair. "I like comfowt myself, as you zeals know. I shall nevah be one for the stenuous life—wather not, bai Jove! But theah are, geals, innovations this tewm which I can hawdly appwove!"

"Don't you worry," chuckled Betty. "It won't be long before Morcove is its old self again."

And, as soon as she had gulped down some luke-warm tea, she hurried round to her own study, there to sit down and prepare her team-list.

Ten minutes later she was affixing the list to the green-baize boards in the front hall downstairs.

The names were those of girls who were the best players to be found in the Form. Up till now the custom had been for Betty, as captain, to draw up a team-list, and any girl whose name figured in it was considered to be "warned" to be on the field at the appointed time.

Custom had also decreed that a player should not ask to be let off except for urgent reasons. As it had always been considered to be an honour to be in the team-list, such a thing as backing out except on good grounds had been almost unknown. But now—

Was there to be any trouble in keeping the team together, as the result of dazzling counter-attractions which the new regime offered?

Even as Betty turned away from the green-baize board, leaving the list of names on view, she met Biddy Loveland and Pat Lawrence sauntering forward to take a look.

"Are we down to play to-morrow, Bètty?"

"You are—why?" smiled the captain.

Biddy, who was Morcove's millionairess, looked at Pat, who was another girl with a golden future. They both laughed.

"Hockey's all right, Bètty," said Pat. "But one can't be in two places at once. There's the first dancing class at the Headland ball-room to-morrow!"

"As it's the first, we thought we'd go, just to see what it would be like," Biddy said innocently. "Can't you replace us, Bètty?"

"Now, you two, what's this?" Betty good-

temperedly appealed to them. "A couple of my best players—"

"But how can we, Bètty?"

"Surely the dancing class doesn't clash with the hockey match?" Betty cried. "Bully-off at two-fifteen, and the dancing, I suppose, not until half-past three, at the earliest?"

"Three, we were told—"

"What!"

"And we're to be ready at three."

Betty, calmly but spiritedly, turned and pointed to the team-list on the board.

"There's my team for to-morrow," she insisted, with a good many girls besides Biddy and Pat to hear her, for others had gathered round. "I don't expect any girl to put the dancing before the hockey. It's not fair to have made the two things clash, and as we've always given up the first part of the halfer to hockey, I think it should still be so."

She walked away, leaving an impressed crowd of girls in a murmurous state. Not a word of Betty's was resented. The reasonableness of her argument was recognised. "Of course, she's right—trust Betty!" was the tone of the talk.

But there was, at the same time, a good deal of perplexity.

"Bother," Biddy frowned prettily, "one doesn't know quite what to do now! It's all so—changed!"

"What to do?" flashed Polly, who was suddenly here, having come in from the gym with Bunny and Judy. "Do the right thing by the Form, of course—and play for it!"

"Yet, after all," Pat demurred, "dancing—"

"D'you think I don't like dancing?" Polly flared out. "But I don't want it at a quarter-past two on a fine afternoon! Goodness, have some of you got the rot already as the result of—"

"Sh, Polly!"

It was a whispered warning which Polly received with a loud:

"Don't care!" as she herself saw Madeleine Dollond coming by in the hall.

The madcap's dislike of the Dollonds—mother and daughter as well—was simply due, at present, to innovations which seemed to her both silly and demoralising. To give point to that loud "Don't care!" Polly walked away as the young lady suddenly diverted her steps to go close to the notice-board.

But next moment Polly was flashing round to return to the little crowd of scholars. She had heard Madeleine Dollond break off from some winning remarks to exclaim angrily:

"What's this!"—meaning the notice on the board.

"It's the team-list for hockey to-morrow, Miss Dollond."

"Hockey! And I say there is to be NO hockey!" was the authoritative cry which answered the crowd's murmur. "We have something better to do than play hockey! With all our facilities, to talk to me of—hockey!"

And her right arm flashed to its full length as she angrily tore down the team-list, which became a tattered paper, falling to the floor.

Whipping about, Polly raced to the stairs. Two at a time she ran up flight after flight to the Form quarters. Breathless and wild-eyed, she reached the captain's study and burst in with the panted cry:

"Betty, your team-list is torn down!"

A pen dropped from Betty's hand. She hitched



As the car glided past, Betty and Pam saw that Madeleine Dollond was at the wheel while her mother sat in the back. The watchers had their own suspicions as to why these two were so interested in the empty house, and they meant to confirm them if possible.

back her chair and stood up, giving Polly a round-eyed stare.

"By whom?"

"That Dollond girl! I never did know anything like it!" Polly stormed on. "Does she think she is running the school? A dozen of us saw her tear down the list!"

"But why? Does she think she should have been shown it first, or what?"

"Oh, no-o-o, Betty! It's worse than that! She says—NO hockey to-morrow!"

"All right, Polly. You go to Study No. 12. I shall have something to tell you and the others when I get back. Shan't be long, either."

