

YOUR FAVOURITE WEEKLY

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN

No. 688. Vol. 27.
Week ending
APRIL 14th, 1934.

EVERY
TUESDAY.

2d

DON'T STAY AT THE
CROMLECH MANOR HOTEL



EVERY DIS-COMFORT

~~Turn Left~~ It's less than a mile
BACK **TROUBLE**

~~BY DANCING~~ IN THE BARN
RATS →



WHOSE WORK ?

An incident from this
week's fine complete
Morcove holiday story.

"MORCOVE'S MANOR HOUSE MYSTERY" Complete Within

A LONG COMPLETE MORCOVE HOLIDAY STORY



MORCOVE'S House

Manor MYSTERY

By Marjorie Stanton

WHAT is the matter with Dave Cardew? Why is he behaving in such a strange fashion—seeming not to care that his conduct threatens to cast gloom upon a novel holiday that should have been all happiness? Betty and Co. are naturally perplexed, for hitherto Dave has always been so dependable.

Betty & Co. Mean Business

FROM the old carpenter's shed at Cromlech Manor came a busy sawing and hammering.

It was just as if two or three sturdy men were at work in there, carrying out an urgent task.

But Polly Linton, that madcap of Morcove School, was doing all the sawing.

Betty Barton, in term-time the captain of the Form, was using chisel and hammer.

Other members of the Study 12 "chummary" were just as busy, some sorting out nails, others searching for screws, others plying screwdriver, plane, or gimlet.

Betty & Co., in fact, had the place to themselves.

Ankle deep were the girls in sweet-scented shavings. Sleeves were rolled up, aprons were being worn. And how very professional Polly, of all girls, looked, with a pencil behind one ear!

Tap, tap, tap—bang, bang! went the hammer. Bang!

Rip, rip, rip! went the bright saw, and soon another billet fell plop into the shavings on the floor, leaving a piece of "four by three" the exact length required.

"That's another!" Polly gaily announced, laying aside the saw so that she could take up the weighty strut from the bench and place it with the rest. "Look out, Paula!"

"Owp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nearly got you that time!" grinned the madcap.

"Yes, bai Jove!" exclaimed elegant Paula Creel. "I hov a great desire to healp in the good wovk, geals; but—"

"Nails, Paula! Come on!"
"Wight-ho, Betty deah! Wather wusty ones this time!"

"They'll do! Anybody got the time now?"

"Half-past two," called out Helen Craig.

"As late as that?" yelled Polly.

But most of her chums seemed to feel that, although time had sped, good progress had been made.

"Oh, we'll manage!" Betty declared. Bang, bang, bang! "Get the whole thing off and away on the truck in a few minutes now—"

"And have it erected by tea-time," said Judy Cardew, with an optimism that drew loud cheers.

Suddenly that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, appeared at the sunny doorway bearing a well-laden tray—glasses, a crystal jug full to the brim with lemonade, and some cakes and biscuits.

"Bekas spell-o, everybody!"

"Spell-o be blowed!" exclaimed Polly, who always had to adopt a playfully scornful attitude towards Morcove's royal junior. "Hop it! But leave the tray."

"Not ze bit of eet! Bekas I want my share," the notoriously hungry one yelled. "After helping—"

"Helping! A fine lot of help you have been!" said Polly, becoming the first, after all, to sample the lemonade. "Cheerio, mates!" she said. "A pipe o' bacey, and I'd be O.K.!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Phew, I'm warm!" Helen realised, pausing for a breather.

"Such glorious weather!" Madge Minden commented. "Who would think that there are only the Easter hols? Just like summer!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Quite tiring."

"Don't you talk about being tired!" Polly grimly warned the languid one. "If you've got nothing better to do, Paula, you'd better go and find the carpenter's hand-truck."

"Er—twuck?"

"Yes, truck. A thing with wheels. You know what a wheel is, don't you?"

"Yes, wather!"

"Intelligent child! Scoot, then, and—"

"But I wather imagined that some of the boys would return to lend a hand with the carting!"

It was only Polly's make-believe, but the mention of "the boys" caused her to snatch up a mallet and hold it threateningly in front of Paula's nose.

"Ow!"

"Then be careful! You know very well I won't have the boys mentioned! As it is, by digging out holes for the foundations, down there beside the main road, they're doing far more than I ever wanted them to do! It was *our* idea, and why should they have any part in it?"

Pam Willoughby, after a sip of lemonade, set down the glass and moved towards the doorway.

"I'm going to see how Tess is getting on in the paint-shop."

This latter was another shed, hard by the carpentry "shop." A few moments, and Pam was in the paint-shop, addressing a serene inquiry to Tess Trelawney.

"Any luck, Tess?"

"Oh, not so bad! Quite good, in fact."

Tess, the born artist of the "chummery," was rummaging amongst a lot of old tins of paint.

"It's a tall order," she said, "to expect a girl to do a nice, attractive sign-board for a country hotel with only the scrapings from pots of paint used for carts and wagons! But I'll do my best."

"Of course you will, Tess."

"So long as you all leave me alone at it," stipulated Tess. She was temperamental, and became a little dictatorial when concentrating upon any work of art. "I don't want a whole gang watching!"

"You shall be left in peace," Pam promised.

"We won't come near until it's finished. Then we shall see—oh, I know!—a really beautiful sign-board, quite an ornament to the countryside. It's surprising, Tess, how attractive a coloured sign can be made to look. No need at all for anything ugly."

"If a thing is ugly it doesn't attract."

"Yet people do spend a lot of money on ugly hoardings," Pam deplored. "Yes, well, the sign-board for the Cromlech Manor Hotel is going to be the right thing!"

"In three colours, apparently," Tess grimaced.

"Look at this blue, Pam! Look at this pillar-box red! And there's a brush for you! Look at it!"

Pam laughed. She knew that Tess was at her crustiest when keen for the work in hand.

"Your own colour-box will help you, Tess dear. I say, you'll be ready with those paint-pots and all else when we get the truck round? Then the whole lot can go down in one trip."

"I'll try," sighed Tess.

Pam discreetly effaced herself. She was midway back to the other shed when a sudden joyous commotion caused her to face round to discover the cause.

Across the cobbled yard came two boys, trundling a large hand-cart. Jack Linton, fun-loving brother of Morcove's madcap, was one of the boys—seemed to be the one who was making the hand-cart execute weird antics on its way to the shed.

