

"MORCOVE'S QUEST IN THE CAVES"
Fine Long Complete School Story in This Issue

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



POLLY LINTON'S DISCOVERY!

A dramatic moment in this
week's enthralling complete
Morcove story.

Morcove's Quest in the Caves



Enthralling Complete Morcove School Story
By MARJORIE STANTON

NIGHT on Morcove's rugged coast. A chill wind blowing from off the wide Atlantic, and the roar of mighty breakers. Three schoolgirls—chums of Study 12—picking their way along a lonely shore, seeking a dark cave-mouth. "Morcove" is on the trail of the stolen documents!

She Must Have Her Joke

"LATEST! All the la—test! Speshul extry!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Half a dozen girls in Study 12 at Morcove School had been set laughing by madcap Polly Linton's bursting in upon them, flourishing a newspaper.

"Take eet away!" shrilled Naomer Nakara. "Bekas zat rotten old rag—booh!"

And Morcove's royal scholar from the desert country of North Africa went on mixing herself a sherbet and water.

"Bekas I am disgusted with *de Barncombe Herald* ever since they rejected my article on 'How to Keep Fit.'"

"Anything much about the affair, Polly?" smiled Form-captain Betty Barton.

"Columnns."

"Bai Jove!" drawled languid Paula Creel, busy with pocket-comb and mirror as she reclined in the best armchair. "You might wead us—"

"Hardly time—only half an hour between now and dinner," jested the madcap. "If you want the headlines I'll read you those. 'Sensational Affair at Cliffedge Bungalow!' 'Famous Professor Bound and Gagged!' 'Priceless Documents Stolen by Mystery-Man!' 'Was He a Hindu?'"

"Yes, he was; we know that, for a fact," said Helen Craig. "Absurd to—"

"I'm reading," Polly primly admonished the interrupter. "Smart Work by Morcove Scholars."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gorjus! Bekas, stuff to give them."

"Brilliant Detective Work by Miss Polly Linton," bawled Polly, her eyes upon the newspaper. "'Schoolgirls Succeed Where Police Fail.'"

"Go on with you, Polly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bekas zat isn't in ze paper at all. Sweendle!" yelled Naomer, after looking over the madcap's shoulder. "Trust that rag not to mention us."

"What do they say about it, Polly, really?" asked Pam Willoughby calmly.

"Oh, they haven't done so badly," conceded the perennial jester. "They've got most of the facts right. 'Professor Donkin, whilst reading at Cliffedge Bungalow, was the victim of a surprise attack. He was left gagged and bound by someone whose motive was the theft of valuable papers. They were papers relating to research work by the professor in connection with an ancient temple out in India. It is believed that a Hindu

committed the deed, as one is known to have been haunting the neighbourhood."

"Quite correct," said Helen Craig. "Go up one, the *Barncombe Herald*."

"A jewel found by a Morcovoe scholar, and believed to have been worn in the Hindu's turban, is now in the possession of the police."

"Pity ze jolly old Hindu isn't in ze possession of ze police," said Naomer. "Zen there would be something to shout about. Zey have never been after our photographs for ze paper. Ees that all, Polly?"

"That, kid, is all, so you can have it."

And the local newspaper, suddenly crumpled into a tight ball, was playfully hurled at Naomer's head. Naomer promptly dodged the missile, which smote Paula Creel full in the face.

"Wowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's wight, laugh at me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fwivolous cweatures, all of you," said disgruntled Paula. "Weally, the way you laugh at nothing."

"Ooo, she called herself Nothing, which is just about right. Bekas—"

"You needn't twy to be funny, Naomer!" protested Paula, shaking up a cushion. "You wouldn't like me to lose my temper and thoww this at you."

"Go on zen, throw him. I don't mind."

"Er—no," Paula wisely decided. "I will wefwain."

"Boo, bekas—afraid!"

"Pewfectly wicidulous to say I am afwaid. I simply pwefer to west, that is all. A stwenuous morning in class—"

"Not so stwenuous, dear, that you can't come out to the games-field," smiled Betty.

She closed a drawer upon some captaincy papers, and jumped up.

"Come on, girls, out to the field. Time for a bit of French cricket, anyhow."

"Paula," said Polly, waving an ebony ruler like a magic wand, "arise!"

"You can leave me heah, geals."

"Not ze bit of eet. Bekas—"

"Ow, staph it! Na—ow!—mer! Betty heah, speak to Naomer."

"Naomer," said the captain sternly, "desist."

"The company—shun!" Polly vociferated in a sergeant-major's voice. "By the right, quick march!"

And then, changing herself into an imitation military band she moved off at the head of the batch.

"Bam, bam, bam!" Polly smote an imaginary drum. "Ta-room-ta, roomp-ta, boom!"

"Insuffwable!" groaned Paula, dragging herself after the others up the Fourth Form corridor.

"Incuwable westlessness, that's what it is."

"Queek!" yelled Naomer, suddenly dashing ahead. "First downstairs gets first innings."

Polly, at any rate, was in the mood to accept that challenge. She gave chase, overtook the imp at the landing, and rushed down a flight of stairs in her own lightning way.

Naomer, with the usual shrieks of "Not fair!" whirled after the madcap. Like a pair of young lunatics they maintained the race.

Miss Everard, their Form-mistress, chancing to be crossing the hall downstairs, suddenly beheld a certain junior sliding the last lot of banisters.

That was Polly, that was!

As for Naomer, she came screaming down the

last flight in fear of losing the race, jumped to the mat from five stairs up—flump!—and was gone as quickly as her rival for first innings.

"All this noise, Betty!" said Miss Everard, when the captain had come down with the others.

"Noise, Miss Everard?"—incredulously.

"Polly and Naomer should work off such superfluous energy out of doors."

The captain might fairly have replied that that by now was exactly what Polly and Naomer were doing.

Madcap and imp, the issue of the race being in dispute, were now tussling for the cricket-bag. Polly had snatched it up at the porch; Naomer wanted it, but was not apparently to have it.

"All right zen, go in first; I soon get you out, any old how!" the dusky one threatened, giving up the struggle. "To me, Betty, queek!"

So Betty tossed the ball to Naomer, enabling play to begin as quickly as all this. The "field" was not yet positioned when Naomer sent down the first ball to Polly.

"Out!"

"Nonsense!"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Trial!" Polly claimed, smiting back the ball after it had hit her upon the shoulder.

Then she licked her finger-tips, deeming that a professional touch, and struck a fine attitude.

Naomer sent down another, intended to be a very crafty ball indeed. But Polly fetched it a whack that lifted it into the branches of an elm.

The ball seemed a long time up there, smashing about in the twigs; then it came down in a making-up-for-lost-time manner, dropping lightly upon Paula's head.

"Yowp, gah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bekas why ze diggings didn't you catch him, duffer!" dinned the bowler. "Now zen, everybody, look out, bekas—"

"Whizz!" she bowled again; and "How's that!" she next moment shrieked. "Out!"

"Not out!"

"Out!" insisted Naomer, walking forward to claim the bat.

"None of your leg theory for me," objected Polly.

"Yes, bekas French cricket, your legs are ze wicket!"

"Oh, is that it?" the madcap innocently exclaimed. "Start again then."

"Not ze bit of eet. Hi, Betty!"

But the captain, it was now realised, had somebody else to attend to.

An elderly gentleman with a walking-stick to help his somewhat infirm steps, had strolled upon the scene, addressing a genial "Good-morning," to Betty, as being the girl nearest to hand.

Naomer could have the bat now for all Polly cared. She cast it to the grass and careered towards the visitor.

"Professor Donkin!"

"Morning, my dear; 'morning, all!" he continued his amiable murmur, as they all gathered around him. "Ha, Pam, and how are you, my dear?"

"How are you, professor; that's the great thing!" was Pam's earnest response. "Feeling really better at last? Your first time out, isn't it?"

"Much better. And so I thought I would take a walk in the direction of your school."

He straightened his tall, spare figure, wanting to express regained strength. But only too well

the girls could see that he had far from recovered.

It was not surprising. Never would they forget the deathly state in which they had found him that fateful evening when called to the bungalow by the one maid who had been looking after him.

She herself, being in the wildest state of terror, would probably have run all the way to the school for help, only Betty & Co. had chanced to be passing at the time.

"Don't let me interrupt your game, my dears," he said, his thin, clever face holding a very genial look. "Indeed, I must be turning back, or that girl Zelie may be put about by my being late for lunch."

"May I walk a little way with you?" Pam was moved to suggest.

"My dear, that would be very nice of you. But wouldn't you prefer to stay and—"

"No," smiled tall Pam. "And my chums understand."

He had only to scan their faces, whilst slowly doffing his hat to them and smiling his good-bye, to divine how well these other girls understood Pam's mood.

