

**"Study 12's Strange Secret"** Grand Long Morcove  
School Story Inside

# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2<sup>d</sup>

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EVERY TUESDAY.



## THE FORM MISTRESS' HIDING-PLACE!

A dramatic incident from  
this week's grand long  
Morcove School story

**"THE CRIMSON SHADOWS"**

EXCITING COMPLETE 'SECRET  
SOCIETY' SERIES WITHIN



Magnificent Long Complete Story of Betty Barton & Co.



# Study 12's Strange Secret

## In the News!

"YES, Betty, I want to see you. Come along in!"

Sent for only a couple of minutes since, on this troublous Monday morning at Morcove School, Betty Barton had already presented herself to Miss Somerfield, the headmistress.

"There is an emergency, Betty, in regard to your Form. As captain, you have always shown yourself to be a good one at rising to an occasion, and so I am not going to be afraid of making a big call upon you.

"Your Form-mistress, on Saturday evening, had to go away from Morcove—in a hurry," Miss Somerfield pursued. "I am not going to say one word, Betty, as to why Miss Merrick had to leave so suddenly. You girls must not expect to be told about things which do not concern you. But it means that your Form, for the time being, is without a mistress."

Betty's anxious mind fastened on to those words: "For the time being." Did they mean that Miss Merrick, after all, might be coming back some day?

"So, Betty, I have had to decide that our head girl will take the Form for the present. Ethel Courtway is well qualified to do so; and you, as captain, can do much to help her carry on. That is all, and you may go."

"I see; all right, Miss Somerfield," Betty quietly responded, and gave the customary bow before turning to march out. "I'll do my best."

"I'm sure you will. Oh, and Betty!"

She faced round, halfway to the door.

"Just one other thing. About that new girl, Zillah Raine, whom I brought back with me from America, when I returned from that Head

Teachers' Congress over there. I find, Betty, that Zillah is not quite turning out as well as was expected. This is quite between ourselves, Betty, and I only tell you because it concerns you, as Form captain. There again, you can be of great help, Betty! In Zillah, it seems that we have a girl whose standard of conduct is not what it should be. But we must not despair of her. At the same time, Betty—we must stand no nonsense!"

A very direct and steady look asked Betty: Did she quite understand? Believing she did, she nodded, and then Miss Somerfield looked greatly relieved at not having to say more.

"Very well, Betty; one way and another, you will have your work cut out! Ethel Courtway has all her instructions and is taking over now. You girls all like her, Betty?"

"Of course—we all do!" nodded Betty emphatically.

"So, then, I am entitled to feel that I have done my best for your Form, pending the appointment of a permanent mistress to replace Miss Merrick."

There it was—in plain words—the headmistress' own hint that Miss Merrick really was—gone for ever!

Betty went from the room, and her mood was anything but happy.

Nothing but trouble these days; one thing after another. But there was all this reliance upon her, as a captain, and this was no time for despondency. She walked towards the front hall,

and there, as it chanced, was Ethel Courtway—the very best example, if Betty had needed one, of cheerfulness under difficulties.

"Hallo, Betty. I expect you've been hearing—"

**Betty Barton and Co. discover the hiding-place of a fugitive from justice. But for reasons of their own, they keep silent.**





BY MARJORIE STANTON  
ILLUSTRATED BY L. SHIELDS

"Yes, Ethel. And of course I'm glad it's to be you; the whole Form will be so glad!"

"It may not," demurred charming Ethel Courtway, looking as if there were no hurry, in spite of its being so close to class-time. "I'm going to the class-room now. No, you needn't come. Stay out as long as you can, Betty—why shouldn't you? Perhaps you'd like to bring the class in at nine?"

"I'd rather you did, Ethel!"

"On the other hand, I'd rather—well, let the girls find me there, and if you will give them the tip not to make any fuss—thanks."

Clear of the main porch, Betty looked to see if girls belonging to her Form would need much collecting.

Suddenly a hailing cry: "Betty!" drew her glance back to one group that she had already noticed. It comprised Polly Linton and some half-dozen other girls who were her, Betty's, best chums.

Now they were all running towards her. Polly was first in the race, and Betty, as she stepped to meet them all, noticed that she held a newspaper.

"Here, Betty!" And her heart-beat quickened as she found the morning paper being excitably offered. Something in the looks of all these chums of hers suggested—Morcove was in the news.

"Look!" Polly panted on, stabbing a finger at the headlines to one half-column item. "See the name—MERRICK!"

"Had Miss Merrick a brother, Betty?" clamoured several of the other girls. "This is a Donald Merrick—"

"Wanted by the police, Betty!"

She raised her eager glance from the printed sheet.

"I never heard her speak of a brother. But what has he done?" she asked, starting to read on.

And then, carried away by excitement, she began to voice, in snatches, the gist of what that half-column had to say.

"Donald Merrick—age twenty-three—wanted for embezzlement. . . . Thousands of pounds of his employer's money—stolen! And the police looking for him—everywhere. . . ."

### Police!

BETTY lowered the folded newspaper and looked at her horrified chums.

"Can I keep this, girls? I mean—if it hasn't been seen by other girls—"

"Oh, it hasn't yet!" Polly was quick to answer. "We wouldn't have seen it, but Helen here happens to be watching the shipping report every day for her father's boat."

"And so my eye caught that bit about Donald Merrick," was Helen Craig's rejoinder. "I felt I must bring the paper out to show these others."

"I mean to say," Betty said crisply, "we don't need to shout it all over the school. I'll keep this and manage to put it where it won't be seen."

She was folding the newspaper tightly.

"Then you think, Betty," exclaimed Judy Cardew distressfully, "there is—some connection?"

"It does look like it, girls. The affair, of course, means disgrace for anyone connected with Donald Merrick."

"Tewwible disgwace," Paula Creel murmured. "We can just imagine, geals; if Miss Mewwick suddenly realised that her own brother had done a thing like that—"

"She'd feel she'd want to go from Morcove at once—yes!" Polly agreed. "In case the school's name should be dragged into the papers."

"She might even feel that she wanted to—well, try and get in touch with her brother," Bunny Trevor suggested. "Oh, but how awful for her, if it is so! Poor Miss Merrick!"

Polly stamped in a raging way.

"Yes, and that's what she was keeping from us, when Betty and I were with her for just that moment or so on Saturday night! No wonder she looked as if she were suffering agonies!"

The clangour of a bell came from the school-house. Time for classes! Betty, not sorry that such painful talk had to end, looked one way and another to see if other girls belonging to the Form were likely to need a "Hurry up!"

But everywhere the girls, to whatever Form they might belong, were instantly making for the schoolhouse—still in talk, and the talk still, no doubt, about Miss Merrick. Thank goodness, though, they did not know what was in this morning's paper!

"Ethel is taking the Form," the captain tersely remarked, hurrying with her chums to the schoolhouse. "That's something."

"Gorjus!" shrilled artless Naomer Nakara. "Bekas I was beginning to get ze wind up about who was going to take us! We didn't want Miss Massingham butting in!"

Miss Massingham, of the Fifth, led her own charges far too strict a life, for any other Form to want to have dealings with her.