His companion was, perhaps, prevented from countering these antics by reason of his being so very fat.

"Hi, hi, hi!" shouted Jack, as if it were a fire-engine coming. "Now then, boys!"

Jack always addressed his sister and her girl chums as if they were so many pals belonging to his own famous public school—Grangemoor.

With a final lunge that nearly swept plump Bobby Bloot off his feet, Jack ran the handcart to the shed doorway. Then he saw the tray of lemonade and cakes and goggled his eyes.

"Oh, boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, young Bloot, try just a sip of lemonade. You'd better not sample the cakes, Bloot; too much protein, Bloot; an over-plus of Vitamins A and B—bad—bad for the embonpoint!"

"Greedy!" Naomer reproached Jack, who was taking an enormous bite at a home-made cake. "Here, Bobby, you have your whack as well, bekas, eef we don't look out, we shan't get any-zink!"

It was observed that Naomer's "you" had changed to "we" and laughter started.

"How touching," said Polly sweetly. "How truly pathetic it is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Naomer's anxiety for Bobby Bloot! Two minds," said Polly, "with but a single thought, and that thought—food! And Jimmy," she asked, "where's he?"

"Jimmy Cherrol is down there at the site, still digging," Jack affably explained. "Stout fellow, Jimmy. Not stout in the sense that Bobby is—stout. No. A real cad," said Jack, putting on an Oxford accent. "Daffinitely!"

Yet this same nonsense-talker was the lad who answered Judy very gravely when she put a question to him on the quiet, a minute later.

"Seen anything of Dave?" she asked. Dave was her brother.

"No, Judy."

She sighed faintly.

"I hope he isn't out with that Curtis girl. It is as puzzling as ever—the hold she seems to have taken on him. But it's not surprising, perhaps, that he hasn't been with you others much, to-day. After that breeze you had with him, Jack—"

"Oh, of course, I did rather let myself go," Jack grimly admitted. "First row that Dave and I have ever had, to speak of. But I felt fed up with him. He came away with all of us for this holiday, and we supposed that he'd be a mixer, as usual—not play the silly ass over a girl like Thelma Curtis."

He added bitterly:

"Tisn't as if she were even friendly with you and the other girls, Judy! So, really, the less of Dave I see for a bit, the better. Sorry to say it, but there it is!"

"Never, never has he been like it before," Judy remarked mournfully. "Although I wanted to come with the party, because we knew that it would be helping Dolly Delane's parents to give the manor a good start, as a country hotel—I would rather have stayed away if I'd known that Dave was going to behave like this."

She said no more, and by the smile she gave Jack it was evident that she wished him to try to dismiss the whole thing from his mind—this thing that had so imperilled the harmony and the happiness of all.

For his part, Jack realised that it was up to him to launch into more fun, if only for the sake of preventing some fresh debate that could serve no useful purpose.

"Let's see what you've been doing, boys," meaning girls. "How goes the great work?"

"It goes in the handcart—straight away," Polly proudly answered. "For it's all ready—"

"Eh, what? My aunt!" gasped Jack, inspect-

ing one bit of joinery. "What do you call this?"

"A fine specimen of mortice—"
 "Mortice my godfathers!" he groaned. "So this—is this what is called carpentry at your school, is it! But you would try to do it all yourselves, when you had us chaps—experts—skilled MEN!" And he thumped an inflated chest. "I like the nailwork, though," he condescended. "That bashed-over effect—wonderful! Wow!"

"Then stand out of the way!" stormed Polly, after pushing him aside. "We don't WANT you! We can do everything ourselves—"

"Except carpentry!" Ah, well, I was e'en young myself, once."

"Tess has some tins of paint to go," Pam remarked.

"And don't forget, I want to be given a ride, all ze way!" shrilled Naomer. "On top of ze load—gorjus!"

"Well, boys, it is to be hoped," Jack sighed—"it is to be hoped, I say, that we do end by attracting paying guests and not driving them away. At present, this looks as if it is going to be a poor sort of signboard. After Mr. Delane has put you out such nice timber and all! He will be—"

"He won't be anything of the sort!" Polly dissented. "Dolly's parents are ever so grateful to us for pushing on with our idea. They say the home-made advertisement is going to save them several pounds, and perhaps attract loads of p.g.'s."

"How you do talk," Jack said, with pretended weariness. "It's all right to attract loads of paying-guests, but will the Delanes keep them when they've got them? If a ceiling hadn't come down in the night and the electric light hadn't gone wrong just when it was wanted, those four guests wouldn't have cleared out after brekker this morning. However, where's my mate?"

Young Bloot being found to be sitting down to make quite a substantial repast, he was shouted at by Jack as if he—Jack—were the foreman of a pantehnicon job.

"Come on, Bill, and we'll take the grand planner fust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Team Spirit

THERE might have been unending fun, loading up the handcart, only the girls were anxious to get away with it.

So there was no more larking about after Jack had managed to capsize half a tin of paint over Bobby Bloot. That little occurrence—"a pure accident, son!"—was rightly deemed a climax to the merriment.

"You're all right, old lad," Jack consoled his much-be-spattered chum. "Quite a good walking advertisement for the Cromlech Hotel, in fact. All he needs is a placard—Stay at the Cromlech Hotel; Gives You Colour!"

"Shame!" laughed Pam. "Turps in the paintshop, Bobby. That'll take it off."

Master Bloot, however, preferred to resort to tufts of grass, with which, indeed, he had great success.

"Why," said Naomer admiringly, a few minutes later, "you look quite presentabubble! And now—hooray! Bekas, let me get on board, and zen we can be off—gorjus!"

"Allow me!" said Jack, gallantly offering to help Naomer on to the top of the load.

"Zank you, bekas, eet wants some doing!"

It did. There were moments when Naomer, far from being securely placed, was so precariously positioned that she was in danger of falling off and bringing half the timber and all the pots of paints with her.

But at last she was firmly implanted, as it were, looking rather like a weird figure that was to be carted round in a carnival procession.

"This would be the thing to attract guests," Jack said, as he and one or two of the girls started to trundle the handcart along. "Up and down the main road, with Naomer to show how they feed you at the Cromlech!"

