

"THE TYRANT OF MORCOVE"

Brilliant Long Complete School Story Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d

No. 718. Vol. 28
Week ending
October 27th, 1934.
EVERY TUESDAY.



"YOU THINK TOO MUCH OF YOURSELF, PAM WILLOUGHBY!"

An intriguing incident in this week's complete Morcove tale.

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My Dear Readers

I HAVE already told you some preliminary details of the great new serial which our new author, Miss Jean Emerson, is writing specially for THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN.

Of course, you are naturally all very excited about this big treat, and no doubt you are just longing to know the title of the story; so here it is:

"A SPOILT GIRL'S FOLLY."

And the extra-long first instalment will appear in two weeks' time.

"A SPOILT GIRL'S FOLLY" is quite unlike any story you have ever read in these pages before. The heroine—Joyce Beresford—is one of the best, a girl you will love. Yet Joyce has a fault; she is selfish, perhaps because her wealthy parents, in their affection for their only daughter, have rather spoilt her.

Joyce is ambitious, too—and not a little vain. She is a lover of the limelight and because her every wish has always been granted, she fails to see why fame should not be hers. But alas! for Joyce's hopes. Like a bombshell in her happy home there falls a blow that threatens all her happiness, her hopes, a blow that . . .

But I mustn't go on, or I shall give away too much of Miss Emerson's stirring story! You must all read it for yourselves—this vivid tale of A Spoilt Girl's Folly.

Don't forget that the first instalment begins in TWO WEEKS' TIME. Tell all your chums, please, and remember that the best way of making sure of your SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN is to order it in advance.

Simply go to your newsagent and ask him to reserve for you each week until further notice a copy of THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN. It will then be delivered to you every Tuesday—and you'll just have time to glance through your copy before rushing off to school!

MORCOVE "ON STRIKE."

The present series of Morcove stories promises to be one of Marjorie Stanton's greatest successes. In next Tuesday's vivid long complete tale you will read how, driven to desperation, the Form, under Pam's leadership, mutinies.

A rebellion at Morcove! Almost unheard of in the history of the school, there is a mutiny against Authority—a barring out, in protest against the tyranny of Morcove's spurious mistress. Naomer's long-awaited "grand strike" becomes a reality!

Next Tuesday's powerful story is packed with thrilling developments; there is drama and humour in plenty, adventure and comedy, blending to form a story you will all thoroughly enjoy.

The title is:

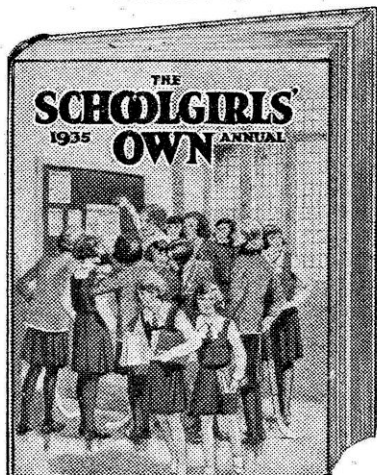
"DRIVEN TO DEFIANCE."

In addition to this fine tale and long instalments of our two popular serials, our next number will also contain another complete story in our series of Empire tales. The scene of next week's story is India, and it is entitled "Barred from the Palace."

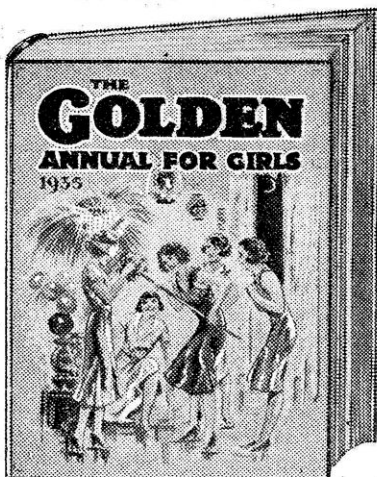
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YOUR EDITOR.

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MARJORIE STANTON Contributes This Stirring Complete
Story of Morcove School



The TYRANT of MORCOVE

GOADED almost beyond endurance by the tyranny of Miss Kitten, the Form looks more than ever to Pam Willoughby, its captain, to guide it through this time of crisis. And Pam, capable and calm, shows that she is ready—if needs be—to take drastic steps against such misuse of authority.

CHAPTER 1.

Near to Rebellion

"SHE was horrid again this morning!"

"Awful, I think!"

"Hateful—yes!"

"And—girls! I don't see how we can go on

like it, do you?"

"Impossible!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Too twying for words!"

Morning class was over, and these girls who were exclaiming so fiercely amongst themselves had just come away from their class-room.

One of them looked round, and then grimaced a comment on the small number of other girls who had received the "Dismiss."

"Half the Form kept in!"

"I know, Polly—and it's a shame. Not a girl really deserved 'deten.'"

Polly Linton, in addition to being the mad-cap of the Form, was also its most headstrong member. She had been answered by Judy Cardew, whose nature was just the reverse; yet even patient Judy was full of burning indignation at this moment.

"Such a pity," Judy added, in a tone of bitter disappointment. "For Morcove to have a mistress like that."

Then Madge Minden, under the same sense of great provocation, muttered wistfully:

"When you remember what a nice mistress we had in Miss Everard—before she left to marry Mr. Challenor, the Housemaster at Grangemoor."

"Don't remind me, Madge deah, of Miss Eweawd," came the doleful voice of Paula Creel. "The change from her to Miss Kitten is—is too painful for words, yes, wather!"

"Bad enough, she was, at the very start of term," Polly said, with all the force of her outright disposition. Polly could usually find words—blunt ones! "Nag, nag, nag, from the very first! And talk about a kill-joy! Has she made a moment's happiness for any of us? And now—well, nothing better than a tyrant, that's what I call her now!"

"Zen what ze diggings," piped in that artless imp, dark-skinned Naomer Nakara. "Why not go on ze strike, bang away; zat is what I say! Why wait? Bekas, ze longer you wait, ze worse it becomes!"

"It isn't often," Polly grimly smiled, "that I see any sense in what you say! But for once I feel you are just about right. Make a stand against her! Bring the whole trouble to a head!"

The seething state this particular batch of chums was in had caused them to drift, in muttered talk, to the foot of the stairs in the front hall. There were two or three other groups of girls, whose exasperated looks and angry mur-

murings evidenced similar feelings to those of the Chums of Study 12.

Between one group and another shrugs and grimaces were exchanged, and in a few moments all might have been slowly mounting to the Form quarters, in talk about the general grievance; but now tall Pam Willoughby, the captain, stepped amongst them, voicing the soothing suggestion: "Out to the field, shall we?"

"Not for me!" Polly instantly dissented gloomily. "Can't play games after a morning like that!"

"It does—upset, one," Helen Craig sighed. "Why, we used to look forward to lessons and games. But now—"

"You think, Pam, we had better get games whilst we can? It may be our turn next to be kept in—unfairly!" frowned Tess Trelawney.

"My feeling is," said Pam quietly, "we must do something to shake off the effects of this morning. She really has been in a bad temper with all of us—and without cause, I am sure. But she is the Form-mistress—"

"Worse luck for the Form, she is!" stamped Polly. "All right, Pam, I'll come out—"

"So will I—and I!" chimed in others. "But how long is it all to go on?"

"Not much longer, girls; I can promise you that, as captain," Pam said—only quietly, and yet the words were electrical in their cheering effect upon her listeners.

"We've put up with enough from her," that calm voice continued. "And now it'll have to stop. You can rely on me, girls. I never wanted to be captain; but the Form would have me, and I don't mean to fail the Form about all this—one of the very things for which any captain must make a stand. Fair play—"

Pam's quiet manner was taking more and more effect upon the girls who acknowledged her leadership. If she had been all frothy talk, making a loud boast of what she intended to do as captain, very speedily there would have been impatient interruptions:

"All very well to talk, Pam!"

But the Form knew this—and Pam's own particular chums of Study 12 knew it best of all—she was by nature a girl of few words.

If it had been somewhat of a little speech, just then, that was only because the time had come for her to give a definite assurance that she was fully alive to the need for action.

"If Miss Kitten doesn't treat us better, this afternoon, then I shall go to the Head," Pam added. "But I do think it a mistake to brood over the grievance."

"I think you're right, Pam!" exclaimed Helen Craig, as if greatly benefiting by the wise advice. "That's exactly what Betty would have said, if she'd been here. Isn't it, girls?"

"It is!" said Polly, in an "I ought to know!" voice. "The field, then; come on, all! Hockey praece, or anything else you like!"

The group, feeling a little more cheerful, started to disperse; and then there was a dying-away of voices, whilst frowns returned to pretty faces.

With a silent rush, the Form-mistress had come straight at the girls, on her way from the classroom to her own private room.

"All this standing about; this whispering!" she complained, singling out Pam with bespectacled eyes. "I will not have it!"

"Excuse me, Miss Kitten, but—"

"Oh, I don't want any argument!"

"It is fourteen minutes past twelve," Pam

checked the time by her own wristwatch. "You didn't let us out until ten-past, Miss Kitten. So there can't have been much standing about and whispering. I don't know that there has been any whispering!"

"Pam Willoughby, every day you are showing more impudence—"

"I am not, Miss Kitten."

"Girl, I say you are! This must not continue—"

"It is not going to continue, Miss Kitten."

Beware, Miss Kitten—beware this Form captain, with her calm composure which you are mistaking for impudence! So the girls who stood by were thinking—with tremendous pride in Pam, in one of her most spirited moments.

But Miss Kitten would not be warned by the captain's significant calmness. Once again the Form-mistress was allowing herself to be dominated by that belief which might yet prove her downfall: "After all, I am the mistress—I am everything, and this girl nothing!"

"Now, Pam Willoughby, as a punishment, you will return to the class-room and remain there—"

"Don't you, Pam!" interrupted headstrong Polly hotly.

Then Miss Kitten fixed her eyes upon the mad-cap.

