

NOW ON SALE!—The Schoolgirls'
Own Annual—6/-

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d



**GETTING READY FOR
CHRISTMAS!**

(A jolly incident from the splendid, long
complete Morisco School story inside.)

An absorbing long complete tale of the girls of Morocco School.



BECAUSE OF COUSIN BILLY!

Morocco is getting excited! Christmas is in the air. And for the Study 12 chums that means even more enjoyment than usual, for they are booked to spend it at Pam Willoughby's beautiful home at Swanlake. But—already a cloud is threatening the joyous prospect. And all because of that cousin of Pam's!

By MARJORIE STANTON

Cheers From the Chums!

"NEWS! NEWS!" And madcap Polly Listen, to signify that it was great good news, gave a rejoicing wave of the hand as she burst into Study 12 at Morocco School.

"No school for us to-day, girls!" "Who says so?" cried Betty Barton sceptically. "I say so," was Polly's all-sufficient answer. "You see if I am not right, girls! There will be no school for the Fourth Form."

"That's coming down to mere peoptheey," grimaced Helen Craig. "But a most gratifying propheer, yes, wather, gals," drawled Paula Creel, from the easy-chair; "if true!"

"What I tell you three times is true," quoth Polly. "No school to-day! No school to-day, for a cert! That's the third time: And so—a present for you, Paula!"

There was a cascade of school books into Paula's lap, as the madcap shot them at her.

Then Naomer Nakara took example from Polly. "Ooo, queek, mine too, Paula! With as compliments!"

"I refuse!" protested Paula, whilst more primers and writing books tormented into her lap. "Betty dear, speak to these gals!"

"Betty dear, speak to Paula!" was Polly's counter cry. "Just point out that as she is really the only one amongst us who can't do the work,

she will, of course, push on to-day. Whilst we—Hooray, no school, so what shall we do!"

"But why no school?" inquired Pam Willoughby, coming into the study at this instant.

"Yes, why? You say, queek!" clamoured Naomer.

The madcap suddenly found that she must get her breath back. This gave her time to improvise one of those mock-dramatic turns for which she was famous.

"'Tis twilight on the moor, slow music," Polly began staggily. "Hark—those bells! 'Tis Sunday, and the bells of Barncombe steal sweetly o'er the heather!"

"Any more of this?" asked Pam. "If so, I'll call back."

"Yes, what an diggings! Zat has nothing to do with no school to-day, Polly!"

"Hain't it!" was the withering retort. "For see! Who is this, coming along the lonely road in an ancient car? Can it be Miss Massingham? It is, it is! And now—see! Look! She stops; she cannot go on. She is out of petrol!"

"Good job," interjected Naomer. "Heartless child," Polly rebuked the imp. "Wouldst rejoice!"

"Yes, hekas, I have no use for Miss Massingham," Naomer stated candidly. "I sink she is a washout."

"She is your Form-mistress, Naomer!"

"That is why I have no use for her! I sink, if we had a—"

But there Naomer's suggestions for the betterment of life at Morocco were cut short. At the open doorway stood, suddenly, the very tallest of tall seniors—Ethel Courtway, head girl of Morocco.

Polly groaned. She fell back into a chair and made tragic gestures.

"Say on, Ethel!" she said gloomily. "Tell us the worst!"

"Sorry, if it is going to sound so dreadful," laughed Ethel—"that I have to take the Fourth Form for the present, owing to Miss Massingham's enforced absence."

"It isn't that we don't look up to you, and all that," said Polly, coming round after a mock swoon. "Only, we did think that we might be let off school on account of—"

"Nothing doing," smiled Ethel.

Polly got up.

"It's a hard life," she commented sadly. "Girls, I was wrong. For the first time in my life, I have raised false hopes amongst you. School as usual, ugh! Where are my books?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a peal of laughter as Polly observed all her books lying higgledy-piggledy with Naomer's, at Paula's feet.

"Now," said the madcap grimly, "you will just set to and sort them out, Paula!"

"Yes, what as diggings! Quick—"

"I refuse!" squealed Paula. "Betty, dear, speak to these girls!"

But Betty spoke to Ethel, ignoring the sudden rumpus going on around the easy-chair and its occupant.

"Tell me, Ethel, what is this, then, about Miss Massingham? Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Oh, no! Miss Somerfield knew last night, but it has only just been made known in the school. Your Form-mistress appears to have had a whole chapter of accidents, coming back to Mercere from a visit to friends at Exeter. Petrol gave out, and then, when some nice, kind young fellow had run miles to get her a canful, it was dark."

"Next thing Miss Massingham knew, she was almost running into straying cattle. She got ditched. If it hadn't been for the nice, kind person—whatever he was—she might have been there all night, apparently! As it was she had to put up at a moorland cottage, and is still there."

"Howwows," gasped Paula, who was now being allowed to listen, along with the rest.

"So you will not be late when the bell goes, will you, girls?" Ethel said, going away to acquaint other juniors with the duty which had devolved upon herself.

"When the bell goes," echoed Polly dismally. "When isn't it going?"

"Oh, well, it will be nice, having Ethel," said Pam.

"It will," cried Betty heartily. "So cheer up, all!"

Then did Polly and Naomer show how they could cheer up—with a vengeance! There was a flavour of breaking-up day about their subsequent boisterousness, and this spread to other members of the Form.

That there was a risk of this gay enthusiasm being construed as rejoicings over the absence of Miss Massingham, cannot be denied. But the Form did not stop to think of that! Its one concern was to enjoy this rare opportunity of working under the easy-going yet capable supervision of popular Ethel Courtney.

Ethel, at the midday dismissal, could not withhold her praise.

"You've been splendid, girls!"

"I think we should be given a whole day off,

later in the week, as a reward!" Polly took the opportunity of suggesting—only playfully, of course.

But Ethel's response was evidently meant in earnest.

"Well, we'll see what can be done!"

These words sent the Form surging away in tremendous excitement. There was the sudden joyful belief that Ethel would really get them a whole day's holiday. The Study 12 coterie debated the rosy prospect with great glee.