"Well, you had better show that paper to Ethel, anyhow," Polly suggested. "She can be trusted."

"Oh, yes," Betty nodded. "And it's only fair to her."

So the folded newspaper was still in the captain's hand, but kept out of sight, when she got to the class-room during the general trooping in.



Ethel, after all, was not in evidence. She might have had to pop back to her study to get something she had just remembered she would want. Far more likely she had effaced herself so as to avoid being thought officious.

Yet with only Betty, as captain, out in front, the girls went to their places quietly enough. Even two or three who were known to be taking the upset about Miss Merrick rather callously, thought it best not to misbehave.

A few moments, and the class was settling down in the desks, and Betty felt she could safely go to her own place.

She had stood by what was the Form-mistress' desk, in case some other girl, noticing the newspaper whilst going by, should stop to look-out of mere idle curiosity.

But now, to Betty's amazement, a girl rose up in her desk and calmly walked out, making for what had been Miss Merrick's desk. Annoyance was added to Betty's surprise, the girl being Zillah Raine.

"Say! Is that this morning's paper?" inquiringly drawled the American girl, with every sign of intending to take it up. "I guess I'd like to—"

"You go back!"

For once, Betty was being very much the captain as she put herself between Zillah Raine and the desk on which that newspaper was lying. A directing gesture accompanied the order; and Zillah Raine, finding herself thus dealt with, stared.

"Back to your desk, please, Zillah."

"Say, what's biting you, Betty Barton? We don't begin until the head girl comes in, I guess? Got some objection to my just taking a look at the news?"

"Yes, I have. You're in class, so go and sit down."

"Like that, is it?" Zillah laughed, after doing no good for herself by trying to walk round Betty. The captain had taken up the paper. "Oh, well, I'm not a whole lot interested!"

She raised her voice for all the class to hear, as she airily returned to her place.

"Some captain, this morning!"

As no notice was taken of this, she seemed to fly into a rage. Her dark-complexioned face, that could be so attractive, was distorted with passion as she turned round and simply shouted at Betty:

"Think I can't guess what's in the paper? I know more'n there is in any paper—only I don't choose to say! Maybe I'm holding my tongue until it's made worth my while—to speak!"

She strode to her desk and sat down, relieving her ferocity by a sudden wild laugh. There was a sensational silence after that laugh had died away; then Ethel Courtway came in, and tension was at an end.

Betty put the newspaper back on the desk and went to her own place at last. She knew how composedly the head girl could take a shock, or she would not have wished her to see the Donald Merrick item at this stage.

It had seemed advisable to let Ethel know without delay. It might enable her to enforce certain precautions, such as the suppression of all newspapers in the school.

Tactfully Betty avoided meeting the senior's eyes until a few minutes later, when work was in full swing. Looking up from her own task then, the captain saw Ethel settled most cheerfully at her own desk in front of the class. The Form must have received the impression that its temporary mistress meant to take her job quite

light-heartedly. But—she had read that bit in the newspaper! Her glance, coming Betty's way of a sudden, said so. A faint nod acknowledged a service done, and that was all.

Nor had Betty expected more than that. Feeling that she must now really concentrate upon the lesson, she dipped her pen and was going to continue writing, but took one look out of the nearby window.

Then her heart seemed to sink within her. Coming up the drive was a car that held—police!

### The Sneak!

THE police!

So there it was; an end to any doubt there might have been.

Miss Merrick was related to that Donald Merrick who had absconded. It was the impending disgrace brought upon her by another's terrible wrong-doing that had caused her to go away, broken-hearted, from Morcove School.

Betty, as this sad conviction filled her mind, was painfully aware of other girls, round about her in the desks, wanting to whisper to one another excitably. They also had realised that the police were here, and now, very likely, they were putting two and two together. Something to do with Miss Merrick!

"Supposing we try just a little less talking in class?" Ethel Courtway presently suggested with her usual all-conquering geniality.

And the very reasonableness of this remark did the trick. Complete silence reigned, except for the scratching of pen-nibs.

After a while, Betty took a look at Zillah, a few desks away. Working at her lessons, the American girl now appeared to be such a very pretty girl, with a great suggestion of personal charm. If ever there was a girl with a dual nature, Zillah was the girl! Cross her, and one had to reckon with a venomous enemy.

She had only to become the least bit upset, and she was her mother's daughter—more Mexican than American.

Lesson-time crept on. There was time for a change-over to history, and then the Form was due for "break." Betty, rather dreading a mobbing round Zillah during the fifteen minutes out of doors, was greatly relieved when Ethel affably announced:

"I'll come out with you, girls, and I want to see you all at some bit of exercise or another. I don't mind what it is."

Three minutes later some bustling hockey practice was occupying most of the girls. The rest were at lacrosse.

Any inclination to hang round the still-waiting police-car had been opposed by Ethel in a good-humoured but effective way.

Betty and her chums had plumped for hockey, and their habitual keenness allowed them to be no laggards in the game.

But that keenness for the game did not prevent the captain, for one, from keeping an eye upon Zillah, although that girl was on the other field.

Zillah was the only girl who had needed to be told twice by Ethel to "come away from that car." Sulkily the American girl had joined in the lacrosse when it started, and Betty had not much doubt that what Zillah had hoped to do was to get into talk with the police officers when they came away from the schoolhouse.

At any moment now, Betty thought Zillah might do a certain thing, and so she was keeping a good look-out.



Nor was the captain's vigilance wasted. In the very instant that the police officers came out to their car, to drive back to Barncombe, Zillah was seen by Betty to drop out of play over there on the other field.

Artful! The girl was intending an unnoticed slipping out of bounds—to be able to stop the car when it was beyond the school gateway, on the road to the town.

The head girl was just then returning to the hockey players, after giving an eye to the lacrosse, so she had her back to the latter team. It was not the moment for Betty to be swayed by her keen dislike of anything that savoured of "reporting." She attracted Ethel's attention, and then pointed.

Turning about, Ethel instantly voiced an arresting:

"Zillah Raine!"

The girl took no notice. She was at the boundary hedge, casting away her "crosse" before starting to burst her way through a narrow gap.

"What a tiresome girl she is!" Ethel frowned. "Betty, just go after her! She's not to stop that car to get a talk with those police."

She ran to receive Betty's hockey-stick and replace her in the game. The captain was herself running hard as the stick changed hands. After that, she fairly streaked for the boundary hedge. Zillah was already past it and racing her hardest for the road.

The police-car had not yet reached the gateway. There would be time for Zillah to bring off the hold-up; but Betty reckoned to be there before any conversation could take place.

Through the same gap which had let Zillah out of bounds, plunged the captain. Racing on again, she saw the other girl glance back and then run faster than ever.

At that instant the car appeared upon the open road.

Zillah waved to it to stop, whilst she herself floundered at top speed over rough ground. In hot pursuit, Betty realised that the car was slowing—that it would stop where the girl would soonest get to it. Wondering how the rest of the Form was going on in the meantime, she, Betty, glanced back over a shoulder.

Not much hockey was being played now—nor lacrosse! But Ethel seemed to have forbidden any general dashing out of bounds.

Looking to the front again, Betty saw that the car had stopped, and a man in uniform with a peaked cap—a superintendent of police—was getting out.