"Gosh," the fiery one fumed, "I'm feeling worked up, I know! But—Betty! If we are not to get any hockey—not to play any other schools, this term—"

"Don't you worry," smiled the captain, tapping her best of chums on the shoulder soothingly. "There'll be hockey. There's going to be a hockey match—to-morrow!"

And the step which took Betty out of the room, was as determined as her words had been.

### Battle Royal!

IT was that fine room taken over by Madeleine Dollond, to be her very own, which Betty boldly entered after a formal tap at the door. "Miss Dollond—"

"What? Oh, not now, Betty Barton—"

"But I'm afraid it must be now, please." And Betty, having closed the door behind her, walked forwards.

"Well, what is it, Betty?"

"You have torn down my team-list from the notice-board."

"I have."

"Then I want you to know that I am going to put up another."

Madeleine Dollond jumped up from her chair. "How dare you—a scholar—a mere junior at that!"

"Simply because you and your mother have dared to do things that can only harm Morcove School—that is, if they are allowed to go on. But the whole thing has got to stop."

They were words which left the listener agasp with amazement.

"Are you mad, Betty Barton! Go away, this instant, and—"

"Oh, no," said Betty, growing deadly calm, as she always did in any big crisis. "If I did go away, it would only be to go to Mrs. Dollond. But you can easily tell her from me—that I say you have got to stop—"

"You say—you!"

"Yes, I—who have found you out!"

Another telling shot. Madeleine Dollond recoiled and assumed a shrinking posture, as a duelist might who has broken his rapier.

"I know what the game is," Betty pressed on fiercely. "You and your mother are going to do all you can to get the girls to prefer your methods to the old ones. So that, when your time is up at Morcove School, lots of scholars will want to follow you to the school you will be opening! You reckon that, by that time, they'll be so demoralised—"

"Demoralised! I never was so insulted—"

"Morcove was never so shamefully tricked as it has been by you and your mother. I am not going to call her the headmistress. She is simply Mrs. Dollond to me! When I think what a fine headmistress we have in Miss Somerfield, and of all that Miss Somerfield has done for the school—"

"Now, stop! Not another word from you—you parcel of impudence!" stamped Madeleine Dollond, looking ready to strike Betty across the

cheek. "Get out! Get back to your study—"

"Well, I will go, now that I have given you fair warning! I only wanted you to know that I am not going to stand by and see Morcove ruined! Drop the whole thing—let Morcove go on as it used to do, and as I'm sure Miss Somerfield wants it to do, and nothing more will be said. But," Betty added, drawing off to the door, "you just try tearing down my fresh team-list, then you'll see!"

"Stop—come back! Close that door again!"

Betty took returning steps so that she and Madeleine Dollond were fronting each other again. There was no more than six inches between Betty's held-up chin and the face of the much older, taller girl, thrust forwards with an expression of intense fury.

"You deserve a thrashing, Betty Barton—and I would be the one to give it you, only I must realise that you are making a fatal, stupid mistake! Oh, I see what it means," and a blustering laugh followed the words. "Naturally, you are up in arms—imagining that mother and I mean harm to a school you love."

"It's not imagination—"

"I say it is—it must be! My mother's qualifications for the temporary appointment were the best! She—"

"Oh, no doubt; but you are going to start a new school—in this district—"

"And that's where you are wrong, and I would box your ears, you young monkey, only it is so obvious you have been listening to some stupid rumour—"

"No. I have simply found out for myself. What about Southmoor?"

"Southmoor?" Madeleine Dollond echoed after losing her breath for a moment. Then she burst into forced laughter. "Oh, now I see—ha, ha, ha! Oh, very funny—ha, ha, ha! Just because you happened to see some estate agent's particulars of that property on my mother's desk the other evening! You jumped to the conclusion—"

"I admit I suspected, even then. But I waited for proof, and I got proof—this afternoon. You were both at Southmoor, looking over the property. You were both talking as if you had as good as bought the property."

"Go on," nodded Madeleine Dollond, affecting pure amusement. "It really is so funny! Except that I don't know that it does a Morcove scholar much credit to have spied as you must have spied!"

"You won't get me to feel ashamed," Betty calmly returned. "I had to obtain proof—"

"And you didn't get it, after all! No, you didn't!" came Madeleine Dollond's passionate assertion. "You thought you did, but you didn't—see, Miss Clever? Since you know so much, just let me tell you this—to set your mind at rest! Mother and I have had no idea of buying Southmoor! We were simply asked to look over it for a friend who is interested but who could not come so far to see it."

"Then how is it, Miss Dollond, that you were talking about rooms that could be made into dormitories? For girls who would have been accustomed to Morcove's much larger dormitories?"

"You never heard any such remarks!"

"Excuse me, but I and my chum—for there were two of us—"

"Oh! Two of you, were there? All right!" faged Madeleine Dollond, taking a violent turn upon the carpet. "All right, then! Two of you, ready to stick to this false charge—for the sake of 'saving Morcove'!"