It was the coterie's conviction that it, better than any other batch of juniors, could do with that whole day!

"We could make it an away match at Stormwood," was Betty's idea. "It really needs a whole day, at this time of year, for a jaunt to Stormwood."

Helen nodded.

"We might do that, yes. Or—"

"A day in Exeter, for shopping," suggested Madge. "The Christmas things are in the windows, by now."

"Ooo, gorjus! Bekas—"

"I suppose," broke out Pam, rousing from private thoughts, "you wouldn't like to make it a run to Swanlake? Mother is making the Christmas puddings this week. I'd love you all to have a stir—"

Naomer gave a perfectly frenzied yell of eagerness.

"Ooo, yes, queek! Bekas, it brings you luck, yes!"

"Pam dear," the others chorused. "Oh, if only we could do that, on the day!"

"If we get it!" was Pam's rejoinder. "Anyway," she added, getting up and going to the door, "I'm going to get off a note about it at once—on the chance."

"Do, Pam—do! Splendid!"

But Pam, going round to her own study, did not immediately write the letter. She drifted to the window and stood looking out, lost in thought.

A run home to Swanlake, for the day! It would be a real boon to her, apart from all the fun of having the others with her, for them to give that traditional stir to the Christmas pudding. Swanlake was only a very few miles from Grangemoor School, and so there might be news at home about how Cousin Billy was going on.

No mistake, Christmas was coming on with a rush now.

"And Billy—is he getting on better, I wonder!" she pondered, not without very grave misgivings. "It wouldn't be so serious, only—Christmas, and Jack Linton and Dave Lawder coming to Swanlake, with all the rest! If Billy isn't really chummy with them, by then—well!"

With the vague idea that somehow a flying visit to Swanlake, in the meantime, might help matters, she came back to the table and wrote her letter.

Of a sudden, Polly came in, looking very serious now.

"Pam, supposing we get that whole day off, and supposing your master is good enough to have us all over to Swanlake; do you think—"

"Do I think what, Polly?"

"My brother Jack—any chance of my being able to see him? Your home is so near his school, and—"

"Polly, of course; nothing simpler! As a matter of fact," threw out Pam, "I had made up

my mind to get my Cousin Billy to come along from Grangemoor. They must all come!"

"Oh—er—your Cousin Billy; yes, of course!" Polly rather stammered. "Yes, I see!"

The sudden embarrassment and Polly's quickly drawing off to the door—it all explained itself to Pam. But she took care to ask in a merely casual way instead of showing uneasiness:

"By the way, Polly; heard from your brother lately?"

"A letter this morning," Polly answered, and was gone next second.

Then, alone again, Pam sighed. Was there any doubt something was being kept from her—about Billy? The letter from Jack to Polly must have made reference to Grangemoor's now scholar from the South Seas, and no flattering reference either. Or Polly would never have been so terse as all that!

Out in the passage, some girls were going by in talk—about Christmas.

"Such a little while now!" was one remark Pam heard.

"And such a lot to be done," she said to herself, with a serious little smile, "if our Christmas at Swanlake is not to come to grief!"

Why The Form Behaved!

AFTER school, that day, it was known that Miss Massingham was back at Morocco, but was advisedly keeping to her room.

Her motoring adventures of Sunday evening had resulted in a slight chill. It was nothing serious.

But the good lady's indisposition, however slight, meant Ethel Courtway's remaining in charge of the Fourth Form. So, for the next few days, there was a more docile lot of juniors than ever. The time for the Riot Act to be read would come, if and when the Fourth failed to get that special whole day!

For it has to be admitted that only on the assumption that the holiday would be granted were the juniors being so well-behaved.

The Fourth Form may have worked well, at the start, simply out of liking for Ethel; but for so much creditable motive were pretty heads bent over racing pens when, towards three-thirty on Friday afternoon, the class-room door opened and in came—Miss Massingham!

Swathed in a huge woollen shawl, she presented such a comical figure that the class forgot to rise. Instead, it started to titter.

Paula breathed: "How wows!" whilst Naomer came out with a giggled: "What so diggings!" "Stand, girls," re-

quested Ethel sweetly. "Don't you know your own mistress!"

That they might have been excused for not knowing the lady in her present muffled-up state, Ethel Courtway was well aware.

Miss Massingham smiled upon the class as if she had been a long, long time away and knew how sadly she must have been missed.

"Good afternoon, girls," she said; and then some of them, as an alternative to going into convulsions of laughter, asked most sympathetically:

"Are you better, Miss Massingham?"

"I am much better, thank you, so I thought I would look down to see how you are all behaving," was the answer. "I am glad to see that you appear to be idyllicious."

Miss Massingham then pulled a cork out of a small bottle with a loud pop! and inhaled the contents.

"Yes, Miss Massingham," Ethel smiled, "the girls have been just splendid! I think they should be given a whole day off, to-morrow, as a reward!"

There was very nearly a cheer for Ethel, for putting in for the whole day, anyhow! Good old Ethel—always such a sport.

Miss Massingham looked very gracious.

"I will think about it, girls."

"Thank you, Miss Massingham! Hooray!"

That was a very thin cheer—unlike the one which was later accorded Ethel, when the Form knew that the favour really had been granted.

The moment it was known that to-morrow, for the Fourth, would be a whole day off instead of the usual "halfer," there was a rush to Ethel's study and a real three-times-three!

"Belkas—co, gorjus!" shrieked Naomer, starting to caper back to the Fourth Form quarters. "Now we can go to Swanlake, hurrah! Queek—Pam!"

"She's gone down to the 'phone."

"No school to-day, for a cert!" Polly Listen said gaily. "So here's a present for you, Paula!" And she shot all her school books into the duffer's lap.



"Polly—where is Polly!"

"Gone down to the 'phone!"

It made Pam and Polly burst out laughing when, quite unwittingly, they reached the telephone-box at the same instant.

"You go first, Pam. I only want to get Jack, if I can. You're wanting Swanlake!"

"No—Grangemoor!"

