

WONDERFUL PRIZES WAITING TO BE WON

See page 674 for Novel Morcove Competition

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN

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EVERY
TUESDAY

2d



THE WHITE FLAG

A dramatic incident
from the fine long complete
Morcove School
story in this issue.

ENTHRALLING CIRCUS SERIAL STARTS INSIDE

Dramatic, Long Complete Morcove-Grangemoor Story



Just ONCE Too Often-

By MARJORIE STANTON

NOT content with the strife they have started between Morcove and Grangemoor, and the subsequent bitter feeling against Pam Willoughby, the Denver sisters decide upon yet another act of petty spite. But it proves to be a case of "once too often," for unknown to Fay and Edna Pam has been watching them.

CHAPTER 1. The One Topic

"HAD the letters, Fay?"
"Nothing for you, Edna. One for me, from Cousin Bert."

"Oh! What has he got to say?"

"Not very much, I'm afraid, about Jimmy Cherrol"—dryly.

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"But you were, Edna, rather expecting a letter from Jimmy?"

"Don't be silly, Fay! Just as if he would write to me."

That excessively pretty pair, the Denver sisters, were alone together in their study at Morcove School. It was the elder, Fay, who now folded and put away the letter which had come by the Monday morning delivery from Cousin Bertie—a House captain at Grangemoor School.

"Things, then, Edna darling, have not got to that stage yet?" Fay smiled.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I thought you seemed to be making quite an impression upon Jimmy, the other afternoon, at Sandton Bay. Such a grand box of choes!"

"You're an idiot," said Edna, with a touchiness that was new to her. They had always got on so well together, these sisters.

She stated clearly:

"You know very well I had to make myself sociable to Jimmy because you and Bertie were so taken up with each other. As for the choes—naturally, the Cherrol fellow was not going to take all and give nothing."

"It's all right, Edna darling," laughed Fay. "I know you wouldn't dream of trying to make a special chum of Jimmy, when really he is so devoted to Pam Willoughby—like a brother to her!"

"She can have him for a brother! You might at least tell me anything that was in Bert's letter about when they got back to their school—whether everything was all right."

"Your only concern being, dear—the war that's going on between Morcove and Grangemoor; is that it?" Fay rejoined, as dryly as before.

"Well, it's all quiet on the Grangemoor front!" Edna could laugh, now that Jimmy Cherrol had been dropped out of the conversation.

"Quiet! More than it is here, anyhow," she chuckled. "How the Form does go on seething, Fay!"

"And another outburst against Pam Willoughby, before brekker. Poor Pam!"

Edna laughed again.
"Oh, there's a lot of pride can be taken out of Pam yet, before we need pity her, Fay!"

"I think so, too, dear. Somehow—there it is; of all the girls in the Form to whom I took

a dislike, when we first came to Morcove, Pam had first place. But there goes the bell for class, Edna—"

"Vile nuisance!"

"It's what we're at school for—at least, so I suppose we would be told. Education, Edna darling! I must say, though, for my part, I always seem to learn most on half-holidays."

"It is surprising what you can learn," nodded Edna, "from simply watching the other girls, out of school hours. This isn't like our other school, Fay. Morcove is more of a world on its own."

"Very boring," sighed the elder sister, picking up books from the study table. "If you and I, Edna, had not managed to set Morcove and Grangemoor by the ears, I don't know how I could have endured it here. But, at least, we have had that bit of excitement—and fun."

"At Morcove's expense!"

"Yes. How much longer do you give the war, Edna?"

"Rest of the term, judging by the mood the Form is in. That third 'insult' from Grangemoor, on top of the first two insults, just about stirred things up again."

Fay paused before opening the door to pass out.

"There may be a fourth incident before long, Edna. We'll see. If I can think of something, I shall just love carrying it out. Quite an expert, by now, at that dressing-up business!"

"There is such a thing as once-too-often, Fay!"

"Oh, rabbits! Well, coming?"

Fay opened the door, and was followed by her sister into the long corridor of studies, where many other members of the Form were sauntering towards the staircase.

Friendly smiles and words in passing showed how well the sisters were standing with a great majority of their schoolmates. If there was a minority inclined to feel a vague dislike—mistrust even—of Fay and Edna, that very vagueness of the feeling decreed silence about it.

The two were, in fact, very skilful at being all things to all people, which meant that they needed a lot of finding out. Betty Barton, the Form captain, and a pretty shrewd judge of character, had felt that vague mistrust of the sisters; but Betty was the least likely of all girls to speak without proof.

Always careful not to be swayed by prejudice, Betty had been particularly careful about this in the case of Fay and Edna, as they were new to the school. Slips must be expected, and, if possible, overlooked, until any new girl had found her feet.

There was a cordial nod from Form-captain Betty for both sisters, at this moment, and they lifted their brows and smiled very sweetly in return.

Perhaps they were alert for a talk with Betty on the way downstairs; but she had special chums of hers with her, and even they seemed to be an embarrassment—strangely. She suddenly turned back, at the landing, running down the corridor again.

Stopping at the door of a study next to her own, she tapped formally and then looked inside; but the room was empty.

Betty repressed a sigh, and then, as she found that one of her special chums had followed her back from the staircase landing, remarked softly: "I was looking for Pam, Madge. But she doesn't appear to have come upstairs after brekker."

"Helen Craig says that Pam went straight out of doors at the dismiss."



"I've only seen her for a moment," Betty deplored, going up the corridor again with staid Madge Minden. "And during the last few days; all yesterday—Sunday—"

"I know. It makes me wretched, too, Betty. Tess is as irritable as can be about it all!"

"What about Polly, then?" grimaced the captain. "I daren't breathe a word in front of Polly, concerning Pam. You can tell; Polly hates being so bitter about it, and yet she has to be."

"Has the Form, taken as a whole, ever been more bitter about one of its own girls than it is at present, Betty?"

"Never! Oh, I know there is a lot of excuse," the captain fair-mindedly admitted. "All the same, Madge, I've simply got to do something—take action."

"How do you mean?" There was sudden alarm in Madge's usually passive face.

"I shall call another meeting, to put it to the Form that Pam's punishment has been too severe."

"Oh, Betty, you'll have tremendous opposition to face—"

"I don't care. Either they can revoke the banishment resolution that was passed the other day, or else they can have my resignation."

"It's fine of you, Betty," was Madge's feeling murmur. "I and others will be with you, of course, stand or fall. But my fear is that they will say resign, and that will mean a fresh captain—one, most likely, who is not the friend of Pam that you've always been."

"I've thought of that, Madge. But my mind's made up. I won't go on as captain of a Form that is treating a girl as Pam is being treated."

"Have you said anything to Polly?"

"No."

There was no time for more. Too many other girls were now within earshot. Hurrying to

make up for lost time, they did the run down several flights of stairs, and got to their places in the big class-room just as Miss Courtway, the Form-mistress, was becoming playfully impatient with any laggards.

"Some of you girls—the last thing you seem to hear is the bell for classes!"

"Bekas," came the saucy voice of that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, "zey don't bang him loud enough. Zey should let me have a go!"

"The bell, Naomer, is as loud as the gong for meals—and you always hear that."

The girls in their desks went off into a peal of laughter. True it was, Naomer had a quick ear for the gong.

"Sh! Silence!" the youthful mistress requested. "Even now I don't see—Pam Willoughby. Come, come, Pam!" for at this instant tall Pam Willoughby walked in, last of all.

"Late, Pam!"

"Sorry, Miss Courtway." For a moment or two longer the silence enjoined by the Form-mistress endured; then, whilst Pam was still making for her place in the class, her step a brisk but dignified one, some tittering broke out.

Miss Courtway looked affronted. "Well, what's the joke? Silence, this instant, all!"

No one explained, and the mistress must be presumed to have remained in ignorance. But there was Betty Barton, who knew as well as any of the titters themselves, what the "joke" was about.

And in this moment she, the captain of the Form, became so much more determined that it might be said to have become a vow, registered in her mind, either to end the punishment of Pam or else—resign!

CHAPTER 2. Betty's Bombshell

It was on the notice-board five minutes after the midday dismiss:

"NOTICE.

There will be a Meeting of the Form on Wednesday evening next, at eight o'clock.

A matter of importance has to be discussed, and the presence of all girls is PARTICULARLY REQUESTED.

"By order,
"BETTY BARTON (Captain)."

"Why? What's up, then?"

"No use asking me."

"Something to do with our last meeting—must be."

"Oho!"

"Where's Betty now?"

"Can't say!"

"Well, we ought to be told more than the notice says!"

"Yes, rather!"

Such were a few of the excitable remarks from girls who mobbed in front of the board. Another meeting! A surprise, this, and in it a hint at a coming sensation.

"Let's find Betty."

"Yes—let's!"

Study 12, upstairs, was likely to provide news as to Betty's whereabouts, even if she were not on hand in that misnamed Abode of Harmony.

So there was a storming up flight after flight, to the Form quarters, and then a rush, en masse, down the corridor to the captain's study—at the far end.

