

MAGNIFICENT STAGE-SCHOOL SERIAL **BEGINS INSIDE**

# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d

No. 784, Vol. 31.  
Week ending  
February 15th, 1936.  
EVERY TUESDAY.



**"You'll Return to  
School at Once,  
Naomer!"**

A dramatic incident  
from the grand, long  
Morcove story in this  
issue.

There are **FIVE ENTHRALLING** Stories in This Issue

To the Tyrant Girl Who Is Out to Rule the School, Betty Barton's Command Is—



### The Form Tyrant

"PENS down, girls!"

The pleasant chiming of Morcove School were at this moment ding-donging the four quarters.

Twelve o'clock!

And what a joyous moment it should have been for scholars who had been hard at work all the morning. But things were not what they used to be at Morcove.

Suddenly the class-room door was opened by a tall girl who was not much younger than the Form's own youthful mistress.

A self-important step, matching the intruder's self-important air, brought her across from the doorway to where the teacher was standing at her desk.

"Miss Merrick!" was the very authoritative remark. "You are not forgetting? These girls have to go out now to a half-hour's drill. In the gym—I shall be there— Pardon?"

Miss Merrick began a polite protest, but Madeleine Dollond soon aired her superior authority by interrupting.

"Miss Merrick, it doesn't matter what you think! Drill at twelve o'clock every day is in the new time-table, and drill they must! Let there be no more talk of what the class used to do. It does not make for good discipline!"

Sauntering back to the door, the speaker repeated loudly as she went out:

"In five minutes—I shall be there to see you drill them all!"

"Books away, girls," the Form-mistress voiced very quietly; and as soon as all the flurrying sounds of desk-clearing had ended:

"You know the new time-table, girls—"

"Yes; sweetie!" exploded that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara. "Bekas, nuzzing but work—"

### Enthralling LONG COMPLETE Story of Betty Barton & Co., the Famous Chums of Morcove School

"Naomer, be silent, please! I don't want to have to punish you for speaking—"

"I wish you would, bekas, better a hundred lines to do, zan a lot of rotten drill! Bekas—"

"Sh! Naomer, you must NOT!"

Miss Merrick was smiling, whilst more than half the class tittered. As a royal scholar from a tiny desert kingdom in North Africa, Naomer had never yet been taken seriously, even in class. Even if she had not been the irrepressible imp that she was, obviously allowance would have had to be made, in fairness, for her foreign origin.

But now Madeleine Dollond came striding back into the class-room, her handsome eyes singling out Naomer for angry censure.

"You! Didn't I hear you, although I was outside—"

"Not zo bit of eet—unless you were listening when you shouldn't have been!"

"Stand up, girl, when I am speaking to you!" cried Madeleine Dollond, all the angrier now because of some further tittering. "What were you saying?"

Miss Merrick tried to intervene, but was waved away.

"Something about 'rotten drill'—wasn't that it?"

"Yes, bekas, so eet is rotten, to have to drill instead of getting games!" shriled Naomer. "Ze new time-table—he is a sweetie, and—"

"You will do one hundred lines—"

"Zank you! Bekas, zat will save me ze trouble of going out to drill—"

"It will not! You will do the drill, and then you will return to this class-room and do the lines! You hear me?"

Naomer put both hands to her ears as if she felt deafened.

"Impudence!" said Madeleine Dollond, and kept her eyes upon the dusky one for a few moments. Then:

"Well, Miss Merrick; come, come! How much longer?"

Miss Merrick's gaze, which had been resting sympathetically on Naomer, came back to the haughty Madeleine. A faint flush mantled her cheek. She realised only too well how her authority had dwindled. She dared not even demur at Naomer's punishment. She faced the class.

"The class—stand."

"No—NO!" was Madeleine Dollond's angry disapproval of a somewhat noisy uprising. "Sit! Now then! You will do it when I give the word, and see if that makes any difference. The class—STAND!"

This time the Form came to its feet with a sort of parade-ground crash!

"Sit!"

Madeleine Dollond waited for some tittering to subside; waited for the complete stillness which came at last, with many a girl shaking from inward laughter.

"We are going to have this right! If it takes an hour, we are going to do it as I wish it to be done! The class—Stand! Sit! The class," came once again with intenser fury, "STAND!"

This time the class rose with exaggerated care.

Madeleine Dollond must have realised that the girls were mocking her, by being so extremely careful not to make the faintest sound. But as she could not fasten upon any particular girl, to make an example of her, she turned to Miss Merrick with a triumphant:

"There, you see? A little more of that, Miss Merrick, and not so much indulgence! We do not want it to be said that the girls are being—demoralised!"

That last word, uttered very sarcastically, was accompanied by a glance at Betty Barton, who treated it with the smile that any cheap sneer deserves.

But Polly Linton, the dearest of all Betty's chums, felt maddened, knowing that Madeleine Dollond had conferred that look, hoping to put the captain in disfavour with the class as a whole.

"The cat," Polly said under her breath, as soon as the march-out was taking place. The class was leaving the class-room in two-and-two manner, and Betty and Polly were together. "Never mind, Betty dear!"

"Oh, I don't mind anything for myself," was the whispered response. "But the way even Miss Merrick is being treated now—"

"Yes, poor Miss Merrick," Polly softly raged. "And I suppose, if she does make a stand, she will be removed straight away. What a quandary for her!"

Betty nodded, nudging Polly not to talk any more. The Form, as it kept in step across the front hall to go out by the front door, was under the critical eye of Madeleine Dollond again.

Accordingly, every one of the girls made a point of being mock-fearfully silent.

Miss Merrick was coming on behind, but a few moments later they heard her calling gently:

"Girls, I am going to find the headmistress. Go on to the gym, and when you get there, get



into position for Swedish drill. Betty, you will stand in front till I come."

The captain and her best chum exchanged glances. So, Miss Merrick had suddenly decided to appeal to the temporary headmistress about this midday drilling! Bravo, Miss Merrick! But as for her being likely to get the infliction-removed—

"I ha'e me doots!" Polly expressed herself grimly.

The farther the Form marched away from the schoolhouse, the louder became the voices and the heavier the stamp-stamp of girlish feet in playful protest.