"Oh!" And Polly laughed again. "You got the number then, Pam, and have a word with your cousin. Afterwards, he might fetch Jack!"

"Right-ho!"

So the call was put through, and half a minute later a house-porter at Grangemoor School was fetching Billy Charters to the instrument.

"It's some young lady, and you ought to tell her," grumbled the porter, who had great ideas of his own importance. "Isn't allowed!"

Billy preserved a huffy silence which the porter liked not at all. Check! He, the porter, would like to see this new boy made to toe the line—a bit more.

"Hallo!" Billy spoke into the receiver gruffly. He was feeling irritated by the hanging about of that porter. "Oh, yes, Pam! What!"

"Billy," came Pam's further remarks over the line, "try to get to Swanlake to-morrow, won't you? I and my chums will be over—to stir the padding, you know! We've got the day off!"

"Right-ho!"

"Thank you can manage it!"

"Of course!"

The way Billy answered, it was as if he were quite his own master. Nor had he a single thought, at that moment, of many obstacles that were likely to have to be overcome. As he was asked to go over to Swanlake, he would go.

"Billy!"

"Well!"

"Polly's here and would like a word with Jack, if you can find him."

"Right-ho! Hold the line, Pam."

By now the house-porter was looking more possessive than ever. Billy coolly turned to him.

"Don't let them ring off, please. I have to fetch another fellow."

"Here!" For Billy was walking away. "Who do you think you are giving your orders to, my lad!"

Billy spoke back over his shoulder:

"You silly ass—I'm not giving orders. I'm simply asking you—"

"Report you, that's what I'll do!"

"Report away then!"

That said, Billy ran off, knowing the need for haste. Up a dark, stone staircase he rushed, and quickly gained that study which Jack and Dave shared.

"Listen, your sister Polly is on the 'phone—"

"What? Oh, thanks; all right, Charters."

Between Billy Charters and his schoolmates it was semantics only, at present. Dave Lawder, a slow one at making advances, but a first-rate friend when he had become one, was looking up from his work to take notice of Billy as Jack sped away.

"There's a chair, Charters—"

"Oh, you don't want me around," Billy said, and went out.

Instantly, as was so often the case with him, he knew that he had sounded grumpy, churlish even, when he only wanted to be considerate. Dave Lawder was a bookish chap, and so it had

seemed unfair to interrupt his reading; but he, Billy, should have answered differently.

Biting his lip, he drifted away to his own study—one which he had all to himself. It was pretty depressing, he felt; a cooped-up life altogether. To him, Grangemoor was next door to being in prison.

"I'll never settle down—I can't," he was fuming inwardly. "No pony to ride, no dog—none of the things I've been used to."

Hollowly a cultured voice suddenly boomed along the corridor:

"Charters!"

He did not answer. That was his House captain again, dash him.

"Charters!"

"Oh, hang!" And Billy wrenched open his door and fairly shouted back:

"What now?"

At this instant a roar of laughter came from a study full of fellows, and then a chorus started. It was that old, old ditty, "King of the Cannibal Islands!" and Billy knew why the song was enjoying this revival at Grangemoor. They had dubbed him the Cannibal King!

"Charters, come here!"

He went along, his lounging stride making him appear innocently leisurely. Reaching the House captain's doorway, he found himself being looked up and down sternly.

"What's this about your calling Tonkin names?"

Tonkin was the house-porter.

"He's come complaining to you, has he?" Billy's lip curled. "I called him a silly ass, and so he is, for being so footlingly big in his own estimation."

"He's the porter, anyhow, and he's entitled to be treated properly."

"He might be a bit more obliging, I think."

"It doesn't matter what you think, Charters."

"Oh, doesn't it, Grangemoor," Billy said, very explicitly, "is not going to stop my thinking."

Then Fletcher, the House captain, got up, looking very slim and handsome. For a half-minute he regarded Billy with mingled amusement and contempt.

"You are a funny chap, Charters. You mayn't be able to help that, but we'll help you to get over it, anyhow," Fletcher said, with cheerful confidence. "I shan't say anything more about the Tonkin incident; but take my advice, Charters—"

not so much of the lip."

There was a nod of dismissal, much too like that between master and dog for Billy to feel like obeying. He held still.

"Beat it now," said Fletcher.

Billy quivered.

"You speak to me like that, Fletcher! I tell you what it is—"

"Charters, let me tell you," came with just that mocking composure which Billy did not possess.

"This is the wrong shop for chaps who can't toe the line. None of your Cannibal Islands stuff here, my son. Unless you want a gating for to-morrow afternoon, you will go away—quietly, now—"

Slam! went the door, after Billy's passionate exit.

Fletcher whipped the door open again instantly.

"Charters!"

Billy looked round. In the dimness of the stone corridor, his eyes were as fiery as a bull's.



"Take a galing for to-morrow afternoon, Charters."

It was said just as Jack Linton came along from the stairs. That led took in the situation at a glance. There broke from him the good-natured cry:

"Oh, I say, Fletcher—no! This chap Charters—to-morrow afternoon—he's promised to go home!"

"I can't help that," the House captain said, and heeled round, smiling grimly as he stalked back to his study.

Then Jack, finding that Billy was retiring to his own lonely lair, followed him there.

"Charters, I'm awfully sorry. What have you done now?"

"What does it matter what I do!" shrugged Billy. "It makes no difference."

Jack sighed.

"You can't go to Swanlake now—pity."

"Can't I?" returned Billy fiercely. "You wait and see!"

In Fear For The Future!

JUST as many scholars as Morocco's motor-bus was made to seat, and—as Polly Linton had said at starting—a few over for Jack!

Such was the load of youthful humanity which was set down at the front door of stately Swanlake, eleven o'clock next morning.

Betty, Polly and Paula; Madge, Tess and Helen; Naomer, and Etta Hargrove, and Elsie Ashby—out they all jumped. Dolly, too—homely Dolly Delane, who could have made a Christmas pudding as well as any housewife—she had come along to give the Swanlake one a stir for luck. And Pam, of course!