The door was ajar, and this resulted in an unceremonious swarming in of excited girls, causing languid Paula Creel—that co-tenant of the study who loved peace—to cry out protestingly:

"I say, I say, bai Jove!"

"Yes, what ze diggings," shrilled Naomer, appearing from the corner cupboard with a tumbler of water in one hand and a paper bag of sherbet in the other. "Bekas—"

"Betty!" dinned the mob. For Betty was here, busy with some captaincy notebooks. "That notice on the board, Betty!"

"What does it mean, Betty?"

"As it says—'a matter of importance'!" the captain good-humouredly answered.

"Yes, but come on—tell us more than that!" clamoured one of the excited girls. "Something to do with—Pam Willoughby, is that it?"

"Good guess, Kath. But, for the present, I'd rather not—"

"Oh, Betty, don't be mysterious!" was the chorus.

"Very well, then, I won't be. I want the Form, properly assembled in general meeting, to say one thing or the other. Is there to be an end to the so-called banishment of Pam, or am I to resign?"

"What!"

Betty got up from her seat at the table. She was smiling.

"There's no mystery now. You can go away and think it over—and tell others, of course. I want you to consider carefully. That's why the meeting is not until next Wednesday evening."

"Resign? You?" gasped some of the staggered girls.

"That's it, unless Pam can be restored—"

"Well, that is!" the gaspings were resumed.

"Well, you are, Betty!"

"I'm afraid I am—quite determined."

Betty's composed response created such an impression, the crowd found itself turning to pass out, for the moment bereft of speech. Then one of the girls—it was Eva Merrick—paused to take notice of Polly Linton, who was standing by the table, gloomily silent.

"And what does Polly say about all this?" Eva asked.

"I say—nothing!"

"It's about all you have said in regard to Pam, ever since we banished her," Eva retorted tartly. "Oh, well, change for you to say nothing, Polly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The departing crowd was feeling that that had been rather neat of Eva. Certainly, Polly Linton was usually one to do her full share of the talking.

Now Polly strode to the empty doorway and closed the door with a bang.

"Ah, deah," Paula Creel lamented, from the depths of an easy chair. "No peace!"

"Only a duffer like you," said Naomer, stirring sherbet-and-water with a ruler, "would eyespек peace when there is a war on! Well, jolly good luck to our side!"

And her lips went to the edge of the tumbler and her nose into the foam.

"Gorjus!" Naomer panted, a few seconds later.

"Ze real patent fizzer."

"Oh, hold your row!" snorted Polly.

"What ze diggings, can't I spik—"

"No, you can't!"

"Well, I shall!"

But Naomer suddenly found that she couldn't, just then; the hasty quaffing of sherbet-and-water having caused a tickling sensation all down her nose.

"Don't you sneeze over me!" Paula voiced the timely warning. "Weall, Betty deah, I admire the spiwit which has prompted you to use all your pwestige, as captain, on the side of fair play, yes, wather! All vewy well for the Form to mark its disapprowal of Pam's wegwt-able—"

"Oh, for goodness' sake!" fumed Polly, stamping.

"But, geals theah is such a thing as tempewing mercy with justice, what? Personally, I shall support you, Betty!"

"Same here!" shrilled Naomer. "Bekas, zere has been enough of all this not spikking to Pam, and talking behind her back—"

"I am not at school to learn zat, zank you! Ah, bah, let me help you up, bekas, you know eet is only bekas I am fond of you—duffer!"

Naomer's way of demonstrating her affection for Paula had this drawback, that it invariably resulted in the languid one's discomfort. Even when Naomer had helped up her long-suffering chum, the latter had to submit to being propelled out of the study, headlong.

"You coming down to the field, Polly dear?" the captain asked.

"Oh—not now, Betty. You go. And don't think I am—sort of cross with you."

"Just as if!" Betty let it go

at that. Lancashire born, she had a belief that there were times when it was best to "say nowt." She scampered away, and then Polly Linton was all by herself in the study.

But not for long. There had been time for her to make only a few restless movements about the room, when the door was tapped, then opened, letting in—Pam Willoughby.

"Oh!" Pam exclaimed gently. "It's you, Polly. I was next door, and I fancied I would find Betty here alone."

"I'm sorry. She's gone down to the field."

Pam shook her head, at the same time closing the door behind her.

"I'm not going down to the field. I want Betty when she's alone. I've seen the notice on the board. She mustn't threaten to resign, as a means of getting the Form to call off their action against me."

"Well, she is going to do that."

Pam turned round, in the act of passing out again. Once more she closed the door.

"Polly, we're not on speaking terms, I know. But I'm going to ask you; any influence you have with Betty—"

"I shan't use it!" Polly exploded. "Betty is better

without my influence! She's fair-minded, has a good heart. I'm different—"

"Not in those respects, Polly."

"I know I am! And over this business about you, Pam, I've been as bitter as any girl in the Form. Oh, I admit it—I'm hard!"

"Yes; well, there were two girls in the Form entitled to feel particularly disgusted with me, I suppose. One was Judy Cardew, with a brother at Grangemoor; the other, Polly, was yourself—also with a brother at that school."

Pam calmly paused.

"As was said in the Form, Polly: if you and Judy could have nothing to do with your own brothers, whilst the war was on, knowing that they would understand, that made it all the more disgraceful—my seeing Jimmy Cherrol on those two occasions."

"Judy is not hard," Polly mumbled. "Like



Fay took up the packet of cigarettes. "You see, Edna, I don't have expensive boxes of chocs given me—by Jimmy Cherrol; so I have to make do with gaspers!"

"I haven't talked behind her back!" Polly flared out.

"Nobody said you had, Polly, so don't go off ze deep end! Nashrally, like sensibubble girls, all of us Study 12 chums have felt sorry for Pam. But I know one thing, Polly: you have been precious grumpy about eet all, any old how!"

"No more," Betty pleaded brightly, and with a rallying smile for grim Polly. "Who's for a bit of batting praccer at the nets? Paula, arise—"

"Before I tip you out of ze chair—"

"Wow-ow! You silly goop, you! Naow look at me!" wailed the oft-teased one, finding herself suddenly sitting upon the floor, tilted arm-chair in danger of closing over her. "You wender me fufwious, Naomer! When will you learn to tweek me with a pwoper respect?"

Betty, she's in favour of your being forgiven."

"By the way," Pam said quietly, "I don't want any forgiveness. It will be for me to forgive the Form—when it finds out what an injustice it has done me."

Polly received this with a half-angry shrug and walked about the room.

"I can't listen to any talk, Pam, about injustice. You were tried by the Form, and found guilty. One had to abide by that. Why, it is said that you even saw Jimmy again, after the Form had let you know what it thought of such disloyalty!"

"Yes, I did see Jimmy, but—"

"Then I wonder at your—your present way of treating the Form. And I— Oh, go away! Why do you stand there, when you know what I am for flaring out! Go away; go away!"

Pam went away. Was it callousness that made her smile, after she had closed that door between herself and Polly? Anything but!

In these darkened days that had come to Pam at Morcove School, there was at least a gleam of brightness now and then. It touched her deeply, comforted her, that, in spite of all the strain upon their former affection for her, the Study 12 chums still felt that affection enduring.

Betty's threat to resign rather than see the "banishment" continue; looks of sorrow rather than bitterness in the faces of Paula, Madge, Helen, and other former intimates. Above all, Polly's hard fight to keep herself from feeling—hard!

That, considering Polly's fiery nature, was the most touching thing of all. She had felt the "scandal" of her, Pam's, alleged disloyalty acutely. Marvel, that a girl as explosive as Polly was had managed to be silent for once.

But Polly, now alone again in the study, was not feeling at all proud of herself. She knew her own inward feelings; knew by what a narrow margin she had kept them under control, time after time, in the past week.

More than once she had felt she must become one of the noisy, pitiless demonstrators against Pam. If she had! What Betty and others would have thought of her then!

Yet she was taking no credit to herself for having at least held her scorn for Pam in leash.

By-and-bye Betty came in, looking all the fresher for some brisk exercise.

"Pam's been asking for you, Betty. She wants to see you."

"Oh, does she," the captain laughed. "Well, I don't want to see her now. I think I had better not! I can guess what she wants to say, and—I'm not having any."

Polly, the born madcap, was seldom emotional. But now she looked at Betty—her best of chums; her idolised Betty—with shining eyes.

"How I wish I were a bit like you, Betty!"

"I like you better as you are, Polly. It takes all sorts to make a world—tha knaws!"

"It takes girls like you," said Polly wistfully, "to make Morcove—what it is."

CHAPTER 3.

A Clue in the Cave

THE tide was brawling in along Morcove's lonely shore.

Oncoming waves, seeming to try and look over one another's heads, to know how much farther to run before tumbling upon the shingle, flashed in the early evening sunshine.

A lonely shore, more often than not, but here came Pam Willoughby, walking alone beside the foam-faced edge of the ocean. The Form's

"banished traitress," getting no batting practice at the nets, now that tea was over, no tennis, no chummy share in a cycle ride to Barncombe and back. Nothing like that for her, the scholar outlabeled by her schoolmates!

Even so, it was in no despairing, miserable mood that Pam had come this way to her solitary state.