"And you, too, Polly Linton, for saying that! To the class-room, at once!"

"I shan't!"

"What!"

"No, don't you, Polly!" dusky Naomer now shrilled. "Bekas—not fair!"

Again Miss Kitten half-turned, to single out the last rebellious speaker.

"It's you, is it—you young monkey?"

"Here, don't you call me ze monkey; bekas, in my own country I am a—"

"I don't care who or WHAT you are in your country!" raged the bad-tempered mistress. "In my Form you will obey me—"

"I jolly well won't, so there!"

"Naomer," the captain interposed; and then, as she saw the Form-mistress swooping and seizing the dusky girl: "Miss Kitten, please! Neither Polly nor Naomer should have said that. There have been enough scenes this morning, in class; so please—"

But it was no use saying more. Miss Kitten, now that she had seized Naomer by an arm, was forcing that writhing imp across the hall, back to the class-room.

In vain Naomer wriggled and writhed, at the same time shrilling:

"Sweendle! Not fair!"

Miss Kitten's superior strength enabled her to hustle the little rebel towards the class-room.

Only a forcible rescue by other girls could have saved Naomer from such violent treatment, and although the other girls were surging around, such a thing as all of their "going" for Miss Kitten, to get Naomer away from her, was not to be thought of.

Polly—she came very near to doing just that. But more level-headed girls took care to restrain her.

As for Pam, she created a counter sensation by suddenly making over all the books, with which she had come out of class, to Madge Minden, with the steady remark:

"Here, mind these for me, will you, Madge dear? And I'll go and find—the Head!"

And, without so much as a glance at Miss Kitten, Pam crossed to the doorway and passed out.

CHAPTER 2.

Miss Kitten Shows Her Claws

SO, at last, the storm, long in suspense, had really burst.

In a moment, as the worst storms have a way of bursting!

There was Miss Kitten, in one of her ungovernable moods, hustling struggling Naomer Nakara back to the class-room, with Polly Linton and others crowding behind, murmuring indignantly.

But the captain—the captain had gone to find Miss Somerfield.

Bravo, then, the captain! Her quietly voiced assurance of only a minute or two ago—being made good, like this!

Madge Minden, holding Pam's books as well as her own, was urgently making it known to those who were possibly in ignorance:

"Pam's gone for the Head, girls."

"Right!" Polly said loudly. "But look at her!"—meaning Miss Kitten.

"Ugh, shame—shame!"

"Yes, disgvaceful! Monstous!"

Naomer had come in for a slap or two. Now she was being hustled on again, still struggling as wildly—and as helplessly—as ever.

Into the class-room she was rushed, in the grasp of Miss Kitten, and more than a dozen girls who were doing punishment lessons sat bolt upright, agape at what was happening.

They saw Miss Kitten push Naomer before her to a vacant desk in the front row and slam her into its seat.

"And now," panted the Form-mistress—she treated Naomer to a last shaking—"sit there, will you!"

That desk was bare, otherwise Naomer, next instant, would have been snatching up the first thing that came to hand to hurl it at her own Form-mistress.

Other girls saw the dusky one casting about for something to fling, and there were some mild screams. Naomer, of course, was—Naomer! Hot-tempered, possessing all the fierceness of her native race. But what a terrible thing if she HAD found something to hurl!

As for Miss Kitten, she now turned round to look for Polly—and the captain.

"Pam has gone to fetch the Head," Polly found great satisfaction in telling the Form-mistress.

"Indeed!" was the scathing retort. "But I am not going to say anything to Miss Somerfield in front of you girls—if that is the idea! You have brought it upon yourselves—"

"We haven't!" Polly cried out wildly.

She went unanswered this time. Miss Kitten, becoming suddenly unstrung, was hastily walking away. It was not the first time the girls had seen her change from ungovernable fury to a state of semi-collapse.

Madge turned blankly to girls who were standing close by.

"Whatever's come over her?"

"I should think she must be ill!" Tess frowned. "Bai Jove, we hev now weached a cwisis, yes, wather," palpitated Paula. "Just as weall, pewhaps!"

"Shall we wait about?" questioned Helen.

"Wait? Ra-ther!" Polly said with a grim smile. "I don't mind staying here, now! All of you wait for Pam to come back—with the Head, cheers!"

"Bekas—up, ze Form!" yelled Naomer, suddenly standing on the desk seat, as if to make a speech.



Naomer had had more than enough of Miss Kitten's tyranny. "Bekas," she appealed, wrathfully, "who is for going on strike wiz me, bang away!" The others smiled but they knew it might come to that—even yet!

Bursts of laughter came, growing louder as Naomer, not content with the seat for a platform, finally stood higher still—upon the desk itself.

"Bekas—now zen, everybody!" she appealed, with a special gesture to all those in "deten" to lay down their pens and pay heed. "What I want to know is, who is for going on ze strike with me, bang away!"

There was some amused laughter, and Polly advised the "imp" to sit down; but many a face held a look which proclaimed serious sympathy with Naomer's proposal. She could only express herself in the old comic way; but here were serious-minded members of the Form who were feeling that it might come to that in the end—an open revolt!

Only they must have the captain to lead them, as the captain very surely would lead them, if other remedies failed.

"And before I go any further, everybody," Naomer shrieked on from her makeshift platform, "don't forget that when we do strike, eet will be all right about provisions and water to drink, and—"

At this point a nicely aimed blackboard sponge, playfully flung by Polly, took the orator full in the face—plop! But Naomer did not resent this interruption as much as might have been expected—perhaps because she was able to catch the sponge and retain it for future use herself, as a missile.

"Zat is all very well, Polly," she specially addressed the madcap, after some laughter had died away; "but you are jealous, of course!"

"Jealous? Pooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bekas," Naomer stormed on at a crowd fast becoming greatly amused, "I have been ze one all along to reckymend ze strike—yes! Polly is always on ze ramp; but I believe in getting ze move on!"

Facetious cheers!

"Bekas, who was eet got ready for a strike? I did!" Naomer proudly claimed. "Who was eet packed up purvisions—"

"And lost the lot to the enemy, booh!" Polly chipped in, and then dodged behind a blackboard.

"Girls of ze Form, don't take any notice of Polly!" the dusky one loudly counselled. "And never mind zat I did lose that lot of purvisions; bekas, next time—"

"Next time, kid," Polly spoke round one edge of the blackboard merrily, "your services won't be required, thank you!"

"Ah, bah, you zink you are going to boss ze strike, do you? Are you ze captain, zen?"

"Are you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you see this!" yelled Naomer, displaying the sopping sponge menacingly. "Zen now you can—feel it!"

But Polly didn't; it was ever-unlucky Paula who did that.

So wild was Naomer's aim, the hurled sponge went sufficiently wide of its intended mark as to smite Paula damply on the left ear, extracting a sharp:

"Owp!"

Nor could Paula understand why there should be great clapping, as if Naomer had done something wonderful. But possibly it was considered wonderful that Naomer, having lost her balance when she hurled the sponge, had come down off the desk with only a minor flump!

A moment more of all this levity, and then—"Here's Pam!" was excitedly cried from over by the doorway, and all faced that way, expecting to see her come in—with Miss Somerfield.

But Pam had entered—alone.

"I couldn't get to see Miss Somerfield—"

"Oh, what a sickener!" was Polly's contribution to the disappointed outburst. "Beastly nuisance!"

"I was told that she had just received some upsetting news, and unless my business was very important I must leave it. On that, girls—of course," Pam lightly shrugged, "I had to come away."

A general silence slowly gave way to a kind of "Ooom!" from this girl and that.

"Then what do we do now, Pam?"

"Just wait," Polly was answered. "And those of us who were ordered back to this class-room had better wait here."

The madcap heaved a sigh.

"Oh!"

"It's what I shall do, anyway," Pam added calmly.

"Oh, all right," sighed Polly, making another face. "I suppose we must! You're only advising what Betty would have advised, if she were—"

And there the madcap broke off, open-mouthed. Surprise, for the moment, had taken all her breath away; even so, she was the first to cry out amazedly:

"Why—here IS Betty!"

All tongues went then. They made a perfect babel of surprised and glad some cries as Betty Barton, the Form captain up to the end of last term, came forward from the class-room doorway with a slight limp.

She had looked hesitant for a mere instant, before entering; then the chorus from all her schoolmates had brought her into this, her old class-room.

"Hullo, all!" she blithely answered the delighted outcry. "Is Miss Kitten about?"

"Do you want her?" Polly asked. "You can have her!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" went up laughter which Betty could easily appreciate.

She knew how very unpopular Miss Kitten was with the Form. Betty, having been brought down by her loving mother to stay at the Headland Hotel to recuperate after that serious motoring accident which had kept her away from school all this term, was now in constant touch with all her school chums. The hotel was barely a mile from the school.

She flourished a note, smiling.

"This is for Miss Kitten, from mother. It's to ask Miss Kitten if you can all come over for the evening at the Headland."

The girls went wild with delight.

"What! Betty dear, do you mean—the Form? The whole Form?"

"The whole Form, yes!"

"Oh, hooray!"

"Gorjus!" capered Naomer, clapping her hands. "Bekas—Paula, do you hear zis?"

"Yes, wather! A gwand tweat; a most welcome—owp! No need to tear me to bits, Naomer!"

But Naomer seemed to think that there was every excuse for doing that, and Betty laughed to see the imp working off such high spirits upon the oft-teased duffer, in the old amusing way.

"When, Betty—when?" the crowd now clamoured. "When?"

"This evening!"

"Hip, hip!" Polly exploded again. "Cheers for Betty's mother, girls!"

"Hurrah! Hooray!"

"So, where can I find Miss Kitten, to get it all fixed up?" Betty eagerly inquired. "And then I'll see you afterwards, if there is time!"

"She is probably in her room, Betty—"

"Oh, right! The same room that was Miss Everard's, of course? By the way, though," Betty turned back to remark, "I was so surprised not to find all of you on the field, at games! What's the meaning?"