"My word," ejaculated Polly, as soon as they were all indoors, "just imagine Christmas here, girls!"

"Gorjus!"

"I feel I must touch wood every time Christmas at Swanlake is mentioned," said Betty. "It seems too good to be true!"

It was not that the house was so spacious and luxurious. It was the happy, homely spirit; the

"Charters!" called the Captain, sharply. "Take a galing for to-morrow afternoon!" "Oh, I say, no, Fletcher!" pleaded Jack Linton. "He's promised to go home then."

hundred and one signs that everybody here was happy and out to make others happy.

To be aware of this, and then to think of anybody causing strife, was to feel a kind of passing horror—and that was exactly the feeling Polly experienced, thinking of her brother's last letter, and of certain things he had been bound to tell her, about Billy.

The boys would not be turning up for a good while yet; meantime their names were constantly cropping up in all the lively conversation. But Naomer was all impatience about that pudding, so presently the girls found themselves being escorted by Mrs. Willoughby to the enormous kitchen.

At first they saw only a huxton cook and a couple of scullery-maids, all as busy as could be, yet ready to accord Morocco a beaming welcome to these domestic regions. Then, as a huge earthenware mixing-bowl seized their attention, with the handle of a large wooden spoon sticking up very significantly, Naomer, for one, fairly shouted.

"Ooo, me first—me!"

And there she was, next instant, stirring vigorously with both hands to the spoon.

"What a pudding!" cried Polly, taking a peep into the bowl.

"Gorjus! Ooo, why isn't it Christmas to-morrow!" complained Naomer. "Quoak, everybody, give him a stir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Willoughby came in whilst the diverting scene was in progress. His eyes a-twinkle, he suddenly drew out a special store of bright sixpences and threw them into the mixture—for luck. He chuckled:

"And don't I have to stir, girls?"

"Yes, Mr. Willoughby—yes!"

"Quoak, quoak!"

Mr. Willoughby gave his stir, and then he spooned out a morsel of the mixture, offering it to Naomer, for a joke. But Naomer was not averse from sampling the pudding in the row. There were shrieks of laughter as she very readily took the mouthful off the spoon.

After that, Swanlake, both inside and out, provided the juniors with never-ending delights, and time flashed by. They all went down to the

great lake, to feed the swans, as one of the final activities before lunch, and then it was that Jack, Dave and Michael appeared—but no Billy!

The three boys were just leaving the motor-cycles and sidescars when Morocco sighted them, and so greetings took place in the open air.

"But what about Billy?" came Pam's calm inquiry, after the usual interchange of flippancies.

"Ah, Billy—it's a great shame," Jack said, with genuine regret. "You won't see him to-day, I'm afraid."

Pam looked as if she were going to say: "Why not?" but the words never came.

"Yes, well," she said serenely, after a tiny pause; "lunch isn't for a few minutes yet. Do we want to go indoors, or shall we stay around outside for a bit longer?"

They all scattered off, gradually forming into chatty twos and threes. For a brief space, Jack had Madge and Naomer in talk with him; then he and his sister, Polly, somehow gravitated to each other. Polly was no longer the madcap as she asked unasily:

"Pam's cousin? What's to be done about him, Jack?"

"Goodness knows, Polly!" was the guarded response. "I'm just about fed up with Billy Charters—and so are a good many more."

"You can't get on with him?"

"He won't get on with us!"

Polly pondered, taking a very slow step to which Jack suited his.

"Is it that Billy didn't want to come to Swan-lake to-day, Jack?"

"Great Scott, no! Only wish that was the reason. Billy's got himself absolutely the wrong side of everybody at Grangemoor. He's been up before the Head I don't know how many times already. Fletcher—our House cap, you know—has been on his hind legs to the chap, all this week."

"To-day, galed!" Polly whispered.

Jack nodded grimly.

"I tried to beg him off. No use. And, really, Polly, you can't wonder that they are giving him a pretty thin time. I do think he might try to adapt himself; but he won't. He simply will not."

"Then I've no patience!"

Jack laughed.

"I'm sure I haven't, Polly. I mean to say, I've had two fights of my own with him, and in between I'm sure I've done my best to be a pal, if he'll have me. But even if you are at peace with him, it's—an armed peace."

Sauntering on with her brother, Polly cast a glance in the direction of Pam. She was entering into the others' light-hearted talk as if she hadn't a care in the world.

"See her, Jack? Pam, I mean," murmured the Study 12 girl. "She won't let it show, but I know it's on her mind all the time. I haven't told her what was in your letter. How I wish you had been able to send me news of her cousin that it would have been a pleasure to let her know!"

Jack took a neat kick at a pebble in the path. Then he side-glanced at his sister.

"There's Christmas, Polly."

"I know! Oh, it's tiresome. Think how grand it would be, if only—"

Polly checked. From the house came the bong-bong of the gong, and there was a general turning round. Polly and Jack, who had been dawdling behind, now found themselves in front of the others, who were brisking up their step.

"Do you think it's any use, Jack, my telling Pam how bad things are with Billy Charters, as Grangemoor, on the chance of her being able to do some good by giving him a good talking-to, some time? Or do you think?" Polly whispered on. "I myself might go for Billy—"

"You give him a jawing!"

"On the grounds that we want to spare Pam! Which would you do, Jack?"

"Neither, Polly. On the grounds that you're both only girls—"

"Thank you!"

Polly was pouting now, but with hardly her usual playfulness. This matter of Billy Charters was no joke. Aware of Naomer's prancing approach from the rear, she made a last grave remark for her brother's ear:

"That may be the biggest mistake you ever made, Jack! Imagining that where your Hood and all of you are failing, no girl can hope to succeed! After all, who got Billy to apeleg—"

There was an interjection—a yelled: "What an diggings!" from Naomer, now that she had caught up with Polly and Jack. They both fancied that it was the imp's more saucy protest against their manifest gravity; but they found Naomer following up her skittish cry with an exclamation:

"Ooo, look!"

She was pointing, and they stared sharply in the direction indicated.

"Great goodness!" jerked out Jack.