The Form, out of school hours, was enforcing its banishment decree in bitter earnest. For her to meet some girls was to have them passing her by with averted faces, stonily indifferent. To meet others, was to be treated to open hostility. Yet she went about amongst all the girls, these days, as serene as ever.

Banished! But her spirit broken—not yet!

Hardly a thought was she giving, indeed, at this moment, to the opprobrium in which she stood. More important things than that to think about.

There was, for instance, that theory of hers, founded on certain sensational discoveries made by her last week. The theory that nothing ever had been done by Grangemoor, really, to give offence to Morcove. The belief that there never would have been "war" between the two schools, if somebody belonging to MORCOVE had not caused all the mischief!

Somebody—a Morcove girl; one could be as definite as that—who at times had dressed up in Grangemoor clothes!

Morcove's case against Grangemoor was that each insulting trick could be proved to be the work of a Grangemoor boy.

Grangemoor's reply to the charge had been that this was impossible. The two schools were many miles apart, and at all material times every boy could be accounted for. To which Morcove had answered that it simply meant; there must be collusion at Grangemoor. Several boys were in the conspiracy, contriving to provide an alibi, as it were, for the one who was detailed to carry out the trick.

But Pam's theory, if correct, meant that Grangemoor could be acquitted. On the other hand, Morcove could not be blamed for having been so insistent in its belief.

There only need be a Morcove girl, letting herself be glimpsed at times in the disguise of a Grangemoor boy, and there you had the cause of this misunderstanding which had brought about the "war."

And that was what had happened, Pam was certain. She knew of a cave down here on the seashore—one that she was coming to now—which had served the masquerader once, at least, for the crafty purpose. As a safe sheltering place, where she could rid herself of the clothing—put on over her own. If only the unknown girl had resorted to the sandy floor of the cave, for a hiding place for the boy's clothing! It had been Pam's great hope, last week, that the girl had buried the clothing, in a bundle, in the sand inside the cave. But she had dug about with her hands in vain.

Here was the cave, and it seemed worth her while to go in again. Second time she had returned to it, since that evening when certain footprints led her to form this amazing and yet plausible theory.

A Morcove girl, the cause of both schools being set by the ears! And so, if only one could find out which girl it was of all Morcove's army of scholars—why, then, one would have done something indeed for the school. Even though one was—a "traitress" to the Form!

In the cave the light was good, because of the sun's hanging low in the western sky.

Pam stood again at the very spot, over-arched with rock, where the sandy floor had revealed such definite traces, that evening last week, of someone's having nipped in here for a few minutes' privacy. Someone who had left footprints all the way along the shore from another cave, where a "Grangemoor" trick had just been played upon Morcove girls. A "Grangemoor" trick—for a Grangemoor boy had been glimpsed by the victims. Only, the footprints left by the "boy" had been—a girl's!

Pam knelt down and dug about in the sands again. She felt she might as well try again. On the assumption that the secret masquerader must have been changing out of the disguise in great haste, one could imagine her losing something in the sand.

Great pity that the girl had not buried a bundle of clothing here. To have discovered that would have meant everything. What did the girl do with the clothes? Keep them at Morcove School? If so, then she had to come out with them in a bundle, to put them on somewhere in secret. She could not do the dressing-up indoors.

"I'll have to keep my eyes open for that, too," Pam was thinking, whilst she dug the sand about with her hands. "If I see any girl at any time going out of bounds with a bundle, I shall follow her and—"

Hallo, what was this!

Pam's right hand snatched it up as a gold-digger might snatch up a nugget.

Yet the object was as valueless as it was tiny; valueless, except as an "exhibit" in favour of her theory.

A collar stud!

PAM's habitual calmness soon returned. She was up, from her knees now, eyeing the commonplace object as it lay in the palm of her right hand.

A full-sized stud, such as a man or a boy would use for his collar; not one of the extra small kind, of imitation pearl, such as girls occasionally use. And she had found it—here.

Still, there was need for keeping calm. Somebody bathing from this cave might have lost the stud—easily!

Unfortunately, it was simply a penny stud. Otherwise, its owner might have been traceable. Had it been a gold stud, for instance, of identifiable pattern, then, if someone at Grangemoor had loaned it along with the clothing—

Pam's calmness suddenly forsook her again. She was feeling quite staggered by what had passed through her mind, just then, as the outcome of thoughts about the stud. What—what had she been saying to herself just then? "Someone of Grangemoor, loaning—THE CLOTHING—"

For, from this, her mind was making the leap to a fresh conviction. The Denvers! Bertie Denver, at Grangemoor, loaning the clothing to one of his cousins at Morcove!

"Then I've got it," Pam

suddenly whispered to herself with returning calmness. "Now the whole thing is as clear as daylight! The Denvers! That hateful fellow at Grangemoor and those two girls at Morcove! I can't prove it, so I mustn't say a word, yet. But it is so, I'm positive!"

The difference it meant; the advance by this one great leap—to a state of definite conviction as to who was the masquerader!

Now she knew whom to watch. The Denver sisters! One or the other of them had done the dressing-up. But both, of course, were in the plot, with their Cousin Bertie all the time wishing them well over it.

A fine lot of goodwill he bore Morcove! Detestable fellow, his captaincy only obtained by means of that Grangemoor rule—badly in need of amendment—which made captaincies the reward purely of scholastic achievements.

Pam put the stud safely away in her frock pocket, then knelt to do some more digging about in the sand. But she found nothing more. It was simply the stud that had been dropped and lost sight of, when the masquerader, that evening, was hastily discarding the disguise.

She walked back to Morcove rather briskly, for now it seemed to her that she must be always on the watch, must shadow the sisters as constantly as possible. At this very moment they might be intending to use the disguise again.

But Pam got back to the school to see Fay and Edna playing tennis; they were partners in a "doubles," their opponents, Pat Lawrence and Kathleen Murray.

To find out this, Pam had to show herself to many of her schoolmates at the courts, with the usual result that some pointedly ignored her,



"Jimmy!" Pam gasped.
"Oh, Jimmy, what are you doing here?"

whilst others stared resentfully. But it was worth it!

She sauntered away, thankful to know that Fay and Edna were there, when they might have been at their secret mischief once more. From now onwards, they would have little chance of eluding her vigilance.

In all this there was something so elating, Pam could even smile to herself when she heard some of those onlookers at the tennis-courts mockingly calling out:

"Jim-mee! Coo-ee, Jimmy—coming out?"

CHAPTER 4.

Up to Their Old Tricks

"HA, ha, ha! I guess that rattled her, girls!"

"Well, serve her right!"

"I was never," said another of the girls sitting to watch the tennis, "more disappointed over anyone than I have been over Pam."

"Hear, hear! I used to look up to her as being such a ripper; I don't now!"

"Game and set!" the comment was voiced. "So now we can have our turn. They should have more courts, I do think."

"Fine game, you girls," the four coming away from this court were hailed by Eva Merrick. "Some of those rallies—splendid!"

Fay and Edna, in very bewitching tennis frocks, were flushed and breathless after a very fast game.

With good reason could they smile as brilliantly as they did. They knew that they had been at the top of their form, in front of all these girls—beating their opponents, who, again, were "hot stuff" with the rackets.

Pat Lawrence and Kathleen Murray were inclined to sit down, too, now, and it was added joy to the Denver sisters to realise that Pat and Kathleen were ready to sit with them.

"Did I see Pam go by?" asked Pat, fiddling with disarrayed hair.

"Yes! She had the cheek to show herself here!" Eva responded.

"How some of you twit her about the Cherrol boy," Kathleen laughed. "Betty doesn't like it."

"Then, for once, I must go against Betty," stated Eva flatly.

"Is it right that the meeting is to be held out of doors, if fine?" Fay inquired casually.

"There has been some talk about that," nodded one of the others. "After all, these long evenings—who wants to go in at eight, to attend a meeting in a stuffy class-room?"

"I'm sure I don't! Not this time, at least," said Pat. "It isn't worth it. Big mistake Betty is making."

"Like taking sides with Pam against the Form—yes," the gossip was carried on. "And if Betty isn't careful she will find herself being kept to her word—to resign."

"The Form certainly isn't in the mood to forgive Pam yet."

"Oh, no! And why should it be? She has even been having dealings with the enemy since the banishment."

Fay and Edna heard the talk turn upon what would happen supposing Betty's resignation did come about? Who would be captain then? They, the sisters, sensed a feeling that Pat would be nominated for a captaincy election. Etta Hargrove was another likely candidate, although her chance of being elected would be poor. "Too much like Betty!" was the general opinion.

"That's what I say. If we're to have a change, let's have—a change!"

"I'm going in," Fay suddenly announced, "to get a bath."

Edna stood up as well. As artful as her elder sister, she, too, felt that would be good policy to go away now. They had been made very welcome, this evening, amongst these other girls. Best not wear out that welcome! Besides, it would give the others an opportunity to discuss them at a moment when their "stock" was standing high.

"That Lawrence girl, Edna—one to keep in with," Fay murmured, sauntering towards the schoolhouse with her sister. "You know, I'm sure if it came to an election, she'd get in as cap."