"This cart hasn't any brakes!" Polly dinned as it began to gain speed on the gently-descending by-road.

"Back pedal, boys! Whoa!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hi, be careful!" yelled Naomer. "Bekas, ze paintpots are all on ze wobble. Hi, I want to get down! Queek!"



Naomer was thoroughly enjoying her ride; but it was very doubtful if Bobby Bloot enjoyed his privilege of being allowed to pull the loaded hand-cart!

"When we stop!" promised Polly.

But they didn't stop! Attended by a number of prancing, mirthful chums, those who were in charge of the handcart kept it going—fast!

Polly and Jack certainly gave signs of trying to prevent the whole outfit from getting out of control. But, as the joyous escort noticed, these efforts only seemed to result in the handcart zig-zagging wildly.

"Sweendle!" Naomer was soon yelling as she rocked this way and that. "What do you think you're doing!"

"Taking baby for a ride in her pram," panted Polly. "Doesn't she look sweet, Jack!"

"What we ought to have done—had the bullock-float!" They were having to push now. "I think she might get down now, don't you, boys?"

"Yes, Naomer—"

"No! Bekas I am quite comfortabubble now!" Naomer knew that the road had assumed a slight rise.

"Where's young Bloot? Boy!" Jack shouted. "Come here!"

"Yes, bekas I zink he ought to be given a ride, too!"

"Are you," Jack thundered at Bobby, "the young gent who sits at Naomer's table? Are you the young Blooter who would do anything for her? Then there you are, my son!"

And it was for Master Bobby to take hold of a handshaft that Jack had exhaustedly relinquished.

"A rest," said Polly sweetly, "would be nice! Let's walk on, girls, slowly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not ze bit of eet! Bekas—hi! Sweendle! Paula, you lend ze hand, queek, unless you want zis pot of paint all over you!"

Thus threatened, languid Paula rushed to help Bobby push the handcart. Whilst their united efforts lasted, anything funnier could hardly have been imagined. But, of course, some of the others soon went to the assistance of the ill-assorted pair.

After that, progress was more or less speedy and sedate until there was only another hundred yards to go on the level.

Then Jack and Polly did their best to provide a grand finish-up. Jimmy Cherrol, who had been all alone at the job of digging foundations, had finished.

Waiting beside the road, just where it joined a highway, he was accorded the magnificent spectacle of the truck's arrival, drawn by various galloping chums, with Naomer hanging on as for dear life to her lofty and quaking seat.

"Queen Boadicea," Jack styled the tableau, "in her chariot, forty h.p., supercharged; with paints complete, shilling extra. Grand flourish of trumpets—ta, ra!"

"It's a circus, really," Polly informed grinning Jimmy. "And Jack is the performing ape. Jimmy! Did you dig all those nice deep holes for the posts!"

"Alone, he did not," cried Jack. "Bloot and I had half finished the job before we came back to the manor. In fact, I don't know what Jimmy has been doing with his time."

"Hi, I want to get down!" yelled Naomer.

"You may, dear," said the madcap sweetly. "Just jump, pet."

"I'd like to see me jump!"

"So would I," said the madcap.

"Would you? What ze diggings, zen—just to show you that I'm not afraid! Look out, bekas when I do jump," said Naomer, suddenly deciding to climb down a bit before doing so. "Now zen!"

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried Jack, starting

to go round with his cap. "Before my partner performs her great and wonderful feat—another ninencepence-ha'penny!"

"Policeman coming!" Polly jested. "So hurry up."

Meantime, Naomer had come lower still, on the barrow.

"Now, zen!"

"The lady," cried Showman Jack, "will now do her astonishing feat. She will jump, and at the same time, ladies and gentleman, she will upset the cart, tip the paint all over the road, and—thank you, sir!" as Jimmy put a ha'penny in the cap. "Only ninencepence now, ladies and gentleman, and the lady will positively perform this truly wonderful—"

Crash!

"What did I say," Jack groaned as half the load came off the handcart, following Naomer's jump.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I jumped," the dusky one proudly claimed. "And I want half ze collection!"

But Jack, suddenly changing himself into Signor Lintonii Grandiflora, announced that he would now do his wonderful conjuring trick. In his cap—observe!—was the sum of threepence-ha'penny. A wave of the hand—gone!

"Sweendle!"

"Is this signboard going up to-day, that's what I want to know?" Betty questioned, after more peals of merriment.

Then the general eagerness for work became more than the job in hand could absorb.

Even though two or three of them could be putting in one of the posts, whilst two or three more put in another—even though Tess had the paintpots and brushes to see after, and a "rough-out" of the proposed signboard to study, this still left some of the girls idler than they wished to be.

For the three boys simply would not allow Morcove to do any of the actual "navvying"—spading back the flinty soil round the posts, and ramming it home.

Soon the upright posts were in position and side-supports had been fastened home, so that the whole thing would be galeproof.

Then the signboard itself was nailed up, in sections that enabled easy handling. That done, Morcove could stand back to see how the "job" was beginning to look.

"Just right, I think!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Gweat!"

"Nicely proportioned," Pam said. "Seems to fit in with the surroundings."

Suddenly a car approached, on the main road. It pulled up when level with the busy juniors. A distinguished-looking gentleman of the retired Army type leaned over from the steering-wheel to speak.

"Cromlech Manor? To the left here?"

"Yes, sir! Up this side road—half a mile or a little more."

"Thank you! It's a country hotel, I understand, just opened? Do you know anything about it?"

"We're staying there!" was the chorus. "And it's fine!"

"Gorjus! Bekas, eef you want good food—"

"Ha! Well, good cooking is always a consideration," the white-moustached motorist smiled.

"And plenty of water for baths. Cleanliness—"

"You'll find everything splendid, sir!"

The gentleman slewed round to consult with some passengers in the back seat—his wife, by her age and looks, and two daughters who must have been getting on for thirty.



About to assist in the rescue of Bobby from the depths of the tank, Jack suddenly slipped and dived through the manhole, to join Bobby underground!

They had become all smiles, partly, no doubt, on account of Naomer's specific reference to good food. Their emphatic nods must have decided the matter. The gentleman, facing to the front again, let in the clutch, and the fine car purred on, turning into the by-road that led to Cromlech Manor.

"Cheers!" said Betty softly. "More guests, hip-hip!"