"There now!" was Polly's equally dismayed murmur. "What does that mean!"

For, gaining up the drive on a bicycle, was Billy Charters!

Called Back!

NEITHER Polly nor Jack could take part in the rush to greet Billy.

"He's no right to be here, Jack!"

"It's certain he hasn't! I know, from the way the House cap, spoke only this morning."

Meantime, Pamela was voicing her delight at Billy's having been able to turn up after all.

"Just in time for lunch, Billy," smiled Pam. "I'm so glad; now we are all complete."

It was not, as she was bound to realize rather sadly, that he promised to be much of an acquisition socially! He was just the same Billy, a bit awkward amongst so many girls, and with no easy speech. But there was a certain gladness in seeing him, since it relieved her of anxiety. Pam had feared that he had been getting into hot water at school, and had been forbidden the outing by way of punishment.

He came last of all to the luncheon-table, having been to get a wash and brush-up after the cycle ride. When he came in, his hair looked little better for the comb that had been run through it.

His place was next to Pam, and she took care to welcome him to the seat with one of her brightest smiles. And maybe some of the others fancied that such graciousness was wasted upon the lad; he looked so impassive. But Pam's belief was that, at heart, he felt grateful for any little display of cousinly affection.

The trouble was, he was so constituted that he did not know how to respond or to do himself justice in the eyes of others.

At the same time, Pam realized that she and he would have to talk a good deal to each other. Her chums of Morocco and the rest of the boys

were going to be rather chary of drawing Billy into talk or of paying him any attention, lest they should unwittingly upset him.

"Well, and how's things, Billy?" she asked, as soon as the lavish meal had begun, with the rest of the table in talk.

"Oh, not so bad." He was ill-at-ease, rolling a bread-pill.

"You know why we girls have got the whole day off?" she chattered on. "Miss Massingham came to grief with her car, last Sunday. That gave her a chill. Our head girl had to take us in class all the week, and we were so won-der-ful-ly well-behaved, this is our reward!"

"Your artfulness," he smiled—and what a smile it was, now that it had come.

"Yes, well—perhaps," she conceded merrily. Thank goodness, he was brightening up! "After all, Billy, what's the good of school, if it doesn't teach you how to handle people!"

"But getting round people is—"

"Diplomacy!"

He didn't like that word, and let her see as much.

"I'm only joking," she had to say. "I must remember; it doesn't do to be flippant with you. Ever tried your hand at archery, Billy? We're all going to have a go, on the old coast, this afternoon."

"I'm on," he said with enthusiasm. "Something in that, I should think."

The second course was served.

"Never used a bow and arrow in my life," he resumed, forgetting to pass Pam the salt.

"But the natives, where I come from, they taught me a few stunts with spears. And boomerangs. They're rather fun."

"Must be," agreed Pam. "Let's see, a boomerang is a block of wood, isn't it, that you throw away and it comes back and hits you?"

He was going to laugh, but suddenly remembered the salt. And then he grew red and awkward.

"Sorry, Pam." He passed the salt-cellar.

"Doesn't matter, Billy. Thanks.

I'd love to have a go with boomerangs, Billy. You show me, some time."

"I will, Pam."

More and more his tongue loosened, but only because Pam drew him on about his former life in the South Seas, where his "governor"—her uncle—was literally governor of the island.

Suddenly, in the midst of lunch, a man-servant entered who had nothing to do with the waiting at table.

Advancing to Mr. Willoughby's elbow, he bent over to deliver some message in a subdued voice.

Instantly, the master of Swanlake looked down the table to where Jack Lintox was sitting.

"Jack, my boy—wanted on the 'phone! I fancy it's your school."

"Oh! Sorry, sir," Polly's brother pleaded,

jumping up to go, whilst Xanmer, who had been all talk with Jack, being next to him, exclaimed: "What're diggings! Bekas you have not done some times, is that it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" the laugh went round the table. "As long as Jack hasn't to go back!" exclaimed Helen.

"Yes, rather! Good luck, if he must!"

"Yes, bekas, he is to show me how to shoot as bow and arrow," announced Xanmer gaily, "and hit the straw man right in the middle of the tu—"

"Chest," said Betty lastly, causing such a prolonged round of laughter, it was only ended by Jack's sudden re-entry.

"Mr. Willoughby, sir, I'm awfully sorry, but



"But what about Billy?" Pam asked, as the three boys greeted her. "Ah, Billy—it's a great shame," Jack said, rather awkwardly. "You won't see him to-day, Pam."

that was Mr. Head, and I've got to go back at once—with Billy Charters."

"What?" chorused the table.

"Nonsense, my boy," said Mr. Willoughby, getting up. "Surely it's not as urgent as that, whatever it is! I'll go to the 'phone—"

"No, sir—please! I—I'd much rather you didn't," Jack implored, with such a surprising betrayal of agitation that everyone else looked more astounded than ever.

"The Head himself, sir—I'm sure that he would rather you—didn't ring him up."

"But what, then, does it mean? Billy?" Pam's father questioned that had sharply.

Billy, on his feet now, simply shook his head.

"You will excuse us both, sir?" Jack resumed uncomfortably. "Mrs. Willoughby—"

"My dears, if you are under orders to go, you must go, I suppose!" Pam's mother said ruefully. "But what a shame!"

Jack made a sign to Billy to withdraw with him, and then the difference between the two lads became very marked. There was an easy grace that had not a particle of foppishness in it, in the way Jack wished the rest good-bye. Billy, on the contrary, simply walked out bashfully.

Pam and Polly, in the softness instant, caught Mrs. Willoughby's eye and received permission to leave the table. They quitted the room together, finding themselves alone in the hall. Jack and Billy had run to get their things on.

"A nuisance, Polly! Some trouble over Billy, I'm afraid."

"It can't be helped," was the best Polly could say. "We know what he is, Pam."

"Oh, he's not so bad, after all!" That was unusual tenderness on the part of Pam all at once.

Then Polly made the sudden tension rather worse by not answering. To Pam, it was as if her schoolmate was mentally reserving a contrary opinion—and that was exasperating!