Another minute, and on the spacious floor of the gymnasium all the scholars were spaced out, while Betty, as captain, stood in front.

Very soon a bitter murmuring against her developed into loud complaints.

"It's all your fault, Betty!"

"Yes—booh! See what you've done for us—you, the captain!"

"The captain—the girl who has saved us from being demoralised!"

That word again. The same word which Madeleine Dollond had used, just now, whilst her look hinted that, if the Form felt the new and stricter time-table to be hard upon them all, let them blame Betty!

"Oh, shut up, some of you!" Polly flounced round in the front row. "We've had quite enough of—"

"Booh!"

The Denver sisters and a few others let ribald laughter follow this loud demonstration. But there were a dozen girls—and they were girls who really counted for something in the life of the Form—whom Betty could see frowning heavily, as if their sense of grievance against her pained them.

Miss Merrick, suddenly appearing upon the scene, looked dejected.

Yet even when Madeleine Dollond turned up, to

By Marjorie Stanton

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watch the class being put through some exercises, the Form-mistress kept perfectly calm, and every word of command was gently voiced.

It was from the Dollond girl herself that constant fault-finding came. There she was, all the time, not only criticising the girls, but often snapping at the Form-mistress on account of their alleged slackness.

Nor did she forget Naomer and those hundred lines that were to be written—before dinner! The dusky one could be seen, in due time, going in custody, as it were, back to the schoolhouse.

In the grip of Madeleine Dollond, she was marched back, to return to the class-room; and Betty and some others, by going to look through the glass of the class-room door, saw poor little Naomer being pushed into her seat—there to remain until the punishment-task was performed.

So, at any rate, it was supposed. But only five minutes later Naomer came prancing into Study No. 12 upstairs, in such a gleeful state that the one cry from her chums was:

"What, let off, kid? Splendid!"

"Let off? Not ze bit of eet!" was Naomer's shrill retort, after she had gaily slammed the door. "I just waited for her to go away, and zen—I just did ze bunk, zat is all!"

#### Naomer is Defiant

THESE would have been sudden peals of laughter in Study No. 12, if Naomer's chums had not instantly felt a good deal of concern as to how she might be made to suffer for this disobedience.

"Um!" grimaced Polly. "In that case, kid—where are you going to hide?"

"Yes, bai Jove!" gasped Paula Creel. "Good gwacious, Naomer, it's gwoos insubordination!"

"Mutiny!" said Bunny Trevor. "And you'll be shot at dawn!"

With Betty suddenly gone from the room, Polly and others were done with flippancies. They knew that the captain had gone away to her own study, round the corner, to be by herself. A chosen leader who had the cruel fact to face that already so many girls regretted having made her their choice!

"Poor Betty!" exclaimed Madge Minden, out of the depths of a heart that held much love for the captain. "When she has deserved so much better of the Form!"

"But I've an idea," said Polly, sitting upon the table edge, legs a-dangle. "We know very well that the Dollonds intended to make conditions very easy for the school, this term; it was to be simply do-as-you-like, so that girls would think: 'What a nice, kind headmistress! How nice to have her always!' And so, when Mrs. Dollond started her own school, lots of girls would have wanted to leave Morcove to follow her. But Betty put a spoke in the Dollonds' wheel there. She did a fine thing for Morcove School—"

"Yet the Form doesn't see that!"

"It won't be long before it does," the madcap answered Bunny. "It's my idea the Dollonds will still try to get a lot of Morcove girls for some school of their own—"

"But, Polly!" struck in Judy. "How do you make that out? I mean, it isn't going to make girls lose their heads over the Dollonds if this strictness goes on!"

"The Dollonds can have favourites," Polly said, hopping down from the table edge. "And that's what it will be, you see! Tyranny for some, but favouritism for others!"

"Oh, well," Bunny shrugged, "anyhow, we don't want girls who can stoop to accepting favours from a pair like that at Morcove. If they like to go to some other school, good riddance to them!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Geals like Fay and Edna—"

"Bekas—" Naomer was chiming in, when suddenly the door was thrown open to admit Madeleine Dollond!

"Now then, what's this?" demanded the girl who was running the school. "You!"—to Naomer. "You can't have done those lines!"

"I don't mean to do them, so zere!"

"You have been encouraged to show me impudence! The captain, no doubt—"

"Not ze bit of eet! Bekas, I know when I am being swended, wizout being told!"

For a moment Polly and others felt that Madeleine Dollond would box Naomer's ears. If there had been any such angry action, it is certain that the tyrant would have found all Naomer's chums intervening.

But Madeleine Dollond so far restrained herself as to point to the door, although she was in a quivering state of anger as she said:

"Girl! Either you will go straight back to the class-room now and do those lines, or you will not get your dinner!"

"Zank you! Much obliged for letting me know," Naomer said—and marched out of the study.

The others were very surprised. Knowing what Naomer was, for liking to be the first always to sit down to table, her cheeky answer was difficult to understand. It would have been more in accordance with her unruly nature if she had positively yelled out that she would NOT do the lines and would insist upon being given her dinner!

Madeleine flounced away, and her self-important stride took her round to Betty's study. Nothing could have been more domineering than the tone in which Madeleine Dollond began, even as she entered:

"In future, Betty Barton, you will keep to this study, and keep out of Study No. 12! A band of admirers, taking their lead from you, may have been all very well in Miss Somerfeld's time. Now that sort of thing must end!"

"But—"

"Oh, I can't argue with a junior!"

Yet the imperious girl, after turning to go out again, came back to the study-table, to give it emphasising rappings as she said fiercely:

"Either you will resign the captaincy, or you will keep strictly to this, the captain's study! That is all I have to say to you!"

Again a protesting word came to Betty's lips, but she kept silence, after all. Mute and still she stood, until the headmistress' daughter had gone away, then, with the same wonderful self-control that was hers, Betty unclenched her hands. She sat down. She smiled to herself.

"Wanting me to resign—that's it!" she shrewdly inferred. "Trying to force me! Right! Just as well to know it!"

MEANTIME, in the Form's class-room downstairs, Naomer had seated herself at one of the empty desks, and by the haste with which she flung out an exercise-book, it might have been thought that she was going to make up for lost time over the punishment task. So as to be in time for dinner, after all!