"Four! So they'll replace the four who went off in a hurry this morning," Helen gaily commented.

"Come on!" Polly cried, as if bursting with energy. "We'll get the Manor so packed out we girls will have to sleep in the attics!"

"And that would be jolly!"

Some final hammering home of long nails, and then the sign-board was ready for painting. Nor was it long before a first coat of white paint had been run over the posts, struts, and the back of the sign-board itself. Another example of speedy team-work.

This left Tess free to push on with the task that was to be hers alone.

Using the truck as a platform, she quickly lined out a design and lettering on the front of the small hoarding.

Mr. Delane had said the truck would not be wanted for any work about the farm, and so it would be left here when Tess knocked off for the day. She could not hope to finish by nightfall, even if she put in a long evening at her work of art.

They left her at it, knowing that she preferred to go on all by herself. From a hundred yards away they looked back, and could see the outline, sketched in charcoal.

"STAY AT THE CROMLECH HOTEL"

the sign was going to read.

"EVERY COMFORT."

With a picture, in brilliant colours, faithfully representing the ancient Manor House, all mellow brick and clustering chimneys, and two or three fine old trees, showing masses of foliage.

Beneath the picture a line in smaller lettering was to run:

"Turn Left—it's Less than a Mile!"

"Hi, Tess!"

"What!"

"Looks fine!"

If they had not known Tess as well as they did, her taking no notice might have given offence. But Betty and the rest only laughed as they resumed the walk back to the Manor.

Anything like praise always irritated Tess. Morcove had never yet known her to be self-satisfied. On the contrary, she had often been known to tear up what seemed to be a splendid bit of work.

This was the talented girl—her own sternest critic—who now had paint-pots all around her on the truck that served as her platform.

She fell to work with ordinary house-painters' brushes, having a good deal of area to cover. Working in a bright blue sky with the paint that had been used for farm-wagons, she felt that it was astonishingly different from any blue she would have used for an ordinary oil-painting.

But this was a sign-board, and in a little while she felt happily confident that the crude colours were just right for the job. Her fear was that she herself would be the failure.

Presently she heard a murmur of voices, but although they sounded familiar she did not look round. The colour for the brickwork was just going on—"not so bad!"

But suddenly an amused "Oh!" in a girlish voice caused Tess to glance behind irritably.

Then she saw Thelma Curtis—that girl whom Morcove was holding in such dislike.

And companioning Thelma was Dave Cardew.

These Two

"HALLO, Tess!" he said in that serious tone of his, and doffed his Grangemoor cap.

"That's going to look a treat!"

"How do you know?" she retorted, just as touchy towards him as she would have been

towards any of the others. "You can't tell until it's finished."

"And when will that be?" laughed Thelma.

"An hour's time?"

Tess simply turned her back on both of them to resume work. She chose a fine brush now, and put in some effective touches, using a bit of cane for a mahl-stick.

Dave nudged Thelma to come away with him.

"She's a girl who hates to be spoken to when at work," he remarked quietly as they sauntered on, going up the by-road to the Manor. "Concentration, you know."

"I shouldn't have thought a job like that needed much concentration," Thelma smirked.

"Pretty awful, anyway, wasn't it?"

"No. I reckon that's going to look as attractive as one of those railway posters you see everywhere. Tess will be a famous artist some day."

"But how stupid to put up a sign-board!"

"I don't think so. Fine idea!" Dave said, as flatly as before. "The Manor House is just a bit off the map. A directing sign like that is going to work wonders."

"I wonder you didn't help to put it up if you think so much of it as an idea!"

"I wanted to be with you."

"Oh! Very nice of you," Thelma laughed.

"So you don't find I bore you?"

"Not a bit!"

"You're a strange fellow," she murmured, after a puzzled silence. "I was beginning to feel that—we, we don't exactly agree about things, do we? And yet you say you like to be with me!"

"I find you like to do lots of wandering around, and I'm that way inclined myself," he said calmly. "You don't mind that I seem to—sort of turn up when you're out by yourself?"

"Oh, I don't mind! I rather like it. The place, of course, is beastly dull. I wonder if any new guests have come in? We seem pretty full at present at the Manor, but that's only because you and your chums are here. When you're all gone back to school—"

"Shall you be still here—you and your mother?"

"I expect so. Why?"

"Oh, I just wondered!"

She side-glanced him again, studying his imperturbable face.

"You know," she laughed, "I believe you're a fellow who does an awful lot of wandering and thinking, without saying much. You wouldn't say what you really think of me—now, would you?"

"It might offend you."

"Because it would be so uncomplimentary? I see!"

"Because I haven't the right to say what I think of you—now, have I?" he smiled.

"You mean we're only just new acquaintances. But supposing I give you the right? There!"

"I'd rather wait," he laughed.

"Oh, tease! I shan't let you come out with me again!" she pouted. "This evening you must simply play tennis or cricket with those chums of yours! By the way, I suppose they are offended at your spending so much time with me?"

"I'm afraid they are," was his tight-lipped answer. "But that can't be helped."

"Oh! You prefer my company as much as all that?"

"I just have to!"

"The things you say when you like!" she rippled, her head quite turned by the apparent compliments. "Well, after dinner this evening,

Dave, I'm going—let me see! Oh, I know! A walk this way again, to see the primroses in the twilight. There are such millions of them amongst the trees over there."

"I'll remember you said it."

"And I," she said, in a rich whisper, "will look out for you—shall I? We don't want to start away from the Manor together, do we? Those friends of yours—"

"Oh, I can't help what they think!"

"How lovely!" she gurgled, throwing her head back to laugh. "But now let's hurry, for—my goodness, it's gone the proper tea-time half an hour ago!"

Only one of the Morcove girls was to be seen when they came strolling together up to the front door of the spacious Manor House. It was Polly Linton, pumping up the back tyre of her bicycle.

She turned round and gave Dave a full look—that was all. Then she went on with the tyre-pumping.

"See you later, then, Dave," said Thelma, doing a sudden dart for indoors.

He went to get a wash before going to where tea was served. Back in the front hall, a couple of minutes later, Judy suddenly confronted him.

"We didn't see anything of you, Dave, this afternoon."

"No; but I saw the signboard—Tess working hard at it. Fine idea!"