"Half the Form kept in—that's what it means," Pam stated. "But—no need to go into all that now. See you later, Betty dear."

"Right-ho! What a shame, though—"

"Yes, sweendle!" Naomer yelled after Betty, who was turning back to the door. "And—hi, Betty! Zere is going to be a strike—a grand bar-out! But don't say anything to Miss Kitten about zat, bekas—secret!"

Betty, hurrying away as fast as her slight in-

firmity would permit, was laughing quite as much as the girls she was leaving behind in the classroom.

It was just like artless Naomer to advise great secrecy about the "strike," whilst advocating that means of redress at the top of her own shrill voice.

In a few moments, however, being alone on her way up to the first floor, Betty's merriment gave place to a distressed state of mind.

She, who loved Morcove almost as much as she loved home itself—she, who had done her best always, when at the school, for the Form she captained, had now to realise that things were in a bad way, indeed.

Not the fault of the girls! Of that she was convinced. Not Pam's fault, either, as the captain termed this term! Painful though it was to have to recognise the fact, there the fact was—Miss Kitten to blame!

More than once Betty, although not at school this term, had met the new Form-mistress. Those few encounters would have been quite sufficient to convince the ex-captain that Miss Kitten was a bad one at handling girls.

In addition, there had been all that Betty had learned about the unhappy state of affairs, first from letters from chums of hers, whilst she was in hospital, and then from rare meetings with them down here at Morcove.

No, Miss Kitten, as a mistress, was a failure. More and more it had become evident that she was completely out of her element as a teacher.

Then how was it that Miss Somerfield's eyes had not been opened to this fact by now?

That question, to Betty, was an easy one to answer. She knew the Form, and so she could appreciate how much the Form had endured in silence—Pam Willoughby striving her hardest all the time, as captain, to get some of the more hot-headed girls to keep the peace. It would be

a captain's duty to do that, and Pam was not the one to fail in her duty.

And now Betty was at the closed door of the Form-mistress' private room.

The pause, whilst she tapped, gave her a moment for thoughts of all the scores of times she had come to this same room—to see Miss Everard.

Ah, there was a mistress for a Form to have—that young lady whom the school had lost by her marriage to Mr. Challenor, a housemaster at Grangemoor School!

Grangemoor's gain had been Morcove's loss. It had been said so, at the time of the wedding, and how much greater the loss was being felt to-day, here at Morcove, with Miss Kitten upon the scene!

"Come in!"

A dull, cold response to the polite tap, so different from the cordial cry that the former mistress used to voice.

Betty went in, and it seemed to strike a chill to the very core of her being to go towards this young woman who, in spite of instant recognition, could put on no kindly smile.

"Oh—Betty Barton, isn't it? Well, what?" came in a peevish tone.

"Please, Miss Kitten—a note from mother."

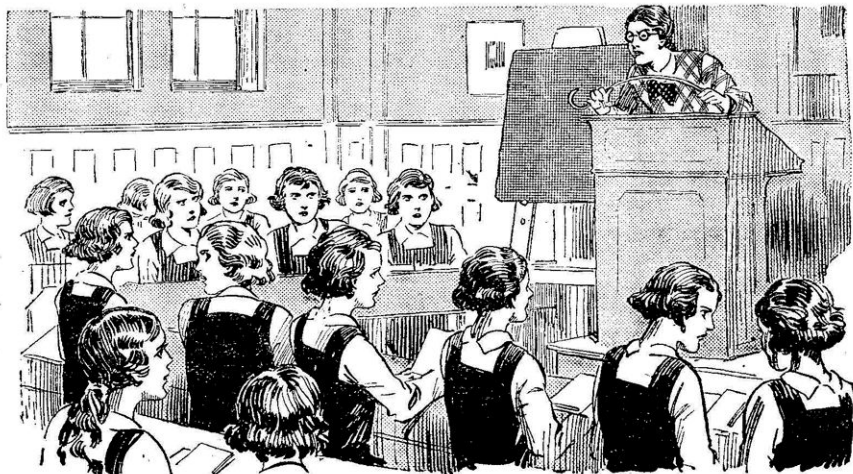
"For me?"

As greatly startled—dismayed, it seemed to Betty—as all that, was Miss Kitten, and why should she be so?

Watching her as she opened the note, Betty saw that the hands actually trembled. Really, this youthful Form-mistress seemed to have very bad nerves!

Then, going to the window for a better light by which to read, Miss Kitten looked whiter than ever in the face.

Altogether, it was just as if the arrival of a note from Betty's mother had upset her.



There was consternation in the Form when it was seen that Miss Kitten had produced—a cane! "And I hope I don't have to use it!" she said meaningly. But the Form could not help thinking that she was secretly longing for a chance to cane one of them.

Miss Kitten folded up the note after reading it, but did not speak at once. She remained half-turned away from Betty for a full half-minute, and appeared to be breathing more freely—like one who is getting over a bad fright.

"No!" she said, facing Betty again at last. "I am sorry, but you must tell your mother I cannot permit the Form to—"

"Oh, Miss Kitten, you can't?" Betty cried.

"No!" as sternly as before. "That is final."

"But why?" pleaded the ex-captain, understanding all the better now what an unkind spirit the Form had had to put up with. "Surely, Miss Kitten, there can be no reason for—"

"Oh, are you another Morocco girl who argues with her Form-mistress?" struck in Miss Kitten icily.

"I was the Form captain, as you know," Betty answered spiritedly, "and so I think I may be given credit for—for understanding the respect due to a mistress. But what I don't understand—I frankly admit—is your refusing the Form this little treat. Mother's idea, as the note explains, was to arrange everything nicely; the girls could even do their prep, if necessary, before coming across for a couple of hours or so. Cars to fetch them and bring them back—"

"Quite," Miss Kitten again struck in; "but the point is that the Form, as a whole, does not deserve this or any other treat. I will, as a concession, name just a few girls who may go, but—"

"Miss Kitten, excuse my interrupting you, but that would not be the same," Betty said, strenuously. "I wouldn't wish it—only a few to come. And as mother is studying my wishes—well, there it is! Unless the great majority can come—"

"The captain, Pam Willoughby, cannot come—"

"Not Pam?" gasped Betty. "Oh, then, it's all off! I shouldn't dream of—"

"Neither the captain, nor any of those girls who hang round her so much—"

"And by them you mean my own best chums! Then I say again," Betty exclaimed warmly, "that settles it! Except that there is still Miss Somerfield—"

"The headmistress—"

"Yes, the headmistress! I feel like appealing to her, Miss Kitten—I do! In fact, I think I must!" was Betty's agitated cry. "My mother addressed the note to you, not wishing, of course, to go over your head. But I feel sure that mother—who knows Miss Somerfield as a friend—will feel entitled to—"

"Miss Somerfield must not be bothered over a matter of this sort, let me tell you," said Miss Kitten, crumpling up the note to cast it into the fire. "In fact, the headmistress will not be accessible—"

"She will be, to mother!"

"She will not be," was the crushing retort. "Miss Somerfield went from the school a few minutes ago in the car. She has been telegraphed for. A near relative is dangerously ill—"

"Oh, I am sorry!" Athrob with quick sympathy was Betty's changed voice. "How shocking! It would not be, I hope, Miss Somerfield's brother—the airman who did such wonderful things in the Great War?"

"Yes, I understand it is he."

Betty, after that nodded answer, stood appalled. She tried to make allowances for Miss Kitten's not being acquainted with Miss Somerfield's brother: but, even so, how cold, how callous,

those few words about his stricken state had seemed to be!

"Poor Mr. Somerfield!" Betty exclaimed emotionally. "Some of us have seen so much of him—during holidays. He and his wife took us all abroad, once. I'm awfully sorry for Miss Somerfield, too."

"And you see now, don't you?" Miss Kitten smiled coldly, "there is no one to appeal to!"

"Oh, nobody—since Miss Somerfield has gone off like this!" was Betty's response. "And so my little party must be cancelled. Unless you feel that, after all, Miss Kitten—"

"I'm afraid I don't!"

Hard, unkind—rejoicing in the chance to spite the Form!

Betty turned to go away. After this, she would know better than ever what it meant to be a girl in Miss Kitten's Form!

"Er—how's the foot, Betty?"

She answered over a shoulder:

"Oh, nearly well, now, thanks!"

"And—by the way, I was a guest for dinner at the Headland last evening, as you remember, of course—"

"Yes, with the Denver girls; their uncle and aunt are staying at the Headland." Suddenly Betty came back a step or two. "You did not refuse them permission to—"

"Fay and Edna Denver are two girls whose conduct has been praiseworthy."

"Oh, has it!" Knowing the sisters for the artful pair they were, Betty had to smile incredulously.

"I was going to ask you, Betty—your mother lost an evening bag last evening at the hotel—has she recovered it?"

"Sorry to say she hasn't."

"Ah, what a pity," Miss Kitten commented carelessly. "It had money in it, too? Twenty pounds, I think your mother said?"

"A bit over, if anything. But it's not the loss of the money that grieves mother—it's the feeling that somebody must have been dishonest enough to keep what was found! Good-morning!" Betty said, and went limping out of the room.

Relief, to have finished talking with a mistress like that! Oh, but the coldness of her; the spitefulness, now, against the Form!

"If Miss Somerfield had been here!" Betty said fiercely to herself, limping off to find her chums. "If only Miss Somerfield had not been called away—"

But Morocco, with dramatic suddenness, had lost its headmistress for the time being—and at a time of crisis in the Form!

"Pity the poor old Form, then!" was Betty's further thought.

And, indeed, the Form was to be pitied, more than ever now. Now, when in the privacy of her own room, Miss Kitten was unlocking a wide drawer of her writing-table to take out—a punishment-cane!

CHAPTER 3.

Duel of Words

WHO could have misunderstood the gleam that came into the Form-mistress' eyes as she toyed with the short length of cane, testing its suppleness and finally swishing it downwards through the air.