But what Naomer did was to tear out one sheet

from the book and write two or three lines only in a very bold hand.

Then, leaving that scrawled page on the desk, she jumped up and was off like a shot.

First to the coat-room, to don her outdoor things; then out of the schoolhouse she ran, streaking for the cycle sheds.

Such was her haste now, the dusky one never even troubled to extricate her own machine from where it was slammed away amongst others.

She took the first bicycle that came to hand, and another minute found her pedalling at top speed, like one who was leaving Morcove—never to return!

### Naomer the Rebel!

THAT high-class café, the Barncombe Creamery, was in such favour with Morcove School, that the bakehouse-yard alongside was quite a recognised parking-place for girls' machines.

Sometimes there would be as many as thirty bicycles stalled in the yard, whilst their owners indulged in tea and pastries in the charming tea-room at the back of the shop.

But at a little after one, to-day, Naomer's was the only machine here belonging to Morcove. She could see one other bicycle, as she put her own aside for the time being, but that other was a boy's.

The town hall chimes were ding-donging the quarter-past as the dusky runaway went round from the bakehouse-yard to go in by the main entrance to the pastrycook's shop. Naomer knew that from one till two each weekday a very good hot lunch could be had, and hers was a grin of expectant delight as she passed in.

And then suddenly she was seized with horrifying dismay.

"Bekas, what ze diggings, I don't believe I have got any money—sweendle! Ah, bah, I was in such a hurry, I forgot—my money is in ze drawer in Study No. 12!"

So, just inside the doorway, she stood in dire perplexity for a moment or two, the distressful state quickly resulting in her being approached by the manageress.

"Yes, miss?" smiled that lady, recognising a frequent Morcove patron.

"Oh, good-morning, how joo do! I say, do you give credit, plis? Bekas—"

"Well, my dear!" smiled the manageress. "You know the rules by which we are bound, in regard to Morcove scholars. No credit—"

"But zat means about cakes and sweets!" Naomer desperately argued. "And what I want is some lunch! What ze diggings; I can't starve! And zey won't give me any dinner at ze school, bekas—"

And there she lost her breath and was left agape

with sudden utter amazement, her round eyes taking in the bulky figure of a certain school-boy who had suddenly come forward from the refreshment-room.

"I thought I heard your voice, Naomer!" he said delightedly. "What's the bother?"

"Tubby!" was the dusky one's equally delighted yell, and the manageress tactfully retired. "Ooo—gorjus! Bekas—hooray, are you having lunch?"

"I was just going to order a snack," Tubby smiled. "Like to join me?"

"Yes, queek! Where are you sitting? And are ze others here?"

By "ze others," Naomer meant Master Robert Blood's four best pals of Grangemoor School—Polly's brother Jack, Bunny's brother Tom, Judy's brother Dave, and young Jimmy Cherrol. But she was to learn that Tubby was all alone, although his cronies would be in Barncombe presently, along with the rest of a Grangemoor team.

"Our House is playing the Town," Tubby imparted as he and the dusky Morcovian seated themselves at a white-clothed table laid for lunch. "I came along in advance, as I had to have a tooth out."

"Ooo, rotten luck—although eet is jolly good luck for me!" Naomer excitedly gabbled. "Will eet make any difference to your eating, Tubby? I hope not!"

"Sháll eat all the better now," was the cheerful assurance which Tubby gave, picking up the



"If it takes an hour we are going to do it as I wish it to be done!" Madeleine Dollond said furiously. "Stand! Sit! STAND!" This time Betty and Co. rose with exaggerated care.

menu card. "You'd like the full lunch, Naomer?"

"Yes, plis! Bekas, I don't know when I shall get ze next meal! Bekas, zey may come after me and drag me back, and lock me up in ze detention-room—"

"Eh, what!"

"Yes! Bekas, you never know, now, at Morcove School! You have heard about our having a tempy mistress? Well, she is a washout and a no-gooder, and her daughter is simply awful! We are being worked to death, and drilled, and given lines, and made to get up earlier, and—"

"I say, that's a jolly shame!" Tubby said, and paid closer attention than ever after treating the waitress to a chubby smile as he gave his order.

"So what I did," Naomer rattled on, "I did ze bunk just now. Instead of doing my lines, I left a message to say I was off to Barncombe Creamery to get some lunch, bekas, I re-fused to be sweendled! Only, I forgot to come with some money, and zen you came to ze rescue like this, which is seemply gorjus!"

A beaming remark from Tubby gave Naomer to understand that the luck was really his, not hers, that he was to have the pleasure of footing the bill. The most sociable fellow ever born, Tubby was never happier than when he was entertaining.

"A chap hates to feed by himself; but now you're here," he said, his eyes twinkling above his rounded cheeks, "it's fine. I hope you like kidney soup, Naomer?"

"I adore eet!" she shrilled, using a word which she had often heard her chums use. "But what do you think of a tempy mistress being out to get round girls so zat they will want to leave Morcove and go to her own school when she starts one?"

Tubby kept a soup spoon in suspense half-way to his mouth.

"I say! As bad as that, is it?"

"Worse, now! Bekas, Betty soon rumbled ze plot," Naomer gabbled on, whilst spooning away at her soup, "and accused ze Dollonds to their faces, and zen they said zey would do just ze opposite, and be ever so strict, just to prove that Betty had had no right to say eet! So we are all being worked to def!"

"Shall have to tell the other fellows about this," Tubby said, and gave a quick sign to the waitress that she could bring the fish. "You must make a good meal, Naomer—"

"Ooo, I mean to!"

And she did. They both did full justice to the four-course lunch, and then Tubby took it for granted:

"You'd like a coffee, of course?"

"Yes, plis, Tubby, eef you can run to eet!"

"Coffees, please, miss! Er—would you like a cream-bun, Naomer, just to go with the coffee? And cream-buns for two," Tubby called after the waitress.

The cream-buns, when they came, were most delicious. Tubby and Naomer were eating them with great relish, so they did not heed the sharp scream of car brakes as a motor drew up at the kerb; never even noticed someone who came in with angry strides, after getting out of the car and closing the door with a slam.