"You really think so? Then I wonder you didn't lend a hand, Dave, instead of—"

But Judy would not say the rest. They were not accustomed to quarrelling, he and she. In a moment, they were going different ways, and it was not for Judy to know that he had suddenly looked as unhappy as she!

"You in there, Thelma?"

"Yes, mother!"

A bed-room door opened, letting in handsome Mrs. Curtis, whilst Thelma stood in front of her dressing-table mirror, using comb and brush.

"Anything to—tell me, Thelma?"

"Afraid not, mother. I thought I was going to have a chance at last, and then that boy, Dave Cardew, turned up again."

"The Cardew boy seems to hang round you, Thelma."

"He does, rather."

"Of course, Thelma, it is nice for you to find a chum in him. Besides, you may get to know more about the Delanes through him. His companions are very friendly with Dolly Delane. Only—if he is always going to be around—"

"It's all right, mother; I'm dodging him by-and-by, anyhow," the girl chuckled. "I told him I would be going down to the primrose glades, after dinner, this evening—in the opposite direction from that hill, where the—"

"Sh!"

It must have been one of the Morcove girls romping by in the corridor, who had caused Mrs. Curtis to hold up a silencing finger.

"Not so loud, Thelma. By the way, some new people have come in—a Major Fenner, with his wife and two daughters."

"And how long will THEY stay, I wonder!"

"One night, at most—we must hope. Thelma it is time we did tackle that business, up there on the hill. I'm leaving it to you, so do try, later on—"

"All right, mother. Don't worry!"

"You say that, Thelma," was the frowning response. "But I must worry when it means so much to us if—we can only carry out the plan. I'm tired of being poor, of living by my

wits, Thelma. And here are these Delanes, with a good chance of making a big success of their venture, unless we make trouble for them."

A pause.

"I wonder, Thelma, do you think it too unfair, too cruel—"

"No, why should I?" The girl was smiling at herself in the glass as she said it. "The way I see things; we've as much right to the whole place as they have! Of course, they came into it under that will; but—"

"It is because I could never hope to succeed in any law case, challenging that will, that I am as desperate as this," Mrs. Curtis said fiercely. "There are just those few onerous conditions of the inheritance that are in our favour, Thelma. The Delanes, if they can't afford to keep the place on, must let certain distant relations of theirs have the first offer to rent it."

Thelma nodded.

"And we are those distant rel—"

"Sh, again! Thelma, do be careful. It would be a fearful thing," the mother whispered, "if it were found out that we're passing under assumed names. Better not discuss the matter any more," she decided, turning back to the closed door. "But, remember, Thelma, if we fail, then I don't know what will become of us!"

It was a husky warning that did not seem to leave Thelma at all dejected. Perhaps she was unable to visualise a failure! A minute after her mother had gone away, she herself ran downstairs and entered the dining-room as if in bounding spirits.

Dave was there, getting a lonely tea at the table which had been allotted to him and his sister and one of her Morcove chums. "Separate tables for guests," was the arrangement at the manor. Thelma and her mother occupied one close to Dave's.

"Hallo! The whole place to ourselves," she commented, prettily. "Why not sit at my table, Dave, just for once? Then we can talk!"

"What about?" he asked, taking up his cup and saucer and plate, to cross over and sit with her.

"Oh—anything! You know the Delanes quite well, of course. Tell me, if you like, more about them—"

Morcove's Great "Stunt"

POLLY LINTON came running out of a back door of the Manor House, carrying—not a tennis-racket, but a broom!

After her came Betty and others, in just as much hurry—not to commence some game or other, but to get busy again.

Morcove had got another great idea.

Now it was—dancing in the old barn!

Mr. Delane, hastily consulted, had laughed a "Yes, by all means! Go ahead, my dears!"

The barn was empty, and this idea that had come to the girls, since tea, was to get the place swept out, install a few benches and spare chairs, fetch across a small table or two, one to take the gramophone, and the other to serve as a refreshment buffet—and there you'd be!

"With a floor to take dozens," Betty had blithely declared, without the slightest exaggeration.

For the barn, with its picturesque old oak beams, was as big as many a concert hall, and the floor was all smooth concrete.

The entire Morcove "chummery," with Jack and Jimmy and Bobby to fag for them, was going to put in a busy hour or two, hoping that there could even be some dancing after dinner, to-night.

Chinese lanterns, rummaged out by Dolly Delane, plus one or two stable lanterns—genuine antiques, and what could be prettier?—would have magical effect in such surroundings.

Judy Cardev was not here, but she was doing her bit, all the same. Judy, at this moment, was "biking" down the road to find Tess, at work upon that hoarding, and to ask her: Could the signboard be made to say something about **DANCING IN THE BARN?**

To Morcove it seemed that some such attraction as that would be a big draw. Motorists might call at the Manor House simply to get a meal, and then pass an hour on the old barn's floor! And so the place would get known as the real thing in old fashioned hospitality and amusements.

"We want—oh, the very thing!" Polly puffed as Naomer came running in with a watering-can with which to lay the dust. "For once, kid, you're doing a really useful—"

"Yowp, gow!"

"Zen out of ze way, Paula!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dwenched!" groaned the inevitable victim of Naomer's superabundant spirits. "A weck, a wuin!"

"Oh, no, you're not!" cried Polly, brooming away once more. "And don't stand about, or else I shall—"

"Yarooogh!"

"Sorry, but if you will get in the way of my broom—"

"Sowwy, bai Jove! I will wettire!"

It was unfortunate for Paula that she sidled to get out of the huge barn just as Jack came in with a table upon his head, so that his vision was obscured.

He ran into her with the table, and when, after being nearly floored, she wildly dashed for the open air, she ran into Jimmy, carrying two Windsor chairs.

"Oh, sorry," said Jimmy as he found Paula impaled, as it were, upon two chair-legs.

"Sowwy, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The barn rang with the others' laughter.

Jack crashed down the table.

"All furniture delivered in plain vans! Lot Sixty-seven, how much? Hooray!" as Bobby Blood staggered in with the gramophone, followed by Dolly, laden with a pile of records. "Ladies and gentlemen! Before commencing our dance programme—"

"Before doing that," Polly chipped in, "I shall want a bath. Burr, the dust!"

"Oh, we must all have a grand clean-up and get into something nice this evening," Betty laughed.

"Some more people have come in," Dolly announced. "Only to take a look round and have dinner presently. Still!"