Fond of him as Betty and the rest had become, there was none quite so fond of him as Pam Willoughby. This dreamy old "buffer" had been a great friend of her parents for years, and he had stayed at Swanlake, that stately, ancestral home of the Willoughbys.

For Pam herself the professor had a great affection, and she returned it. He was such a dear. And, oh, the marvellous things he had done in the way of research work connected with the ancient races of the world!

As to that, however, she was inclined to wonder at this moment whether he would ever be the same man again. There was the sad fear that what had promised to be the crowning work of his lifetime—his researches in connection with the Temple of the Moon—would never be completed now.

The papers were gone, stolen, in such circumstances that it probably meant they were gone for ever.

She did not like to allude to the loss, however feelingly, but in her girlish compassion for him she was glad to be companionshiping him like this. Her eyes side-glanced him. How stoical, cheerful he was in the face of the cruel calamity.

"Zelie is doing everything for your comfort, Professor Donkin?"

"Why, yes, my dear; I think I may say Zelie has been very good."

"I'm so glad. I feared she might—well, not be quite the right sort, being mother's lady'smaid, really. This is glorious weather we're having. I'm coming all the way to the bungalow with you," Pam gaily declared.

He smiled at her quizzically.

"Then Zelie will have to lay an extra place for lunch, young lady."

"Oh, no, she won't. But I'd like to see Zelie for a moment. The fact is," Pam owned up with her usual candour, "I haven't been too nice with Zelie lately. She made me cross. But from what you tell me she seems to have made good, anyhow, at the job."

"Your dear mother all over again," was his pleased comment.

They chatted on, taking the mile walk slowly, of necessity. Pam was going to be back late for her own midday dinner at the school, but that he bothered.

He was asking her about the Easter holidays

whether she thought her parents would be home in time for them, and she had to say that she didn't think so. She didn't quite know what was going to happen to her at Easter. Not Swanlake—no. Very likely she would be spending the "hols" with some of her chums.

Only when they were very close to the bungalow did he come out with a vague allusion to his great loss.

"I have enjoyed this little walk with you immensely, Pam. Now that I have nothing to do—nothing to do," he repeated, and gave a sharp sigh.

Pam's eyes dimmed then as she looked at him. "Yes, I know, and I am so awfully sorry for you," she said lumpily. "It is not a bit of use without the papers?"

"Oh dear, no! They were everything, Pam. But there, we won't talk about it."

"I'll run on in front of you and—and see Zelie."

He nodded hearty approval, and so Pam went speeding up the garden-path to the bungalow porch, leaving him to fall back upon his own thoughts.

She had felt she must slip away or else start crying in front of him. It was not like her to go in for tears, but his case seemed positively heart-rending.



It was a wild race downstairs between Polly and Naomer. And Polly, like the Madcap she was, chose the banisters!

If only there were still a chance of getting back the stolen papers.

Meantime, the professor came to a standstill in the breezy garden of the cliff-top dwelling. He sniffed the sea air appreciatively, smiled his stoical smile, and sent an admiring glance after Pam just as she passed into the low-roofed building.

Fine girl, the Willoughbys' Pam. Why all this grumbling about the modern girl? He asked himself. Heaps of 'em at Morcove—splendid girls. He'd never forget his return home from abroad the other day to learn that Pam had saved those papers from being stolen by some other people who had come after them. Bitter disappointment for Pam herself, that the same papers had now been stolen by that Hindu.

But all she felt, he could tell, was the disappointment to himself. He, well! So it was a blow, of course; his coup de grâce so far as that business was concerned.

Pity! A great pity, when a few more days at work upon his theory might have given him the secret of the Temple of the Moon. Now very likely its secret never would be fathomed. Without the papers he could do nothing, nothing.

He resumed his smile, along with a loitering step, aware of Pam's having come running out again.

"Well, my dear, have you made your peace with Zelig?"

"She's not there!" cried Pam in a tone that halted him sharply. "She's gone off!"

"My dear—gone off?"

"Run away, yes," the schoolgirl affirmed. "Here's a note to say so."

And the sheet of paper bearing a few scribbled lines came before the professor's astonished eyes.

Promotion for Muriel

MISS EVERARD, presiding at the Fourth Form dinner table, took fresh notice of a vacant seat that had already incurred her displeasure.

"Pam Willoughby should not have stayed out like this. Even though we know where she is, it is not the thing."

"I zink, probabbly, she has stayed to lunch with Professor Donkey," said Naomer, who never could get the savant's name aright. "So she won't do so badly."

Was this a hint that Naomer herself could be doing better? The Form-mistress could not allow that.

"Surely, Naomer, after two helpings of pudding?"

"Eet was not one of my favourites. Still, I don't mind one more helping, just for luck."

"No," came the judicious refusal; and the Imp said under her breath:

"Sweeidle!"

"Here's Pam!"

It was quite a chorus of delight, and even the Form-mistress forgot to look reproving as the tall junior came upon the scene. Something about thoroughbred Pam—well, there, she was adorable.

"Sorry I'm late, Miss Everard. I don't really want the meat course. Anything—"

"That's nonsense, Pam. You don't eat half enough."

"Unfair!" muttered the dusky one. "Bekas nobody ever says that about me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Girls, such noise! Your dinner has been kept, Pam, and you must eat it. What delayed you?"

"Oh, when I got to the bungalow with Professor Donkin we found that Zelig Duval had run away."

"What!"

Here was a sensation to set the Fourth Form buzzing.

"She had left a note, for me, on the kitchen table to say that she had packed up and gone back to Swanlake."

"But why?"

Pam shrugged and smiled as she sat down. "She's like that, Miss Everard." It appears that it hadn't been the picnic for her that she expected it to be. She complains that she hasn't seen anything of me."

One of Morcove's serving maids came up behind Pam, to set before her the kept-back meat course.

"Thank you, Murie."

Pam was turning her lovely head to smile at Muriel Floddon, that young girl from a cottage on the Swanlake estate who was in training at the school. Nor did Muriel fail to flush with pleasure. She would have given her life for Pam.

"But what then is the poor professor doing?"

"Bekas he better come and board at ze school."

"And take us in dead languages," Polly carried on Naomer's skittish suggestion. "I should love to be able to read a good thriller in Egyptian mummy language."

"Polly!" said Miss Everard, trying not to laugh.

"I got something for the professor's lunch," Pam now remarked casually. "Now I am wondering whether the school will be able to spare somebody to look after him."

"Pam wants the job herself," chuckled Helen.

"Nuzzing doing, Bekas, I am ze one to cook for ze professor. I soon feed him up and get some flesh on his jolly old bones. What he wants is some of my patent treacle jumbles."

"Hush, girls. You are much too noisy." For again the Fourth Form table was all laughter.

"They won't be able to spare another girl from Swanlake, I'm afraid," Pam presently remarked. "They've started the spring cleaning. Zelig may be ordered to return; but I don't think she will. I know Zelig. Miss Everard, do you think Muriel Floddon could be spared? She'd be the one."

"I am sure I can't say, Pam. It is not my department. You may see, when you've finished dinner. But you must not let it keep you away from class this afternoon. I can't have that."

"Yes, well, thanks."

And Pam went on with her belated eating, plying knife and fork—well, in a far different way from Naomer's.

Miss Everard gave the dismissal for the girls in general before Pam had finished. So when at last Pam rose from table she was alone, except for maids who were briskly clearing away.

Muriel Floddon was one of them.

"How would you like it, Murie?" asked Pam, with her fond look for the Swanlake woodman's daughter. "You heard what I was saying about the professor, and Zelig being gone?"

"Yes, miss," glowed Muriel, resting her laden tray. "And I'll do anything you think best. I'm not very experienced yet, but—"

"You're all right, Murie. Cooking—you've often cooked at home?"

"Oh, heaps of times!"

"Yes, well, there you are. The only thing is," rippled Pam, "you mayn't have much time for

going on with all the lessons you have been setting yourself to do. Sure you won't mind the loneliness over there? Not going to be afraid at night-time?"

Muriel laughed.

"I shan't be nervous, miss. If I should be, I could always peep out of window and see the school."

Pam received this with a charmed smile and nod, sauntering away to find Betty and the rest.

She did not have far to go. They were hanging about for her in the sunshine, close to the porch.

"Now, Pam," as they swarmed about her eagerly. "You say that Zelig left a note for you?"

"Care to see it?"

Pam was ready to hand it over, and next moment eager eyes were devouring these scribbled lines:

"Mademoiselle:

"I write this for you, for it is that you will comprehend better than mitor the professor, who is imbecile.

"Also, I have to complain that your unkindness it is that makes me go, as well as the fear at night. I have not sleep, thinking of that so terrible Hindu.

"Mademoiselle, I think you have treated me very cruel, but I forgive you. It is all that Muriel's doing, I know.

"So I go back to Swanlake and remain for your mother to return.

"Adieu, mademoiselle,

"Hélas, how I am miserable!"
"ZELIE."