Naomer, at that instant, was forking up the last morsel of cream-bun, to convey it to her mouth. Tubby, on the other side of the table, was raising his coffee-cup for another sip.

It was when he saw Naomer become so agitated that she jabbed the forkful of cream-bun against her cheek, that Tubby guessed.

The young lady at whom his chum was staring must be—Madeleine Dollond!

Tubby was a gentleman. He set down his coffee-cup and stood up as the furious-looking "tyrant" reached their table with a final angry rush. There came an imperious order which could be heard all over the place:

"You young monkey—come out of here this instant! You'll go back to school at once!"

"No, bekas—"

"Out to my car!" insisted Madeleine Dollond, taking the dusky absentee by one arm to haul her up from the chair, "before I box your ears! You shall be punished for this, my girl! Get along with you!"

"I say, that's enough of that," Tubby interposed, noticing how Naomer was being pushed and shaken. "Not so much of the—"

"And who," the Dollond girl rounded on him wittingly, "are you?"

"He is Tubby Bloot—a Grangemoor boy; a chum of mine!" Naomer shrilled. "And you had better be careful, bekas—"

"Silence, impudence! The name of your Housemaster?" Tubby was ominously asked. "For this must be reported!"

"Oh, right-ho, report away," Tubby said genially. "Mr. Challenor, Challenor's House, Grangemoor. I am quite prepared—"

"If this is the sort of thing Miss Somerfield allowed—"

"Er—no," Tubby said engagingly. "For in Miss Somerfield's time such a thing as a Morcove girl being refused dinner—one of the necessities of life—"

"Fool!" Madeleine Dollond called him. "I can't argue; I never do with mere juniors! But I shall inform your Housemaster that, obviously, you and this Morcove scholar had planned this—this disgraceful escapade!"

"Not ze bit of eet! Bekas—"

"Go on out!"

And out went Naomer, in custody once again, after she had seen how courteously Tubby bowed to Madeleine Dollond, as if to say: "Do your worst!"

But this "sang froid" of Tubby's was only in regard to trouble that Madeleine Dollond might try to make for him. About Naomer, now that she was being hustled out to the car, he was all chivalrous concern.

No sooner had the car set off back to Morcove than he resumed his seat, finished his coffee, and called for his bill.

Tubby, getting up to go, went to the cake counter and bought various things which the counter-girl fitted into a cardboard carton.

Then Tubby stepped to the sweets counter. He had decided that the least he could do would be to go along to Morcove and contrive somehow to get both cakes and sweets into Naomer's hands. She had been whirled away, leaving behind her bicycle. He would ride his own and wheel hers. Good excuse for turning up at Morcove School—that he wanted to return the Morcove bicycle.

Needless to say, he was not going to get to Morcove until a good while after the car had got back. The task of riding one machine and wheeling the other required a certain amount of acrobatic dexterity which Tubby did not possess. Polly's brother Jack could have done it with his eyes shut; but Tubby fell off twice en route. And the second time he fell off, he fell on top of the wheeled machine.

At last he got to the main gateway of Morcove School. Leaving his own machine against the

wall, just outside, he went on foot up the carriage-way, wheeling the girl's bicycle and carrying the two cartons of eatables.

And now he noticed something that was significant of the new order which reigned at Morcove. Compulsory games!

It was as if every girl belonging to the school had been ordered out to one or another of the fields, there to take part in some strenuous game.

Three hockey matches were in progress, and the grass everywhere else was taken up, in patches, for lacrosse and net-ball.

The sensational thing, to Tubby, was that no girls were to be seen simply sauntering about or standing to look on. He was noticed, but not even girls who knew him well, as lots of them did, dared break off to run to him.

Naomer's best chums—they were playing for a side at hockey, and there was Madeleine Dollond, keeping up a running criticism in a nagging way.

She must have made a point of hurrying out to the field, to inflict herself upon those girls the moment she got back with her "capture"!

But where—where was Naomer now?

In vain Tubby looked for her on both fields. He hoped that she had come in for no worse punishment than to be taken back to the classroom, under orders to write those lines.

And then, when he was putting away the bicycle at the cycle-sheds, he saw her, after all—as a face at a window, and that window a barred one!

"My hat!" gasped Tubby. "I say!"

For now he knew.

Naomer had been placed under lock and key in Morcove's out-of-date, long-disused detention-room!

### Tubby Treats the Denvers!

"O O O, what ze diggings! Bekas—zere is Tubby, hooray!"

Naomer, at the barred window of the detention-room, sighted her favourite member of the Grangemoor "Die Hards" just as he first saw her.

Only a moment since, it had been the dusky one's reckless resolve to raise the lower sash and send a protesting yell towards the crowded games fields.

She had been in the mood, just then, to shout her protests so that every schoolmate engaged in compulsory games would hear—and answer!

But now—

Were her eyes deceiving her, or were those a couple of large Creamery cartons which Tubby had with him? He had brought along her borrowed bicycle; but that might be only a ruse, a "blind."

"I am going to be keerful, any old how," she jabbered to herself. "Bekas, you never know! What ze diggings, zey may be going to keep me on bread and water, and so—"

The rest was a most expressive gesturing to Tubby, from behind the pane of glass, as she joyfully saw him working in her direction very stealthily.

To Naomer he was the knight errant coming to the aid of Beauty in Distress.

Nearer and nearer he crept, whilst she excitably signalled:

"Yes, queek, queek!"

Then the moment came for her to raise the lower sash. He and she were in speaking distance by that time.

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"Jolly good of you, Tubby!" she whispered out to him. "Hooray," she cheered, under her breath. "Bekas, zis has given me ze advantage over zat detestabubble Dollond girl!"

"Looked in?" panted Tubby, getting close in under the wall with the window-sill only just in reach. "I say!"

"Now you know what eet is like at Morcoove, zese days, Tubby! Ooo!" as a brown hand, reaching down through the window-bars, took hold of a held-up carton. "Cakes?"

"And choccs," said Tubby, handing up the other carton.

"Gorjus! You're ze one, Tubby! I shall pay you for all zis stuff when I come out of prison! But I don't know when eet will be, bekas—"

"Don't talk about repaying—"

"But, what ze diggings, you stood me ze lunch!"