"Still!" cried Helen. "If they like it, they'll come again."

"That's what they said!"

"Oh, boy!" shouted Jack, shinning up to a crossbeam. "Now the lanterns. Scene Two: The Old Barn, two hours later!"

"But won't it look pretty!" Madge rhapsodised. "Oh, it was a fine idea."

"Gorjus!"

A minute after this, when the joyous rush to get everything prepared was beginning to take grand effect, some strangers appeared at the barn's wide doorway. They were another husband and wife, with a son and daughter, all much younger than the Fenners.

They had heard about the intended conversion

of the barn into a dance-hall for guests and had come to see what it looked like. To Morcove's delight, comment was very flattering.

"We shall have to put in an hour after dinner; be back home later than ever," the father remarked. "Won't matter. Nice moonlight night it is going to be."

"We saw one of your chums painting a sign-board, and we stopped," the lady said to some of the girls. "That's what decided us to come and see the manor. It's very fascinating."

"So old-world," chimed in her daughter.

"Jolly place for a whole month, in the summer," declared the son. "Pity we can't put in a week now."

They sauntered away, leaving Morcove to jabber joyfully whilst doing last things in readiness for the dancing by-and-bye. Everything was going fine—"daffinitely"! Now they could be sure, they really were helping the Delanes to make the place go—with a bang.

Dusty and dishevelled, the girls scampered across to the house at last. Half an hour was available for the before-dinner toileting.

Pretty frocks were going to be put on. The boys were going to get into "boiled shirts," as a fitting compliment to a scene that promised to be very colourful.

"Hallo, though!" Betty exclaimed, when in the bed-room which she now shared with Polly, Naomer, and Paula. "No water!"

"What!"

Betty twiddled both taps to the wash-basin, to show that no water would come from either.

"Howwows!" gasped Paula.

"Air lock, I suppose," shrugged Polly. "Oh, well, we must just pop round into Pam and Judy's room. But how awkward, just when we want a good wash."

They filed out into the corridor, taking their towels with them, and entered a nearby bed-room to find Pam and Judy fiddling with taps.

"No, they won't run," said Pam. "Hallo, you girls—"

"Goodness!" burst out Polly. "Mean to say you can't get any?"

"Good gwacious! This is extremely awkward, what?"

"I'm surprised," said Judy. "All these wash-basins and the plumbing are new. Dolly said so."

"Hark!"

It was Major Fenner, by the voice, calling downstairs:

"Can we have our baths now? We wish to change before dinner." This was followed by an affection of the speech, sounding like: "Blup!"

The six girls in this bed-room exchanged dismayed glances.

Remembering the hurried departure of other guests, this morning, on account of unexpected occurrences, imperilling comfort, they trembled again for the Delanes.

"Blup! No water in the bath-rooms, do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir. I'm coming up, sir."

That was Mrs. Delane, hurrying upstairs.

"I'm so sorry, Major Fenner! We can't make out why it is. Every tap downstairs has suddenly failed."

"Oh? Blup! H'm! Deuced annoying, you know. We have been motoring all day. We can't have baths then?"

"I'm afraid not, sir! Not immediately, sir. Mr. Delane is going to see if he can—"

"In that case, I'm afraid we must have the car round and be off, Mrs. Delane."

"Oh, sir, don't say that!"
"I'm afraid—blup!—yes! If there is one thing we do like, it is constant hot water. You might make out my bill, and we will pack. Blup!"

Why?

THE door of Pam and Judy's room came open, quietly letting in Madge and Helen.

"Did you hear that, girls?"

"Yes!"

"We've no water, either, in our room," Madge whispered. "Isn't it a shame? A breakdown somewhere."

"Sweendle! Bekas, just when zey had all zose fresh guests! And what about dinner? Eeef no water in zee kitchen, how can zey be cooking?"

"Oh, shurrup!" stamped Polly. "What does food matter. And yet I suppose those other people will be off now, too?"

"If they can't get dinner, let alone a wash—obviously!" Betty grimaced. "This really is a knock-out."

"Far worse than last night's business," Helen murmured. "It affects everybody. You just can't run a place without water!"

"I wonder how it has happened!" Pam frowned.

"If the fittings are all new!"

There was a tap at the door.

"Just a bit, girls," Jack's voice came. "We chaps are going to get some rain-water upstairs for you."

"Oh, thanks, thanks!"

"Better than none at all," Pam remarked sorely. "But that won't help to keep those guests."

Sure enough, ten minutes later both cars were driving away, and Morcove knew that Mrs. Delane, in the kitchen, was very upset. Some of Dolly's girl chums went with her, to comfort her mother, whilst others helped Jack, Jimmy, and Bobby to get the rain-water upstairs.

"Where's Dave—does anyone know?" Polly huffily inquired, coming back with an extra pail that she had been questing.

"No." As curtly as that Jack and others answered.

They were at the uncovered manhole of the underground rain-water tank. There was no pump, and it meant letting down a bucket at the end of a rope.

Hauling up the brimming bucket was an awkward, exhausting business—so awkward that Bobby Blood ended by losing his balance and falling headlong into the tank.

At one moment he was above ground, with his chums, and the next he was gone!

He was seen to give a wild lurch, a wilder wave of the arms; and then, from the underground tank of water, came a prolonged:

Splosh!

"There!" gasped Polly. "Oh—"

"Ow, heelp!" Paula screeched, as if she herself were down there, in twelve feet of water. "My gug-gwacious—"

"He would be the one to do that," Jack exploded, getting busy with the rope. "Hi, you goop—"

"Oh, don't call him names," pleaded Madge. "Call him names!" said Jack, angling with the rope. "I haven't names enough to call him by, or I would. Blot," he bellowed down into the tank, "catch hold, man; catch hold— Gulloop, wow!" was the startling break off.

And then Jack himself fell through the manhole, head first.

SPLOSH! again. "Oh, dear, oh, dear!" Polly Linton fumed. "Now he's fallen in!"

As this was merely stating the obvious, no one troubled to answer. And, indeed, it was no time for talk.

Luckily, Betty had darted to catch at the rope, or Jack would have taken the remaining length of it down with him.

Another moment, and all the girls were in line, digging their heels into the ground and leaning back, so as to take the strain on the rope they were all gripping.