"Some style about Pat, I must say," Edna agreed. "But don't you think, Fay, that Betty will prove strong enough to get her own way with the Form?"

"She may, and she may just not bring it off," Fay said, narrowing her eyes. "Of course, there are a good many girls she can twist round her little finger. But the Form as a whole is still mad with Pam."

"She gives herself such airs!"

"Look out; there she is."

"Pooh!"

Pam Willoughby appeared to be going indoors just when the sisters were doing so. They brisked up their step so as to drop her behind. A minute after they had got to their study, upstairs, they heard a girl go by in the corridor and were sure that it was Pam.

"I say, Edna—an idea!" now that the door was closed, affording privacy.

"Well?"

"If they hold the meeting in the open; somewhere in the grounds, I suppose that means—couldn't we work another 'Grangemoor insult'? Sudden interruption of the meeting—in all its solemnity!" Fay tittered. "By a Grangemoor cad!"

"Oh, Fay, how lovely, if it could be managed!"

"I must think about it, that's all. One thing's pretty certain: if the meeting is held in the grounds, it will be in some out-of-the-way spot. They wouldn't want to run the risk of a mistress turning up. Oh, I could do with a gasper, Edna. Well—my bath!"

Fay stepped to her side of the table and pulled open a drawer. Reaching her hand far in, she drew out a packet of twenty cigarettes.

"I don't get expensive boxes of chocs given to me, Edna darling; only gaspers. So, cheerio for the present, dear! Bath-room window wide open, plenty of bath salts, and you can smoke ALL the time!"

"You're awful!" laughed Edna.

"We Denvers are—all of us," was the bland retort.

CHAPTER 5.

The Hour at Hand

WEDNESDAY evening. Little more than an hour to go to the meeting, and great excitement in the Form!

Games were still being played; cycle runs had been undertaken—but only to kill time. Those who were away on their bikes were going to take good care to be back early for the meeting.

At the tennis courts, Form members chatted about the coming meeting and nothing else whilst watching the play.

What would be the outcome of the meeting?

Nobody could predict with any certainty. Anything might happen!

Girls who were openly in sympathy with Betty's move, to obtain the Form's pardon for Pam, were greatly afraid that they would prove to be in a minority.

On the other hand, girls who were saying that they would see Betty resign rather than consent to the letting off of Pam, were similarly in fear of being outvoted.

It was a perfect evening, and the meeting was to be held out of doors—in a corner of the games field. There was a precedent for this; but Betty had been thinking of something in addition to the boon it meant, not to have to muster indoors on such a lovely summer-like evening.

Shrewdly she was hoping that a meeting in the open air would stand less chance of deteriorating into a riot.

Now, when Morcove's musical chimes were just beating out six o'clock, Betty was in Study 12. She was not alone; but the few chums who were with her were having very little to say.

Full well they realised that the captain, in these last hours before the meeting, had a lot to think about. They sensed in her an inclination to ponder, very carefully, what she must say when, presently, she stood up before the Form.

Their captain, enjoying up till now such a wonderful prestige; and yet, before this evening's sun was set, she might have become their captain no longer. All that prestige of hers staked in one great throw for the sake of clemency towards a schoolmate; and she, Betty, the loser!

Madge Minden was here. She had drifted to Study 12 a few minutes since, finding that she "could not play a note" on her beloved piano, below in the music-room.

Tess Trelawney was here, tense looking, wishing she could sketch Betty at this moment; but it would be an offensive thing to do. How fine, though, Betty's expression was, as she sat thinking, waiting.

Polly was here, gloomier than ever. She was going to support Betty—of course she was. But it made Polly wretched to know that for once it had cost her a big effort to uphold the captain. Wretcheder still, to know that Betty might be going to throw away the captaincy—for the sake of one who, after all, HAD failed the Form at a time when special loyalty was demanded.

Then there were Judy Cardew and Helen Craig as parties to this grave silence. Study 12, the dear old rendezvous where life had been wont to be lived so blithely; but this evening—no! Some had not the heart for talk. Others had no words for what was in the heart.

"Naomer and Paula?" Betty suddenly wondered aloud in a cheerful tone.

"They've biked into Barncombe," Helen answered. "But they were not going to stay long."

She raised her head to listen.

"That sounds like Naomer, back already."

And Naomer it was. The flurrying sounds grew louder in the corridor; then the door flew wide round, letting in the dusky imp—breathless, highly excited, shrill!

"Bekas—pouf!—ze enemy in sight again!"

"What!"

"Two of zem, yes! You ask Paula, bekas she saw zem just as plain as I did!" Naomer panted on. "Ooo, such a narrow eggscap for us! Bekas, we thought we were going to be captured!"

"Rot!" laughed Betty. "But you have really seen—"

"Two Grangemoor fellows, yes! And zey were prowling about, too, not coming to Morcove

openly! Paula and I were biking home from Barncombe, and we saw ze two boys on ze moor, dodging amongst ze gorse!"

"Yes, wather," puffed Paula, having now arrived upon the scene. "Ow, nevah was so hard in my life, bai Jove!"

"So you ran away?" smiled Polly grimly.

"Er—oh, no, wather not, bai Jove—"

"Bekas, what ze diggings, we had to run to tell you, didn't we?" was Naomer's indignant protest. "Bekas, eef zere is going to be a grand battle, just as well to know! I zink zose two boys were scouting, and zere is going to be a big attack—"

"Piffle!" Betty derided this alarming inference. "But it looks as if Grangemoor is going to try to score off us again. Why else should two of their fellows be over this way?"

"Bai Jove, and most extwaowdinaway, too," Paula resumed, having sunk into an easy chair, "the two were Jack and Dave, yes, wather!"

"Never!" gasped Betty and others.

"Yes, zat is so," shrilled Naomer. "Bekas, we saw enough of zem to recognise zem. And zey must have seen us, bekas, zey dodged out of sight like ze lightning!"

"Jack and Dave?" echoed some of the astounded listeners.

But Polly was silent, and so was Judy. They had looked at each other rather agitatedly; now they met the wondering eyes of their chums.

"Jack and Dave!" Helen repeated blankly.

"And they didn't appear to be coming to the school?" Betty exclaimed. "We musn't forget, they were sent over one evening last week to Morcove, with a parcel from their Housemaster's wife for Miss Courtway. They may have been chosen again for an errand of that sort."

"No, bekas—zey are creeping about, I tell you, not coming to our school at all!"

"I can confirm that," nodded Paula. "It is the perfect twuth, gals."

"Out on the moor?" Helen said. "So that you saw them, dodging amongst the bushes?"

"Yes, wather!"

"How far from Morcove?"

"Barely a mile, bai Jove!"

"Um!" Betty said. "Well, Polly—and you, too, Judy—if you think you ought, in the circles, to go out and look for them; they're your brothers, and surely the Form, for once, can make allowances—"

"No," Polly said in her downright way. "I said I wouldn't have any dealings with the enemy, and I won't. If I met Jack at home—then, of course, we'd be just the same as ever. But whilst we are at school, and whilst Grangemoor still owes Morcove that apology—no!"

"I say the same," Judy murmured steadily. "Dave quite understands. It is nothing personal. I must be loyal to my school, as he must be loyal to his."

A dramatic silence followed this. Betty was not the only one to feel that such words from Polly and Judy put Pam's persistent disloyalty in a bad light again. But Polly and Judy were not to be blamed for that.

"Well, you two girls are sports—"

"Yes, wather!"

"As for those two boys being over here," Betty pursued "it simply can't mean that they are up to tricks. A nasty trick was played last week, at the time they were over here; but nobody suspected that they did it."

"The belief in the Form was that some Grangemoor fellow sneaked over, knowing that Jack and Dave were here, hoping to get one of them suspected if he himself were seen," Helen re-

marked. "I wonder! Are Jack and Dave over this way, on the look-out for one of their own schoolmates?"

"You mean," Betty said quickly, "they may have begun to suspect that a Grangemoor fellow has been serving us these tricks, and so—"

She got no further. The door had been left standing open, and suddenly a batch of girls was at the threshold, clamorous for details about a scare that had started.

"There's a rumour that two Grangemoor fellows have been seen near Morcove, Betty!" was one of the excited cries. "Is it true?"

"Yes. But we needn't jump to the conclusion that they mean mischief. Jack and Dave are the two—"

"Oh!"

"We class them along with the enemy, of course; but we know very well that those two—"

"Quite," cried one of the girls at the threshold. "Still, we know what happened one evening last week, when those two boys were over here."

"They may not mean us any harm," chimed in another girl, "but, like last week, this may give the rotter who does the chance to serve us another nasty trick!"

Fay and Edna were on the fringe of the crowd about the doorway. The elder sister nudged the other, and they withdrew, unnoticed.

A few moments, and they were alone together in their study.

"Really," Fay exclaimed, "it's too good to be true! And the evening of the meeting, too—"

"In the open air!"

"Yes! Edna darling, I'm going to do it—I am! I'm going to get into the disguise again, and— Listen, dear, my idea. It's too thrilling! When the meeting is on it will be interrupted by a Grangemoor cad—he, he, he!"