"I wish," Tubby, suddenly groaned, "I could do ever so much more for you. But I must look out and not be a mutt and make it all worse. Does Miss Merrick know? Shall I find her?"

"No, Tubby! Bekas, she will go off ze deep end, and zere will be a big row and she will get ze sack, and we don't want that! I know Betty dreads that more than anything else. So, Tubby—"

There was a sudden denouncing cry to interrupt Naomer.

"Oh, we'll tell! We'll tell Madeleine Dollond!"

And there were Fay and Edna Denver, who had come round a corner of the building just in time to take Naomer and Tubby by surprise.

Although the sisters had screamed out like that, in imitation of habitual tale-tellers, Tubby knew just as well as Naomer that Fay and Edna were quite capable of running to Madeleine Dollond with the story. Very significantly, the sisters had been let off compulsory games. A sign, surely, that already they had begun to enjoy favours!

"I'm off," Tubby said hurriedly to Naomer. "Bye for now, and all the best."

"Oh, don't let us drive you away—such a pity!" sneered Edna, strutting nearer with her sister. "Carry on! A file and a rope, and all that—eh? He, he, he!"

"Ijots!" Naomer yelled from behind the bars. "Don't take any notice of them, Tubby!"

He would have much preferred not to do so, but it was his sudden chivalrous idea that possibly, by making himself agreeable, he could, as it were, induce them to hold their tongues about what they had witnessed. Simply out of a desire to save Naomer from a further rowing, he toddled up to the sisters.

"Going my way?" he inquired affably. "Down to the gates?"

"Oh, the poor boy is afraid of being seen!" was Fay's teasing remark. "All right, then; Edna, you walk one side of him, and I'll walk the other—he, he, he!"

"As a matter of fact," said Edna pertly, "my sister and I were going to stroll as far as the Headland and get tea there."

"I say! Could I give you tea there?" Tubby gallantly offered, refusing to look b-hful now that he was walking between excessively pretty Fay and her sister.

They looked at each other across his shoulders and grinned.

"But Naomer might not like it!" said Fay demurely.

"Oh, that's all right," Tubby assured them both, although it was at this moment that a

disapproving, "Hi!" came from the window which was being left behind. "She'll understand."

"Hi, Tubby!"

"D'you think she will?" Edna smiled sweetly, now that a second objecting cry had been sent after them. "But there! She can't possibly come out, can she? And Fay and I have permits!"

"Splendid," Tubby said, and hoped he might be forgiven for such dissembling. "Right-ho, then, I'll give you some tea at the Headland. Er—jolly afternoon, isn't it?"

"For those who can be out," nodded Fay. "And not compelled to play games!"

"There's Madeleine Dollond," Edna coolly remarked. "I'm afraid she has seen you, but she sees you are with—us! It will be all right."

"You haven't met this girl who is running Morcoove School?" prattled Fay. "So charming, really! Of course, if you get the wrong side of her—"

"But we," Edna chimed in, "happen to be on the right side. She likes us!"

In proof of this assertion, both sisters waved to Madeleine Dollond, who was still with the hockey-players but looking this way.

Tubby, toddling along between a couple of pretty girls who were all precocity, hated them in his heart. Yet he would not waver in his purpose, which was to stand them such a tea, presently, as would almost compel their silence about that little matter of the barred window.

Even such a heartless, unsporting pair as he knew them to be, would not, he hoped, "sneak" after that.

But the cost to his pocket!

No wonder he did some desperate mental arithmetic whilst trotting Fay and Edna off to tea. Swagger show, the Headland. Three teas in the lounge, and a tip for the waiter—lucky if one got out of it all under ten bob!

And this on top of two lunches at the Creamery and those purchases of choccs and cakes!

Altogether, he might reckon to end the afternoon quite spent-up. Never mind! Jack and other pals had often come to the rescue of Study No. 12 in, perhaps, saner ways. This happened to be the only way he, Tubby, could think of now.

And he was not going to care how much he might get laughed at, afterwards, so long as he did, as it were, contrive to spike the enemy's guns!

### It Depends Upon Betty!

THE hockey match was over—and for the first time in their lives the girls hadn't enjoyed the game a scrap!

The voice of every girl coming off the field was an aggravated one. Betty and her chums, themselves in an exasperated state, heard many a Form-mate mumbling about the nagging there had been all the while the ball was in play.

They heard, too, again, loud remarks which were being uttered about the captain being entirely to blame for every irksome condition now prevailing at Morcoove.

As surely as Betty chanced to glance around, so surely did she catch some girl or other scowling at her blackly.

But she was not going to worry about all this dislike in which she stood at present. What to do for Naomer—that was the urgent question!

It was known that the dusky rebel had been put under lock and key in the detention-room, and Betty was not the only girl who feared that worse



was now in store for Naomer now that Madeleine Dollond was done with her nagging on the games field.

"I shall find Miss Merrick," the captain voiced her wise decision to Polly and others, on the way to the schoolhouse. "It isn't that I want to get her to fight my own little battle. But I do want to find out how she herself stands."

"Shouldn't wonder if this treatment of Naomer brings things to a head," Polly fiercely muttered. "The kid isn't to be taken seriously, ever. If the

Up to the Form quarters went Betty, surprising her chums by not joining them in Study No. 12, but only speaking to them from the doorway.

"It's strange, girls, for Miss Merrick to have gone off like that—for several hours. I am just wondering, though, if it may mean that she has gone to get advice?"

"Over at Grangemoor School?" Polly suggested, with a brightening face. "Mrs. Challenor was a Morcove mistress before she married, and she and Miss Merrick are great friends."

"Let's hope it is so," Bunny exclaimed. "But why stand there, Betty?"

"Oh, I—I can't very well join you—"

"You can't? Why not?"

Betty hoped that her answering smile and shrug led them to think: "A lot to do!" But it added to the weight upon mind and heart alike to realise, as she did, that very soon her chums must find out the real reason for her avoidance of Study No. 12.