She herself waved to him; but although they were most meaning signals he chose to ignore them. There was his zeal for his job to make him very ready to listen to Zillah, now that she had reached him, in a panting state.

Betty had done some overtaking during the pursuit, but she only got near the stopped car after Zillah had said enough to leave her listener very impressed.

"And that's not all, either," the odious girl was panting on, as Betty sprinted the last few yards. "Only I guess I'll say the rest when you've just told this other girl to beat it!"

"Sir," Betty breathlessly interposed; and the superintendent saluted her. "don't listen to her like this! It's hardly fair. At any rate"—to Zillah—"you're to come away."

"Is that so?" was the insolent retort.

"But, look here, missy," the "super" perplexedly exclaimed at Betty; "I'm being given information that is of the very greatest importance. This girl appears to know that a man who is wanted for embezzlement was in Exeter, last Saturday! Donald Merrick—"

"Yeah." Zillah nodded. "Miss Merrick's brother! And she was with him, too—a secret meeting to see what she could do for him, to help him with his getaway! Blue lounge-suit, dark overcoat; and height, I guess, about—"

"Oh, you beast!" Betty could not help bursting in, fiercely, despite the presence of the law. "Do you know what you are doing, Zillah Raine?"

"Know? Of course I know," she said, with such a gloating smile as left the superintendent and his men in the car—for they were close listeners, too—frowning scornfully. "I'll say I'm putting them hot on the scent, that's all—and don't see why I shouldn't!"



"Got some objection to my just taking a look at the news?" Zillah demanded. Betty did not move. "Yes, I have!" she answered bluntly. She did not mean Zillah to see the paper, if she could help it.



The superintendent coughed uncomfortably. He had transferred his gaze from Zillah's face, with its boastful smile, to Betty's, white and tense.

"I'd be ashamed," Betty flamed at her school-mate, "to say such things, knowing that it can only make it worse for Miss Merrick herself! And she was your Form-mistress!"

"Yeah. But the law's the law, isn't it, and mustn't we be on the side of it?" Zillah sauced back. "A school like ours!"

Betty would not speak again. She was suddenly aware of Ethel Courtway's hurrying upon the scene. The head girl had come through the gap in the hedge, and her approach was an authoritative one, if leisurely. As soon as she was within speaking distance:

"Zillah—back to the class-room!"

"Oh, say——"

"When I tell you," Ethel said, taking the obnoxious girl by an arm to send her spinning, "you'll obey! I think"—to the superintendent—"if she must do any informing, she had better do it in front of the headmistress!"

The officer seemed to think so, too. Nodding, he turned to re-enter the car, which was afterwards turned upon the road to be run back to the school.

By that time Betty and Ethel were following up Zillah, as that girl went back by the way she had come. She had more than a score of Form-mates awaiting her, just inside the school grounds, so she put on a most impudent air.

After she had scrambled through the gap in the hedge, groups of disgusted girls looked inclined to hustle her; so she held her chin an inch higher and started to whistle. There was her thrown-down "crosse"; she picked it up as if she meant to go on playing. But next moment the netted stick was taken from her by Ethel.

"I said—to the class-room!"

Some of the onlookers laughed now. They were remembering how Zillah had boasted of being on such friendly terms with the head girl!

But Betty did not find Polly or any of her other chums looking in the least amused. There was enduring anger in the way they watched Zillah go towards the schoolhouse, stepping jauntily and still whistling.

Ethel followed her up; even followed her until she was right indoors. But when the time came for a general return to class, there was no Zillah Raine sitting in her desk, with the head girl keeping an eye upon her. So it was inferred that Zillah had been sent for by the headmistress. The car was at the porch again, which meant that the police superintendent must be having another interview.

Presently they all heard the car go away once more. But Zillah did not return to the class-room. Had she done so, there would have been such a scene as even Ethel might have been unable to quell.

By now, as Betty realised, Zillah Raine was the scorn of all. One needed only to send a look round the class-room to see a score of girls whose minds were made up! When next they did see the informer—she'd soon know what they thought of her!

Blackest of all were Polly's looks, as she sighed impatiently over the last hour's work in class. Polly Linton—Study No. 12's headstrong one—slapped her books about now and then, as if she only wished she were slapping Zillah about the head.

And Betty, as the hands of the school-room clock drew together to proclaim the midday hour, found herself wondering what she ought to do,

supposing the Form did "go" for Zillah presently?

Like her chums—like all these other girls—she could only feel furiously angry with that school-mate whose love of self-importance had made her rush to tell tales to the police. But there had been Miss Somerfield's remarks about the girl, before school this morning; that implied reliance upon her—as a Form captain:

"You can be of great help, Betty. . . . We must not despair of her. . . ."

The "Dismiss" came whilst Betty was still in a state of perplexity; heart and soul with the others in their scorn for Zillah, yet bound to remember that a captain must think and act only as a captain!

"And who would choose to be a captain?" was Betty's mental comment on the awkward position, as she got outside the class-room.

For a dozen girls were already rushing away, ominously muttering:

"Where is she—that Zillah! Where is she—the sneak!"

### Betty the Peacemaker!

"HER study—she may be there!"

"Upstairs, then!"

"Yes—come on!"

In vain Betty sent a restraining cry after them all: "But wait—wait!" They paid no heed. Two seconds later, she herself was on the stairs, racing after this justly angry pack which included Polly, Bunny, and others belonging to the Study No. 12 chummery.

And behind the captain, as she mounted two stairs at a time, came yet more girls of the Form, minded to let Zillah know just what they thought of her.

The foremost lot could not be overtaken by Betty until the corridor of studies had been reached; but then she put on a sprint that placed her amongst the seething girls—within a yard or two of Zillah's door.

"Polly—just a moment! All of you——"

"What do you mean, Betty?" panted her fiery chum. "You know what she has been cruel enough to do—the rotter!"

"Yes, but——"

"Oh, out of my way, Betty! The girl has escaped us far too often; so now——"

The rest was a babel of hostile cries and booing, whilst Betty was simply swept aside by the surging mass.

Polly it was who flung that study-door wide open. Zillah was in the room, making a great show of being indifferent to any feeling against her. She was over by the window, looking at a newspaper which she must have acquired downstairs.

Striding across, Polly snatched the newspaper from her and then flapped it across her head.

Other girls had crowded in. Betty, by sheer pushing and struggling, got to the front just as Polly flung the paper in Zillah's face.

"Say," Zillah scowled, "do you folks want me to——"

"We want you to learn to keep your mouth shut, where anybody like Miss Merrick is concerned!" Polly shouted, amidst confirming cries from the rest. "You sneak! You low-down, heartless sneak!"

"Is that so!" laughed Zillah. "Well, I guess you're going to be sorry, some of you, if you aren't careful to keep YOUR mouths shut—see?"

"Meaning that you will tell Miss Somerfield?" Bunny scornfully cried. "Tell her!"



"Yes, bekas—boo—"

"Tell her," Polly carried on the fierce challenge, "that we called you to your face—a sneak and a rotter! And if she wants to know why—"

"But she won't!" dinned some of the others. "Boo, sneak! She knows it's what you are!"