Just then the two lads returned, ready for the journey back to Grangemoor.

"Billy's coming in my sidecar," Jack remarked, tucking down the end of a scarf. "He can fetch his push-bike some other time. So we'll say good-bye and get away at once."

"But why is it?" Pam asked bluntly. "Billy! If Jack won't tell me—you will!"

"I don't think so, since it would only bother you for nothing," was the stout answer. "I'm in a nasty fix, but—"

"Then what have you been doing, Billy?"

"Oh, hang, never you mind, Pam! Good-bye, and—er—you, Polly; good-bye," he mumbled.

As Pam sharply noticed, Polly seemed to derive a hint from her brother Jack that there was no need to be too cordial with Billy. And that again stung Pam. She laughed a trifle scornfully.

"It must be something very dreadful, Billy—really! The way you are being treated!"

Then Jack became tight-lipped, looking impatient to go.

"Yes, well," Pam said, offering her hand to Billy, "good-bye—although I shall be seeing you again soon. All the best, Billy."

Suddenly Polly darted after Jack—for he was going out in advance of Billy. She wanted to know!

"Jack, just a sec! Is it—simply because he gave himself leave to—"

"Far worse; but don't tell Pam," came Jack's hoarse whisper. "The silly ass has been and given the House captain a bad whacking."

"What?"

"Left him senseless after a knock-down blow, and then had the cool cheek to come on here like he did! There is Fletcher's own word for it that Billy did him the injury."

Polly was aghast.

"'Chook,' do you call it, Jack? That sort of thing—I call it horrible!"

And there was sudden disgust for Billy in the look which Polly gave him, whilst making a circuit so as to pass him at a distance.

Pam Goes Off!

PAM, out on the ancient archery court an hour later, with her chums, was in secret misery.

It was all good fun for the others. The wilder flights of arrows—and some were very wild!—kept the laughter going. But she—

No peace of mind for her until she knew as much as Polly knew! For Polly, through Jack, had acquired full knowledge of the trouble over yonder at Grangemoor. That had been painfully clear to Pam at that moment when the two lads were going off.

Not only had Polly shown a kind of sudden disgust for Billy; the girl had since then kept away from Pam.

Obviously, that was because—

"Your turn, Pam!" was the light-hearted cry that struck in upon her harassing thoughts.

"Come on, Pam," laughed her father. "See what you can do, my dear."

It was like her to be equal to the strain of acting quite composedly, although so worried. Pam took her stand, fitted an arrow, drew the bow, and let fly.

" Bravo!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bang on the mark. Well, I'm bothered!" shouted Michael Heriot. "Well done, Pam!"

She sped two more arrows towards the straw man, and both lodged, if not in "the chest," at least in some part or another of his freakish anatomy. Naomer, put on her mettle by such an example of marksmanship, capered up to greet another "go."

"Bekas, zis time, you see, I shall be in ze form. So look out, everybody!"

Some of them did so, jokingly, by dodging down as if to escape being skewered. Pam saw that all other eyes were intent upon the sport, and suddenly she did a quick, silent run that took her out of sight.

Gaining a shrubbery path that offered shelter all the way, she simply flew along to the garage.

"Jennings—"

"Miss!"

"I say, got ready, will you, Jennings, to run me to Grangemoor School," Pam said breathlessly, and then darted for the house, to snatch up hat and coat.

The chauffeur was bringing one of the fine cars silently round from the garage as she came rushing out by the house porch. Hardly waiting for the car to pull up, in she jumped, and dropped back upon the cushioned seat with a smile that was only hers when she was agitated. Every moment, she was feeling more and more keyed up. What maddened her was that Polly knew and she didn't! And she must—she must know what was wrong with Billy.

Five minutes, and the huge boys' school was in sight, far down this quiet country highway. The great gateway seemed to fly to meet the car; then the latter was turning in, to take the run up the gravel drive to the main building.

Jennings pulled up, got down, and opened the door to let her alight.

"Thank you."

If she had seemed to her father's chauffeur a little excited at the start, she appeared the very contrary now. It was just as if she had come to pay an afternoon call with her mother—say, on the Head's wife!

A comely maid opened the door to Pam, for this was the Head's house at which she had been set down. She wished, Pam said, to make an inquiry about her cousin, a boy named Charter. He was in Mr. Hawksley's house.

"Oh, Mr. Hawksley's miss; then you might go across," the maid rather bewilderedly suggested, and pointed out the right building. "If you ask the porter at the door, miss—"

"Right-ho, thanks!"

Pam floated away, signing to Jennings that he and the car might stay where they were. The drone of class-rooms was in the air, but out here, amongst the lawns and asphalt walks, all was lifeless—dead quiet. Pam came to a Gothic doorway where loomed that porter, absurdly pompous, she thought.

"Yes, miss?"

She didn't like his challenging tone.

"I've come from Swanlake," she calmly announced, "to make an inquiry about my cousin, Billy Charters. In fact, I wish, if possible, to see him."

"Ah, Charters! That new boy," was said, in a tone that implied: "and a nice 'un he is!"

"They're all in school, miss—masters and all—"

"Yes, well—"

"The only one that isn't in school is Master Charters himself—no, I'm wrong," the porter corrected himself. "For there's another that isn't in school. They had to take Master Fletcher to the san. on account of his injuries."

"Fletcher! The House captain, I think? Has he been badly injured, then?" was Pam's concerned exclamation.

"Bad enough, miss. So you won't be surprised if I tell you; that there cousin of yours is in the Detention Room now. Which doesn't look as if you would be able to see him, does it?" the porter added, with obvious triumph. He had taken strong exception to Pam's dignified air. Besides, she had said she was Charters' cousin!

She stood struck back by the stock of the words; the implied connection between injuries to Fletcher and Billy's being in the Detention Room. Crash! upon her mind came full understanding. This was why Billy had been fetched back to school! He had done violence upon another boy.

"Fight!" she asked the porter breathlessly.

"I shall say nothing, miss," he said, and threw out his chest. "Except, you take my advice, miss, and go away. It's hardly your business, is it?"