"Gee!" grinned Polly, after the perusal of this scree. "I like that."

"Miserabubble!" cried Naomer. "Of course she is miserabubble, when all ze time she is dodging ze work."

"Just as you dodge the schoolwork."

"Not ze bit of eet, Polly. Bekas zat is different. You don't call lessons work. I call zem a sweendle! But cooking—" And the dusky one smacked her lips.

"Absurd, Pam, for Zelig to say you have treated her unkindly," Betty exclaimed hotly.

"Monstuous pweavawication, yes, wather! You hev been most forbearing, Pam deah!"

"I was really cross with her several times. Well, she had such a cruel down on Muriel."

"What will they say about it at Swanlake?" Madge wondered.

"She won't get much sympathy there," Pam frowned. "Mother's housekeeper is not one to stand nonsense. Considerate, yes, but she won't put up with any sulking."

Pam's activities during the last half-hour before school resulted, amongst other things, in her finding out how Zelig had fared on her return to Swanlake."

The housekeeper there had calmly ordered Zelig to, as it were, return to duty at the bungalow. Thereupon, the French girl had flared out.

There would have been a violent scene, but the Swanlake housekeeper was not the sort to bandy words. Zelig could either go back to the bungalow or consider herself suspended altogether. There was no demand for a lady's maid at Swanlake at present, and they did not want her idling about whilst others worked so hard. "Très bien, I go!"

This was much as Pam had expected, and she

could easily imagine Zelig treating herself to a nice holiday pending the return of her, Pam's, mother. Then for a reinstatement under conditions flattering to Zelig's grand opinion of herself.

So, no doubt, Zelig herself was thinking. But Pam, she was not quite so sure. Mother was not going to be at all pleased with the way Zelig had carried on.

"Anyhow, I'm not going to bother about that." Pam serenely decided. "The great thing is that the professor won't be left without anybody to see after him, poor man!"

For it was all fixed up, and Muriel was being spared from the school for the job. Morcove had complete faith in her all-round capabilities. It was a great responsibility, but that was what Muriel, eager to get on, wanted.

In the last few minutes left to Pam before afternoon school, she got word with Muriel, even then ready to go across to the bungalow with a small bag containing personal belongings.

"Best of luck, Muriel! I'll try to look in upon you by-and-bye, just to see how you are going on."

"Thank you, miss. But you mustn't bother; I shall be all right. So long as the professor will just say what he most fancies for his meals."

"Give him my regards, Muriel. You know, I do feel so awfully sorry for him now. He's lost without those papers to be going on with. By the way, I've just remembered. He likes kippers for breakfast."

Pam held out a hand. She felt that this particular parting warranted a shake.

"Ta-ta then, Muriel."

"I shall feel, miss, that anything I do for him will be done for you, like. You're so fond of him."

"Yes, well, so I am. And perhaps, Muriel, you and I can get a half-hour together in the bungalow kitchen some time for more French and arith."

Then the little lady of Swanlake stepped away to go upstairs to her study and get ready for class. Muriel took up the handbag and marched away. She had already been wished good-bye and good luck by the Morcove staff, with whom she had been in such happy association just lately.

There yet remained, however, sundry juniors to give her a well-wishing send-off. Betty and others abandoned a bit of play on the gamesfield when they saw Muriel going down to the gateway, bag in hand.

They careered towards her.

"Bekas don't forget, Muriel; keep up his appertite. Put some stuffing into him, I would."

"So you're off, are you?" cried Betty blithely.

"My word, Muriel, aren't you proud of yourself?"

"Yes, I am, miss."

"Bai Jove, Muriel, so you should be, yes wather! The prospect of being responsible for Pwofessor Donkin would weduce me to a state of nervous pwestwation," declared Paula modestly. "It would pweucipitate a nervous bweakdown."

"No breakdowns for Muriel," said Polly heartily. "She's the one."

"So what about asking for ze rise, Muriel? Bekas I would!" shrilled Morcove's royal scholar. "Anyhow, you can cook yourself what you like, which is better than having more money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give Murie a cheer, girls!" the captain posed. "With a hip, hip—"

"Hurrah! Bravo, Murie! Best of luck!" Spring sunshine and all those jolly, good-natured girls demonstrating like that. No wonder Murie stepped along with a light heart. What was there to cast a shadow upon the way? Nothing.

She looked back from the school gateway and saw the chums turning round to wave for the last time, now that the bell was ringing them into class.

"I'm very lucky," Murie thought to herself, trotting along in the sunshine. "It may lead to big things."

Lucky! And her every step, if she could only have been warned that it was so, meant a drawing nigher to deadly danger.

On the Barncombe Road

"EXCELLENT tea, my girl. Yes, you may clear, Muriel."

The professor got up from his lonely tea-table, fumbling out his pipe and pouch.

"And if you please, sir, what about your evening meal? There's nothing in the larder that I should care for you to have," remarked young Murie, quite in a mothering way.

"Ha, hum! It doesn't matter, my girl." The learned professor blew at his stopped-up pipe. "I am not particular, except as regards my favourite brand of tobacco. I seem—hum!—to be very nearly out of that."

"Would you care for me, sir, to go into Barncombe and get in a few things for the larder? A nice chop for supper, sir, would be nice, if I made a little milk pudding to follow? And perhaps I could get some of the tobacco that you like most."

"Excellent idea, Muriel. For it will make a little run for you this lovely evening. You will get away at once?"

"Yes, sir. I shan't be a minute washing up and putting these things away. Then I can be off."

On the way out of the room with the tray Muriel paused.

"And for breakfast, sir—kippers?"

"Ha, kippers! Now how, my girl, did you divine that of all things for breakfast I do like a kipper!"

"Miss Pam, sir."

"Ha, was that it! The dear girl!"

"So she is, sir," Murie agreed, and then passed out.

Presently Murie at the kitchen sink heard rather cautious steps on the gravel path leading round to the back door.

Pam! She was looking amused at having got to the back door unbeknown to the professor.

"How goes it, Murie?" she whispered in from the doorway. "Sh! I don't want him to know I'm here. It might disturb him."

"He ate a good tea, miss. I poached him an egg, and he seemed to like that," Murie said with a touch of pardonable pride. "I'm off shopping in a minute. The larder is so low."

"Pity, I didn't think of it, or I might have gone for you, Murie. But the run out of doors will do you good. Shall I leave you my bike?"

"I think I'd prefer to walk, miss, thank you. It's no distance really."

"Right—ho then. I'm off back to the school now; have promised myself for tennis. My word, those taps are shiny!" was Pam's admiring

comment, as she turned to go. "Ta-ta, Murie."

Stealing away, the little lady of Swanlake glimpsed the professor walking in the garden. Pipe in mouth, he was loitering with head bent and hands clasped behind his back. She got away unseen; but Murie, a couple of minutes later, fared differently.

"Er—Murie! Er, let me see! Ha, yes!" he said flightily, coming across the grass to her. "Money for shopping, my girl?"

"That's all right, sir. We can settle up at the end of the week."

"Bless my soul, though, you mustn't shop for me with your own money? No, no; take this note, Muriel."

"Thank you, sir."

"Er—just a moment." And he took it back.

"Ha, yes, Egyptian banknote! Must get that changed some time. You want—let me see—an English currency note?"

"It would be better, sir, in Barncombe."

"And a quarter of a pound, if they have it, my girl, of Brills' Navy Cur? Can you remember that? Brills'!"

"Brillsesses, yes, sir."

"Brills', my dear; one 's', singular possessive. But perhaps you have not learned much grammar?"

"I'm trying to learn a bit more, sir."

"Ha, hum! Perhaps I can manage a lesson or two, my girl. Now that I have nothing to do—nothing to do."

And he drifted away, relapsing, as she could tell, into a hopeless mourning for the lost papers.

Except that it was sad to think of him as being so stricken by that loss, Murie could be very happy as she tripped the couple of miles or so into Barncombe, and afterwards when she was returning not minding a well-laden marketing bag in the least.

Many a Moreove scholar had said: "Hallo, Murie!" in the old High Street. The fine evening had tempted numbers of girls to do the cycle run into the town. But there were none of these pleasant encounters on the way back.

It seemed as if Murie's return time was too late for more scholars to be coming along from the school, and too early for any of them to be going back.

Of a sudden, however, about a mile out of the town a chance glance behind let her in for a minor shock, one that dashed her good spirits.

Someone was coming on, on foot, walking quickly as if to overtake her. And there was no mistaking the familiar figure.

Zelie Duval!

Somehow Murie could not believe that the French girl was making her way back to the bungalow with the intention of resuming her job.

What seemed far more likely, bearing in mind Zelie's ill-governed mind, was that she had found her way into Barncombe after going off in a bad temper from Swanlake, had found a lodging, and now had time on her hands.

She carried no luggage, and had the appearance of being merely out for a stroll.