"Now, stop!" Betty called out, striding between Zillah and the infuriated crowd. "Girls—"

"No, Betty—no! You stand away—"

"But listen!" she insisted, the only calm one there. "You don't seem to realise. Zillah has done what none of us would ever dream of doing, because she is—different."

"I should think she is—different!" Bunny exclaimed. "But don't ask us to make allowance for her!"

"Yes, Betty—yes!" It was uproar for a few moments. Then:

"With us it's not a case of whether Donald Merrick ought to go to prison or not!" Polly raged loudly. "All we are thinking of is Miss Merrick! Our own Form-mistress, one of the best—fond of her brother, of course she is, whether he's right or wrong!"

"I know," Betty voiced appeasingly. "But Zillah here doesn't see it at all as we see it. She hasn't been long enough at Morcove to become as fond of Miss Merrick as we are."

"You're standing up for her, are you, then—against us?" several girls gasped. "Betty!"

"I'm saying that this is like taking the law into your own hands, and it won't do."

More uproar.

"I'm captain," Betty felt bound to say, for those words of Miss Somerfield's, in regard to Zillah, were still echoing in her mind. "I do make allowance for your feelings. Very likely Donald Merrick will now be caught, thanks to information given by Zillah to the police. And I feel, as keenly as any of you, that it has only made it a thousand times worse for poor Miss Merrick. But this doesn't do any good—"

"Oh, say," Zillah struck in with bravado, "I don't mind 'em letting off steam. I guess I can take care of myself, without needing any Form captain to take care of me! Anyway"—with sudden venom for Betty—"you can quit, right now!"

Betty looked the strange girl straight in the eyes; and there was sudden silence.

"It's not what you want me to do, Zillah Raine," said Betty quietly. "It's what it is my duty to do, as captain."

"But this is my study," flared out the American girl, clenching her hands, "and I'll say I don't choose to have you here, showing off as captain—see? So when I say quit, you c'n just beat it.



"The boat's been used just lately and wound back into the cave!" Betty said excitedly. Polly nodded. "That's why Miss Merrick came to the school last night," she answered, "to get the key of the boathouse!"

see? Well?" she quivered, as Betty stood unmoved.

Next instant, with a cry that proclaimed insensate rage, Zillah made a tigerish spring at the captain.

Some of the other girls gave little screams; such was their utter horror at the attack upon one who had even been standing between her and their own anger.

Betty did not come in for any blow, but she was thrown off her balance by having Zillah lunge against her. The crowded study made it all the harder to save herself from falling. She went down, with Zillah sprawling over her. But in a moment, of course, Polly and one or two more had the raging girl dragged away and held.

Then it was seen that Betty was too dazed to be able to rise unaided. She had, it transpired afterwards, struck her head against a chair in falling. Chums of hers helped her up and got her out of the room, from which Zillah had already been hustled.

Those who did this for Betty, took her to Study No. 12, and there they made her stay, whilst Zillah was being chased downstairs.

"And we would have ragged her study whilst we were about it," Polly puffed, when presently she and others got back to Betty. "But it's more Pam's study than Zillah's."

"Yes, sweendle! Bekas eet would have been gorjus—"



"Would it have done any good?" Betty quietly submitted, getting up. As Judy, Madge, and Tess had barred the way out to her, during the last five minutes, there had been nothing for Betty to do but sit there.

"Anyway," Bunny sparkled, "it has made me feel better in my mind! Any bruise, Betty dear?"

"Oh, nothing to speak of."

"Fancy her flying at you like that—you!" Polly fumed. "At a very time when you were saying 'Hands off her!' to all of us!"

"Yes, bai Jove! Dweadful geal, weally!"

"Why did you say it, Betty?" asked Bunny.

"Not because I wanted to," was the faintly smiled answer. "You see, Bunny, there are times when I almost wish I wasn't captain!"

### Gull Island!

**B**UT, anyway, Betty, as captain, was to come in for one pleasant task, by way of a change, later in the day.

Just after dark she had to go down to what had been Miss Merrick's room, to put in an hour or so with Ethel Courtway.

As temporary mistress, Morcove's head girl had been instructed to take over Miss Merrick's private room, and she had asked Betty to meet her there this evening, so that they could go into Form affairs together.

Betty, punctual to the minute, made up the fire. Ethel, coming in late, added more coals. A believer in comfort, was Ethel, and not too much of a believer in exerting oneself over routine matters. In no hurry to tackle points connected with the class-room side of school life, she fell into talk with Betty about the Merrick affair, as it now appeared to stand.

"Nothing in the wireless news, just now, Betty. I suppose we would have been told if there had been an arrest. We must listen-in again at half-past nine."

"I wonder if she is with him—helping him to dodge the police," Betty murmured. "I hope so."

"Oh, so do I! A brother is a brother. Well, what about a spot of the work we came here to do, Betty?"

They left their fireside chairs and sat down together at the table, and for a quarter of an hour or so there was useful collaboration. Then they needed to refer to a book of Miss Merrick's which Ethel had used during the day, but had left downstairs in the class-room.

Betty ran off to get it, meeting no one as she descended to the ground floor. It was "prep" time in all the studies, and she crossed a deserted hall, knowing that she would find the class-room itself lifeless and unlighted.

But, in the very instant that she reached the class-room doorway, certain sounds came to her from the darkness of the room—scurrying sounds, as of someone trying to be out of sight when the light should be switched on.

As she could only think of some Form-mate being the cause, up to more or less innocent pranks, she reached a hand to the switch in no startled way. And so the shock was all the greater for her when, in the sudden blaze of electric light, she saw a thrown-up sash of one of the windows, and somebody there—a woman—hastily climbing out over the sill.

Miss Merrick!

The instantaneous and horrifying recognition almost caused Betty to cry out.

She was saved from doing so by her usual presence of mind, together with an instinctive desire to befriend the ex-mistress. One whom she still thought of so highly and so lovingly; a young woman who must be in what desperate straits now, or would she have been discovered doing a thing like this!

So, after letting only a loud gasp pass her lips, she switched off the lights far quicker than she had switched them on, then took a stride, to be able to close the door behind her.

Her eyes were not leaving that pitiable figure as it writhed about in its hasty exit over the window-sill. She saw Miss Merrick's face for an instant, and it was like a white mask in the darkness. Then it and the darkly clad figure vanished.

Betty rushed across to the open window. Was she mistaken, or did an imploring "Sh!" come to her from the one who was now hastening away?

Be that as it might, a few seconds later the Form captain discerned the fugitive figure, and it would have been easy for her to go over the sill and start in pursuit; but again presence of mind dictated wiser action.

After a minute at a standstill she drew down the window-sash very softly, then went across to switch on the lights again. Breathless and a-shake, she looked for the book they needed upstairs, and went away with it.

"Got it, Betty? Good!" Ethel genially welcomed back her helpful junior, whilst poking the fire. "Hallo, though!" And surprise caused the poker to be thrown down with a clatter. "You look like a ghost, Betty!"

"I feel as if I had seen one," was the panted answer. "But—it was Miss Merrick."

"Who?"