That threat of Madeleine Dollond's! It was one that Betty could not afford to flout. Under the changed conditions, with all justice likely to be a thing of the past, a stroke of the pen could deprive her of the captaincy on the slightest excuse.

That excuse, of course, Madeleine Dollond was hoping soon to obtain, by being able to announce that a command laid upon her, Betty, had been disregarded. "I warned her to keep out of Study No. 12—and she has not done so!"



Betty wheeled round to look down upon the excited throng. "I shall not take back a word of what I said about the Dollonds!" she declared in answer to their angry cries.

"For it was the truth!"

Dollonds choose not to recognise that fact, then I can see Miss Merrick telling them that they must!"

"I'll nip to her room and see you afterwards, upstairs," Betty said, and sped away in advance of her chums.

More black looks for her, as she hurried across the thronged front hall; more frowns on the way up to the first floor, as girls glanced to see who was slipping by them in such haste and found that it was she—the girl whom they thought was to blame!

Even a Form-mistress—Miss Massingham it was, of the Fifth—had an angry look for Betty, implying: "All this upset, just because of you!"

No wonder Betty got to Miss Merrick's door with a thankful feeling that here, at any rate, she was going to face someone who would be unchanged towards her. As unchanged as were one's own dear chums!

But the Form-mistress was not in her room, and it was Betty's cruel disappointment to learn from a parlourmaid that the young lady had gone out in a hired car, an hour ago, and was not expected back for several hours.

It was, then, the solitude of her own study which Betty had to endure—but not for long. A bell rang, telling her, as it was telling the rest of the Form, that it was time for some fresh muster. And this, a so-called "halfer."

What a mockery the new time-table made of the mid-week half-holiday, which used to mean such complete freedom!

Now it was to be a mile walk before tea—two-by-two; that awful style of walking-out known as a "crocodile." And no talking, either.

The Dollond girl herself took Miss Merrick's Form for the dreary trudge round. She walked at the tail end of the line, and not once, but a hundred times, she fiercely ordered this girl or that to keep in step or to stop talking, although there was nothing but the most guarded whispering.

Back she brought them all, every face expressing a pent-up disgust. No going up to the studies before tea. Every girl to change into house shoes and then go to the class-room, to wait there until the four o'clock bell. Every girl to be seated in her right place, with arms folded—and still no talking.

That was how the "half-holiday" would end, to-day.

But, with Madeleine Dollond gone from the class-room as soon as she had seen the girls take their places, mumbling and muttering soon swelled to loud complaining.

Suddenly returning, the self-appointed "dictator" caught the Form in a state of uproar. And yet, strangely, she did not make any angry comment—only smiled as if it were something she had hoped for. After a moment or two of sullen silence, came the stern command:

"Stand! Any girl who speaks now will be made to return, going without her tea. The Form—dismiss!"

A word that used to mean a boisterous surging away, with Miss Merrick only laughing at the noise, as she stayed to clear up her own desk. But now "dismiss" simply meant a marching out in double line, straight to the dining-hall—and let a girl speak who dared!

The same for other Forms. Glancing about, after getting to their seats, Betty and her chums could see the Fifth, at its table, and the seniors at theirs, all looking moody, exasperated.

Madeleine Dollond sat at that long table which took all the Form of which Betty was captain, and it was noticed that she had brought along a little hand-bell. No use was made of it until the meal was finished. Then suddenly the "dictator" stood up and a violent ting-a-ling! was heard all over the great room.

Ting-ling, ting-ling—ting-a-ling!"

The self-important girl went on ringing the bell for several seconds, demanding "Silence!" from scholars who had been indulging only in whispers of a class-room type.

"Girls of Morocove School!" began Madeleine Dollond, and with amazement it was noticed that she was letting a false-sweet smile match a very amiable voice.

What, then, was coming now?

"I want to say that it does not surprise me in the least that there is a good deal of discontent over stricter measures that are at present in force." So the surprisingly winning voice went on. "Naturally enough, you have not enjoyed this half-holiday. You do not like games to be compulsory. Well, neither do I! And I wish to make it quite clear; the headmistress will be only too glad to go back to the happier state of things which she had intended; but it must be on one condition!"

The pause made by the speaker, just here, was filled in by an excited buzz of talk at all the tables.

Relief—on one condition! Then surely, girls everywhere were exclaiming, at any moment an easier time might be expected.

Ting-ling; ting-a-ling!—and there was silence again. The whole school was hanging upon Madeleine Dollond's next words.

"I have authority for saying that it rests entirely with one girl in this school whether you are to be happy in work and play alike, or—quite frankly—groaning under an iron discipline!"

Betty felt herself being looked at from all parts of the room. She was the girl to whom Madeleine Dollond alluded!

"As you have all been told, the new system had no sooner been introduced, giving you girls a much happier time all round, than a certain girl—I do not need to name her—chose to insinuate that it meant an attempt to undermine your loyalty to Morocove School. It was said that you were being given certain privileges which you would miss, when Miss Somerfield returned to resume her duties as headmistress. It was said, in fact, that the present temporary headmistress—my mother—intended to start a school of her own later on, and so she hoped to lure a lot of girls away from Morocove. In those allegations there was not one word of truth!" Madeleine Dollond protested in a ringing voice. "Not one word!"

"Then why take any notice!" was the well-meaning cry from several of the listeners.

"Ah!" sighed the speaker, with an injured-innocent shake of the head. "Girls, you must all have heard the old saying: 'when mud is thrown, some is bound to stick!' And so, lest it should be thought that easier conditions were a bait to a trap, we were forced to make a complete change—with what results to yourselves you have seen!"

The winning smile came back to Madeleine Dollond's face during a pause which allowed time for those last remarks to sink into listeners' minds.

"Still, girls!" she resumed, in a sweeter tone than ever; "it may be that, after all, another way out can be found. If and when I see a written retraction of what was alleged, posted upon the green-baize board in the front hall, the school will at once enjoy all the privileges which have been withdrawn! Let the girl concerned go from here in a minute or two, and immediately write out a complete apology for making charges which she knows to have been without the slightest foundation, and all will be well again, instantly, with the school!"

Again there was sensational jabbering at the tables—a gabble of excited talk which Madeleine Dollond did not attempt to quell. Instead, she simply called loudly above the hubbub:

"I cannot act fairer than that!"—and sat down.