She faced Betty again and laughed sneeringly.

"The other girl—she also prefers the old regime?"

"Definitely. If you would like me to fetch her—for I'd prefer that she spoke for herself—"

"It doesn't matter in the least," was the drawled answer. "And you can both tell as many girls as you like, for all I care. In any case, the school has got to know that it will have you to thank for all the greater strictness that must now be enforced!"

There was just time for Betty to see an ugly hint in all this; then Madeleine Dollond was facing her again, saying in a tone of hatred:

"The best answer to your false story will be not a single indulgence for any girl after this—in case it should be said that she is being 'demoralised'! No lessening of school work—just the opposite, now! Games—and compulsory games, too! That is the best answer, as I say, and that is the answer I shall get my mother to make! So you can put that fresh team-list on the board; only, the time for play to commence will be half-past one, not two-fifteen. Nothing 'demoralising' in that, I hope?" was the finishing sneer.

Betty heeled round to walk to the door. She had purposely omitted to give a scholar's bow, since she felt not the slightest respect for this girl who was such a power behind the throne—a

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girl who was simply running the school to her own liking!

But, before the Form captain reached the door, she was pursued and gripped by a hand which dragged her round, so that she had to look again into Madeleine Dollond's fierce face.

"And you yourself!" the young woman hissed. "If I liked, I could deprive you of the captaincy. But I see a bigger punishment than that in store you now! Just you wait, my girl! Wait till the whole school knows that it has Betty Barton to thank for changes that will have to come into force—now! You can go away, and you can take that—to be going on with!"

They stood away from each other, Betty with a hand to that side of her head which had received a swift and violent slap. For a few moments it was a battle of looks, no further word being spoken.

Then the captain went away, taking with her a mental photograph of Madeleine Dollond's face in all its intensity of personal hatred, whilst that savage cry: "Just you wait!" seemed to echo again and again in Betty's mind.

**H**ALF an hour later, there was excitement everywhere in Morcove's great schoolhouse.

The first Betty knew of it was when she and her chums had their private talk in Study No. 12 interrupted by the bursting in of Pat Lawrence with the news:

"First bell in the morning—to be half an hour earlier!"

"Who says so?"

"It's on the board downstairs—a changed timetable," Pat went on. "Oh, it's going to be rotten now—perfectly sickening! Just when we were reckoning to have an easier time!"

Another girl rushed in.

"Betty—all of you! Only a five-minutes' break in future! Cruel shame, when we thought we were to—"

"And drill at twelve o'clock, every day!" was the cry from yet another girl, just arrived at the Study No. 12 doorway. "Awful!"

To the chums, as they faced that doorway of theirs, it seemed as if a crowd were rapidly forming, each girlish mind in a staggered, horrified state.

"Afternoon school—from two till four now!"

"What!"

"And those dancing classes are off!"

"There's to be no tea in the studies either!"

"Compulsory games, Betty! Shame, shame—"

"Well, girls," Betty made herself heard at last, "it is no use coming to me. I'm sorry, but—"

"Oh—'sorry'!" she was caught up by a sneering voice; and there was Fay Denver, with her sister Edna, suddenly to the fore in the excited crowd. "Why didn't you leave well alone, Betty? That's why I have come here, to say to your face that it's all your fault!"

"As it is—it is, girls!" Edna Denver fiercely addressed the girls amongst whom she and her sister stood. "Fay and I have been told so, by Madeleine Dollond!"

"What!"

"Oh, shut up!" Polly shouted at the Denver pair. "You don't know everything, and so—"

"We know that we have Betty to thank for it all!" Edna yelled. "Dash it all, isn't Madeleine Dollond to be believed? She says that Betty,

here, has made such wicked charges against her and her mother that their only way of answering them is to make life for all of us stricter, harder

"Oh, oh!" was the mob-like cry. "Shame!"

"And I dare Betty to deny it!"

"That was Edna again. She and her sister were glorying in having this stick with which to beat the captain. All their animosity towards her had lived over from last term.

"That's all she has done for us as captain—booh!" Fay jeered. "Well, I for one never voted for her, as you know!"

Even as that spiteful voice broke off, many of the girls who had voted for Betty began to booh her. Looks and voices alike were those of a mad-dened crowd, and suddenly Polly strode to the door and slammed it in their faces.

As for Betty, she was immovable—calm as ever, quite prepared to go on facing that seething mass of schoolgirl humanity.

"Booh! Shame, Betty—shame! Booh!"

"Get out, the lot of you!" Polly shouted to the crowd outside. "It's some of you who should be ashamed—"

"Booh!"

Bunny wedged a chair under the lock.

For a moment all in the study could tell how the outer knob was being rattled and the door itself shaken, in the effort to force the chair away.

The attempt failed, and then some louder boohing went on, only dying away to give place to an aggrieved murmuring.

Betty herself said nothing.

Her thoughts, like theirs most likely, were far too deep for words!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

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