"She has entered the schoolhouse to-night, Ethel. I put her to flight by going into our class-room. She was off in a flash—over a window-sill. I didn't go after her."

"And you did right," Ethel promptly nodded, looking very grave. "Um! So now we know. She is helping him."

"They're both in hiding in the neighbourhood—that's what it means? And she needed something that she knew she could get from the school?"

"What else could it mean, kid? Well, good luck to her! Betty, that brother may be a scoundrel; but—what a sister!"

Ethel took the book from Betty then, as if nothing more was to be said. But Morcove's head girl went to the window and peered out, and afterwards drifted about the room in a very reflective state, so that Betty was quite sure the senior was wondering—anything to be done?

"You come from Lancashire, don't you, Betty?" Ethel smiled at last.

"Yes, Ethel."

"And what do they say in Lancashire, Betty?"

"Sometimes they say—'Say nowt!'"

"Good working rule, kid. Of course you'll want to tell your chums. But it needn't go beyond the walls of Study No. 12."

Nor did it.

Only in Study No. 12, that night, was this latest sensation discussed—in very guarded tones. At news time, in the wireless-room, scores of girls flocked to listen, wondering if they were to hear that Donald Merrick had been arrested. But only Betty & Co. suffered, with Ethel Courtway, special pangs of anxiety, due to the tragic fact—known to nobody else—that poor Miss Merrick was certainly sharing her brother's hunted life.



Had he been caught, she must surely have been arrested as well! But the news bulletin was silent altogether about the affair.

Morcove went up to bed in due time, and then there were those few girls to lie awake longer than all others, because they felt positive that Donald Merrick, in Exeter last Saturday, was now in hiding—perhaps only a few miles from the school!

But where—where was he likely to have found safety?

Bunny Trevor, during that first discussion in Study No. 12, had staggered her chums by suddenly wondering if Donald Merrick might be in hiding in the schoolhouse itself!

To that sensational idea, however, level-headed ones had soon said a decisive "No! Impossible!" Where, then—where else?

There was the great tract of moorland country, and there was the seashore with its caves.

They longed to find out, because they longed to get in touch with Miss Merrick.

Just as she, in her undying love for a brother—criminal though he might be—was helping him, so they must help her whom they cared for so dearly. That was how Study No. 12 had, quite simply, reasoned.

But no attempt to, as it were, "comb" the moor, could be made until they had at least three or four hours for being out of bounds. The seashore, though—that was a different proposition altogether.

And so, next morning, four at least of the chums were down very early, setting off for the seashore whilst other girls were only just awakening at the call of first bell.

A lot of useful scouting could be done along the shore in a mere half-hour.

"Especially if we divide so as to take both ways at once," Betty remarked.

She, with Polly and Bunny and Madge, made a hasty descent of the zig-zag path which was Morcove's nearest way down to the cliff-walled seashore. As soon as they were on the shingle, two of the girls set off in an easterly direction, and the other two in a westerly.

Betty and Polly were the pair who took this latter course.

The tide was high, and, although only a moderate breeze was blowing, some big waves were pounding along the shingle. But the captain and her present companion had no fear of being held up by any patch of yeasty surf reaching to the very foot of the cliffs. Only during the gales, when the sea heaved itself into towering waves, was the way along the shore cut off.

Some jackdaws who nested in the face of the rugged cliffs kept up a great outcry, and a handsome gull or two, winging over the creaming waves, seemed also to be vocally resentful at the loss of accustomed solitude.

It was certainly very early for anyone to be about. Both girls were impressed with a loneliness down here that was, they realised, so favourable to that security which Miss Merrick must have longed to obtain for her brother.

And it was along the route Betty and Polly had taken that the cliffs held several natural caverns, two or three of them with freak niches and recesses which took some finding out. Study No. 12 had long since enjoyed the thrill of a first discovery of such secret places, the existence of which was now known, most likely, to Miss Merrick. It was not so certain, however, that everything about the caverns was known to the police!

But first the captain and her best of chums came to a cave that was really a most straightforward affair. It was one which, only a couple of hundred yards from the foot of the zig-zag, had been used for years by Morcove School for housing a motor-boat and certain "gear" only wanted during the swimming season.

Recently the entrance to this cave had been fitted with lattice gates that were kept locked. This was not simply a precaution against pilfering; it also prevented any reckless girls belonging to the school from getting into mischief with the boat.

Close to those locked gates stepped Betty and Polly now, to peer between the wooden slats into the gloom beyond.

That this cave might have become a hiding-place for the wanted man they were not for a moment supposing. It did not go far in, and they could see to the very end of it from where they now stood.

Only a normal interest in anything that was strictly "Morcove" accounted for this moment's pausing. They turned away as soon as that, meaning to hasten along to the next cave—one that did, they know, hold great possibilities.

And then Betty stopped dead, with such a catching of her breath that her chum gave her a wondering look.

"Polly! I say! Do you see?"

"See what?"

"Look at the beach just here, in front of the gates!" Betty spoke on, excitably pointing. "That line that is scoured in the shingle—the boat's been used just lately, and afterwards wound back into the cave by the winch."

"But—my goodness, Betty, at that rate——"

"We needn't go any further—no!" Polly's gasping utterance was answered. "The boat—our school boat, that's in the cave now; she and he had it out!"

"That's why Miss Merrick came to the school last night," Polly said. "To get the key of the boathouse. It hangs on that board with a lot of other keys, in a passage off the hall."

"Is it back on the nail now—that key? If it isn't, Polly, then Miss Merrick still has it. That would mean, she may need to come to the cave again. So by keeping a look-out for her here——"

"Oh, come along back to the school!" Polly clamoured. "That's the first thing to be done—see about the key! Where are our chums?"

After running back to the foot of the cliff-path, they were able to make Bunny and Madge hear their cries. Answering "Cooees!" came, to tell Betty and Polly that the other two were hurrying back.

"About the boat, Polly," broke out the captain, whilst they waited. "It must have been used to take him to some place where he could be left. Miss Merrick must have brought the boat back all by herself. So he and she are not together all the time. She is secretly in the neighbourhood, I take it. But he—— Well?"

"Gull Island, Betty!"

"What! Oh!"

And they both stood silent after that, staring away over the sea, all a-flash in the early morning sunshine; gazing right away to the horizon.

Gull Island! Only a rocky islet really, uninhabited and unvisited except at holiday times, when many a joyous boating-party landed to picnic on some grassy knoll above the low, wave-lapped cliffs. Gull Island, a mere, tiny blur as seen from here, out there in the open sea!



"They'll not get him if he's there—and it looks as if he must be," Betty muttered, still gazing across the waters. "He is safe, then—"

"In spite of Zillah's sneaking to the police!" Polly said fiercely.

"Before the News—"

FIFTEEN minutes later all four girls were back at the schoolhouse; and it was as they had expected. The key of the boat-cave was missing from its nail.

That its disappearance would be noticed, when the board held so many other seldom-wanted keys, the chums could not believe.

So, in their good-will towards the ex-mistress, they had only to hold their tongues and all would be well!

In a quiet moment, Betty confided the discovery about the boat-cave to Ethel Courtway. But to all other girls not a word was said.