That strain came instantly, along with a hollow shout from Jack, telling them not to pull, but simply hang on. For a minute the line jerked them. Then his head and shoulders appeared at the manhole.

"Cheerio, boys! Excuse my coming up first," he jested, whilst the water ran out of his hair, all

Blot's final exertions, as he writhed and floundered half-in and half-out of the manhole, Morcove simply had to shriek its laughter.

"Bekas, talk about ze Loch Ness monster," shrielled Naomer. "But never mind, Bobby; queek, run and get into dry things, and zen-dinner!"

If only to keep this little mishap from the Delanes, both victims of it promptly scooted, dripping water as they ran. They were able to slip indoors unseen, and a seldom-used secondary flight of stairs provided a hasty dash for the seclusion of their bed-room.

The corridor, to their relief, appeared to be deserted, and then Dave suddenly appeared—out of a cupboard-like doorway giving access to the attics. He looked dusty and unkempt.

"Hallo, you two—"

"We're all right, so don't you worry, Dave," said Jack, with that biting sarcasm which had



"Where's Dave?" Judy panted. "He's not in his room—I can't find him anywhere! Have any of you seen him?"

down his face. "I thought I'd better be here to help hang on when Bobby comes up."

"So I should think!" Polly puffed. "You're not such a featherweight. And now look at the state you're in. Oh, you boys!"

"How about Bobby?" clamoured Naomer. "Bekas—"

"He sent his kind regards," grinned Jack. "Whoosh! I wanted a bath, but I don't know that I wanted it down there. Bobby Blot will be hungry after this, of course. But he won't want a drink of water for a month, I reckon. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't funny," said Polly; but she was smiling.

They hung on again, Jack lending a hand, and up came Bobby at last, but not with the same facility as his more agile chum.

There was something so comic about young

come into force in the last day or two. "You just go on enjoying yourself, Dave."

"But—"

"Bobby and I have just been getting a cold plunge, that's all! You know—or, perhaps you don't know? The water's off in the house."

"It's on, now," said Dave calmly.

"What!"

"I've had a look at things in the attics. The house tanks are there. The water hadn't been coming in from the reservoir on the hill. But I put things right."

"Gosh!" said Jack.

An astounded silence after that enabled him and Bobby to hear a welcome sound of water rushing in at the supply pipe to the tanks in the attics.

"Well—I'm-jiggered!" said Jack. "Um!" Then, in their dripping state, he and Bobby dashed on to the bed-room, leaving Dave in one of his reflective moods.

Alone there in the corridor, he suddenly noticed a pair of girl's walking shoes, put outside a bed-room door to be taken away for cleaning.

He knew it to be Thelma Curtis' room. Evidently she was changing for the evening, and would not want those shoes again before the morning.

On tiptoe he went swiftly to her closed door. He silently picked up the shoes and came tiptoeing back with them.

A moment more, and he was as noiselessly climbing those cramped attic stairs which, but a couple of minutes since, he had descended.

His left hand held the shoes together whilst he made good use of his right hand to steady himself when it had become necessary for him to tread very warily along loose planking.

It was planking that led to the water-tanks, and it had been laid down to form a tread, otherwise one would have had to do a cat's creep along oak beams, with the risk of slipping and shooting a foot through old lath and plaster.

There was one huge gap in the plaster, where the ceiling of a bed-room below had come down last night. Jimmy and Bobby had taken over that room now, as it was not fair to expect any of the girls to sleep there still.

He could have listened, unsuspected, to talk going on between Jimmy and Bobby, but he was not that sort of fellow.

Without a sound he reached a patch of planking that afforded standing-room, alongside the tanks. Dust lay thickly on that rough-and-ready flooring—so thickly that there were footprints.

Some were his own, as he knew, resulting from his previous visit of a few minutes since. But there were others, and now, kneeling down, he tried to see if any of these other marks in the thick dust fitted the soles and heels of Thelma's shoes.

But in the end he rose up, giving a baffled shake of the head.

As silently as he had come, he went down to the bed-room corridor again. There were voices of some of the Moreove girls, mounting the main staircase—and there he was, with Thelma's shoes in his possession.

Quick as a flash, however, he got to her door, set down the shoes exactly as she had placed them—and then calmly walked away.

On With the Dance

"I DON'T know what to make of Dave, girls—I simply don't!"

"Why, Judy? Has he—"

"Oh, he's going to be as unsociable as ever," Judy mournfully answered Betty and other good chums. "I've just been telling him that we mean to have a dance in that barn, but he won't be there."

"Well, never mind, Judy dear—"

"I shall write to mother," came the tensely-speech decision. "I shan't say anything about him—only get her to come along and stay for a few days. She will, if I ask her, I know."

"Yes, well, in any case, it would be jolly to have your mother here," Pam murmured. "She's always such a sport."

"And Mrs. Cardew won't be off, just because the place isn't going quite smoothly at the start," Betty chimed in. "Oh, look, the boys have lighted the lanterns!"

Dinner—half an hour late on account of the upset—had ended five minutes ago. Except for the Curtises, the juniors were again the only paying guests. But they had changed for the evening, partly because they had felt like it, and

partly because—well! A car-load of people might turn up!

It was from the hall doorway that Betty, peering across to the barn, had seen the lanterns burning prettily in that dim interior.

"Even though we're all to ourselves—we'll keep it up till bed-time!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Come on, all," Polly yelled, leading in the race to the barn. "Betty, my partner for the first!"

"Right-ho!"

"Admission, one shilling!" was the announcement with which Jack mock-seriously received them, at the entrance to the barn. "Children, half-price—wow!"

For Polly, as if charging a goalkeeper, had sent her brother flying.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A delighted "Hooray!" followed this. Moreove, storming into the barn, was entranced.

The half-dozen Chinese lanterns, hung here and there from cross-beams, with two or three antique stable-lanterns besides, shed a romantic glow upon the picturesque interior. The concrete floor, swept clean, shone like marble in places.

Jimmy started the gramophone. He stood by it, watching the others pair off and get going. This was a moment for Jimmy's "inferiority complex" to trouble him. He wished he could dance well enough to ask Pam. But just look at her, moving round with Paula Creel—the graceful pair they made!