Murie brisped up her step. She did not want to jump to the conclusion that Zelie, catching sight of her in Barncombe, had made up her mind to follow. But it did seem as if the girl now wanted to overtake her, for the sake of having words.

Glancing behind again a minute later Murie found that the French girl had lessened the

distance between them. Very significantly, too, Zelig flourished a hand as if to mean: "Stop!"

Then Muriel decided to leave the road and go the rest of the way along the top of the cliffs. The springy turf was dotted with gorse bushes, and so she might be able to do a little run, out of sight from Zelig. There must be no scene with the tiresome girl, causing a hindrance as well as an upset. Muriel's mind was quite made up about that.

She accomplished the little run, and was not at all sorry to have come off the road, for it was jollier than ever along the cliffs with the sea spread wide in the sunshine upon one's left and the jackdaws flapping about their old nests.

Very faintly came the chimes from the town hall in Barncombe and then the hour-bell. Six o'clock.

"So I shall be back in nice time," she was saying to herself, when she heard a panting sound upon her right.

She faced that way, slightly startled, and was next moment eye to eye with Zelig, who had come with a rush from between two patches of golden gorse.

Never yet had the French maid confronted the woodman's daughter without a look of raging jealousy. But now the look was one of such hatred it made Muriel wonder whether the young woman was still in her right mind.

"So we meet again!" Zelig hissed in her foreign way.

"We need not talk; it will be better not to," the other answered calmly. "There has been enough of bickering, Zelig Duval. Besides, I am in a hurry to get back to the bungalow."

"Oui, it is that you are always in a hurry, you! There has been the hurry to come between me and mademoiselle Pam, has there not? Oho, and you have not lost any time about taking my place at that bungalow, is that it?"

The impassioned foreigner strode nearer. "Dolt! You boast to me, do you, of having taking my place! Bah, do you think I care that you have been sent to look after that professor? I do not care."

"Then that's all right. And now, Zelig—" "But listen—you shall listen!" the frenzied-looking girl raged out. "There is one thing that I do care about; a thing that I never will forgive, you upstart, you. I have lost the regard of mademoiselle, and it is your doing."

"Nothing of the sort, Zelig. Anybody would tell you, I'm sure, you have brought it on yourself. You have been—"

"Silence, or I shall strike you!" stamped Zelig, opening and shutting her hands. "I was all right

until you became the favourite. So it is that you are a serpent, snake who has—"

"Oh, that will do!" pleaded Muriel. "Why have you come after me, Zelig, when you know very well that it only maddens you to see me. Let's part, and—"

"And next time you see mademoiselle you will make me a farce to her, oui? You saw that Zelig, how she was all alone, having to take a lodging in the town. Ha, ha! What a good joke, eh? When I look at you I could tear your hair out."

"That's why I say go away now, Zelig." "And I will not go, no, at least, not until I have done that!" came with greater vehemence than ever. "And that!"

And with a lightning-like movement she grasped



Pam came into the dining-room, as serene as ever. She said, quite calmly: "Zelig Duval has run away from the bungalow—back to Swanlake!"

Muriel's shoulders, shook her violently, and then thrust her away. Muriel reeled under the force of the cruel push; she staggered back and fell to the ground, and as she did so her head struck a projecting boulder.

With a growing look of horror Zelig waited for Muriel to move, to open her eyes, to show some sign or other of life.

And not one such sign came.

"Twilight and Evening Bell—"

THE light was going now from the games-field and the tennis courts at Morcove School, and so reluctantly girls were knocking off to go indoors.

It must be upstairs to the studies for all now, and that nightly infliction—"prep."

"Run and pick up those balls, Naomer, will you?"

"No, why should I, when there is Paula? Bekas I am thirsty," shrilled the dusky one. "Ooo, I could drink ze river. Queek, for a refresher."

"Paula darling, just pick up those—"
"Weally, Polly deah, I do think I might be excused from further exertion, yes, wather! Pout, bai Jove, why I played that last set, I weally don't know."

The answer was that she had been as good as ordered to play. What was Paula Creel's languid, complaisant nature, in opposition to the literally forceful dispositions of Polly and others?

So now Paula fagged after tennis balls lying far astray in the fading light. She toiled back to Polly with them, and Polly, accepting one, instantly disposed of that ball in skittish fashion.

"Just for luck," said Polly, preparing to racquet the ball as high and as far as she could. "See if I can drop it through the greenhouse glass, girls."

Whack! And away it went into the gloaming. But no tinkle of broken glass resulted.

"Bad luck!" said Polly. "You might look for that ball in the morning, Paula darling."

"Weally!"
"Before breakfast."

"Insuffeable imposition! I don't ask you to do my pwep for me, Polly."

"You don't ask me, but I generally have to—now don't I?"

"Haw, haw, haw!" Paula suddenly chortled. "All wight, Polly deah, I wealise you are not a bad sort weally. But don't—Owp! I say, pway don't—Oocch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"What are you doing, Polly deah? Ow, stahp it!"

"It's how I feel," the madcap excused herself for batting Paula on the head more or less playfully. "It's the spring, dear."

"If some of you made less row," complained Betty with a grin, "we might hear the birds still singing in the twilight. Girls, this is a glorious evening. Fine weather for Easter?"

"Let's hope so," sighed Helen. "Easter, hooray!"

They sauntered indoors and climbed the stairs in a pleasantly tired manner.

One by one the studies were receiving back their rightful tenants. One by one doors were being closed, for that necessary spell of seclusion which "prep" decreed.

Pam Willoughby, ready to settle down to work along with Helen Craig, crossed to the open window, whilst her co-tenant of the study clicked on the light.

"We needn't quite close this window, Helen?"
"Rather not, Pam."

"This really is a topping evening," exclaimed tall Pam, lingering at the window. "A night to be on the sea. There's a large steamer, outward bound, on the horizon, Helen. You can see its lights quite clearly. But rather strange, Helen, I don't see any lights at the bungalow."

"You don't?"

"I hope they're not out of oil," Pam laughed, coming to the table. "I can't imagine Muriel Floddon being caught like that. Yes, well!" And she flung out some books and subsided into her chair. "Prep!"

"Or shall we, Pam, leave it until the morning? But then the mornings are so lovely, too."

"Oh, yes, one wants to be free before brekker. I know what I would like to do first thing," Pam said, dipping a pen. "Get a bath."

"We might get permish to make up a party, Pam. First time in this year. All the lovely stinky feeling over again, and the salt water going up your nose."

"I know," nodded Pam, and they left it at that.

Small hands rubbed the open books to make them stay open at wanted folios. Some preliminary drawing of absurd hieroglyphics on blotting-paper, evidencing a reluctance to concentrate; and then—

"Oh, who is that?" sighed Pam, hearing a tap at the door. "Come in!"

Round the edge of the half-opened door came the pretty head of parlourmaid Ellen.

"If you please, miss, they want to know if you have seen anything of Muriel Floddon."

"Want to know what, Ellen? And who are 'they'?" added Pam, rising along with her study-mate.

"The headmistress and Professor Donkin, miss."
"Professor— Is he here, then?"

"Yes, miss. He has come across to the school, wondering what's become of Muriel. She went shopping in Barncombe, and hasn't come back."

Pam and Helen, after glancing to the darkened window, looked at each other.

"Yes, well, I'll go down," said Pam. "I'll let you know, Helen."

But it was not in human nature for Helen, on that assurance, to settle down to work. Left to herself in the study she dropped into a chair away from the table, soon got up again to go to the window and peer out anxiously, then crossed to the door.

The four tenants of Study 12 were making their thought-straying criss-crosses on blotting-pads when Helen drifted in.

"Hi, not time yet for ze hand-out!" Naomer protested. "What ze diggings, we haven't even started prep yet. Although eet would not be a bad idea, girls, to have ze hand out first?"

"I haven't come for that," laughed Helen. "I say, girls, what do you think?"

"Well, at times," sighed Betty, "we do try to think about the work."

"But it's difficult," said Polly sweetly. "Still, take a chair, Helen."

"The professor has come across from the bungalow, girls. He is wondering what's become of Muriel!"

"Wha-a-a-at!"
"Bai Jove!"

"Bekas zis is late ze time when she should be serving up his lust dinner."

"They've sent up to ask Pam, and she's gone down, although she knows nothing, of course," Helen resumed. "I felt I must come and tell you. Can't work until—"

"Wather not, bai Jove!" said Paula, getting up very willingly from the table to resort to the best armchair. "Geals, this about Muwiel is wather disconcerting, what?"

"Bekas, you never know."

"Evidently she is a good deal overdue," Helen remarked. "And the professor feels anxious."

"I suppose he thought she might be here."
"Or that we'd seen something of her, anyhow. She went into Barncombe to do some shopping."

Betty nodded.

"Yes, and several girls did see her in the town. They said so when they got back. But that was long before dark."