Swish!

It was the gleam that always came into those hard eyes of hers when some tigress-like instinct of her cruel nature was being ministered to.

The girls of her Form had seen just such a look

in her eyes, and just such an evil smile flickering at her lips, more than once in the last few weeks, and to all had come the selfsame thought: "If ever this mistress of ours should have a chance to be as cruel as she would like to be!"

But always, until this hour, there had been the heartening thought to follow: "Thank goodness we have the headmistress! We'll put up with Miss Kitten for as long as we can; but if—if—"

And now the Form was to learn that the headmistress had been called away.

Perhaps Miss Kitten was smiling because she could imagine what dismay must seize the Form on finding itself, as it were, suddenly deprived of its Court of Appeal.

Swish! She lashed the cane once more in the air, then laid it down—on her writing-table.

It was not to go back into the drawer. Instead, this afternoon it would go into class with her.

Vaguely she realised that it had been a disappointment to her, from the very first, to find that no caning was allowed at the school.

She could remember a kind of pang of disappointment when the headmistress, at their first interview, had smilingly remarked that really the old-time right to cane scholars, even though they were girls, not boys, still existed at Morcove, but that, of course, such a thing was never dreamed of now!

Along with other forms of punishment, in force in the long ago, caning was a dead letter now.

"We actually have a cane that was in use before my time—in the school museum!" Miss Somerfield had added, with a laugh. "A relic—a curiosity, these days!"

But the right to cane still existed. In so many words, Miss Somerfield herself had said so, and even whilst the remark was being made, something had stirred deep down in the heart of Miss Kitten, like an awakening desire.

And ever since, the desire had remained awake in her, strengthening into a positive craving—to hurt those who were at her mercy.

It had afforded her a strange satisfaction, even to provide herself with a cane—in secret, in case opportunity and excuse should ever come together.

But not until this hour had she dared to feel sure of conditions entitling her to bring down that cane, smartly, upon a girl's outland hand. *Swish!*

Miss Kitten noted the time by the clock, and resumed her thoughtful stepping about the room. She was not forgetting that certain girls were under orders to stay in the class-room, downstairs, until she set them free.

Well, they could wait! Much good had it done that captain of theirs to go running in search of Miss Somerfield. Much good would it be for the Form to rely upon any help from their captain—now!

Gradually Miss Kitten's step became a more jaunty one; so much had happened already today to make her feel she was in luck.

Even the turning up of Betty Barton, with that note about the Form's spending the evening at the hotel, had meant a load off one's mind.

Casually one had been able to ask—had Mrs. Barton recovered the lost bag and the money in it, and so there had been the daughter's answer, free from any hint that suspicions were being harboured.

Miss Kitten stood still, as her thoughts ran on, and stared at the fire in the grate. Behind that fire, first thing this morning, she had put

the missing bag to burn. Every part of it had been combustible—no metal-work at all—and so it was simply part of the fine ash now, lying beneath the bars.

And the money—the money, or most of it, in the possession of that destitute sister who, for a night and a day, had had to be sheltered secretly in the school—in one of the unused attics!

There again, to think of Hetty was to feel much less in dread now. She had gone away from the schoolhouse, at dead of night and, thanks to one's luck in picking up that dropped bag a few hours earlier in the evening, it had been possible to provide her with ample money.

Would Hetty go right away from the district now? Perhaps not. But, at any rate, she could be relied upon not to take any step that would mean one's own exposure and downfall.

"It wouldn't be Hetty to do such a thing," thought this young woman, who had only obtained such a fine position at Morcove by victimising her sister.

At last the chimes ding-donged a quarter to one, and then Miss Kitten went downstairs to the class-room. Every step of the way she was hoping to find that her order had been defied.

But Pam was there in the class-room. So were Polly and Naomer! How much this was due to Pam's wise counsel, and how much to cheerful resignation on the part of her two chums, can be imagined.

"You may go now, you three girls. Pam Willoughby, let the whole Form know at half-past one there will be drill, in the gym."

"Drill?"

"That is what I said."

"Are we never to get games now, Miss Kitten?"

"You may play games—but not with me!"

Pam stood an inch taller.

"We have not played any games with you!" she protested indignantly. "You simply have no right to make out those charges against us!"

"No, bekas—"

But Naomer came in for a checking gesture from the captain, who spoke on, looking the Form-mistress straight in the eyes.

"You know that I was going to appeal to the headmistress?"

"And you know now that the headmistress is going to be away from the school for several days at least?"

Pam was not to be silenced by that tart retort.

"Yes!" she flashed. "And this is how you mean to take advantage of Miss Somerfield's absence. At a time when everything should go as smoothly as possible—you're making it hard for us—"

"I am not here to make things soft for you—let that be clearly understood! There has been enough of easy-going—"

"In your time?"

"In my predecessor's time—"

"Oh, don't bring Miss Everard into it!" Pam protested, with greater indignation than ever. "You never knew her!"

"I have seen the results of her handling of you girls—mishandling, some people would say. But here, I am not disposed to bandy words—"

"And I," Pam struck in, advancing a step like a duellist suddenly resolved to press an adversary hard, "I'm not disposed to hear a word against our former mistress. She really was—a mistress!"

"You're insolent, girl!"

"Now, I am being—rude to you, if you like.

yes! I don't care!" Pam panted. "You've got me roused! Unfair to the Form; unfair to the mistress who was here before your time; unfair even to the headmistress—"

"How dare you!"

"Only because it is no use showing restraint any longer," the battle of words went on, rapidly. "There is unfairness to the very headmistress now—to one who is your headmistress as well as ours! In her absence you're upsetting the school—going the best way about—"

"Silence, I insist!" stamped Miss Kitten. "Go, I tell you—go, all of you, and not another word! After school, Pam Willoughby, you will stay in and do a punishment task. Meantime—at half-past one, drill for all!"

Pam, for a long moment, kept her eyes upon a face that had become pinched with anger. She seemed to be going to speak again; then she closed her lips, and with all her inborn dignity, she turned to invite the other girls to follow her out of the class-room.

"What's come over you, Pam!" was Polly's delighted cry as soon as they got outside.

"Nothing—why?"

And then Polly realised; it had been a mistake to feel any surprise. She should have known that Pam, with nothing left to do but fight for herself and the Form; would fight and fight hard!

Nor was there any doubt that it must be a fight now—to the finish. War was in the air. The demon that seemed to possess Miss Kitten had decreed it.

At any moment such a conflict must rage as could know no ending until one side was the victor and the other—the vanquished!

CHAPTER 4. The Last Straw

FORTY minutes later, more than half the Form was in a state bordering upon mutiny.

Up from the dining-table only a minute ago, girls had now to troop across to the gym, there to be given a half-hour's drill.

No going out to games, as usual at this time. All liberty, all choice of pursuits for what used to be such happy times between the sessions of work, was evidently a thing of the past.

But the burning grievance was Miss Kitten's refusal to let the Form benefit by that kind invitation which Betty's mother had sent across at midday, from the hotel. It was known to all how curly and unkindly that generous offer of a treat for the Form had been refused. And there was no appealing against Miss Kitten's spiteful ruling!

"Come on, girls; we had better get across."

That was Pam, counselling the seething malcontents so calmly that it might have been imagined all the fight had gone out of her.

But nine-tenths of the Form knew better than to harbour any such fancy. Pam was in their midst again, showing that poise which was never pose, and to look at her was to feel reassured.

Just the girl—their captain—to be a match for Miss Kitten in the end.

Pam's policy—it would have been unfair to her to call it a plan—was to give Miss Kitten plenty of rope now.

All the power that the Form-mistress was arrogating to herself in the headmistress' absence—let her use it, for the present. So, when at last she did go one step too far in her course of tyranny, the Form would be thrice-armed by knowing that Right was on its side.

The school chimes ding-donged again, and there were all the girls of the Form, ready in the gym. Miss Kitten, arriving to the second, was balked in her secret desire to find defaulters. All present!

She lined them up, giving her thin-lipped smile as she had them all standing to attention in front of her. She was thinking: "I'll soon break their spirits now!" Where girls were looking sullen she marked their looks with petty delight. "Beginning to lose heart, are you!"

"Now then, smartly!" she rapped. "Form—two-deep!"

They did so. She got them into four-deep, spaced them apart from one another, and put them through all those exercises which were enjoyable enough at the right time for drill.

But this was like punishment drill, inflicted in that treasured half-hour before afternoon school. All right, Miss Kitten; but you wait!

Mercilessly she put them through monotonous repetitions of the exercises. Spitefully she kept them, at times, in fatiguing positions. Out of so many girls, it could not reasonably be expected that all would be able to endure such severe drilling. But Miss Kitten expected it. Those few girls who lost their balance came in for no gentle reproof. "Stay in after school!" was the cry, each time.

Finally, Paula Creel found herself so striving not to fall over a very difficult exercise lest she should be given "deten," she suddenly emitted a kind of gasping groan.

"What girl is that!" cried Miss Kitten, so fiercely that Paula, in the back row, promptly flopped off her toe-tips with a wailing:

"Ow!"

"Come out here, you!"

"I'm sowwy, Miss Kitten!"

"Come out in front, I say!"

"But I—ow, I appear to hev stwained a muscle, yes wather! Oooch!" gasped Paula, struggling up.

"Strained a muscle—rubbish! You're too much of an armchair girl, that's the only trouble with you! Come here!"

None of the other girls had tittered when Paula gave her comical wail, for they thought that she might really be in pain.

But when the unfortunate duffer, in working between some of those who were still balanced on tiptoe, knocked several off their balance, there was involuntary giggling.

Then Miss Kitten rushed in to seize Paula and drag her clear. How many more girls were bowled over by the Form-mistress herself cannot be stated; so many others fell over at the same moment, being in convulsions of suppressed laughter. But Paula—she was sent spinning clear of the entire squad.