"From the other side of the hedge?"

"That's right. Oh, I'll serve them such a trick, this time! I'll make the Form's blood fairly boil!"

"But it means that we shan't be able to attend the meeting, Fay!"

"Doesn't matter. We can say, afterwards, we didn't care to. The whole thing, a squabble—beneath us."

Edna nodded.

"That's all right, I suppose. But where are you going to get into the disguise, Fay?"

"Same place," was the cool reply. "Out there on the moor."

CHAPTER 6.

Out After Jimmy

"STILL no sign of the chap, Dave!"

"We mustn't give up, though."

"No fear! But when we do get hold of Jimmy—we'll have something to say to him!"

"Will we?"

"I will, anyhow! You, Dave, won't say a word—you never do!"

Jack Linton and Dave Cardew were alone together on the moorland wastes that were bordered just here by the road running between Morcove and Barncombe.

Morcove School was considerably less than a mile away. They could see upper windows of the great schoolhouse flashing in the evening sunshine, and they were not forgetting that any carelessness on their part might render them liable to be seen from one or another of those windows.

"We've just got to hang around, though, as close as this to the school," Jack muttered.

"Jimmy's come over to Morcove—of course he has! It's all on account of Pam; got some big reason, I suppose, for feeling he must see her. But it's all very well. Fancy risking expulsion just for the sake of a girl!"

Dave smiled his wise smile.

"You talk, Jack. You know very well you'd do the same if there were a call for it!"

"Anyway, if he had to see Pam this evening, why did he choose this afternoon for knocking down Bertie Denver? Jimmy had no right to land that chap one on the chin! It was to be my privilege, that!"

"I expect, Jack, one thing has led to the other."

"Think so? Well, all we know for a cert, at present, is that knocking down the Denver brute led to Jimmy's being put in deten. From which he broke out, half an hour later, vanished—and here we are, you and I—"

"Talking far too much," Dave quietly closed the discussion. "How about separating, Jack? I reckon that it will be this side of the school we shall come upon Jimmy, if we're to find him. And this is a good point from which to look out for any girl who might be Pam, coming out of bounds. Plenty of cover here. But there must be other places just as good—"

"And a bit nearer to the school, too," Jack nodded. "Got to be jolly careful, though. There's a war on! And—"

"It really doesn't matter if we are seen. After all, didn't Naomer and Paula glimpse us, just now?"

"They did, and I thought my last hour had come," Jack jested. "C'est la guerre! But I'm not worrying about the jolly old war. I'm worrying about Jimmy; the row he'll be in if we don't get him back to Grangemoor before the whole thing has become a case for the Head. Jimmy's such a good sort; I should hate to see him have to bend down—and it might even mean being sent down!"

"Will you stay here, Jack, whilst I scout more away there to the right, working nearer in to the school?"

"Right-ho, son! Gosh, and we've missed our tea all on account of this," Jack grumbled, whilst Dave moved off very warily. "Time was when we could have buzzed in upon Polly and her chums for lemonade and cakes. But now—"

And he muttered again grimly:

"C'est la guerre!"

At this instant Pam Willoughby came alone out of Morcove's schoolhouse, to start a saunter round the grounds.

CHAPTER 7.

On Watch

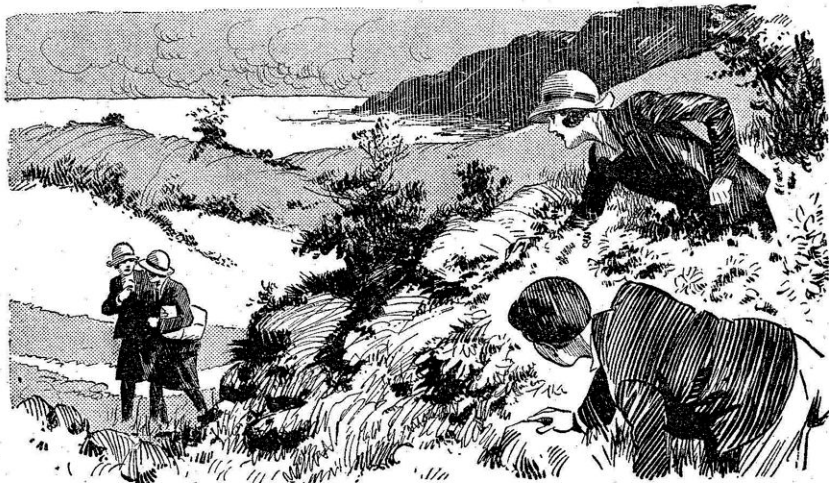
PAM, a few minutes later, strolled out by the main gateway of Morcove School. She was still alone.

After a couple of hundred yards or so along the Barncombe road, she turned off it, taking to the gorse undulations of the moor.

Nothing could have appeared to be more like an aimless extension of mere drifting about by a girl whose company was not wanted. But there was a purpose in Pam's movements.

Unless her reasoning was disastrously at fault, it was vitally important for her to be on watch for Fay and Edna.

Pam had picked up the news about Jack and Dave having been seen in the vicinity of the



With inhaled breath Pam and Jimmy noted the movements of the Denver sisters.
 "And one of them," Pam breathed significantly, "is carrying a parcel——"

school. What their furtive activities might mean, she could not imagine. But this she did know; it was when those two boys had been over this way, one evening last week, that Morcove had again been victimised by someone in Grangemoor clothes.

So this was her inference; that her suspected masquerader would seize this fresh opportunity. There might be nothing in the theory, as indeed there might be no justification for her having fastened suspicion upon the Denver girls. But at least it was worth while posting oneself in a suitable position for watching.

Here, on the fringes of the moor, just beyond the school bounds, was the best place for keeping a sharp look-out. Pam was sure of this. She could keep the road in sight, if Fay and Edna should come out by the main gateway to fare away, say, in the direction of the seashore.

On the other hand, if they sneaked out on to the moor itself, then she would be very favourably placed for following them up.

They were in their study, she knew, when she came downstairs to begin the vigil out of doors. Rather significant; they appeared to have gone into seclusion directly after the news about Jack and Dave had spread like wildfire through the Form!

Pam picked her way between the clumps of golden gorse and shining hollies. Growth of some sort or another was in abundance to offer a screen; but at present she did not deem it necessary to go into complete concealment.

After all, she was the "banished" girl, the outlaw of the Form, and as such she could be expected to come out for a solitary wander-round. The Form had seen her do this again and again, during the past——

"St! Pam!"

She stopped dead, then slowly turned round.

"Jimmy!" she gasped. "Oh, Jimmy!"

HER eyes, dilating with surprise, had discerned no more than his face amongst some brambles, when she faintly gasped his name.

Now he came crawling out—his cap rammed in a jacket-pocket—looking fagged. He glanced this way and that, to make sure that it was safe for him to rise, then stood up.

"Pam——"

"You shouldn't be here," she said quickly. "I mustn't speak to you."

"Did you write me a postcard?" he questioned eagerly. "That's all I want to know."

That word—"postcard"—took spellbinding effect upon Pam. She could not walk away, as she had quite intended doing.

"There have been two postcards, Jimmy," she said, steadying up after the shock of the encounter. "One, the first, I did not write——"

"Oh, I know you didn't. But the other—last week?"

"Yes, I wrote that one to you, Jimmy. I asked you to meet me in Barncombe, if possible, as there was something very important to see you about. But——"

"Pam, I never had that card. It was torn up by my House captain."

"What!"

"Bertie Denver; he chanced to be going through the morning delivery of letters, saw the card, and tore it up."

Jimmy ran a tongue-tip round his dry lips.

"I found out about that this afternoon. I tackled him about it. He tried to make out that it was all rot; but I had information that I could trust. The House porter, who always takes the letters from the postman, saw Denver do it."

"But how—abominable!"

"I knocked him down for it, anyhow," Jimmy said grimly. "I pretty well altered the shape of Denver's face."

"Jimmy! Didn't that get you into a row?"

"They put me in deten, but I scooted out, got my bike, and came over here to Morcove. I wanted to see you. I just had to see you, Pam, after finding out that about a message from you that I never had. You say it was something important. I knew it must be. So—so here I am," he finished simply.

"It was about that first postcard, partly," Pam said slowly. "I wanted to ask if it came from Morcove. Perhaps you're not free to tell me—"

"Pam, I'd always tell you anything! That first postcard came from one of your schoolmates. She made out that she wanted to see me on your account—to help you. But I soon saw that that was all bunk. I can't stand the girl. I cleared off.

"Edna Denver?" smiled Pam. "I've been thinking it must have been Edna. I have been putting two and two together, Jimmy, about the Grangemoor 'insults'—you know—and your being with the Denvers the other afternoon at Sandton Bay."

His jaw dropped.

"Pam! You—you've been told that I was there, with those two girls and their cousin, my House captain?"

"I saw you there, with all three Denvers," she serenely answered.

"My hat!" he gasped. "Weren't you frightfully sick about it? I should say, disgusted with me—"

"Oh, no! I know you well enough, I hope, Jimmy, to be sure you never wanted to join them."