The head girls' own pitying attitude, in regard to Miss Merrick, showed itself in a marked reticence. She neither warned Betty to "leave well alone," nor encouraged her and her chums to pursue certain activities during the day. She was, in fact, sporting enough to leave them to do as they pleased—"and best of luck," as perhaps a dry smile of hers implied.

But they did notice that, out of school hours, unexpected facilities came their way for which they had to thank Ethel.

It would have been difficult for Betty & Co. to keep an eye in secret upon the seashore, during the day, if the head girl had not been such a "benign neutral."

Both before and after dinner she had the Form at practice-games on the field. As she was such a jolly good sort, and could carelessly supply most helpful hints, there was no grumbling. On both occasions, two or three of the Study No. 12 chums were exempted; but this caused no surprise.

The letting-off was done in such a way that it appeared as if the absentees—one of them the captain—had been detailed for special duties indoors. Ethel could be excused wanting a bit of fagging done for her when she herself had been called upon to take on such a full-time job!

Zillah in particular was being fairly kept on the leash by the acting-mistress—to the great joy of the Form as a whole. At any rate, girls were gleefully saying, it was some slight punishment for the sneak that she was being publicly taken in hand by Ethel—the very senior with whom Zillah had claimed to have such a friendship!

But the best turn of all that the head girl did Study No. 12 came at two o'clock.

She needed a couple of girls to go into Barncombe to get something for her. As Betty and Polly had been "forced" to miss games, they might have the treat of being excused from class to go upon the errand!

They went, taking as long as they pleased. On the outward journey, they left their bicycles on the grass at the top of the cliffs and raced down the zig-zag. But it was a case of "nothing doing," and the same result attended a second flitting down to the seashore, on their way back from the town.

"Rotten!" was Polly's grimaced comment as she and Betty reclaimed their bicycles once again to ride on to the school. "I had big hopes for the afternoon, Betty!"

"So had I. If Miss Merrick should need to creep to the cave, it is certain she will try to make it some time when she reckons all girls are in class."

"But we are going to keep watch after tea—right on until dark?"

"Oh, rather! Take turns; much better than our being out of bounds all at the same time. Besides," Betty added, "some of us want to be around when the six o'clock news comes in on the wireless."

"There'll be a crowd in the wireless-room this evening, Betty!"

And that prediction of Polly's was fulfilled.

When she and the captain got to the wireless-room, at five to six, it was already thronged. During the brief wait for the time-signal there was a big inflow of other girls, and the excited talk was considerable.

Even when the pip-squeak had sounded, the jabber-jabber still went on. Most of the talk was due to uncertainty as to whether there would be even one word about the Merrick affair.

Some girls argued that the broadcast news hardly ever dealt with crime. Others argued that it made all the difference, a wanted man being in hiding.

Then came the announcer's voice:

"Before the news, here is an S O S—"

The crowd of schoolgirls hushed instantly, although it seemed as if it must be a minute or two before THE news item came—if it came at all!

"The S O S is for Merrick—"

At that name, coming into the S O S itself, every listener here gave a violent start.

"Will Donald Merrick go at once to Barnbridge House, Gaydon Park, London, where Miss Phyllis Ashby is lying dangerously ill as the result of a motoring accident—"

Girls, packed shoulder to shoulder in Morcove's wireless-room, gasped aloud, and many an excited look was exchanged. Go to that address—how could he when he was wanted by the police! But—'sh, listen!

"Donald Merrick is the man for whom the police have been holding a warrant of arrest. We are asked to state that Donald Merrick has now nothing to fear. On the contrary, if he will apply to the police in any district, they will do all in their power to assist him. His innocence of the charge made against him has been completely established."

BETTY and Polly pushed their way out of the room.

They had no need to say anything to each other. It was a time for action, not words. An S O S—that meant a matter of life or death! And, unless they were utterly mistaken in their belief, they knew where Donald Merrick could be found. The island!

Then, as they were hurrying away, Ethel Courtway suddenly put herself with them. Her looks showed that she realised the changed situation and was all for immediate action.

"Going down to the shore, you two? Some of your chums will be there?"

"Bunny, Madge, and Tess—should be."

"Betty, you must stay back and explain everything to Miss Somerfield. I'll go along down with Polly. Tell Miss Somerfield we are going to get the boat out."

"Right-ho!"

Betty did not make a face at being told to find the headmistress. If others were to play a more adventurous part, that didn't matter. Nothing mattered, so long as they all, like a team of well-wishers, pulled together.

Polly and the head girl easily made their way



out of bounds without being noticed. The wireless-room was remaining as crowded as ever. By some hard running, senior and junior took little more than ten minutes in getting down to the seashore under the cliffs.

By giving some hailing cries during the descent of the zig-zag, they had Bunny and Madge and Tess awaiting them on the beach, close to the cave. The three girls had, of course, been in concealment when the eager cries told them that the secret watch was now "off."

"We've got to open those cave-gates," Ethel said, after enlightening the trio who had been lurking around in secret. "Break them open, that's all, as we haven't the key."

"Easily done!" Bunny commented.

Like the others, she was in happy excitement over the sudden call for activity.

They all crashed along the shingle to the cave, two or three of them picking up weighty lumps of sea-worn rock on the way. As soon as the

conceal it. And it was the familiar figure of—Miss Merrick!