"Strained muscle! It looks like it!" the mistress sneered. "You don't impose upon me, girl!"

"I weally thought I had—"

"Yes, you thought you had managed to trick me! A lot of you are thinking you can get past me, but you'll find—you can't. The Form must march in now, for it is time for school. But I am very dissatisfied. At half-past seven, to-morrow morning, here in the gym, a half-hour's drill! Now then—attention! Two deep! Right turn! No talking as you go across. Quick—march!"

Left right, left right—the tramp of feet began, growing louder in the open air. Left, RIGHT! Left—RIGHT!

And, in spite of that harsh injunction about silence in the ranks, the girls talked as marchers always can talk if so disposed. They improved upon one another's names for Miss Kitten. They muttered between clenched teeth: "Shame, shame!"

And so, back to the schoolhouse, and back into the class-room, drawing a terrific left, RIGHT! from the floorboards, whilst Miss Kitten came on behind.

She took her place at her own desk in front of the class as it settled down, and then—

The Form saw what her hand was taking out, from under the raised flap of her desk, and a sensational rustle occurred.

A cane!

"Yes," Miss Kitten remarked, with that acid smile of hers as she placed the cane ready to hand, "and I hope I don't have to use it, that is all!"

"Meaning, that she hopes she does," Polly said under her breath.

"Yes, well," came Pam's whisper, audible only to near neighbours in the desks, "and perhaps it will be better if she does. . . ."

CHAPTER 5.

Fay Denver's Daring

ANYONE seeing pretty Fay Denver five minutes after the close of school that day, might have thought she had been one of the first girls to taste Miss Kitten's cane!

But the Form-mistress, after all, had not used the cane during class, she had simply kept it on show, as a symbol of her might.

Fay Denver, alone in the study which she shared with her sister, was at the window, frowning blackly at her thoughts.

Even when her sister Edna came into the study, the elder girl continued to stare out of the window in this moody state.

"What's up out there, then, Fay dear?"

"Eh? Nothing, of course! I was only looking across to the hotel—thinking—"

"How nice to be there? So it would be," grimaced Edna, flinging down a batch of school books. "Next term, Fay, I shall be away as the result of a motor accident and mother will be giving ME a jolly time at a hotel—like that Barton girl is getting!"

"I don't suppose Betty Barton feels it is half as jolly as being at school. She's that sort!"

"Then let her hurry up and come back into the Form—and take on Miss Kitten! It doesn't"—Edna chuckled—"look as if Pam Willoughby, as captain, is going to tackle the tyrant!"

"Oh, Pam's no use. Too 'refayned'! But, look here, Edna," the elder sister went on, sinking her voice, "it's a joke to see the Form being handled like this by Miss Kitten. I don't mind, I'm sure—"

"And I'm sure I don't!"

"Only, are we going to be sufferers, along with the Form, Edna?"

"No, I don't see why we should be!"

"Neither do I," was Fay's frowning rejoinder. "But we're going to suffer, just like the others—this evening, you know."

Edna, sitting down, nodded.

"You mean, Fay, if the Form had been going across to the hotel, for that little treat—we would have been going with it."

"Well, wouldn't we? We don't usually do as



"Uncle once had a lady clerk of the name of Miss Kitten," Fay said airily. "And she went off with some of the firm's money." Miss Kitten's agitation was proof that Fay's suspicions were correct. She was an impostor!

the Form does, but when it's a treat, we may as well have it, I suppose?"

"Why not! But the treat is off, and in place of it the latest is prep downstairs in the class-room, instead of in the studies!"

"Yes," Fay frowned again, "that is going it, with a vengeance, Edna! To have to do prep downstairs—under her eye! I wonder there isn't a riot."

"Not with a captain like Pam, dear. You forget Pam—so 'refayned'!"

The elder sister took a few turns about the room.

"But we can get out of it, anyhow?" she suddenly suggested. "When you know, Edna, we have it in our power, really, to—to make Miss Kitten a bit afraid of us! In fact," Fay spoke on desperately, "I don't see why we shouldn't use that power to get her to give in—about the treat!"

Edna looked up, her brows rising.

"Fay! And yet, after all—why not! If—if we are right in our theory about Miss Kitten—"

"We're not wrong, I'm positive! Everything—everything points to it, Edna! And we could, if we liked, twist her round our little fingers! I've a jolly good mind to go to her now, whilst there is still time, and—and—"

"Then why don't you, Fay?"

"Well, shall I, then?"

Edna was up from her chair now, infected with the daring that had seized her sister.

"Yes, Fay—I would! It's worth it! Of course, it means getting the whole treat for the Form, but that needn't matter. So long as we get those couple of hours or so, ourselves, at the hotel."

"The ball-room, Edna! That lovely floor! Oh, I shall have a shot for it, anyhow." Fay decided, carried away by her craving for pleasure. "When we get to the hotel, you and I can get away from the other girls, if we want to."

She strode to the door, then paused. "I'll come straight back here, Edna, to let you know how I've got on."

Nor was Fay's nerve failing her when she got to Miss Kitten's door downstairs. An austere "Come in!" answered the tap-tap, and Fay sauntered in with an air of being quite as good as any mistress.

"Oh, Miss Kitten, is it true that the Form is not to be allowed to go across to the Headland later on?"

"Of course it is true, Fay Denver!" was the bridling answer. "Why come to me to ask such a question?"

"But surely you can let—"

"Let you and your sister go by yourselves—is that it? Certainly not, Fay, and I am amazed at your asking such a thing! I have been very indulgent to you two girls, I am sure! You were at the Headland only last night, to dine with your uncle and aunt. Let that suffice!"

Fay gave a cheeky smirk. "I wasn't expecting to be allowed to go again only with Edna," she remarked airily. "But, as uncle and auntie are staying there, I do think it would have been nice to see more of them—if you could have let us go with the rest of the Form."

"No! I should not dream of giving way!"

"Then I'm afraid you yourself didn't enjoy it very much at the Headland, last night, when you were with me and Edna as guests?" Fay coolly submitted. "Didn't you take to my Uncle Arthur and Auntie Edith, Miss Kitten?"

"Er—er—"

Ah, a little flustered now. "I thought she would be!" ran in Fay's mind. "Shot number one!"

"I—I was delighted with the evening, Fay Denver. It was—most kind of your uncle and aunt, I am sure, to invite me as well. But they can hardly wish to see me again, so soon."

"Oh, I don't know, Miss Kitten! As a matter of fact, they felt very interested in you."

"What! How—how do you mean?"

Shot number two! "A few more like that," Fay chuckled inwardly, "and she'll be sunk!"

"Oh," Fay said aloud, as airily as before, "you being a Form-mistress, for one thing. But—rather funny, Miss Kitten. Uncle didn't say so to you, did he? He feared it might make you uncomfortable. But it seems that he had a lady clerk at one time—at his office in the City—of the name of Miss Kitten. Yes!"

"Er—did he?" stammered the Form-mistress. "No," he—he didn't say anything to me about that. But—but what then? Did he imagine, perhaps, that his Miss Kitten might be related to me?"

"Oh, I should hope she wasn't," Fay laughed, so entirely at ease that she even fox-trotted about the room. "For, you see, his Miss Kitten went off with some of the firm's money!"

Fay, as she finished, stood still, treating the Form-mistress to a steady look. The table was

between them and, after a moment, Fay stepped close enough to start five-fingering the edge of it—still looking Miss Kitten full in the eyes.

"She must have been a pretty cool hand, mustn't she, Miss Kitten? Went on robbing the firm up to the last moment when the annual audit made discovery certain. Then, just in time, she vanished. Or," Fay added, still five-fingering, "she would be in prison by now. Uncle's not a hard man, but he could hardly overlook a thing like that!"

"And her name was—the same as mine?" jerked Miss Kitten.

"The surname was—yes. Not a name you often meet with, either?" Fay blandly suggested. "I gathered from Uncle Arthur that his Miss Kitten was about your age—and height—"

Another hit!

"But she didn't wear spectacles," was Fay's next shot.

Enough, for the present! So Fay decided, and sauntered across to the window, just as she might have done in her own study.

"It'll be a lovely evening," she murmured wistfully. "And that hotel is so jolly in every way. But there, I quite realise, you can't let me and Edna go, just by ourselves, even though we have relations staying at the Headland. And you are put out with some of the girls in the Form, so all must suffer on account of the few!"

"I—I had quite determined, Fay, not to grant permission," came the rather husky remark. "But now I realise it will be specially hard on you and your sister—as your uncle and aunt may not be staying long?"

"They hadn't quite decided how long they would stay; but, perhaps, by now they have made up their minds. If I saw them, this evening, I could ask them—and let you know, afterwards. Or would you be coming with the Form?" Fay asked, in point-blank manner again.

"I? Oh, no—er—at least—I could not possibly find time this evening," the shaky voice responded. "But on second thoughts, Fay, perhaps I can allow the whole Form to go after all. I am thinking of you and Edna—"

"Yes, I see you are; thanks so much!"

"But I could not let you and your sister go, keeping the others back. I should be afraid of—of being thought unfair."

"Then let the whole Form go—for the sake of me and Edna—you must, please, Miss Kitten!" said Fay sweetly. "And then—there'll be nothing to be afraid of, will there?"

Sunk!

Miss Kitten had not gone down, either, with flying colours. She had surrendered; had even let her eyes signal that she would do anything—anything, to be spared.

And Fay, triumphant, omitted to bow her head before going out. Bow to HER? Not likely! Miss Kitten might be still the Form-mistress to the rest of the girls, but in her—Fay's—eyes, she was that other Miss Kitten—the absconding lady clerk, embezzler and thief.

Upstairs raced Fay, to rejoin her sister in the study.

"Edna darling, think I shall wear my pale blue this evening!"

"Why—are we going?" cried Edna, clapping shut a book and jumping up.

"Going? Of course we are going! Ha, ha, ha!" Fay gurgled, dropping down into a chair. "You should have been there, Edna. She simply went to bits!"