"Yes, well, I think—"

"Ah, well. Some of you young people," the porter struck in, with crushing rudeness, "you think too much about what don't concern you."

Then Pam turned away. Far from looking crushed, she was more self-possessed than ever. The porter, just when he was going to smile triumphantly, became aware that he had not caused her to beat a retreat. She was calmly pacing about, waiting. Presently she came back.

"I suppose they'll all be out of school at half-past!"

"That's it, miss."

Pam went away again, this time starting a round of the piece, to kill time. She stambored about, aimlessly—until, suddenly, there came a shock that stopped her dead.

Billy! There he was, coming out by a ground-floor window, after throwing up the lower sash with a screech that had made her look in that direction. Escaping! That was what he was doing. Escaping from "Deten."

"Oh, dear!" Pam said to herself, and flew towards him. "Billy! You mustn't! Oh, Billy—"

"But I've done it, and so that's that," he panted, beating his hands clean after jumping down. "Well, I saw you, Pam, and I wasn't going to have them—"

"Billy—tell me!" she implored. "Quick, for

I'm sure we shan't get more than a few seconds. That's the Detention Room! And you—why, why?"

"It's a rotten shame," he said passionately. "I didn't want you to know, but you seem to have come along determined to find out."

"Yes—well!"

"They say I gave the House-cap, Fletcher, such a bashing, he's got concussion. Well, I didn't do anything of the sort. I certainly did have an idea he was coming after me—"

"When, Billy—when?"

"When I had just started to come to Swanlake, before lunch. But he and I never had a word together, let alone a scrap. Either he fell, where they found him—"

"And where was that?"

"Oh, somewhere near the main road—along by the larches. Pam, look here! Do you care to look me in the eyes and believe me when I say it?" he asked thickly and fiercely. "I haven't touched the chap!"

His eyes met.

"I believe you, yes, Billy. Yes!"

Hardly had she said the words than she was aware that all the brightness they had brought to Billy's face was being banished by some fresh development. He was looking past her, and so she faced round—and there was Jack Linton, peeling towards them both.

"Charters, you silly ass!" Jack hissed, as he dashed up. "Back indoors, you idiot! Pam—"

"Jack, she began to intercede, but he gestured that she was not wanted there.

"It's all right," Billy said, with a gloomy composure. "She doesn't believe it against me, anyhow. And so—"

"Anyhow," fumed Jack, "don't make things worse for yourself, juggling! Get back, before you're seen! Lucky I had to come out—an errand for the class-master. Got to fetch something from the lab. Billy, beat it!" he urged furiously.

"Pam—"

"Jack, you are not believing what they say against him!" she questioned tensely. "I'll go; but I must have it from you—what you think!"

Polly's brother did not answer. He was ignoring Pam, whilst he waved Billy back to the building from which that ill-starred lad had escaped.

"Go on, Billy—back!" Pam urged; and then he went, another instance of how he would obey her and her alone, it seemed.

Another five seconds and Jack and Pam were alone, but in full view of many windows.

Reluctantly he looked at her.

"I'm awfully sorry for the whole thing, Pam! It's a staggerer to me, I know that. Only to-day I was saying to Polly; at any rate, Billy Charters would never do anything really disgraceful."

"Neither has he done anything, Jack!"

"Hain't he! Oh, well—you're his cousin."

"Oh," said Pam. "I see! It's like that, is it? Very well!"

And next second Jack found himself staring after her, miserably, as she walked away.

Billy The Stumbling Block!

WHAT had happened to the Study 12 coterie, that the journey back to Morocco, after an early tea, was made in such silent, even gloomy, fashion?

It was a question which most of the juniors themselves would have been unable to answer. Ewanlake had not failed, by any means, to make

it a very joyous outing for Betty & Co. Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby had been kindness itself, contributing a great deal of jollity.

Of course, it had been a bit of an upset that Jack and Billy had been recalled to Grangemoor. But Betty and others took it for granted that there was nothing serious behind the recall—simply the stiffness of Grangemoor discipline in regard to trespasser Billy! Otherwise, Pam would not have returned from her lightning visit to that school, as serene as ever.

In the home-going Morocco bus, however, the talk flagged and mischievous comments on the day's outing were perfunctory.

Once, Naeser came out with a protesting: "What ze diggings!" as if to ask, who was in a temper? Not Pam, that was certain—nor Polly! But there was this general flagging of spirits, and at the journey's end there was a fur from skittish steaming into the schoolhouse and up to the studies.

As Study 12 filled up, Naeser, for one, thought it time to voice a rallying word.

"I sink we had better have our nine o'clocker at once! Belas, ze best thing, if you have all got Indigestion, is to have another meal."

So the corner-cupboard came open, and whilst Naeser was looking to see what it had to offer, Polly glanced round to note who was here. She missed Pam and spoke of going to find her.

It was not far that Polly had to seek. Pam was in her own study, lying back in an easy chair.

"Coming round for a cake and lemonade, Pam?"

"Oh, not to-night, Polly, thanks. Glad it's Saturday. Don't feel like prep., do you?"

Polly's response changed the nature of the talk altogether.

"Your people made it a lovely day for us, Pam. It was good of them. And, Pam—"

That girl looked up, her lovely eyes saying: "Well?"

Polly closed the door before resuming:

"I hope you don't think I was unkind—about Billy. I mean, in not telling you things that you must have since found out. I meant it for the best, dear."

"Oh, yes! I could tell, Polly."



YES, you see I'm still here! I suppose you opened your SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN in some trepidation, this week, expecting to see that your Editor had flown, as he threatened in his last letter.

Well, he hasn't! On second thoughts, he has decided against emigrating to Hawaii or Basutoland, however alluring the prospect might have appeared at first. Fancy leaving the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN to the tender mercies of Cuthbert—petish the thought!

And, anyway, I've had to "retire into a corner" again this week, so perhaps my Australian reader who so wanted that Cuthbert story will relent!