A pause.

"She can't have come to any harm," Polly argued unasily. "How could she?"

"Unless— Ooo, but what about ze Hindu?" was Naomer's scaring cry. "Bekas you never know. What ze diggings—"

"Rubbish!" snorted Polly. "Why should the Hindu have anything to do with this? He got what he wanted—those Temple of the Moon papers—days ago. And, of course, he cleared out. In any case, what has Muriel to do with that business?"

"Bekas she is at ze bungalow now, looking after ze professor. And ze Hindu may have thought zat is ze way to finish off ze professor. Eef zere is no one to cook for him—"

"You talk like a lunatic, kid."

"Widiculous, yes, wather! Weally, Naomer, you hev no more bwains than—"

"Than you have, is that what you were going to say? Is it?" demanded Naomer, with one of her threatening advances upon the occupant of the easy chair. "You say, queek!"

"No—I mean, yes. I— Owp! Naow then—"

"Ru—ler!" cried Polly, catching up the ever-handy bit of ebony. Thump!

"Order, you two!"

"Zen she had better not give me any more of her cheek. Bekas—"

"Sh'rrp!" insisted Polly. "Here's Pam."

The tall one came in calmly.

"Yes, well, Helen has told you, girls?"

"What's the theory downstairs?" clamoured Polly.

"There is no theory. They simply can't make it out," Pam answered. "The professor is going back, and Miss Somerfield seems to think that some of us ought to go across to the bungalow, in case of messages and so on. There is no telephone at the bungalow. Miss Everard is going across; she is taking me and you, Betty, and you, Polly."

"What ze diggings; what about me?"

"I fancy you're to go on with prep."

"Sweendle! Bekas I am ze very one who could cook ze professor a proper meal for once! Ah, bah, I am disgusted! I must have a snack to get over that!" Naomer wound up, whisking to the cupboard.

Betty and Polly, without even staying to close their lessons books, hurried away with Pam. Helen attended them as far as the stairs, then turned back—not to get on with "prep," however. Helen now felt bound to let other studies know.

"I wonder if we shall be away all night?" Polly speculated in a thrilled tone on the way downstairs. "Go out searching perhaps. Oh, but I can't believe it is as bad as that!"

"And yet if Muriel had met with an accident on the road—got knocked down by a car," Betty muttered, "it would have been reported by now. I suppose"—she paused—"I suppose, girls—"

"Yes, what, Betty?"

"There really is nothing in what Naomer said about the Hindu? Naomer talked a lot of piffle, of course; but in a way—I mean, if the Hindu were still in the district, girls?"

"Even then, why on earth should harm have come to Muriel?" argued Polly. "It isn't as if

she were in service where the papers still remained to be stolen. They've been stolen. The Hindu got away with them days ago."

With the next breath Polly said:

"I say, you two. How about Zelie?"

"Zelie?"

"Her jealousy of Muriel. But Zelie is at Swanlake for the present, isn't she, Pam?"

"No, she isn't," was the prompt reply. "She packed up in a paddy and went off quite early in the afternoon."

There was no time for more. The trio hastened down the last flight to the hall, where they found the headmistress, Miss Everard, and the professor in talk.

Miss Everard detached herself to meet the girls at the foot of the stairs. She was dressed for out of doors.

"Will you three get your things on them?" she said, taking it for granted that they needed to be told nothing further.

Then while Betty, Pam and Polly were in the coat-room, the headmistress came to them.

"Understand, girls, you are not being sent out as a search-party. I have rung up the police, and the gardeners have also volunteered to go out and look for Muriel Floddon. You three will simply go with Miss Everard to the bungalow, in case of need."

"Yes, Miss Somerfield."

"I hope you will soon be back with your Form-mistress reporting that all is well. If there is any message to be brought to me, mind you keep one another company on the way here."

They nodded complete understanding, and in a few seconds the night sky was above their heads. A soft warm breeze fanned their faces as they passed down to the gates slightly in advance of Miss Everard and the professor.

Out on the road the Form-mistress gently called to them not to get too far in advance as suspense was inducing them to do. So then they waited to let the two grown-ups join them in the darkness.

Professor Donkin was more inclined to mutter to himself than engage in talk. But his very presence served to create in the girls' minds an uncanny fancy that this present sensation was somehow associated with recent happenings.

Would it prove to be the case? Was there, in the strange disappearance of Muriel Floddon, a culmination of events in connection with the Temple of the Moon papers?

Strange it was, at any rate, that within a few hours of her going to the bungalow to look after the professor, she had vanished like this.

There might have been no such wild fancies as these, only it was dark night now and the way was lonely.

The vast wastes of the moorland were upon their left; the sea was beyond the giant cliffs; the bungalow itself was in darkness, and that circumstance seemed the creepiest of all.

Dark and silent and deserted when they all got to it. Muriel had not come in. A match was struck and one or two oil-lamps were hastily lit. Then there was a standstill, whilst one pair of anxious eyes could read similar anxiety in some other pair.

"Er—sit down, won't you," the old professor said, rousing out of a reflective state. "Let me see now. Wait a little while, is that it? This is—ha, hum!—very disquieting. And such a nice girl, too."

He ran bony fingers through his greying locks.

"Er—yes, you young ladies would do well to wait. But I think I should go out again."

"Professor Donkin, no," demurred the Form-mistress earnestly. "You are not in a fit state. And remember, a search is already being made." "Ha, well!" he reluctantly resigned himself to the waiting. "A quarter of an hour then—"

"And if she still hasn't turned up," Miss Everard nodded. "I would suggest my slipping back to the school, leaving the girls here. I can go alone; it is different in my case." "I can go alone; it is different in my case."

"You are all—er—extremely good," he stammered, sinking into a chair.

"I seem to have been a lot of trouble, Pam my dear. First the Swanlake business, over the papers, then when I had them here and was robbed of them. And now this. I do hope all is well with that little maid. I would rather have good news of her at this moment than have back the papers."

And they knew that he meant it.

Night on the Shore

THE moments of waiting grew to minutes. Loudly the clock in the hall ticked away during lengthy pauses in the talk.

At last Miss Everard stood up.

"I shall do that—be off back to the school now just to let them know. Miss Somerfield is very anxious, and we must keep in touch with her. I shall come back, of course."

"You'll be very tired, young lady."

"Oh, that's all right. But hark!" the Form-mistress eagerly exclaimed. "Is that someone now?"

No. She must have fancied it.

From the dark porch she and the girls peered as they listened. Nobody coming. Nothing but the surrounding darkness and the night breeze wafting by so gently that it created not the faintest sound.

Miss Everard went away, and then the girls turned back to the sitting-room. The professor was absent-mindedly fumbling out pipe and pouch. Ruefully he realised next moment that his fingers were finding the pouch empty.

"No tobacco?" Pam sympathised.

"Er—ha, hum, no! The little maid, as a fact, was to bring me in some of my favourite mixture. Dear, dear, I think I ought to go out—do something, you know."

"We all want to do that, but we mustn't, sir," Betty said with a queer smile.

"Professor Donkin," broke out Polly. "I suppose you don't consider that this affair can have anything to do with the Hindu who stole your papers?"

"Eh, what? Bless my soul! But no," he very quickly decided, "why should it? It is not as if there had been anything more for the Hindu to come after. He got all he wanted. The presumption is that he went right away that same night."

"Muriel was on foot," Pam suddenly commented. "I suppose she didn't leave the road and come along the cliffs?"

"And fall over, you mean?" Polly whispered. "Oh, if there has been something like that."

"Can't imagine it possible," Betty declared with desperate optimism. "She wouldn't be so silly as to go too near the edge. My goodness, though!" as a thought struck the speaker, and then the other girls said tensely:

"Yes, what, Betty?"

"It has been high tide this evening, hasn't it?"

"A little after six, I fancy," Pam nodded. "Why?"

"Supposing Muriel came part of the way back along the shore?" the Form-captain submitted. "You know that there is one zig-zag path down to the beach, further along from here in the direction of Barncombe. Then there is the zig-zag just close to this bungalow. She might have been caught by the tide between one cliff path and the other."

"But why should she take much longer, coming home from the town, by going down to the beach," Pam questioned, "when it's certain she didn't want to be back late?"

"With a bag of marketing, too," added Polly. "Er—h'm, yes!" interjected the professor, who had been glancing from one girl to the other very attentive to their reasonings. "Just one point occurs to me. This bungalow—it has a sort of private cave down below on the beach? Er—certain odds and ends, I believe, are stored down there. I don't know; I am a child about domestic matters, but I presume the little maid could have gone down after something?"

"Just a moment," Polly cried, and ran to the kitchen.

She came back, greatly excited.

"The keys that lock the gates of the boathouse cavern are generally kept on a dresser hook. They're not there now. So perhaps that's where Muriel is—down below in the private cave."

"If she is, then she has met with an accident," Betty said agitatedly.