"She—did? Then it is so, and we were right,

as we felt sure we were?" the younger sister panted. "And she is no more a qualified mistress than I am! But—Fay, Fay—"

"Sh! Not too loud, Edna."
"But now the mystery is," that girl whispered, tensely, "why did she come to Morcove as a Miss Kitten, if that was the name she was known by at the office? Wouldn't you have expected her to change her name—adopt a false one?"

"No mystery at all," Fay answered glibly. "Just think, Edna. She must have obtained this post at Morcove on false credentials. They could hardly be forged, could they? She must have got hold of credentials belonging to someone else

"You mean—another Miss Kitten? And as that name was everywhere on the various papers, she couldn't change it? Oh, I get you, Fay—I get you!" Edna breathed, with an excitable beating of the hands together. "But who was the other Miss Kitten, then?"

"We don't know," said Fay. "We only know that she was not the one who robbed uncle's firm. Our Miss Kitten was the one who did that. Our Miss Kitten was the thief, Edna; I could read it in her eyes!"

CHAPTER 6.

Why Did She Do It?

BETTY BARTON, watching from one of the hotel windows at half-past six that evening, could see the glaring headlights of three motor vehicles wavering in the darkness.

Two of the motors were approaching from the direction of Morcove School, the third came bounding along the moorland by-road, to draw out upon the main road just after the other two vehicles had passed the turning.

A few moments more, and all three motors were taking the run along the hotel's carriage-way, and then Betty darted away to let her mother know.

"They're here, mumsie! There's a car from Grangemoor School, as well as a car and the private bus from Morcove. So isn't it splendid! I'm going out to meet them!"

"Very well, dear; I shall be in the lounge."
The revolving doors swung for Betty, and then she was outside but still under cover, with what a troop of girls and boys to greet!

Even if there had been no last-hour decision to render this happy gathering possible, the babel of talk and laughter would have been great enough; but the Form came bundling out of its two motors not only greatly excited over the treat in store, but in a tremendous state of puzzlement.

Such a strange thing for Miss Kitten to have done! To have been so spiteful to them all day; to have refused to let them go, when the invitation first arrived, and then to have changed her mind so suddenly!

Miss Kitten was not with the Form; but there was the Form's own previous mistress, alighting from that car which had also brought Polly's brother Jack, and Judy's brother Dave, from Grangemoor, together with Jimmy Cherrol and "Tubby" Bloor.

The joy of it all! For the Form to be getting its treat after all, AND to have—not Miss Kitten, but their former Miss Everard, now Mrs. Challenor!

Oh, and how good of that real "sport" it had been, to bring Jimmy and Tubby, although they

had no Morcove sisters to justify their inclusion in the party!

But there, charming Mrs. Challenor, late of Morcove School, knew so much about all of them and what made for their happiness.

She knew that Jimmy and Tubby were the great chums of Jack and Dave, and also that every one of the Study 12 girls would be happier for seeing all four boys here, instead of only the two.

So Betty Barton found herself holding quite a reception in the lighted porch of the grand hotel. And whilst all this preliminary chatter-chatter and laughter and hand-shaking and quite a lot of affectionate kissing, went on—pleasantly she sensed the quite dressy nature of the occasion.

Morcove had put on its best party frocks for the evening. Mrs. Challenor, looking ever so young and pretty, wore a lovely evening frock, with an ermine wrap.

The boys had realised that they must get into "boiled shirts," and very gentlemanly they looked: serious Dave Cardew, quite handsome; Jack Linton, with his black tie a little unruly, as if to symbolise his own unruly nature; plain Jimmy Cherrol, looking so clean and straight, and as for Bobby Bloor, his portliness made you feel you were looking at a jovial bachelor through the wrong end of some opera-glasses!

"But let's go in!" Betty laughed at last. "And find mother."

"Yes, queek!" Naomer's shrill voice announced her whereabouts in the vast throng. "And you keep with me, Tubby! Bekas, perhaps we are going to start with something to eat!"

They did. Mrs. Barton had thought it would be nice for all to partake of refreshment on arrival, then enjoy themselves just as they pleased for an hour or two, finishing with supper.

Waiters came flitting around, in that part of the great lounge where refreshments were to be served.

Mrs. Barton and Mrs. Challenor sat chatting together, very happily, with all the boys and girls sitting about with one another. No—not all! Fay and Edna had sighted their uncle and aunt going in to dinner, and had slipped away to join them.

"Without asking, too!" Polly disgustfully commented.

"Yes, bai Jove! Haow extremely wude towards Betty and her mother!"

"But I must say," Madge murmured, "they look awfully pretty in those frocks."

"Fay and Edna are pretty in anything," Pam sincerely remarked.

"Looks aren't everything!" Polly quoted.

"Good job, bekas, eef they were, zen where would I come in?"

"You wouldn't come in; you'd be thrown out." Polly responded playfully. "Along with me. As it is—we are being allowed to stay. Betty darling, —bong santy!"

And the madcap lifted her glass of lemonade to that best of chums whose impaired health was still keeping her away from school.

"I think you should drink to the health of Miss Kitten," Betty laughed. "For letting you all come, after all! But we can wait till supper-time for that!"

"Oh, yes, with a question mark!" said Polly dryly, and more peals of laughter went up. "Jack, I want you! You can drive the car back, bye-and-bye, so that we girls can take Mrs. Challenor back to Morcove?"

"For keeps, yes!" clapped some of the girls who heard this tantalising suggestion. "Nunno, boys," said Jack, meaning girls, "you don't come that game! 'Ours is a nice House ours is!'—now we've got Mrs. Challenger. The food, boys—gosh, it's great! Besides, you've got Miss Kitten!" He had heard a good deal about Miss Kitten.

"I shall hit you," Polly threatened. "It's a shame, the way you fellows have come in for our Miss Everard that was, as your Housemaster's wife, whilst we poor wretches—but I do believe Miss Kitten has got the wind up suddenly."

"Bekas—" But Naomer found a crumb going the wrong way, and so she could not make any shrill reference to the great "secret" after all.

"It was rather monkeying about," Jack declared, with a rare touch of gravity. "First to say you couldn't have this treat, and then to say you could."

"Oh, but that's nothing to what we have had to put up with," Polly grimaced. "It was to have been prep in the class-room this evening, and after to-day there are to be no more teas in studies."

"What! I say, chaps, do you hear this!"

"And dwill, bai Jove—howwid dwill, morning, noon and night, yes, wather!"

But now the two ladies finished their talk together and rose, causing an eager jumping up by the girls, after hasty setting aside of plates and glasses.

"You need not remain unless you like," said Betty's homely mother. "Just do as you please, my dears."

"Thank you, Mrs. Barton—thanks!" was the chorus with which a general dispersal took place.

"Girls, I say—how about the ball-room?" Betty gaily proposed. "People won't be out from dinner for an hour yet, so we can have the ball-room to ourselves. And there's a gramophone. I don't like to ask you to play, Madge darling. You want a dance."

"Oh, I don't mind, Betty!"

"Right! Good-night all!" said Jack, in an "I'm going" tone. "When I only came for the sake of getting a dance with Madge."

"Not to see ME, your sister?" Polly withered him.

"Oh, of course, I knew I'd see you," Jack said, with a sigh. "Knew I'd have to! Still—wow!" For Polly was hitting him at last, pounding his shoulders so that he doubled down.

Meantime, there was Tubby, rolling away to the glass cabinet from which expensive boxes of chocolates could be obtained by inquiring of a page-boy.

Tubby, a connoisseur of chocolates, finally rolled back to all his friends when they were in the ball-room, and in spite of some teasing "Oooing!" he presented a mammoth, satin-beribboned box to Naomer, whose ecstatic "Gorjus—zank you, Tubby!" awoke echoes in that vast room.

"Bekas, now zen!" said Naomer, promptly stripping off the ribbon, and Jack rushed to be, as it were, first in the hand-round.

"Soft centres? Good! Stand back, boys—no fighting!"

And after all he did not wait for a "choc," preferring to catch Polly for a dance, there and then, Dave having started the gramophone. It was a fox-trot, and the madcap and this rollicking brother of hers were the pair to take it in lively style.

"I'm going to sit here with you, Betty," said Pam. "Shame, you can't do any dancing yet, because of the foot."

"But you are not to sit out for my sake, Pam! When there is Jimmy over there—look at Jimmy," rippled Betty, "longing to dance with you, and too shy to come and ask!"

"Jimmy must wait," smiled Pam sitting down beside the ex-captain. "Weren't you staggered, Betty, when Miss Kitten 'phoned through to your mother to say that we might come after all?"

"But what does it mean, Pam?"

"We can't make it out—unless it is that Miss Kitten really has taken fright, lest we should all revolt. And yet, you know," Pam spoke on, quietly, whilst she and Betty watched the dancing, "that theory doesn't quite fit in. She was as nasty as ever to all of us, just when we were coming away."

"It's rotten for you, Pam—as captain!"

"It's rotten for the whole Form, Betty. I think the thing that hits us worst of all is no more tea-ing in the studies. And then, you know—that cane!"

"Yes, I heard about that, just now, from one of the others. Pam, if Miss Kitten introduces canings—"

"She had better not," Pam said fiercely. "There will be a riot if she does—a strike, as Naomer calls it. And as captain, Betty, I mean to—"

"You mean to do just as I would have done!"

"Yes, well—"

"What a horrid person she must be, though," Betty exclaimed, "to be taking advantage of Miss Somerfield's absence to bully all of you. It IS bullying! I suppose, Pam, it wouldn't do to say anything to Mrs. Challenger?"

"No, Betty. I don't care about dragging her into it all. We've got to fight our own battle—and we will." So, Pam smiled, "you can expect to hear of big happenings at the school any day now."

"But I shan't hear—if you've all gone 'on strike,' for that means a grand bar-out, doesn't it?" Betty laughed. "Oh, but you must get a message through to me, Pam, because then I can be of help perhaps! If it's more provisions to help you to hold out—I'll manage!"