"Well, neither did I, Pam," he said vehemently. "Denver picked upon me to go with him, to help bring back some things he was purchasing for the school. It was a shoddy excuse, of course, and I was mad about it at the time. But I couldn't very well go for him then. But, Pam, how fine of you, to have—sort of—believed in me still."

"Not at all. Was I to turn cattish?"

"I'm sorry," he blurted, and could not be comforted by her smile. "Now I've paid you a back-handed compliment. You could never be cattish, or turn nasty on mere suspicion, or think badly of a chum. And yet you're the girl, so it was hinted to me, whom other girls in the Form have been running down—"

"Yes—well, Jimmy, we needn't talk about that. And really you mustn't stand about with me like this. Apart from your being a Morcove 'enemy,' I'm here for a purpose—"

"Oh, Pam, can't I stay? Can't I help you?"

"You cannot! But don't look like that, Jimmy. If all goes as I hope, in a very little while—"

"Pam, tell me one thing before I go," he begged her vehemently. "Have you had a rotten time at the hands of the Form?"

"I'd rather not talk about that, Jimmy. The Form has been only acting—for the good of the Form! I'm not at all bitter." She laughed lightly. "I had a fair trial."

"Trial? You don't mean to say that they— And what, then, did they find you guilty? Sentence you?"

"To be banished, yes."

"Pam!"

"Sh!"

"But," he rushed on agitatedly, "it was all on account of me, wasn't it? Our happening to meet—"

"Twice, Jimmy, and that was once too often for the Form. Can you wonder? Oh, no, and now, like a dear good fellow, you must be off back to Grangemoor. I suppose your bike is some-

where handy? Get away now, Jimmy. Good-bye—"

"But, Pam, can't I—can't I go on to Morcove, now I'm here, and do something for you? Or is that against your pride, Pam—that a chap like myself should be wanting to save you, somehow? But I want to, Pam! Oh, look here, let me find your captain—Betty Barton. Let me—"

"No, Jimmy—no! Oh, you don't realise, your turning up to speak in support of what I said, in self-defence, would be worse than useless. The Form would be howling at you then!"

"Why, has it howled at you? Oh, Pam—"

"Jimmy, not so loud!" she entreated. "Oh, and now you really must go," came with the next breath. "For I can see—yes, over there, as if they had just come through the school boundary hedge—the Denver girls!"

"Those two—where?" he panted. "Oh, I see them—"

"Jimmy, don't let them see you! They mustn't see either of us," Pam whispered. "Do go away—creep away! I have to keep watch upon them. It's why I'm here."

"I don't understand, Pam!"

"And I can't explain, Jimmy."

She was peering, cautiously, over some tall gorse as she said it, marking the ffitting movements of the sisters.

"And one of them," she said under her breath, "is carrying—a parcel—"

CHAPTER 8.

Crisis in the Form

THE meeting had begun. Form-captain Betty Barton was addressing her schoolmates, as they sat, some on benches and garden-seats, others on the grass itself.

To Betty, standing out before them all, they seemed very like a class of girls grouped for a photograph. Those on the grass were in front, and the highest seats were in the back row. In addition, the background was sufficiently leafy to give just that effect which a photographer would have desired.

But the meeting, although it was being held in this open-air style, was none the less serious. A camera, at this moment, would have found few girls "looking pleasant." Those who were not positively scowling, as they listened to the captain, were manifesting acute anxiety.

"At the start, girls, I wish you to be quite clear in your minds about one thing. I have not convened this meeting with a sort of idea of having Pam's case gone into again."

"Should hope you haven't!" called out one disgruntled listener.

"Well, I haven't! I freely admit that all the facts were carefully considered at the last meeting. What's more, although you must have known I felt that Pam—should be given the benefit of the doubt, I bowed to the Form's decision that the case against her had been proved."

"And so it was!"

"All right, Eva. I'm trying to explain at the start; I haven't called this meeting with any idea of getting the Form's verdict against Pam—what's the word for it?—reversed! But I wish to know whether the Form is now ready to end its punishment of Pam? My own opinion being that that punishment has gone far enough."

Betty paused—and no one else spoke. She had gone straight to the point. As quickly as this the real crux of the position had been reached.

"I shall ask you to show your opinions by the

usual method," the captain calmly resumed at last. "You know my intention if the Form votes for a continuance of the punishment. I shall resign."

"That's a threat!" called out a girl at the back.

"Of course it is," Betty assented. "One that I made known as soon as the meeting was convened. A threat I was quite entitled to make—"

"You are not entitled, Betty, to put your personal friendship for Pam Willoughby before the welfare of the Form!" cried Kathleen Murray.

"That's just where some of you may be making a big mistake," was the captain's quick retort. "As captain, I'm bound to put the welfare of the Form before all else. But, as a simple member of the Form, I'm entitled to stand by Pam if I think the time has come for a little clemency to be shown—as I think the time has come! In other words, so long as I am ready to resign for the sake of personal feelings that clash with the majority, you can't complain. But would any girl like to say something as to why Pam should not yet be forgiven?"

"Yes, I would!" And Eva Merrick stood up. There was some clapping, and many girls called out:

"Bravo, Eva!"

"I mean to!" she said loudly. "And, first of all, nobody need imagine that I find any pleasure in opposing the letting off of Pam. I can quite see, a girl who has offended the Form might easily deserve to be let off before half the intended punishment had been served. No mistake, we were all worked up when we passed that banishment resolution. If Pam had since shown herself to be sorry—"

"Ah, if!" the cry went up from all parts of the meeting. "If!"

"But," Eva rapped out, "when a girl calmly does, all over again, the very thing for which she was condemned—"

"Hear, hear!" It was quite a shout from a large majority of the girls. "That's just it, Eva! Bravo!"

"And look how she has stayed away from this meeting, like she did from the other!" Kathleen Murray jumped up to complain disgustfully. "At the last meeting she had to be sent for. Then she only came—as we could tell—to oblige the cap!"

"Hear, hear! No letting her off!"

"When she is sorry, not before—no!"

"Vote! Vote!"

Eva's utterances had been like a fuse of gunpowder—first setting off Kathleen Murray, and then causing a general spluttering. Now, like a set piece in a firework display, the meeting was fairly alight!

"No sparing her yet!"

"Boo, no! Why should we?"

"Vote! Vote!"

But, although Betty made signs that she felt the vote might just as well be taken at once, Etta Hargrove suddenly stood up to entreat a chance to be heard. As Etta always commanded a good deal of respect, silence was easily secured by Betty.

"Girls!" Etta cried, looking rather distressed. "It has been admitted that we were very worked up at the other meeting, when we condemned Pam—"

"She has done her best to make us angrier than ever!"

"I know—I know that on her own admission she saw the Cherrol fellow again, after we had condemned her for having dealings with Grangemoor. I'm not holding any brief for Pam. I wish I could, but I can't. But, girls—to lose Betty as captain! Is it worth it?"

"Yes, yes!" Etta was shouted at by a dozen girls.

"Yes!"

"Matter of principle, Etta!"

She pounced on that from Kathleen Murray.

"What do you mean—principle? Betty is not asking you to wash out the verdict against Pam. She is only asking you to temper mercy with justice, there! And I say Betty is right—"

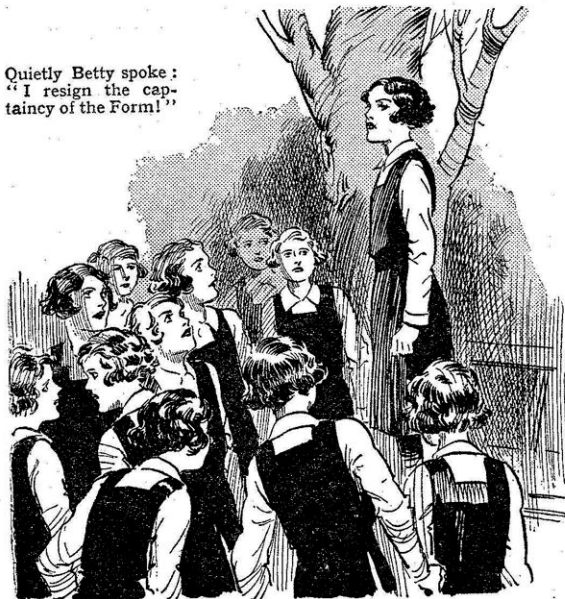
"Then we don't!"

"No! Never! Vote!"

Betty, from her position in front, had even more evidence than all the outcry furnished, as to which way the wind was blowing. She saw so many of her Form mates glaring at her reproachfully, scornfully. Whilst holding up a hand to quell the babel, she glanced gratefully at Etta, who had now sat down.

"There is no need, I'm sure," Betty said steadily, "for anything more to be

Quietly Betty spoke:
"I resign the captaincy of the Form!"



argued. You must have come to this meeting with your minds made up."

"Oh, we did that, right enough!" laughed Kathleen.

"Then I now put it to the meeting, that the banishment of Pam Willoughby be ended, as from this hour. Those in favour?"