She was soon upon her feet again, however, to go from table to table with a very virtuous air of wanting to make things better for all—if only the "slander" could be wiped out! She spoke to girls over their shoulders, and many came in for affectionate little pattings.

Finally, as a further sample of how nice she would be—so easy-going when she liked—she called across to all at Betty's table:

"You can be off when you like, girls!"

Up they jumped, and the captain's own chums were the only girls who did not start asking her, on the way out:

"What about it, Betty?"

They wanted to know, and to know—at once!

#### The Form Captain's Refusal

"BETTY! Are you going to, or not?"  
 "We don't want any nonsense, Betty!  
 You can see—"  
 "It's up to you, Betty! So, come on now—say you'll do it!"

"You must—you must!" They were all around her, moblike, in the front hall, their clamorous voices overriding those of Polly and other chums of the captain's who were pleading:

"Wait! Give her a minute, can't you!"

"No!" was the impatient cry from some who heard the appeal. "Retract!"

That word, which Madeleine Dollond had used just now, was taken up on all sides. It became the insistent shout as Betty, pushing clear of the crowd, walked to the staircase to go up to her study.

"Retract! Retract! We're not going to stand for it all—just because of you! Retract!"

And then, a few stairs up, Betty checked—flashed round to look down upon the excited throng.

"I shall not take back a word of what I said about the Dollonds! For it was the truth!"

"Even if it was!" some of them were desperate enough to shout. "What does it matter?"

Betty's eyes flashed. "It matters to me," she said. "It matters to every girl who cares for the school! And that's all I'm going to say."

"Booh! Rot! Booh!"

"All right, if you haven't the sense to see!"

And she resumed her ascent of the stairs, her ever loyal chums close behind her in a tight pack, and behind them, at least a dozen angered girls who were going to hoot and deride all the way up.

"Booh! Putting your own pride before everything else—booh! Down with the captain! We'll hold a meeting——"

"Yes! Shame! Booh! We won't stand for it!"

At the foot of the staircase the crowd remained as large as ever, and so noisy, as other girls now came away from other Form tea-tables.

And it was this turbulent moment which happened to be the one for a certain dusky Morcovian to come running in by the front door, hugging a rather squashed carton of cakes under one arm and an equally squashed carton of chocolates under the other.

Naomer!

Here she was, her shrill voice explaining how she came to be at large again, when she should still have been under lock and key.

"Bekas—hooray, I managed to bust away a bar of the window; so here I am—free! Gorjus!" the imp yelled on, whilst dashing through the crowd to go upstairs. "And I don't care if I can't have any tea, either! Bekas——"

Triumphantly she displayed the two Creamery cartons, and then she was going aloft, two stairs at a time. There had been some loud laughter; but instantly the girls down here in the front hall



With a mocking smile Fay Denver entered Betty's study. "Sorry, Betty, but I must trouble you to hand me the Captain's sash!" Of all girls, Fay had been made Form-captain!

resumed their angry remarks and cries about Betty.

Refused to retract, had she! Right! Then something must be done!

Madeleine Dollond's coming away from the dining-hall put a sudden check upon the babel of talk. Girls were remembering that the stricter discipline was still in force—and would be until Betty had retracted!

But the Morcove "dictator" did not appear to mind the crowd in its feverish state. She even seemed to smile: "Carry on!"

Two girls there were whom she went up to, but they, as newcomers upon the scene, were not yet involved in all the excitement.

Fay and Edna were the pair, just back from tea at the Headland Hotel. Many scholars noticed how Madeleine Dollond talked for a few moments with the sisters in the nicest manner, and how perfectly at ease and jaunty Fay and Edna were.

Then the girl who was running the school hurried away, and the sisters were free to mingle with the crowd, asking what all the excitement was about.

Very quickly they were given to understand how matters stood. Betty's refusal to retract, the stumbling block to peace and—an easier time all round!

"Oh, is that it!" Fay laughed. "Well, there's no need for me and Edna to say again; we never voted for Betty to be captain! You would have her——"

"And it was a mistake—we know it now!" stamped Pat Lawrence and several others. "She is such a stickler for—"

"She thinks too much of herself; that's the chief difficulty, if you ask me!"

These and similar remarks were audible to Fay and Edna as they both turned to go away to the coat-room and discard outdoor things. They were looking very amused, and Biddy Loveland, feeling irritated, exclaimed at them both:

"You seem to have had a proper halfer, anyhow!"

"We have," the sisters readily agreed.

"I'd like to know how you worked it!"

"Oh, Madeleine Dollond's all right—if you treat her the right way," Fay drawled, standing still again with her sister. "But, of course, when anybody like Betty goes in for insulting—"

The allusion to Betty was like a spark to gunpowder. The crowd exploded again!

"But, look here," dinned one exasperated scholar. "Even if we refuse to have Betty as captain—that won't help matters! If she still refuses to retract—"

"Oh, don't you make any mistake there," Edna said in a voice loud enough to gain her much attention. "Provided you do things the right way."

"How do you mean, then?" a dozen of them clamoured. "Go on, Edna!"

"You say Betty will still refuse to retract, even if she knows her obstinacy is to cost her the captaincy? But, don't you realise," Edna pressed on, "if the Form disowns Betty because of her refusal to apologise, that is certain to satisfy Miss Dollond."

"Edna's right," Fay nodded. "For it will amount to a vote of 'No confidence' in Betty. In other words, the Form will make it clear to Miss Dollond that no one believes that Betty was entitled to say the things she did!"

"Only," Edna added, as she and her sister again moved to go to the coat-room, "you had better make doubly sure—by getting a captain whom Madeleine Dollond really can like!"

The one sister gave the other a careless:

"Come on!" and they sauntered away at last. Behind them, the crowd still hung about, seething with excitement.

A moment or two later, Edna looked back over a shoulder. She wanted to know if many pairs of eyes were following her and her sister—and they were!

"They've taken the hint, I fancy," she whispered to Fay.

"How do you mean?"

"That about getting a captain whom the Dollond girl will really like. Chance for you!" was Edna's gleeful whisper.