"But what could there have been in the private cave," Pam objected, "that she would need to fetch up to the bungalow? It's only boat gear down there, surely. You didn't say anything about the cave, professor?"

"Er—yes, now I think of it, I did," the professor said abstractedly. "I mentioned that if she would like to use a spirit-stove in the morning to get herself a cup of tea, there was one in the boat cave. I—er—saw it there yesterday."

Polly struck her hands together.

"Oh, do let's go down now, this instant! Not you, professor; I don't mean you. You'd fall on those rough rock steps, and that would be another disaster. But we girls—"

"We could go up or down the zig-zag blind-folded!" Pam said serenely. "We have a zig-zag path of the same kind near the school. We are used to it."

"And we are going!" cried Betty. "Someone must stay here against anybody's coming in, so will you do that, professor, please!"

They gave him no chance to demur. He was instantly left to himself, the three girls hurrying out to the open air.

On the hallstand lay a pocket-torch, such as are usually kept handy in country dwellings that have no electric-light. Polly picked it up.

"This will be handy."

Under the wide, star-crammed sky they made their way to the verge of the beetling cliff and began the descent to the shore.

Polly flashed the torch at the start of the descent, then their eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness they went scrambling down—down.

Literally enough the rugged path zig-zagged, and again and again the girls made the sharp turn where some giant boulder or projecting rock decreed one.

It was a calm night, but the always unquiet

tide along Morcove's rugged shore kept up a surge that sounded ever louder as the descent proceeded.

"Water's still high, girls," Betty voiced. "But it will be going back now," responded Pam. "Here's an awkward place."

It was, and they might have laughed at the idea of the professor negotiating it by night, but this was no time for levity.

Eagerly and with all their youthful nimbleness they scrambled safely down that very nasty bit. Some comparatively easy steps, formed out of the rock, came after that. Then with a final jump one after the other the girls landed on the shingle.

"Now!" panted Polly. The torch, put away in a pocket for safety, was flched out again. The three of them struck off to the right, keeping close in under the towering wall of rock.

Only a dozen steps did they have to make, and then they were at the mouth of that natural cavern which had been acquired by the Cliffledge owner as a private boat store.

Strong lattice gates, capable of resisting the stress of bad weather and terrific seas, had been fitted, with a chain and padlock to secure the cavern against unlawful prowlers.

Polly switched on the torch. The gates were unlocked, and one was slightly open. Padlock and chain dangled free, and the key was in the lock.

All this bore out the fancy that Muriel might be discovered inside the cavern. In rushed the searchers, crying:

"Murie! Murie! You there, Murie?"

The arching walls of the cavern echoed the eager calling, hollowly; but after that there was silence.

They searched the place in case she should be lying ill or injured behind the boat or any of the lumber lockers.

"No, she's not here!" Polly exclaimed at last in great disappointment.

"Then that's that!" said Pam ruefully.

"Well, I did feel certain," sighed Betty. "What do we do now, girls? Simply go up again?"

"And simply wait—and wait. Oh, we can't!" Polly fumed in the throes of one of her headstrong attacks. "I know that others are out and about, doing their best. Still, I feel it's up to us to do something."

"Whilst we are down here on the shore," Betty muttered longingly. "What do you say, Pam?"

"Yes, I think we should. We are together, and that about covers what Miss Somerfield said."

"Even if it doesn't—oh, yes, come on!" Polly implored, turning back to the open air. "Look here,

it wouldn't take us long, girls, to scout as far as the other zig-zag."

"The tide has gone back far enough to let us through," Betty commented gladly. "We might come upon her; there's no telling. If she did by any chance come down to the shore on her way back."

"Yet I can't see why she should do that," Pam murmured. "She would be so anxious to get back as quickly as possible. But there's nothing like trying."

"Why, it won't take us twenty minutes, at the most," Polly declared. "Off we go then."

The starlight seemed to be aiding them quite a lot by now. Hurriedly they clashing along the shingle, with the brawling waves always close upon their left hand.

Now and then their hurrying feet made no sound at all, traversing patches of drenched seaweed left by the tide. Then clash, clash again they floundered on over the bare wet stones.

Every yard of the way was familiar to them. They knew when they were rounding projections of cliff that were lapped by the waves every high-water, just as they knew the sandy recesses that were a safe refuge, except at the very worst of times, for anyone caught by the tide.

Not needing the torch's aid themselves they yet used it more than once to send out a signal-like flash. Also they joined their voices at intervals to give a hailing cry.

"Murie! Mu-rie!" Then listening and peering ahead as they listened they could only sigh softly in fresh disappointment.

"I know this, girls," Betty muttered, towards



Parlourmaid Ellen was at the doorway, her glance upon Pam. "If you please, miss, they want to know if you have seen anything of Muriel Floddon. She's—missing!"

the end of the prescribed distance; "if we do find her we shall find her in a bad state. She would have called out by now, even if she had not been able to come on."

"The tide's right for anybody to go right along under the cliffs now," Polly agreed. "And here we are, girls, almost at the other zig-zag. I say, though! This cave, girls!"

"Yes."

It was another of the natural caverns which were a feature of this part of the rugged coast. Polly thumbed on the torch again as she and her two chums floundered to the mouth of the cave.

"Murie! Muriel Floddon!"

Once more their united voices were booming in a confined space, two hundred feet below the cliff-top.

There was no response.

"She's not there."

"Yes, she is!" Polly's wild shout interrupted Betty's murmur. "Look—look!"

And the roving beam from the torch came to rest upon a small, huddled figure crouched against an upturned boat that lay upon the sandy floor.

Once Again

"THAT'S Murie! I say—"

"Oh, how terrible!" breathed Pam.

"What's happened to her?"

They rushed into the cave and got to her. Polly kept the torch going, shining it down upon the pitiable form beside which Pam and Betty knelt.

"She's hurt!" gasped Betty in an appalled tone. "It's her head—a wound."

"Has lost consciousness," Pam whispered. "But what does it mean? How does she come to be here?"

"Girls, I say, look!" came Polly's excited appeal. "All these footprints and other marks in the sand. She has been brought here by somebody. It must have been somebody who found the weight of her almost too much."

"That's so," Betty exclaimed, after a quick glance at the tell-tale imprints. "But the great thing is at present to—Hallo, did she speak just then?"

"I think she did," Pam whispered. "'Sh! Murie, Murie darling?'"

Then a quivering sigh came from the ill-fated girl. She stirred feebly. Her eyes flickered open.

Polly kept the dazzling light away from them. "Oh!" Muriel murmured, whilst she looked up confusedly "Is—is that you, Miss Pam?"

"There are three of us, Murie dear. Steady. You are hurt?"

"My head."

"Yes, well, dear, lie still and we'll get help."

"But I—I think I shall be able to manage," came in a slightly stronger voice. "How long have I been here then? This isn't where I fell."

"No, Murie. Someone brought you here, we think."

"Oh! Then I—I see what it means," she quavered, raising herself on one elbow. "Zelie Duval."

"Zelie?" echoed the three scholars.

"Yes. I—I suppose she didn't know what to do about me, and so she brought me here and left me. She can't have meant to hurt me as much as she did."

"I wouldn't say any more for a bit, Murie dear," counselled Pam. "Let's look at your head. Ah, that's a nasty cut at the back," as Polly

shone the torch so that the scalp wound could be seen. "Yes, well, quiet's the thing for a bit, Murie."

"Oh, but I feel much better now," the victim declared in a yet stronger voice. "This is a cave on the seashore? How strange! Zelie must have carried me all the way down from the top of the cliff. For it was up there that she met me and suddenly went for me."

"'Sh! You simply mustn't talk, Murie."

Polly clicked off the torch. She and Betty stood away together, whilst Pam did all that was possible, kneeling close to Murie to keep comforting arms about her.

"What it means," Polly whispered the captain; "Zelie went for her in a rage, up there on the cliff. Knocked her down, I suppose, and the poor girl's head struck a stone."

Betty nodded.

"It would be like Zelie to lose her own head then."

"I fancy I know why Zelie brought her down here. To leave her where she wouldn't be able to get away whilst the tide was up, see?" Polly astutely reasoned. "It happened before high tide. Zelie could tell that Murie wasn't seriously hurt; on the other hand, she wanted to have time to get away."

"That Zelie!" muttered Betty fiercely. "Ugh, the sickener she has been! But we can do better than stand here talking. I think you and I, Polly, had better hurry back."

"Hark, though!" struck in Polly in a relieved tone. "Is that somebody coming now? It may be one of the searchers. I'll run and see. Good job if it is."

She skipped away quite gaily, but without making any sound on the fine sand. Betty turned again to Pam and Muriel, but before a word could be exchanged there came a startling: "'Sh!" from Polly.

They saw her rushing back in great excitement.

"'Sh!" she again implored.

"Why, what?"