The gramophone ran down, and one of the boys darted to it to re-start it. All wanted that dance over again, but for the moment Polly and several others plumped themselves down close to Betty, for a scrap of light-hearted talk.

Then, when the record began its "repeat," Pam saw Jimmy looking wistfully her way, as he moved from the gramophone.

That favouring smile which she always had for him brought him across the floor to her, and she said a serene "Hallo, Jimmy!" and stood up.

So Jimmy got his dance with Pam after all, and, as usual, his "inferiority complex" made him fearful of getting 'her in the way of bouncing couples like Tubby and Naomer and Jack and Helen.

"What's going to be the end of it, Pam, at Morocco?" he asked, taking her round the floor as something very rare to be entrusted with.

"You girls can't strike, really?"

"Can't we?" Pam returned, her delicate brows rising. "Why not?"

"But it's—it's—well—"

"Oh, I know it isn't done at most schools," she laughed. "But then other schools don't have a Miss Kitten to goad the girls to desperation."

Sorry, Jimmy, if you think it very dreadful of me, as captain, to be quite in the mood now for strong action. The Form's been wonderfully patient."

"Anything you do, Pam, will be right—" "I don't know about that! But I do know, if we are forced to rebel there'll be no giving in by the Form."

"Can't I do something, Pam?"

"Just as if, Jimmy!"

"But, look here, there are four of us chaps—" "These aren't the hols, Jimmy; this is term-time, and so you boys are out of it all."

"You won't forget, anyhow, that we're always there—at Grangemoor."

"No, Jimmy, we never forget you boys for long. That," Pam commented on the finish of the one-step, "was lovely!"

She returned to Betty at a moment when Jack was skating across to the gramophone, to put on another record. Now they all wanted a waltz. And as soon as the "band" struck up it became a fine scene for Betty to watch—poor Betty, unable to dance this evening.

But Betty was never left for a moment without one or another to talk to and, in any case, she would not have minded greatly being unable to join in. What she did feel as a trying deprivation was her absence from the school at this critical time.

War in the air; war only averted in the last few hours, she shrewdly suspected, because of Miss Kitten's surprise concession!

With the ball-room all to themselves, Morcov and Co. had a great time on that beautiful floor for the next twenty minutes. And then, suddenly, there was an unpleasant check upon the enjoyment.

Fay and Edna had flouted in, alone together, boldly smoking cigarettes.

A fox-trot was in progress just then, and they partnered each other instantly, smoking whilst they danced.

Murmurs of disapproval went up, but Fay and Edna were in the mood to show off. As a climax to bad manners, Fay flourished her Virginian at arm's length, causing the ash to fall down the back of Paula's neck.

"Oh, sorry!" Fay laughed flippantly, and would have gone on dancing with her tittering sister, but in an instant Pam stopped dancing, to go straight up to the disorderly pair.

"Stop your rotting about, will you?" she requested, and received a whiff of cigarette-smoke in her face, from Fay, as a sign of defiant refusal.

Then the sisters found all the other dancers at a sudden standstill. Dave Cardew, leaving Judy, flashed across to stop the gramophone.

There would have been tense silence, only Fay and Edna hummed the tune to which they were still dancing.

Pam strode at them again, and this time she stopped them dead.

"Either you'll behave or leave the floor," she said.

Fay and Edna looked her up and down, each still retaining a drooping cigarette between the lips.

"Are you talking to us?" asked Fay loftily. "There is no one else behaving so disgracefully," Pam said steadily. "And I'm not going to let you two girls disgrace Morcov."

"But we are not with you," Fay grandly asserted. "We have been dining with our uncle and aunt, and if we like to enjoy a gasper, just for fun, it's not for you to interfere!"

"Whether you are captain or not!" Edna chimed in, just as insolently. "Oh!" she gasped, next instant. "You beast, Pam!"

For Pam had adroitly whipped the cigarette from Edna's lips and dropped it to the floor, treading it out with a slithered foot.

"Fay Denver," she said, as that girl stood blowing rings of smoke into the air, "throw that cigarette away."

"Eh?"—so provokingly that many girls wondered how Pam could keep her temper.

"If you don't, this instant," Pam said, very quietly. "I shall simply report you when we get back."

"Report away, then!" Fay smiled. "I don't care!"

With every possible display of insolence, both sisters sauntered away to a far corner of the ball-room, and sat down, exchanging amused comments.



Polly came face to face with Pam, while Fay Denver stood grinning spitefully in the doorway. Pam's frock was torn, her necklace broken, and the Madcap was not slow to realise that there had actually been a scuffle between the captain and the mistress!

"They had seen that Pam did not mean to pursue the matter there. She had instantly and calmly implied an "On with the dance!"

Somebody re-started the gramophone, and then, as the fox-trot was resumed, this couple and that talked of what had just taken place.

Fay and Edna were being held in utter detestation now. Not a girl in the Form but had indulged, at some time or other, in a cigarette—for fun's sake. But it was one thing to do that at home, in the holidays, or at some Christmas party; it was quite a different matter for a Morcovce girl to do such a thing here in the hotel ball-room.

There was a general thankfulness that Mrs. Barton had not chanced to witness the deliberate attempt to disgrace the school.

Nor were the boys less disgusted than the girls. Fay and Edna were not left in any doubt about that, and as they were left so severely alone they soon began to feel uncomfortable.

Pretending not to care, they danced again together, resorting to more impudence by joking and laughing against Pam and the rest of the girls.

Then the hotel band turned up to play dance music, and guests began to flock in. Mrs. Barton arrived upon the scene with Mrs. Challenor, who took the first dance with Pam.

"I'm so glad, Pam dear, to have met you all again for a little while," the former Morcovce mistress said, as they went round the floor. "More especially, as Miss Somerfield has been called away. I'm afraid you're all having a difficult time."

"Oh, it will be all right, Mrs. Challenor."

"I'm in an awkward position. I long to intervene, but how can I?"

"Of course you can't. Besides, we mayn't have got Betty with us, as captain," Pam smiled; "but we still have her slogan, 'We'll manage!'"

"At any rate, I shall make a point of keeping in touch with Morcovce. The boys will help me there."

And more than that was never said. Mrs. Challenor's sense of the fitness of things was no greater than Pam's. They were often in talk together, after that, but they only talked of ordinary school interests.

Nor did Pam have a word to say to Betty or any of her other chums about the crisis.

Supper-time came, and they all sat down to a specially-laid table in the great white-and-gold restaurant, and it was all as if there was not a cloud in Morcovce's sky!

Pam, with Betty upon her left hand and Jimmy upon her right, appeared to be forgetting Miss Kitten as completely as was Naomer—and one could not say more than that!

Fay and Edna, claiming to have obtained permission from their uncle and aunt, had stayed behind in the ball-room, and when the time came for the girls to return, Pam had to go to the ball-room to fetch the sisters away.

They had found partners amongst the guests, and so Pam had to wait for that dance to end. Then, when she could go up to them both, there was more of the impudence that was to be expected.

"What—go home, now? Rabbits!" Fay derided her captain. "You can clear out with the others, Pam Willoughby—"

"You're to come with us."

"We're not coming with you! Uncle Arthur will put us into one of the hotel cars, by-and-by, and—"

"Do your uncle and aunt wish you to stay?" "That's not your business!" snapped Edna.

"I think it is."

"Dash you!" stamped Fay. "We are going to do as we like!"

"You are not. Where are your uncle and aunt?" Pam calmly inquired, sending a searching glance around the vast ball-room. "Of course, if it is their wish, then I can let Miss Kitten know when we get back. But I must be told by your aunt—"

"Oh!" Fay stamped again, realising that Pam was too much for them both. "Come on, then, Edna, out of this. But," she simply hissed at Pam, passionately walking away from the ball-room with her, "you wait—you wait!"

"I am waiting—until we get back to the school," Pam coolly answered. "Then I report you, that's all."

"What!"

"You have behaved abominably," Pam remarked as quietly as ever. "Your rudeness to Betty and her mother—considering the invitation came from them; your smoking—"

"What about you?" Edna flared out. "With your boys hanging around you—puh! You and your Jimmy Cherrol!"

"Oh, but Pam's in a different class, of course," Fay sneered. "She's the captain! She's Swan-lake! So refayned, haw!"

"Report us, will she? She had better dare!" Edna hissed.

"Oh, I thought you didn't care if I did?"

"And neither do we, so there!"

Pam merely gave a "Just as well," nod, and a few moments later she was amongst all her chums again, with nothing in her looks to tell of this fresh upset.

The two cars and the 'bus were waiting, and under cover outside the hotel Betty and her mother, bewrapped against the cold night air, said their good-byes to a crowd in youthful high spirits, whose lively voices proclaimed delight and gratitude for the treat it had been.

Never mind that Fay and Edna had done their best to spoil it—the evening had been a crashing success.

"Night, Betty, once again!" Boyish cries mingled with those from the girls. "Bye, Mrs. Barton, and thanks ever so."

"Chaps!" Jack vociferated. "Three jolly good hearty cheers for Betty and her mother! Come on, boys!"

"And we girls, too!" cried Pam.

Such a three times three they made it, resulting in quite an emotional little speech from homely Mrs. Barton.

"Well, boys and girls all, thank you most kindly, I'm sure! I do love to see you all so nice and friendly! Oh, 'tis a fine, a grand school, Morcovce!"

Proud cheers from Morcovce!

"Oh, and I'll say the same of Grangemoor, too!"

A roared cheer from the boys, and great laughter.

"So good-night all, my dears, and maybe we'll see something of you more—at Morcovce. Good-night!"

"Night, Mrs. Barton! 'Night, Betty darling!" came the last hearty chorus from girls crowding in 'bus and car alike.

Then the doors slammed, and all three motors drove away.