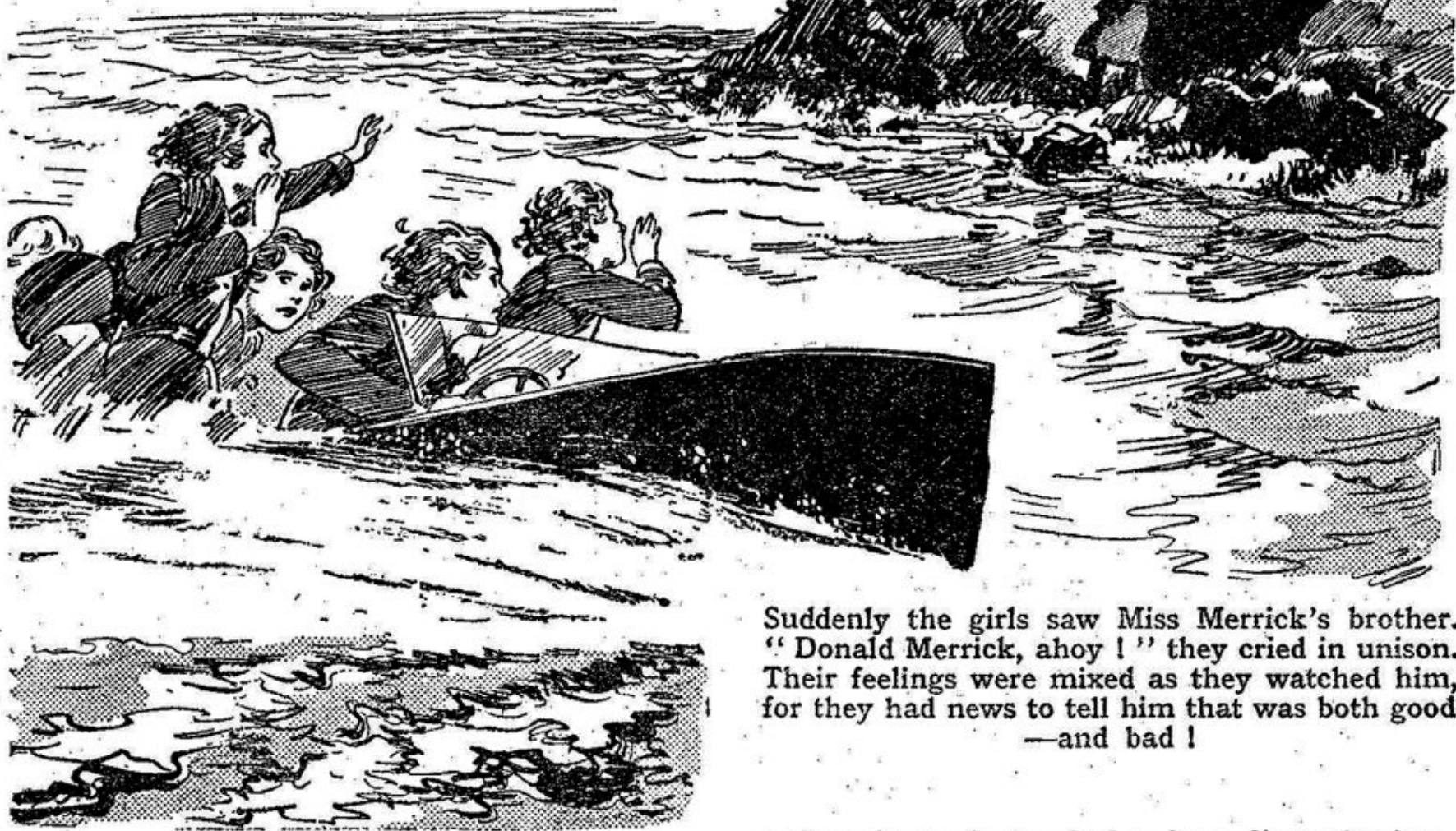
Polly broke the dramatic silence with a sudden yell of understanding.

"Gosh, you've been in here all the time! You locked yourself in—"

"Thing that never occurred to us!" Bunny gasped. "But, Miss Merrick—"

"Yes, it's all right!" Ethel put in quickly, for Miss Merrick's state was one of despair. "Don't be alarmed!"

And they told her the latest news, witnessing



Suddenly the girls saw Miss Merrick's brother. "Donald Merrick, ahoy!" they cried in unison. Their feelings were mixed as they watched him, for they had news to tell him that was both good—and bad!

locked gates to the cavern were reached, Ethel's calm nod approved battering-ram operations.

Bash! Smash! CRASH!

Polly and Bunny were the two who first went to work with furious energy. If they tired before the gates gave in, then two of their chums would take on.

But, after a few moments, an extra-violent cr-r-rash! by Polly's lump of rock did the trick.

The lock burst, and both gates were instantly dragged open to let all five girls rush into the cave.

The roomy motor-boat, high and dry on the sandy floor of the cave, was tarpaulined over, to protect the engine from dust and damp. As the first thing to be done, the girls started to claw the waterproof sheet away; but it was only half off when they each fell back a step or so in staggering amazement.

Up from the boat's centre scrambled a figure that had been crouching with the tarpaulin to

such a change in her looks—from dismay to joy—as they were never likely to forget.

Yet there was activity, even while such thrilling news was being given. Between them, the juniors were lugging the boat out, getting it on its grinding run down to the water's edge.

Then Miss Somerfield turned up with Betty.

Such was the sense of urgency, the headmistress let only a look proclaim her feelings in regard to the Form-mistress, whilst eagerly asking:

"Is he on Gull Island—is he?"

"Yes!"

It was enough—that monosyllabic answer. Moreover's headmistress instantly nodded to the girls to "carry on!" And so, five seconds later, the boat was afloat in the surf.

Some were already on board, and of these Ethel and Tess were getting the engine started-up. Polly and Bunny and Miss Merrick—they were wading knee-deep to give a last helpful thrust of the boat into deeper water before clambering aboard.

Then the engine roared to life. Those two girls



and their mistress climbed in expertly and scrambled to places that awaited them.

Stern-first, out into the cresting waves went the boat, receiving a frequent slop of water which the juniors greeted with cheers.

Then, at the very right moment, Ethel put the motor into forward speed, whilst the rudder went hard over to bring the boat right round, heading for the open sea and—Gull Island!

“Ahoy!”

OFF and away!

And so now the headmistress, after a period of silent, smiling approval of all that was being done, could turn to Miss Merrick to enter into talk with her.

“Your brother is innocent!”

“That is no news to me,” Miss Merrick smiled. “For he told me so, himself, days ago. But it’s

wonderful to think that his need for hiding from the police is at an end! He was resigned to the idea of going to penal servitude, if he were caught.”

“Although he was innocent?”

“Yes,” Polly and the other girls heard Miss Merrick answer. “To clear himself, he would have had to deal a killing blow at the young lady he loves. No, they were not engaged. He has never even told her of his love—”

“She is the Phyllis Ashby who has asked for him?”

“Yes. The daughter of his employer. She is Mr. Ashby’s only child. Her mother is dead. Phyllis has always thought all the world of her father, as my brother Donald has known. A week ago he became faced with a terrible choice. I do not think I need say more than that, Miss Somerfield.”

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN. No. 791. Vol. 31.

Week ending April 4th, 1936.

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## My Dear Readers

**S**TILL they come! Letters in the great “Pam Willoughby” controversy, I mean. And so interesting are they, that I feel that I must quote from another batch, so that you may read what others have to say on the matter:

“... First and foremost, what I most admire about Pam Willoughby is her wish to be just the same as other girls. She is not the sort to want to proclaim the fact that her parents are wealthy. . . . In other words, she lives up to her name of ‘The Little Lady of Swanlake,’ and is certainly one of the most popular girls in the Fourth Form. . . .”—“Daisy” (Mount Pleasant, Co. Antrim).

“... Pam has always seemed natural in her ways. . . . I think girls are prigs who swank about their position and wealth. Pam, I think, is quite right in wanting to be like other girls. . . . I think Pam sweet and kind, especially to animals. . . .”—Muriel Wyatt (Purley, Surrey).

“... To read about a girl so calm as Pam is refreshing and delightful. As for not helping the Study 12 chums, well, I think that is quite untrue. . . .”—Elsie Butler (Oldham, Lanes.).

“... If Pam did take advantage of her fortunate position in life, and definitely stated that she was above the other girls and therefore should be treated differently, she would be very snobbish. . . . In fact, I think that Pam is the most likeable member of the Study 12 ‘chummery.’ . . .”—“An Admirer of Pam” (Golders Green, N.W.11).

“... It is true that Pam does not have brilliant ideas, but she cannot have or do everything. . . . Surely it is very nice to be very calm in a crisis; far better than getting into a fluster, and, after all, there are some people like that. . . .”—Doreen Horlock (Enfield).