And she told them:

"The Hindu!"

HER right hand was holding the torch ready for switching on. With Muriel Floddon at rest upon the cavern's sandy floor, Betty and Polly stood agape at the schoolmate who had passed them that thrilling whisper:

"The Hindu!"

Suddenly they heard one pebble clack against another just outside the cave.

It was a sound to make all three Morcovians and even Muriel herself peer towards the cave-mouth. For a moment longer they saw only the dark, starry sky above the nightbound waters; and then a figure loomed there, tall and black.

The ray of the torch flashed out. It played upon that spectral figure, changing it into the form of a tall man in European dress, except that his head was turbanned.

In the brilliant light they saw his dark, good-looking face and the stark amazement that it expressed. Never could a man have been taken more by surprise.

For a long moment he stood as if petrified at the threshold of this cave to which he had made his way, thinking to find it deserted—and here were these girls.

Then with the utterance of some gibberish in his own native tongue he flashed away.

MORE GIFTS SOON: An Important Announcement Next Tuesday

Polly's nerveless hand lowered the torch, and the stars came again at the cave mouth, and the leaping waves beyond the shore.

"My goodness!" Betty gasped at last. "Fancy that!"

"Then he has been still hanging around in the district ever since the night he got the papers," Pam muttered. "Is it in this cave he's been hiding?"

"No, I can never believe that," said Polly. "He'd have been found. The police could never have overlooked this cave."

"And yet," said Betty, "there he was, just as if he were returning to this cave expecting to find it empty. What a scare we gave him."

There came a murmured suggestion from Muriel, who in the excitement of the moment had got to her feet.

"Perhaps he's had to leave some other refuge and come to this cave for lack of better shelter?"

"There may be something in that," nodded Pam. "Especially as there are people searching for you, Muriel. Their searching may have caused the Hindu to— Yes, what, Polly?"

"Gee!" the madcap was exploding. "What if it's here that he has hidden the papers? I mean, in case he got caught. So that they wouldn't be recovered, even if he—"

"That's more like it," cried Betty. "Probably he's been forced to lie low, being afraid to show himself. On account of his colour it would be all the more difficult for him to escape detection. So perhaps he did hide the papers, in case he were caught?"

"And to-night he's come to get them? Then where are they?" was Polly's shout, whilst she switched on the torch again. "If they are hidden somewhere in this cave we can find them. Here, come on, we must—we must!"

"Oh, yes, do—do try to find the papers!" Muriel implored. "Never mind about me. I—I shall be all right. I'm feeling better, much better."

"But what about you?" Pam gravely remarked. "Dash, what are we to do!" fumed Polly. "We ought to get Muriel safely to the bungalow. Yet we mustn't all leave the cave. He might come back when we're gone."

"Shine the torch this way, Polly, a moment," Betty suddenly entreated. "Yes, I thought so; a trickle of fresh water, a spring, coming out of the rocks. If one of us attends to Muriel's wound with this water—"

"Oh, but I can do all that for myself!" Muriel offered.

Morcover was not going to listen to such a suggestion as that, however. Another moment and the best was being made of the perplexing situation. Pam would give first-aid attention to Muriel, whilst Betty and Polly searched around, in desperate hope of a great find.

Those two girls were able to retain the torch, and by its light they carried on a kind of preliminary inspection.

Swiftly they roamed the pent-in place, treading warily lest they should stamp out tell-tale footmarks with their own feet.

The sandy floor, although damp, was not water-washed by any recent tide. Its main area was heavily trodden, and the two girls could tell that these were old imprints.

But those people who had wandered in and out of the cave from pure curiosity had not gone to the end of it, dark and forbidding as it was even by day. That way Betty and Polly went, after a first hasty round of the whole place, to give closer attention to the part farthest from the cave mouth.

"Only no footprints up this end, dash it!" Polly exploded. "He can't have come along the sandy floor without making footprints? He could have smoothed them out again, but even then we'd see traces."

"Half a sec, though. There's the water from another spring flowing along just here," Betty pointed out excitedly. "He could tread where the water flows, Polly, and his footprints would be washed out."

"Then he may have come as far in as this."

"Polly!" her chum shouted, as if gone crazy. "Look! See that crack in the rock?"

And she pointed to a narrow fissure in the wall of the cave.

"But I can't reach it," Polly cried wildly.

"He could, Polly."

"We can, too, if one of us gives the other a bunk up. Here, make a back for me, Betty."

The Form-captain planted her feet firmly, bent over, using her arms as supporting struts. Up clambered Polly on to Betty's back. From a kneeling position she was able to rise fully erect.

On came the torch again, wielded by Polly. She was shining it into the fissure that had seemed a likely hiding-place.

"Anything there, Polly?"

"Yes."

"Not the papers?"

"Yes."

Polly for a moment or two was exerting herself so violently she nearly fell off her human platform.

"Hurrah!" she cheered madly. "Hooray!"

She jumped down. Betty straightened up. Pam came rushing to the pair of them, and Muriel followed almost as quickly.

"Got them!" yelled Morcover's madcap, with a caper of delight. "The papers—the whole bundle of them! Look!"

"I say!" emitted Betty breathlessly. "Oh, just fancy! The professor's papers—saved after all!"

Pam Willoughby gave a queer little laugh.

"Yes, well," said Pam. "now we can go back."

And then the others laughed, too, just as queerly.

Breaking the News

NAOMER, having made such a hash of one page of "prep" that she quite dreaded its being looked at, tore out that same page with a sharp *r-r-rip!*

"Bekas," she began to remark, and then paused, open-mouthed.

In the best armchair reclined Paula Creel, her pretty head lolling drowsily. It appeared to annoy Naomer greatly that her sole companion at the present moment should be taking it as easily as all this.

"Hi!" shouted Naomer. "Wake up!" To ensure which injunction she screwed the

torn-out sheet into a ball and whizzed it at Paula's head.

"Owp!"

"Good shot!" grinned Naomer. "Bekas you might be a bit more sociable, Paula, when zere is no one else for me to spik to."

"I pwesume I may wext for a moment, after stwuggling through pwep?"

"Not ze bit of eet. Ze time has now come for our usual hand round, Paula, so jump to it. We will clear ze table and have everythink nice, even though Betty and Polly and Pam won't be here. Bekas, we can have ze others in."

"Bai Jove, is it as late as that?" exclaimed Paula, as the school chimes ding-dong'd. "Ah, deah, I pwesume we shall soon be off to bed, Naomer, without knowing what is happening in wegawd to Muwiel Floddon. I vewy much doubt whether those geals will be back by bedtime."

"But they are back!" cried Helen Craig, having burst into the study in time to hear Paula's lament. "All three of them."

"Bai Jove, is that so, Helen?"

"Bekas what ze diggings, where are they then? Ooo, queek!"

"Whoa!" laughed Helen, turning the excitable imp away from the door. "No use rushing downstairs. You won't do any better. The three of them are with Miss Somerfield now."

"Why, is zere a row on?"

"Row? No-o-o!" was all Helen had time to answer before Madge, Tess and others came flocking upon the scene.

Every pretty face held a look of mingled excitement and joy.

"Good gwacious, geals, then theah is news after all?"

"Haven't you heard, Paula?"

"Heard?" shrilled Naomer. "She has been asleep half ze time. As for me, I have been working hard; slaving away, and not a bit all ze time. So, queek, everybody, what is ze latest?"

Whether, with every tongue going at once, Paula and Naomer easily followed what was being said, must remain in doubt. But there was a better chance to grasp the essential facts when girls from other studies came buzzing around.

Then the babel gave place to a more coherent statement by the girl best qualified to give it. That was Helen Craig, who had chanced to be coming away from the class-room below when Betty and Polly and Pam dramatically turned up.

In spite of their eagerness to let the head-mistress know those three girls had spared a moment or two in which to pant "the latest" to Helen. Whereupon, Helen had dashed upstairs to spread the good news.

Morcove could rejoice. And how this section of Morcove, at any rate, did rejoice now that it knew.

Muriel Floddon had been found, and although the state in which she had been found had caused alarm at the time, she would be all right in a day or so.

But that was not all. Much more cause for cheering than lay in that, gratifying though it was.

The stolen packet of papers had been recovered.

"And I tell you," cried Helen elatedly, "those three girls have done it. The professor owes it all to them that he has got back his stolen papers."

"Hip, hip! Bekas Study 12 again—hooray! Paula, now do you understand?"

"Yes. Owp! Don't thump me—"

"But I must, bekas—gorjus!" Naomer yelled, pounding the long-suffering one upon her shoulders. "Stuff to give zem! Hooray!"

"And," Helen dinned on, "and, girls, the Hindu is caught."

"What!"

"They've got him, yes, I tell you."

"Those girls have?"

"No-o-o! But directly after they had got the papers back they managed to give the alarm that the Hindu was about. Two of the Morcove gardeners got busy, and they spotted the Hindu on the top of the cliffs, and gave chase. Caught him, too."