Up shot a number of right hands. Naomer, as usual when she voted, was putting up both hands. Polly's hand had flashed up as quickly as Madge's, Helen's, Tess Trelawney's, and Judy Cardew's.

But Betty, counting during a moment of sensational silence, had few hands to count in all! Her own boon companions, to a girl, of course; Etta and a few others; and no more.

"Thank you," the captain said, and the hands dropped. "Now, those against?"

This time, right arms flashed up as if to let rapidity of response stress implacable feeling. More than half the Form—much more—against the proposal, even though its rejection meant the captain's resignation!

"Thank you." Just as calmly as before, that polite word from Betty. Then, in the renewed silence:

"I beg to tender my resignation as captain of the Form. I—"

"You—what?"

"I resign. And—"

She had to break off, for there was uproar. If this meeting had been held indoors the babel of cries and counter-cries would have shaken the ceiling.

But all those excitable cries were to be outdone, for the sheer noise they made, by the cheering that followed. This was when the meeting was breaking up in disorder. Everyone then seemed to be cheering.

The majority cheered as being a majority that took credit for being "last ditchers"—over Pam, the war, everything! Others cheered Betty for having acted so finely.

All the quicker for being out-of-doors like this, the girls were going to disperse in excitable batches. Betty was ready to go indoors and up to the study. She saw Naomer dragging Paula up from a seat.

"Now zen," Naomer shrieked. "Study 12, ze best thing, come and get something to eat, and zen we all feel better! Betty, I voted for you, you know; I put up both hands, I did!"

"I know you did, dear—"

"And eef Polly and ze rest had put up both their hands, too, zen we might have won!" was the dusky imp's naive argument. "Ah, bah, what a wash-out!"

"Dweadful!" wailed Paula, applying a "hanky" to her eyes. "Worse and worse—yes, wather! Your sawfice, Betty—"

"Oh, come away," Betty pleaded cheerfully. "And now that it is all over—Hallo, though, what's the matter?"

Neither she nor chums who were close at hand, could tell at once why so many other girls were suddenly transfixed. There was this sudden check upon the dispersal, rendered all the more sensational by a dramatic silence.

Then Madge gasped:

"Why, look—it's Pam!"

"Where—where?"

But the questioners saw for themselves before they could be told, Pam coming forward from a boundary hedge as if she had scrambled through some weak part of it to attend the meeting, after all. And—the meeting had broken up!

Pam, as serene as ever! And that roused some of the girls to fury again, so that they started

booing her. Then it was wondered why she looked so amused; why, also, she suddenly displayed a brown-paper parcel in front of them all, as several of the girls began to return.

"What's this?" cried a few blankly.

"This," Pam answered, "means the end of the war!"

CHAPTER 9.

Shown Up

THERE was a very frenzy of excitement.

The Form's yelled "What!" only faintly expressed its amazement.

"Will one of you open this parcel?" Pam pursued, as soon as she could get a hearing. "Will you, Betty, as captain?"

"But I'm no longer the captain."

"Let Pat Lawrence open it," cried Kathleen Murray. "She's going to be captain!"

"But she isn't captain yet," Pam calmly submitted. "So I'll open the parcel myself."

She did so, and from out the folds of brown paper fell a number of garments, recognisable instantly as the regulation garb of a Grangemoor scholar. The Grangemoor tie was there also, and the school cap.

It was Naomer who shouted, ending the astounded silence.

"What ze diggings! Bekas—Grangemoor! Boo, ze enemy uniform! Boo!"

"Are they Jimmy Cherrol's things?" someone tittered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They are Fay Denver's," was Pam's cool reply. "At least, they were loaned to her—by her cousin at Grangemoor. If he had never lent her the clothes; if she had never dressed up in them—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"There never would have been any war between the two schools. Oh, stare," smiled Pam, "but I know what I'm saying. Whilst some of you have been so busy, calling me a traitress and all that, I have been finding out who really did commit all those unkind tricks. And the person was—Fay Denver!"

"What rubbish!" yelled some incredulous listeners. "No right to say it!" cried others.

"Fay isn't here!"

"No, Fay ran away, just now, along with her sister, when I caught them both, red-handed," said Pam. "I expected them to use the clothes again this evening. I was lying in wait for the sisters, and sure enough they came out on to the moor. Fay had this parcel. I could have waited and taken them by surprise when Fay had dressed up. But I had Jimmy Cherrol with me."

That name—Jimmy Cherrol—it was like a spark to a fresh lot of gunpowder. A second time the Form exploded.

"So you were meeting him again, were you? Shame, Pam—shame! Traitor still—traitress!" The babel of hostile, scornful cries was at its loudest, when all in an instant some of the bushes of the boundary hedge crashed violently, and there appeared—Jimmy himself!

He came running towards Pam and the crowd about her. Some booing against him started; but it was enfeebled by the general state of consternation. Many girls were feeling too surprised—too bewildered—to be able to use their tongues at all.

Jimmy stopped when he was at Pam's side, and he stood very firm, his shoulders squared, his chin thrust out. He spoke fiercely, bluntly:

"Pam has been 'meeting me again'! She has

never once met me by arrangement, only by accident. Those of you who wouldn't take her word for that, needn't start doing so now. You're going to have it proved to you."

There was something so fine about him—plain Jimmy, standing before them all like this, and standing beside Pam—he kept the whole crowd of girls reduced to silence.

"And about that postcard—the one you suspected her of writing to me, to ask me to meet her. She didn't write it! She did write one to me last week, but I never had it, because Bert Denver intercepted it at my school. And for doing that I gave him one to go on with, this afternoon, and then I came over here to find Pam. She was not expecting me, was not looking for me. —But I was looking for her!"

He drew a deep breath.

"And I bear out what she has told you about this parcel. I was with Pam just now when she ran and took it from Fay Denver, out there on the moor."

"Yes, well, Jimmy, now you must go," Pam addressed him gently. "Back to Grangemoor, and I'll get hold of Miss Courtway in the meantime and explain to her, so that she can ring up your school and explain. Betty, there is no harm in my doing that? I mean, Miss Courtway can be allowed to talk to the Grangemoor House-master or his wife about it all, now that we know—now that it has been proved. Grangemoor did not carry out those insulting tricks, but a Morcove girl did!"

"Howwows!"

Paula was one of those who had found her voice at last.

"Yes, bekas—what ze diggings! Zen we had no right to go to war with Grangemoor!" shrieked the imp. "Ah, bah, another washout! We thought we were in ze right, and we were in ze wrong!"

"How were we to know that?" gasped others. "But—but—"

"Do you really mean to tell us, Pam," burst forth Polly, "that Fay Denver has been the 'Grangemoor' boy' each time? Then that—that is why Grangemoor could never admit that it was one of their fellows!"

"Of course it is!"

"And you—you, Pam, have been the one to prove all this!" was Betty's rejoinder. "You—who was practically turned out of the Form—branded a traitress!"

"It doesn't matter now."

"Doesn't it? What does the Form say to that?"

There was an ashamed silence. Even those who had kept the censuring of Pam upon a higher plane could only stand ruefully mute.

It was such an intense silence, all present could not fail to hear a sudden rustling of the boundary hedge, at that same weak part in it where Pam, just now, had scrambled through.

Then those who looked in that direction became agape with fresh amazement.

They saw two schoolboys wearing Grangemoor caps come clear of the hedge, one behind the other. The first held aloft a holly stick, to which was tied at the top, a fluttering white handkerchief.

"Why, it's Jack!" gasped Polly. "And Dave, too!"

"White flag!" was now the mock-serious cry from Jack.

Some of the girls burst out laughing.

"You're quite safe," Betty informed the two lads. "Even without that flag! The war is over!"

"Eh, what?" jerked out Jack. "There, now! To think that we might even have got here sooner, Dave, and had tea. Jimmy, you son of a gun, unless you want to get yourself expelled from Grangemoor, come along back!"

"But there's no hurry," Polly gaily declared. "We're going to get Miss Courtway to make it all right for Jimmy, over the 'phone. Oh, just fancy you two turning up at a time like this! How are you, Jack darling, after all these ages!"

"I shall feel better after a lemon-squash, Polly-wolly. And you? My word, how you've grown! A little girl when the war broke out, and now—wow! White flag! And this," said Jack, recovering from a playful thump from his sister, "is what they call the war being over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" Paula joined in all the happy murmurs that were now starting. "Gweat relief—pwofound wejoicing, yes, wather! And Judy, bai Jove—she has her bwother again, too! Most gwatifying!"

"Gorjus!" capered Naomer. "Eef only Bobby Bloot were here, bekas he owes me sixpence, which I may—as well have now ze war is over!"

"Hallo!"

"Why," cried several of the girls, "here is Bobby!"

And sure enough, the cause of a fresh agitation in the privet hedge was due to bulky Bobby's struggling through—another ex-enemy to advance from the no-man's-land of the moorland into Morcove territory!

CHAPTER 10.

Another of Them

IF any members of the Form had been waiting for something funnier still to happen, before they could become really mirthful, they had it in beefy Bobby's emergence from the hedge.

It had been a great struggle for the literally stout fellow; but he had triumphed, leaving the hedge looking as if an Army tank had just investigated that part.