“... I think that Pam could be a little more warm-hearted. She appears to be a little on the cold side, not unkind, but still rather cold. . . . Pam seems to stick to her friends. . . . I should imagine she is rather clever. . . . I personally prefer Polly Linton best of all Study 12. . . .”—Maria Kamlos (Temple Fortune, N.W.11).

“... Pam may be of a sensitive nature, and she might feel the girls would think she wanted to show off if she treated them to an expensive outing. If this is so, I quite agree with her wanting to be ‘just the same as other girls.’ . . . Pam is ladylike in her ways; that is why she always does the right thing, and behaves herself excellently. . . . Not talking about her

ideas does not mean to say she does not have any. . . .”—Sheila Fox (Hanwell, W.7).

“... The girls, I should think all adore Pam as she is such a calm friend. I do not really see why she must spend all her money on friends. . . . Pam does not like to swank, for if she did she would always be taking rich friends out to tea. . . . I should call her an unselfish, sporting girl. . . .”—Audrey Foulsham (Horden, Norwich).

“... During the four years in which I have taken SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN I have never found any reasons for calling Pam a prig. . . . She is a very good-natured, kind-hearted girl, and one who possesses courage. . . .”—Madge Pearson (Newton-le-Willows, Yorks.).

“... I personally rather like Pam. . . . She is very sweet-natured and unselfish, too. . . . She is rather aggravatingly good sometimes. . . . Your reader has only thought of Pam’s bad points, which is hardly fair, because she has some very good points. . . .”—Kathleen Bishop (Effingham, Surrey).

“... I think Pam is rather charming. . . . I think Pam has something better to do with her money than on giving feasts. . . . She would give to some worthy cause where it is really needed. . . . Pam is most certainly not a prig. . . .”—Pamela Easton (Highgate, N.6).

“... Some girls with rich parents are very ‘snobby.’ Pam isn’t a snob. . . . I think Pam is a charming girl, and will make a very beautiful mistress of Swanlake some day. . . .”—Joan Clifton (Lacey).

“... To be calm in peril is a great gift, and it is not many people who possess it. . . . Pam always helps her chums and smiles through her troubles. . . . The stories concerning Betty & Co. would not be complete without her. . . .”—“A Constant Reader” (Walton Park, Clevedon).

Now my best thanks to the following for most interesting letters on the subject. I am sorry I have not space to quote from them all:

Kathleen Buck (Tooting, S.W.17); Irene Mumford (Cwmndare, Aberdare); Violet Dolby (Glasgow, E.1); “Five Lancaster Schoolgirls” (Scotforth, Lancaster); Joyce Webb (Warminster, Wilts); Patricia Cornes (Folkestone); Jean Thornton (Atherstone, Warwick); Doreen Davenport (Swinton, Manchester); Myrtle Halliday (Portishead, nr. Bristol); Patricia Pearson (Gedling, Notts).

In next Tuesday’s issue of SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN will appear the first of a grand new series of Morcove holiday stories, entitled: “ADOPTED FOR THE HOLIDAYS.” Written, of course, by ever-popular Marjorie Stanton, it is just the kind of story you will thoroughly enjoy. Complete stories of the Crimson Shadows and her Harum-scarum Highness, and long instalments of our two splendid serials make up a programme which you must not miss.

All good wishes,

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.



The quiet finish was followed by an appalled "Oh!" from all who had heard the words. Then Miss Somerfield exclaimed:

"You mean—there have been no embezzlements? The girl's own father has had the money—fraudulently taken it out of his own business? And your brother realised that such a thing, if ever it became known to the daughter—"

"Donald is like that," Miss Merrick said, her eyes a-shine with a proud look. "For him to love that girl was enough for him to be ready to bear anything for her sake. And you must not think he was forgetting me, either. I would never have been involved in the disgrace that he looked like having to bear, only—"

"No, that was Zillah Raine's doing!" Polly angrily exploded.

Miss Somerfield, glancing at the girls, nodded.

"Yes, I know!"

And in that tight-lipped murmur there was sufficient assurance of how Zillah Raine would be dealt with after this.

The sea roughened as the boat sped farther out from Morcove's rugged coastline. All who were on board had eyes only for the island, as every moment's throb-throbbing of the engines brought it nearer.

Would Donald Merrick be got to London in time?

It was appalling to think of all that would have to be done with such desperate haste, even when he had been brought off the island.

At any rate, Morcove was rendering vital service. If Study No. 12 had not been in a position to act at once, when the S O S came through,

nothing done by others could have been done in time.

"Here, let's try shouting," Polly presently exclaimed. "We are near enough now to do some good work that way. Altogether then Donald Merrick—ahoy!"

They framed their mouths with their hands and kept up the appealing cries.

"Donald Merrick! Donald Mer—rick! Hi!"

Some of them were kneeling up in the boat as, violently rising and dipping to the waves, it sped onwards.

Again, and frantically, they all shouted; and then came Miss Merrick's joyful:

"I see him now! Look—look!"

She waved a handkerchief, and wild cheers went up from the girls as they themselves saw him.

Such a pitiable, lonely figure—there he was, running to where, along that strip of the island's tricky shore, the boat must finally work in to take him off.

**S**UCH feverish anxiety as all were experiencing—it knew no relief even when, a few minutes later, the boat was forging back to the mainland with Donald Merrick on board.

That night, Morcove knew that he had been rushed in Miss Somerfield's car to Exeter. Miss Merrick was with him. They had caught an express to London.

Yet the suspense was as great as ever, and it was not dispelled until another day had dawned upon Morcove's own little world of school life.

Then came the glad news. Donald Merrick had been in time, after all—and, more joyful still, Phyllis Ashby was recovering from the injuries received in her motoring accident, serious though they had been. She would live, and would live to become—his wife.

"It seems that she had been half out of her mind with worry, because he was wanted by the police," Betty & Co. were told by Ethel, who knew a great deal by now. "That was how she met with the accident, as her father realised, and so he decided to clear the young man."

"But didn't that mean Mr. Ashby's having to tell his daughter that he himself had had the money?"

"It is only known outside the room where she lies," was the grave answer. "Sooner or later she will have to find out. But by that time, let us hope, much will have happened to soften the blow."

Betty spoke after a full minute's silence.

"I should think," she said, "Phyllis Ashby will easily be able to forgive and forget. Because her father did, after all, do the right thing. He could have kept silent, and the guilt would never have been brought home to him. But he chose, after all, to tell the world."

"And it's not such a bad world, either—bit imperfect, that's all!" Morcove's head girl offered her opinion cheerfully. "Miss Merrick will be back again to-day—and—"

"And Pam—very shortly!" put in Polly happily. "My hat—what a welcome we'll give her!"

"Just to make up," Bunny nodded, "for all Zillah did."

And even the reference to that hated girl's name could not disguise the fact that Morcove was happy. Two of its favourites were returning. Problems were solved; anxiety was over; in fact, to quote the Form's own priceless duffer:

"Gweat wejoicings, geals!"

## Easter by the Sea

with all its fun and jollity, its freedom from lessons and school routine. Morcove and Grange-moor together again in holiday happiness—and adventure.

Be sure to read the first of a fine new series about these famous characters:

## "ADOPTED FOR THE HOLIDAYS"

By MARJORIE STANTON

In next Tuesdays' issue of  
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