"Jack also—he has been as considerate on your account as anybody could be, I'm sure. I feel I must say that, Pam, in case you felt hurt by Jack's writing to me and yet not saying anything to you when there was the chance, at Swanlake. Jack and Billy—you know now, of course—they don't get on well. But Jack is really Billy's friend."

"Is he!" Pam said drily. She got up. "Yes, well, we won't talk about it, Polly."

"But—Pam! 'Is he!' As if you doubted!" The tall, slight figure of the Swanlake girl became very erect and still as she looked across at Polly.

"I must be allowed to doubt that friendship, Polly," came with gentle dignity. "Oh, don't look like that. Your information is not up-to-date, dear, or you couldn't possibly speak of your brother as being any longer Billy's—friend!"

She added, whilst Polly stared, agape:

"Billy was fetched back to school for a thing he had not done. I know he has failings, but he is not as bad as they are making him out to be now. If I told you, Polly, that Billy is said to have gone for his House cap, so brutally that the fellow was left with concussions—and that Billy callously came on to Swanlake after an affair of that sort, not troubling in the least! Would you believe that—of Billy?"

"What does Jack think?" hesitated Polly distastefully.

"He thinks it's true. He has a right to think it, I suppose. The evidence, if you care to go by evidence alone, is all against Billy. But it means that your brother can no longer have any faith in Billy."

There was a most unhappy silence between the two girls who had been such good chums all along.

"Don't be hard on Jack, Pam," broke from Polly suddenly. "After all, Billy has been pretty trying."

"My dear Polly, haven't I just said, Jack is free to have his own opinion. So are you! And I shan't think worse of you if your opinion is Jack's. You are brother and sister. But Billy and I, remember, are—cousins."

Again a stillness in this study, whilst from

Next week you will read

"NOT WORTH HER LOYALTY!"

another splendid story of Pam Willoughby and her cousin Billy at Grangemoor. The title will make you think. Up to now, Pam has been zealous in her cousin's defence; is she, then, to find that all her efforts on his behalf have been undeserved? Is Billy not worth troubling about, after all? You'll know—when you read the story!

Instalment 2 of "THE GIRL NOBODY KNEW" you will find even more enthralling than the first, and the next instalment of "PUTTING THINGS RIGHT FOR TRIXIE" brings things to a most exciting pass.

"LITTLE MISS ROBIN HOOD" is the title of the complete tale that Joan Inglesart has written for our next number. You'll enjoy every word of it, so be quite sure you don't miss it!

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

other rooms came the pleasant murmur of care-free girls.

Polly suddenly gave the big sigh of one who soon feels impatience in any quandary.

"Bother," she muttered. "Your cousin is such a trial— But I suppose I mustn't say that!"

"Yes; well, he is still—my cousin. And I'm certainly not going to run away from him whilst he's under this cloud."

"Pam, don't think I expect you to! Ah, it's fine of you. Only—it's not a bit of use arguing! Jack made it clear, did he, that he considers Billy must have done that awful thing? Pam, I do think you might trust Jack to be quite fair! All the time you have known him, Pam! You see, Pam— But no!" Polly broke off despairingly and turned to go on.

Then she spoke round again:

"What about Christmas, then, Pam?"

"Oh—Christmas! Don't talk about Christmas to-night, Polly!"

That drew a muttered "Dash it!" from Polly.

"Well, just see!" she protested, stopping. "All because of your Cousin Billy, we—we daren't think about Christmas! And it was going to be such a ripper. I've felt myself simply living for it; so have others, I know. But Billy Charters, he—he makes all this trouble—"

"He has not made the trouble he is in now, Polly; the trouble that I am bound to—"

And there Pam's composed remarks were checked by the intrusion of Naomer.

"What so diggings?" yelled the imp. "Are you coming round to have some refreshment or not, you two? Queek!"

"Not to-night, Naomer darling," smiled Pam. She patted yawning lips. "I shall be glad when it's bed-time."

"And I," exclaimed Polly—"I must get a letter off. I— Don't wait for me, any of you—"

She got it done just in time for the post. Then she went back to Study 12, and as the others welcomed her return, one said:

"We are talking about Christmas, Polly; how lovely it will be at Swanlake!"

"Bekas," chimed in Naomer, "it is just no right place—geejus! And we shall all be together, with Jack, and Daro and Michael, don't forget! Ooo, how I wish Christmas were next week!"

"I don't," said Polly.

"You don't? Why?" cried Naomer.

"I know!" laughed Helen, making it very clear that she was only joking, just to end this tension. "Polly thinks she'd rather not be with the rest of us at Swanlake, at Christmas—ha, ha, ha!"

"Now you know," Polly herself laughed, keeping up the joke.

But there were tears behind the laughter; tears that were to well up from her troubled heart and



"Ooo, look!" Naomer pointed. "Great goodness! jerked out Jack. Coming up the drive on a bicycle was Billy Charters—and he had been gated for the afternoon!"

dimmed eyes when, two days later, her brother's answering letter came into her hands, and she found that that was the gist of it all. No Christmas, for them, at Swanlake!

Polly took the letter to Pam when that girl was by herself.

"You see what has happened, Pam," said Polly, whilst her schoolfellow was still reading. "The very victim of the affair has now said that Billy did it."

"Yes, well—"

"Doesn't that—make a difference, Pam?"

"Not a bit, Polly. I can only go by what Billy says."

Polly parted her lips as if to speak again; but no words came. Not yet; was the sudden restraining thought. No Christmas at Swanlake, so far as she and Jack were concerned—what effect would that have on their chums?

She went away from Pam's study and drifted towards Study 12.

At the door, however, she lost the cherry, unworried look which she had desperately conjured up.

Her heart failed her and she turned away, to remain alone. Go in to them just now she could not.

She had heard her chums chatting eagerly about Christmas—at Swanlake.

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Is there, then, to be no Christmas at Swanlake for Polly and her brother? Is the happy time they have planned to be utterly spoiled for all of them because of Pam's cousin? You must not miss a word of next week's fine complete Morrice story, entitled "Not Worth Her Loyalty," to learn what happens next.