Polly, in the 'bus with some twenty others, was head out of window with Naomer, exchanging

final parting cries with Jack and Tubby respectively.

It was like those two girls to keep in touch with the Grangemoor car by this means, until the ways parted. Then, drawing in their heads, Polly and Naomer turned about to sit down, just as Fay boldly took out a cigarette-case and, opening it, took one for herself and offered her sister another.

Then a match was struck, and both girls lighted their cigarettes. As Pam did not say anything, nobody else made any comment. It was realised that Pam intended now to deal with these two girls in the only right way.

But it was not simply on account of the Denver sisters that Pam, when the school was reached, at once sought Miss Kitten.

The Form-mistress was in the hall to see them all troop in, but she was as sour-looking as ever, making no affable inquiry as to how they had enjoyed themselves.

"Quick to bed now!" was her sharp injunction. "I shall be upstairs in five minutes to turn out the lights!"

The Form could understand from this that its having been allowed to enjoy the treat, after all, did not mean an end to misery-making snappishness. As horrid as ever, again! Why, then, the Form wondered, in greater amazement than ever—why HAD she let them have the treat?

Why, indeed?

CHAPTER 7.

Mistress and Captain

PAM, knowing that Miss Kitten had gone to her room after ordering the Form up to the dormitory, came a minute later to the door marked PRIVATE, and tapped.

"Come in!" snapped the Form-mistress, following this with a contumelious look for the girl who entered.

"Miss Kitten—"

"What do you want? Haven't I said—to bed?"

"Yes; but first, if I may, please, I'd like to thank you for having let us go to the Headland, after all."

Pam meant this, in all sincerity. She had determined, an hour ago and more, that it was "up to her" to express appreciation, and if this resulted in a happier state of things between the Form and its mistress—so much the better.

"All the girls, Miss Kitten, are grateful—"

"They should be! They certainly did not deserve it! But there—go to bed, Pam Willoughby!"

"There's something else, Miss Kitten—"

"Well?"

"I'm sorry to have to do a thing I have never done before—a thing I hate doing—but I've no longer any choice. Fay and Edna Denver—"

"I don't want any petty tale-telling here!"

"This, Miss Kitten, isn't petty."

" anyhow, don't come here to show off your authority, as I suppose you call it, as captain! You must understand, Pam Willoughby, that I, as a mistress, regard all this captaincy business as so much nonsense."

"The Form doesn't, Miss Kitten. It looks to the captain—"

"And I look to the captain to obey me, like any other scholar—"

"I want to obey—"

There was an interruption, a tap-tap at the door. It opened, and—all unbidden—Fay and Edna entered.

Far from looking taken aback by Pam's presence, they gave "Just as we thought!" smiles.

Miss Kitten, as Pam noticed, betrayed sudden agitation.

"And now, what do you two girls want?" she quavered.

"Oh—we guessed that Pam Willoughby was here," Fay airily answered. "So we thought we'd come along—"

"To hear what she has to say about us," Edna laughed.

"But I have been saying," the Form-mistress exclaimed, uneasily, "I do not wish to be bothered with—"

"Miss Kitten, I'm afraid you will have to be," Pam insisted. "If I were making a complaint, when it could have been avoided, I'd never be able to look the Form in the face again. But for a long time now, these two girls—"

"For a long time," Fay struck in, "the captain has had her knife into us!"

"That isn't so," Pam protested. "The whole Form knows that you have been spared a hundred times over because to report you would most likely mean getting you expelled. You have taken advantage of what we all know in the Form—that Miss Somerfield was very reluctant to have you back this term. You've both traded on the desire to give you a chance—"

"Is all this necessary?" Miss Kitten struck in bleakly.

"Yes, it is—to convince you!" Pam said fiercely, "that there has been no wanting to get them into any row. But while things are being made so strict and difficult and unfair for the Form as a whole, I don't see why these two girls should do as they like, not caring what disgrace they bring upon the school."

"Just because uncle let us take a couple of his cigarettes at the hotel!" Fay sneered. "Miss Kitten, we weren't with the rest of the Form at the hotel! We were with uncle and auntie!"

The Form-mistress snatched at this as a chance to crush Pam.

"Then I don't see, Pam Willoughby, that it had anything to do with you—"

"Hadden't it?" Pam caught her up spiritedly. "Didn't Fay and Edna go with the Form? Weren't they there, like the rest of us, as guests of Mrs. Barton? I say nothing about their rudeness to Betty's mother, but if Fay and Edna are to go unpunished for smoking whilst at the Headland, then I know what will happen. In the end, the headmistress will never allow any of us to go when we have relations there. The whole Form will suffer, and—"

"You have said quite enough, Pam Willoughby! Now—go!"

And still she refused to turn away to the door. "It is a shame, Miss Kitten," she said hotly, "that I have had to say so much. As a mistress you might have been expected to see all that—instead of shielding these two as you are doing."

"How dare you!" Miss Kitten quivered. "If I have much more of your impudence—"

"I am not impudent! There has been a lot to put up with to-day. You let us have the treat after all, and for that I thanked you, meaning it; but, even now, Miss Kitten, you seem to be against me and against all other girls who only want Morocco to be what it always has been."

"I'll not listen to you!" Miss Kitten suddenly raged out. "You, to come here with a trumpery, spiteful complaint against these two girls—"

"Neither trumpery nor spiteful," Pam dis-

sented, strenuously. "And you are siding with them—showing an unfair leniency to them, when all day you have been nagging the life out of the rest of us, taking away our privileges—"

"Where's that cane!" Miss Kitten fumed wildly. "I left it downstairs in the class-room or you should feel it across your shoulders, girl! You, with your high-and-mighty notions!"

"Swanlake!" tittered Edna. "And now you know, Miss Kitten, what she is, to put up with! There was nothing, surely, in our whiffing at cigarettes which uncle himself had given us? If we did wrong, we're sorry—there! But—"

"You smoked in the bus, coming back," Pam said calmly. "You've cigarettes on you now!"

"That's a lie, Pam Willoughby!"

"I could produce more than a dozen girls to bear witness. You, Fay, had your own cigarette-case, full, in the bus coming back. They are the girls to whom you were showing off. You thought I'd decide not to report it, but the time has come for me to think of the good name of the school."

"Very well, then, do that," Miss Kitten smiled acidly. "And try, Pam Willoughby, not to think quite so much of yourself!"

Then Fay and Edna gave peals of laughter. "Go along, Pam Willoughby," the Form-mistress smiled sourly.

"Then—does that mean that you—"

"It means that I have nothing more to say." Pam, having recoiled a little, advanced again. She looked hard at Fay and Edna, who were shaking with silent laughter and then faced the Form-mistress.

"There is something—some reason for this!" Pam said very quietly. "That you can overlook what these girls do, and that they can stand there—knowing they are safe from punishment! Yes, now I understand why they boasted that they didn't care what I might do! There is—favouritism!"

"Miss Kitten!" the sisters protested furiously. "Are you going to take that—?"

"It's obvious to me now!" Pam rushed on, whilst the Form-mistress seemed to gather herself for a spring at her. "You only let the Form go to the hotel—to please these two girls! So the Form would have been denied the treat, after all, only—for some reason or other—"

Miss Kitten made her spring—a tigress-like one—and Pam was in her grasp. With Fay and Edna stepping back to keep clear, there was a

sudden furious scuffle, the Form-mistress trying to bundle Pam to the door and so out of the room.

But Pam struggled. Her athleticism made her very adroit, and she slipped free, and then, standing away from Miss Kitten, she drew herself up. One steady breath she had to draw, and then the girl's voice came again:

"Now I say to your face, Miss Kitten—you are unfit to be a mistress! Don't touch me again!"

"Not touch you!" panted the Form-mistress. "If I had that cane—get out of here—get out!" she hissed, making another rush to seize Pam.

The latter was walking to the door. Fay suddenly advanced and pushed her back—right into Miss Kitten's arms.

Then there was another tussle, and it seemed as if Pam's lovely party frock was being torn from her figure in the wild set-to. A pearl necklace—one that she only wore on special occasions, for they were precious pearls—broke and fell to the carpet.

If all this pleased the demon that possessed Miss Kitten at times, it also delighted Fay and Edna. At the same time, they began to think the violence would go too far. One of them stepped quickly to the door, to open it, hoping that Miss Kitten would then thrust Pam forth into the passage.

Next moment, however, the door was being hurriedly closed again. Fay turned round, voicing a scared:

"Miss Kitten! Stop! Someone outside!"

It was Polly Linton outside the room, wishing now that she had rushed in when there was a chance to do so.

The door was being held fast against her. In vain she kept the knob twisted round and pushed with all her might. Someone—she believed it was Fay Denver—after clapping shut the door, had wedged a foot against it.

Then what was one to do—summon others to the scene? That tell-tale commotion which had been audible when, a few moments ago, one came along the passage—it had meant a scene of violence in the room! And Pam was there—Pam!

Suddenly the door was whipped open, and Polly would have rushed in at last, but Pam came out quickly. Fay could be seen grinning in the doorway.

Pam's lovely face was deathly pale. One sleeve of her pretty frock was torn; it would never be fit to be worn again. In one hand she clutched something—why, it was her pearl necklace, no longer about her neck, but broken.

"Pam!" gasped Polly. "Oh, what's happened? I came down, feeling that I must! I felt that you might need me!"

Slam! The door closed, shutting them off from those who were in the room.

"But this is awful, Pam!" Polly gasped on. "What's happened?"

"Nothing, Polly—nothing."

"But, look at you!"

"Yes, well, never mind, to-night, anyhow," Pam said, breathlessly. "Come away, Polly!"

The madcap, however, her hands clenched, could only go a few steps along the passage with the captain, and then she had to stop. She was much the more wrought-up of the two.

"Do we strike, then, Pam—do we strike?" was the panted question.

And Pam answered, and answered quietly: "We strike!"

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

COMPLETE NEXT TUESDAY:



By MARJORIE STANTON

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