"Morcove again!" capered Naomer. "Ooo, we get a halfer on ze strength of this. Eeef not, sweendle! Bekas—"

"Ow, I can't breathe!" went up Paula's howl, as she found herself too closely pent in by the overjoyed mob. "Geals, geals, pway make woom!"

But it was for a far different reason that the mass of youthful humanity now split in two. A sudden shout: "Here's Polly! Here are Betty and Pam! Hurrah!" Paula then had a welcome chance to extricate herself and retire to the best armchair; but it was a chance she threw away. Yes, wather, when here were the actual heroines of the hour!

"Polly!" the shouting went on. "Betty! Pam! Oh, come on, tell us!"

"But you've all been told," sparkled Polly. "Pouf; somewhere to sit down, please."

"The row," laughed Betty. "Do you know they can hear all this downstairs?"

"Don't care!"

"No, bekas—"

"Owch! I'm squashed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pass away, please," the madeap turned round to say to the intruding mob. "Shut that door."

Again there were peals of laughter. Altogether there was a good deal of truth in the oft-repeated cry: "You might just as well tell us." So at last the madeap imparted those supplementary details for which the Form was athirst.

Betty and Pam were glad to leave it to Polly, who did not fail to infuse a good deal of mimicry into her speech, to the exasperation of listeners who wanted the full story in as few words as possible.

The Hindu, it transpired, had been captured by the two Morcove gardeners, and had been hustled along to the bungalow, where Professor Donkin could confront him.

Within five minutes the prisoner had finished with pretension of injured innocence. The professor had shown that he was not to be bamboozled. An abject confession had resulted, the culprit servilely whining for mercy.

According to that confession, he had come from India with the object of stealing the Temple of the Moon papers, he being one of the very few people who knew that Professor Donkin had been giving his expert mind to the mystery surrounding that ancient building.

It was at stately Swanlake, the Hindu knew, that Professor Donkin had carried on much of his research work before being called away to Egypt; and so it was to Swanlake that the would-be thief had made his way in secret.

The great country house, he had secretly discovered, was let to a married couple who had spent many years in India, and it was not long

before he acquired proof that they, too, were after the papers.

That determined him to play a waiting game, leaving them to do all the searching. At the same time, however, he had to spy upon them closely lest they and the papers should slip through his fingers.

Whilst these tactics went on he was a secret listener to many a talk between the scheming Eastmans, and amongst other things he found out that when in India Lawrence Eastman had robbed a certain Hindu named Hunda Khan.

There had been no idea of personating Hunda Khan; but when there had been that encounter one night with Lawrence Eastman the Hindu had had the wit to hiss that he was Hunda Khan. This, so that it might seem as if the deed of violence was one of revenge, with no bearing upon the Temple of the Moon papers.

But in the very hour that the coveted documents came into his possession the man had been seized with a fear of making the next move. He realised that there was a hue and cry, and that his being a coloured man rendered him very liable to detection.

So he had hidden the papers for the time being in that seashore cavern.

All this was known through the school long before the bell rang Morcove into prayers that night. And yet there remained one thing to puzzle everybody. Why—why had the papers excited such cupidity?

What was there about the ancient Eastern temple with which they dealt that had been the lure?

No use asking Pam. She couldn't say.

"But if ever I do get the professor to tell me, girls—well, you shall soon know."



"Hush!" breathed Polly dramatically. "It's—the Hindu!"

But subsequently the Hindu found that the Eastmans suspected Pam Willoughby of having taken away the papers, to keep them in her study at Morcove School.

He determined to visit the school in the name of Hunda Khan, and to that extent there had been deliberate impersonation.

As "Hunda Khan" he was introduced to Pam herself by the headmistress, and that interview resulted in his finding out which was Pam's study.

He would have broken into the school and ransacked that study for the papers; but there the Eastmans forestalled him, and got nothing for their pains. The papers at the time were in Miss Somerfield's safe.

Ultimately the Eastmans had been disposed of, and then the professor had returned unexpectedly from Egypt and gone into residence at the bungalow. The Hindu had seen his chance there, and had made good use of it.

That was Pam's promise, given for what it was worth to her best and closest friends.

She quiet expected the professor to sink back into silence about the whole affair, and he certainly was not communicative when next she saw him.

Off For Easter!

CAME, however, a certain April morning when Pam sped across to the bungalow, to find him, pipe in mouth and pen in hand, at his desk.

"To say good-bye, Professor Donkin, for we girls are off presently, all of us."

"Ah, you are breaking up to-day for the Easter holidays? Excellent, Pam! And you yourself are not going back to Swanlake?"

"Oh, no! Dad and mother aren't home yet.

I'm going with Betty and Polly and some of the others on a caravan tour. Think of that."

"Caravan—ha, hum! The last time I journeyed by caravan, Pam, was in Egypt. Camels—"
"Oh, some of us have had caravan journeys like that, too," Pam smiled. "But this is to be with motors, professor, sort of See Britain First, you know."

"A very excellent idea, too, my dear. H'm! Well, I trust you will all have a very jolly holiday. I shall be here with plenty to do—plenty to do!"

She saw his eyes returning to the papers bestrewing the desk.

"T of M?" smiled Pam.

"Yes, my dear. And talking of holidays, Pam, how would you like me to propose that you and your parents come out to India with me later on, in your summer holidays, say, to visit the Temple of the Moon? It must be at the temple itself, you know, that I put all this research work into the ancient Sanscrit documents to the test."

He added, with a smile that creased his lean cheeks:

"No money in all this work for me, Pam, and I am a poor man, as you know, unless my theory proves correct. In that case—well, you may not believe me when I say that we may come back from the Temple of the Moon with a treasure as vast as any that India has ever yielded up."

"Of course I believe you, professor," was Pam's thrilled cry. "And so that is why they were all after the papers. For the sake of a treasure which I suppose no one could hope to find at the temple without the benefit of your research work? But I am sorry you've told me at last—at least, before I could warn you. I promised to tell my chums if ever you told me."

"You may tell them, my dear, for there can

be no harm in doing so now. Besides," he smiled, "I hope that some of your best chums will come out with us to India, Pam, when we go."

"I daren't tell them that!" cried Pam. "It would just about send them crazy with joy."

But this was only in fun. Pam would be telling her chums right enough; only before rushing back to do so she had first to slip through into the bungalow kitchen for a word with Muriel Floddon.

The woodman's daughter from Swanlake was no longer a mere maid-in-training at the school.

Behold her, this sunny April morning, installed at the bungalow as a permanent member of the professor's domestic staff, the one and only other member of it being a good widow woman found in Barncombe. Muriel was a parlourmaid now, with a fine increase in her pay.

"I shall see you when I come back to Morcove, Murie, after the hols," Pam said affectionately. "No need to ask if everything is going on all right with you. I can see."

"Miss, we are that happy; the professor so kind and so easily pleased, and never a cross word for me from Mrs. Gibbons, either. It seems too good to last."

"It will last, Murie," said Pam serenely. "There is no Zelic to turn up again and nag at you; she's gone back to France, I hear. And the Hindu is to be deported, so no more to fear from him."

She offered a hand for a parting shake.

So good-bye, Murie, and best of luck. One thing I would like you to do for me if you will presently. My chums and I are all going off together in the school 'bus. It's making lots of trips to the station, of course, but you will know when we girls are coming by—"

"Oh, yes, miss, I shall know!"

"By the noise we are making, of course. So will you try and get the professor down to the gate in time for our passing?"

"Miss, I will. It's what he'd wish, I'm sure."

"Ta-ta then."

And away Pam went, to be seen again by Muriel an hour later when the school's private 'bus came speeding along the road with a specially jubilant, noisy and easily distinguishable batch of juniors off for Easter.

The old professor was down at the bungalow gate with Murie as the packed motor-bus came along, en route for the railway station.

Windows were down and familiar faces were there. In good time the chums of Study 12 started their "Good-bye!" chorus, whilst they fluttered handkerchiefs and even waved a hat or two, not minding how the wind ruffled uncovered hair.

"Good-bye, Professor Donkin!"

"Good-bye, my dear, good-bye."

"Murie, Mu-rie, good-bye."

"Good-bye, all!" she shouted and waved.

"Hi, and don't forget, Professor Donkey; keep up ze appertite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bekas eet is what we are going to do on tour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"WHAT was that last cry of his, girls?" asked Pam, when the motor-bus had whirled them past Cliffedge. "I didn't get it."

"Get plenty of fun."

"We shall do that," was Polly's confident opinion. "We shall have the boys to help us."

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Morcove's Caravan Holiday

The chums of study 12 are spending the Easter holidays in a truly novel way. They are off for a caravan tour of Britain.

DON'T MISS



Morcove on Tour

BY MARJORIE STANTON