**T**HE door of the captain's study opened and Polly, with Pam and others behind her, spoke in to Betty.

"Come round to Study No. 12, Betty!"

"Oh, thanks, girls, but—no, I won't just now."

"Then we shall stay here with you!"

They advanced into the study, and the door was closed again.

"We've got to be with you, Betty," the madcap said flatly. "Got to stand by you—"

"Yes, wather! We wealise, Betty dear, theah is twouble bwewing—worse than evah, bai Jove!"

"Very likely," Betty nodded and smiled, as calm as ever in this fresh crisis. "And if I don't have all your support—I shan't get much from elsewhere, by the look of it!"

"It's a shame!" Polly said furiously. "Poor old Morcove, now that two-thirds of the Form and nearly the whole school is ready to buy an easy time—at any price!"

"They had that first taste, and it has done for most of them," Judy put it simply. "But whatever comes now, Betty, you'll always be able to feel—you did put up a fight."

"Our Betty!" cried Polly, suddenly clapping a hand upon the captain's shoulders. "Going down, if she must go down, with flying colours—hurrah!"

Betty laughed mirthlessly.

"I'm going down, right enough. At any moment now, I quite expect—"

"Hark!"

A loud flurry of scholars, coming excitedly along the corridor of studies, could be heard. Coming to THIS study, to find the captain!

A few of Betty's staunch chums turned rather pale. They all gave her a look intended to fortify her; and then the murmurous throng could be heard just outside the door, which was next instant flung wide round.

Perhaps the crowd's first sight of Betty, simply standing about with her chums when it had been hoped that she might be found writing the demanded retraction, took enraging effect.

At any rate, there was renewed uproar, only quelled by one girl in the forefront making frantic signs that she was going to speak for all.

That girl was Pat Lawrence.

"Have you written that withdrawal of your accusations, Betty?"

"No."

"Do you mean to write it?"

"Certainly not. Here, if you want something from me to go upon the green-baize board—take this!"

Betty had sat down whilst speaking. Seizing pencil and a half-sheet of paper, she scrawled in a large lettering:

"HANDS OFF MORCOVE!"

Smiling fiercely, she jumped up from her chair and offered the paper to Pat, who snatched at it, only to crumple it into a ball and hurl it to the carpet.

"If that's the best you can do," Pat said, "then let ME show you a paper that WE mean to post up! Here it is—take a good look at it, Betty!"

This time it was a foolscap sheet, bearing many lines of writing.

Betty, reading it through, realised that it was to call a Form-meeting for to-morrow evening, when two resolutions would be put to the vote. One was, that the Form condemned her, Betty Barton, for her refusal to withdraw words which had given great offence and pain in certain quarters.

The second resolution was to be that another girl, at present unnamed, be elected captain in place of Betty.

Six girls had signed this formal notice, so it was perfectly "constitutional" under the rules of the school.

Betty handed it back.

"That's all right," she said. "If you will do it, you must do it. But I warn you—"

"Booh!" she was instantly shouted down. "It's your pride, Betty! You made a mistake, and you don't like to admit it—booh!"

"I made no mistake!" she hotly retorted. "What I found out about the Dollonds was the truth—"



"You didn't wait to get proof!"  
 "I did! And you girls should have sense enough to see that the Dollonds have only changed their tactics because—"

"Oh, we don't want to hear any more! Boo!"  
 the crowd was dinning again, when Pat Lawrence turned to the packed doorway, making signs for a dispersal.

As soon as most of the girls were drifting away, still voicing their indignation at Betty's stubbornness, Pat faced those who were in the study.

"In case you think I want to be captain, its nothing of the sort! I wouldn't be bothered!"

"I shouldn't think you would!" Polly glared back. "Who could wish to be captain of such a Form as it looks like being now? Oh, get out of here, Pat Lawrence! We want that door—shut!"

Yet it was Polly who, a moment after Pat had gone away with the rest of the stragglers, took a step towards the closed door and whipped it open once again.

"Dash! I'm going to find Miss Merrick! She may be back by now."

"Polly'll not find her," Betty quietly remarked to those who were left behind with her. "If I were told aright."

After that there was silence in the study. It was the poignant silence of friends who had no words for the calamitous outlook.

Now and again they heard the cry of "Retract!" alternating with "Resign!" and also some fresh booing by girls who were hanging about, not far off.

Then came the unmistakable racing step of Polly, returning to the study. She burst in, wild-eyed and breathless.

"Miss Merrick has had a smash on the road over the moor—"

"You mean—"  
 "Injured, yes!" Polly answered her horrified chums. "I heard it from Ellen the parlourmaid."

"Tewwible! Good gwacious, geals—"  
 "The news has just come over the 'phone. Miss Merrick has been taken to the Barncombe Hospital. She had been over to Grangemoor School—"

"Then we guessed aright!" Betty jerked. "She went to consult someone there! Oh, poor Miss Merrick! Is she badly hurt?"

"It's not known yet," Polly panted. "But there's not the slightest doubt. If she hadn't been doing her best for the school, she would have been safe and sound still. It was anxiety for Morcove that took her upon that journey."

"And the Form—now," Pam murmured sorrowfully. "We lose Miss Merrick, to have in her place—it's certain—that Dollond girl. And we lose Betty as captain, to have—who, I wonder, will it be?"

The following evening the Form held its meeting, both resolutions being carried by an overwhelming majority.

Throughout another day the iron rule had been still in force, and girls came to the meeting feeling more "fed-up" than ever.

Last minute attempts were made by a few to get Betty to give in, but they proved unavailing.

So the Form, in its reckless mood, made a mad choice; and it was Fay Denver who went to a certain study, after the meeting, to say with a mocking smile:

"Sorry, Betty, but I must trouble you to hand me—the captain's sash!"

Of all girls—Fay Denver was captain of the Form!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

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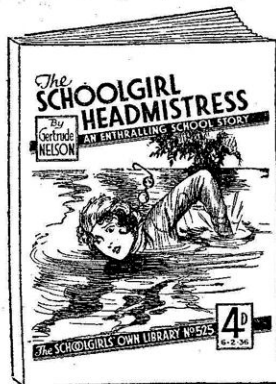
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