Bobby Bloot came puffing towards the astonished crowd, to be asked a blunt question by Jack instantly:

"What are you doing here, Bob?"

"I came to find you and Dave."

"And we came to find Jimmy. These," said Jack, casting up his face skywards, "are the pals I've got! One never says a word, the other knocks down his House cap, and bolts out of deten, the other—"

"Ze other owes me sixpence, don't forget!" piped in Naomer. "So, good job he has turned up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's your white flag, man?" thundered Jack.

"The war's over, you goop!" Polly reminded her brother.

"Doesn't matter. It might have been still going on. He might have been captured—starved!"

"No, bekas I would have seen zat they fed him four times a day, yes!"

"Four times!" snorted Jack. "And what good would that have been. This chap requires constant feeding. But what time did you leave Grangemoor, Bobby?"

"About half-past six."

"Anything happened by that time?"

"No, except that Denver was vowing he'd have Jimmy up before his Housemaster, who would have to take him to the Head, if he didn't show

up by seven. And now," Bob commented tragically, "it's getting on for nine!"

"All indoors," Betty blithely suggested. "And Pam and I will find Miss Courtway— But I'm forgetting! I'm no longer the captain—"

"Really?" exclaimed Pam, raising her brows. "And what does the Form say to that?"

"Those in favour!" dimmed Polly, as if another meeting were on. "That Betty Barton be asked to carry on as usual!"

"Of course! Yes! Hurrah for Betty!" were some of the fervent cries which accompanied a putting up of hands by an overwhelming majority.

Jack put up his hand.

"The war being over! Quite," he beamed. "By the way, we chaps don't know why it IS over! But don't let that deter you from seeing if there isn't a lemon-squash—shorbet-and-water—anything!"

Then Polly took him by the arm to walk him towards the schoolhouse. For obvious reasons this action was loudly cheered. So she improved upon it and simply flung an arm about his shoulders,

whereupon Jack wound an arm about her waist. And so they went together across the grass.

Judy and Dave had fallen into talk very eagerly, a couple of minutes since. Now they set off for the schoolhouse together, and there was more cheering.

"Well, zen, what about Pam and Jimmy?" the dusky one suggested. "What ze diggings, how about me and you, Bobby?"

Very gallantly, then, Bob offered an arm, which Naomer took, with what she imagined to be a becoming sedateness. Anything more comical than the pair of them, going off like that, Morcove could not have imagined. It left some of the girls in convulsions of laughter.

"Haw, haw, haw!" Paula chortled on. "Too ridiculous for words—yes, wather! And yet, bai Jove—" And suddenly she almost cried as she laughed. "The welf, geals, what? No more swife—wather not! Fwiends all wound—yes, wather! Bai Jove, it's great!"

BETTY turned to Pam and two or three others. "What about Fay and Edna? Where are they now?"

"Still keeping away from the school, I suppose," Pam shrugged. "And they will do that, I dare say, until the last moment before Big Hall."

"Need we let that hinder us?" Madge said.

"We can't," Betty decided. "Those boys have to get back to Grangemoor, and we have got to make everything all right for them at that end by the time they get there."

"Yes, well," Pam nodded, "then let's go in and find Miss Courtway."

CHAPTER 11.

"Who Cares!"

AT dusk, Fay and Edna came in by the main gateway of Morcove School with a great show of not caring how they stood now.

In case other girls were looking out for them they talked lightly, making jokes at which they laughed loudly.

But the found-out pair flouted all the way to the schoolhouse porch without an encounter. It was late enough now for all girls to be due indoors. Perhaps there was to be a demonstration against them the moment they stepped in out of the falling darkness?

That was the secret dread of both miscreants, whilst they forced their chatter and laughter. There was only Miss Courtway, however, to confront them in the outer hall.

"You two girls will report to me before breakfast in the morning," said the Form-mistress sternly. "You have, Pam Willoughby, to thank that you are not to be taken by me, this instant, to the headmistress, in which case you would most certainly have been—expelled!"

That was all. Miss Courtway turned away, and so Fay and Edna understood; although they were to hear more in the morning, the affair was to be hushed up.

Fay nudged Edna. "Come on up to our study, Edna. May as well face it out up there in the Form quarters. How do you feel now?"

"Oh, fine!" grinned the younger one. "Why?"

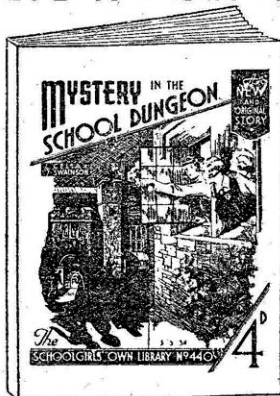
"If the girls upstairs go for us—"

"Pooh, let 'em!"

"It's a scream, really," the elder sister kept up the bravado. "Oh, and I wouldn't mind betting, Edna, half the girls will be admiring us for our daring. Always remember that."

"I don't care if they do or they don't."

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Edna's affected indifference seemed to be marred by a distinct pettishness. Perhaps the great showing-up meant more humiliation for her than it did for Fay. After all, Fay would still have Cousin Bertie to gab about with. But Edna could hope for no more half-holiday hours spent with Jimmy Cherrol.

Off the stairs came both sisters, a minute later, to turn into the corridor of studies. And no infuriated girls were waiting about there to boss and hiss. Amazing! Fay and Edna were only to find out, days afterwards, that Betty had threatened to resign, after all, if a single member of the Form demonstrated. As recent events had enhanced Betty's prestige, her merest wish in the matter, this evening, would have been as a law for the Form to observe.

So the sisters entered their study—and Betty was waiting for them alone.

"You've seen Miss Courtway?"

"We have," Fay nodded.

"There are two or three things I want to say, as captain."

"I'm sure there must be!"

"Aren't you two girls ashamed of yourselves?" "Not particularly," the elder smiled. "A joke's a joke. Of course, if Morcove is so stuffy that it can't see when a joke is intended!"

"Morcove's sense of humour is better than yours; that's only too evident," Betty retorted sharply. "Did Miss Courtway tell you that Pam begged you off?"

"Oh, did Pam do that?" Fay returned blandly. "It's why you are not both going before Miss Somerfield to be expelled. And let me tell you this," Betty added with unusual heat: "Pam would have been for not letting Miss Courtway know even, only something had to be done to stay the hand of that bouncer of a cousin of yours, over at Grangemoor. You may not be aware, Jimmy Cherrol knocked your cousin down this afternoon—and a good few of us girls wish we had been there to see him do it."

"Oh, do you hear this, Edna?" Fay turned to her sister. "So that's why there is to be all this hushing-up! To save Jimmy Cherrol. What humbugs some girls are, really!"

"That's like you," Betty said fiercely. "But wait! In the morning you'll know whether Pam was thinking only of Jimmy Cherrol's danger, or whether she had more pity for you two girls than you deserve!"

"Right," bowed Fay. "Then we will wait till the morning. Heigh-ho!" and she patted back a yawn. "Isn't it nearly time for Big Hall and bed, Edna darling?"

"Hint for me to go," Betty promptly remarked. "But I've one thing more to say. You, Fay, are down for the quarter-mile on Sports Day! Do you still want to run in that race?"

"Not particularly!"

"Then perhaps you won't mind scratching?"

"I shan't mind! Pam can win the precious cream-jug!"

"Pam scratched, days ago, and she isn't going to run. But I don't see why you should run, Fay Denver. Your trying to get her to stand down, so as to leave it a walk-over for you, was the beginning of all this trouble. I see that now. I overlooked your unsporting action at the time, to give you a chance as a new girl. Now that I know what you are, as captain, I consider it my duty to the Form to refuse to let you run. The Form, if it knew, would prefer to let the honours in that race go to a girl who plays the game."

"I see! Anything else?"

"Nothing," Betty said, passing to the door, "except that this is the last time you set girl

against girl, and school against school, and get out so lightly."

She went out into the corridor, pulling the door shut behind her with a disgusted slam.

"Dear me," yawned Fay. "How seriously they all do take themselves!"

Edna laughed mirthlessly.

"Never again, Fay. We've been warned!"

"Never again, dear," nodded the elder sister—"until the next time!"

She sighed prettily.

"Oh dear, I do hope it is all right about Cousin Bert! That Cherrol boy must be quite a dangerous character! Be thankful, Edna darling, that you're saved from having any further dealings with him."

"Oh, shut up!" Edna snapped.

AND now the bell was ringing all the school down to Big Hall. Not much of the dingling, dingling was audible in the Form quarters, for a great deal of cheering had started.

It was one deafening "Hurrah!" after another, coupled with the name of "Pam!"

The Form, it seemed, was demonstrating again.

But where, then, was the captain?

Where else but in the very thick of the crowd, her own cheers some of the very loudest for Pam Willoughby—at one time the banished "traitress" of the Form and now the heroine of the hour!

Yes, it is well for Pam now. The war is over that, like all other wars, need never have been, only it served the purpose of a scheming fever.

Morcove and Grangemoor are friends again, as they might not have been if Pam herself had failed to fight for her own side—the best of all!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

FAME

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