Then he saw Judy, standing by at the doorway. It was quite certain that someone or other had asked her to dance. They all knew that she was feeling a bit down over Dave's extraordinary detachment, and there was the general desire to cheer her up. "Dash it—I'll go and talk to her, anyhow!" Jimmy modestly determined.

"Er—Judy—er—"

To his surprise, she instantly moved to take the floor with him.

"I didn't know," he said feebly. "I wasn't meaning to dance, really. I just thought you looked a bit—humpy."

"Must try not to be," she smiled. "It's only a phase with Dave, I suppose. Tess hasn't come in yet, Jimmy."

"Not that I know of. Fancy her staying down there at the signboard until past dinner-time even!"

"She's like that, Jimmy. This floor is fine!"

"For anyone who really can dance."

"Oh, you're all right, Jimmy."

But he couldn't believe it, and it was not long before he was taking complete charge of the gramophone. There were cries to him to find a waltz, and he put on that old favourite, "The Blue Danube."

"Hi, you're not dancing!" yelled Naomer, and she suddenly relinquished Bobby to take on Jimmy.

Unlucky moment for Paula, when Bobby made for her, as she stood alone, getting her breath back. For they had no sooner floated away together—if Bobby could ever be said to float—than he trod on her toes.

"Ouch!"

"Oh, sorry!"

"Not at all, ouch!" winced the elegant one, limping aside. "My gwacious—"

"I'm more used to a fox-trot. In fact, I've never waltzed before."

"So I gathah!" said Paula, sinking into one of the few chairs.

"Can I get you anything, Paula?"

"Er—no, thanks, Bobby. A little white oils when I go to bed—"

"I meant refreshment!" Bobby bawled, to make himself heard above all the laughter and chatter and the band music.

"Ooo, refreshments! Where?" And Naomer, dancing past with Jimmy just then, broke away from him to pursue the inquiry.

Then that record ran down, and Jimmy put on a fox-trot. When he looked round, after watching the disc start, to spin, Pam was close by, smiling at the eager resumption by this and that couple.

Jimmy looked at the disc again, as if he had never seen one go round before.

"It's working all-right, isn't it?" a serene voice inquired.

"Oh, yes, Pam—rather! I—you ought to be dancing this one!"

"I'm not being asked," she smiled.

"No. Well, I don't—I mean I can't, as a rule. Oh, I say, Pam, I wonder?" he floundered, reddening as she conferred her calm smile. "Would you let me have this one with you?"

"But of course! It is such a pity about Dave," as they started off. "Sort of cloud upon everything."

"Yet he's just the same as he has always been in many ways. Makes me wonder," Jimmy confided, "whether there isn't something behind it all."

"I should have thought he would have told you boys, anyhow, even if he couldn't tell his sister."

"Dave and I share a bed-room, you know. This morning I was awake before him. He was sleeping like a log—just as if he had been awake half the night. I looked at him in his bed, and somehow—oh, I can't explain, Pam! But it did seem hard, just then, to feel that he had changed."

"I can understand, Jimmy." It was like Pam to change the talk, so that discussion of a friend should not become too severe. "We're going to get a picnic to-morrow?"

"So they're saying, Jolly!"

"But I do wish, Jimmy, the place could fill up with other guests, and keep them. Here's Dolly!"

They had gone full circle round the barn floor and were at the wide entrance. Dolly looked as if she were trying to keep smiling under trying conditions. The failure to keep that fresh lot of guests was a real grief to her.

"Going to dance, Doll?"

"I'll sit down for a minute, Pam." The homely one had been helping in the kitchen. "Tess is back, getting some supper. I came out to tell you. She has nearly finished the hoarding, she says."

"All alone, is she? Oh, I'd like to go and talk with her," Pam instantly decided. "You come, too, Jimmy!"

"Rather!"

It did not mean robbing Dolly of a possible partner, for Jack was coming up to her. Pam and Jimmy strolled out into the soft, warm, fresh air. A crimson after-glow still provided plenty of light, and they knew that presently the full moon would be up.

"Perfect evening, Jimmy."

"Super!"

They found Tess getting her well-earned supper at a table in the dining-room. It was very dim in there, but apparently she preferred not to switch on lights.

"Only just back!" Pam smiled affectionately. "Aren't you nearly dead-beat, Tess?"

"No. I wanted to get on whilst I could."

"I expect it looks wonderful. And to-morrow you are going down there again—to destroy your work? We'll watch it!" Pam laughed. "See anything of anybody as you came back just now?"

"No."

"Thought you might have seen Dave."

"Oh, Dave! I saw him upstairs, going into his room. He's there now, I fancy."

Pam turned to Jimmy.

"Reading, would he be, Jimmy? Not lying down, I hope, feeling unwell?"

"Oh, he's quite all right in that respect! It's one of the things I did ask him, and got an answer about."

Then Naomer came running in, panting for breath, with Bobby hard upon her heels.

"Bekas, anyzink going in ze way of refreshments?"

"I didn't know there was to be a supper-dance," Pam said. "Fancy Dave keeping to his room at a time like this!" she resumed. "He must be reading, but—oh, well, we won't discuss him!"

"Unsociable, that's what he is," Naomer commented, pouring out lemonade. "And I am disgusted! Ooo, I know! Bobby, just for ze lark you creep up and turn ze key on Dave, as zey say he is in his room. Just to let him know! Go on, bekas I want you to!"

That, of course, settled it. As for Pam and Jimmy, they were not inclined to intervene. Perhaps the time had come for Dave to be "japed" over his strange aloofness.

Tess got up.

"I want to see the barn. You two going across again?"

"And," Pam nodded, "you must let Jimmy give you a dance. He's quite good."

Utter amazement of Jimmy.

They dawdled, the three of them, out into the open air, leaving Naomer alone in the dining room, helping herself to jam-tart and clotted cream.

Now the picturesque setting to the ancient Manor was all glamorous in the very last of the sunset light.

Tess stopped dead, to gaze around. Art was more to her than dancing.

"Crayons—better than water-colours for a thing like this," she was remarking when—

What was it—that sudden, bellowing roar from quite close at hand?

The two girls and Jimmy made a startled run, and then they saw.

A great bull was ramping towards them, head downwards for a vicious charge.

His tail was waving high, and in that lowered head of his eyes, in the half-light, were like two red coals.

He bellowed again, whilst some faint shouting came from some distance behind the furious beast.

The Pluck of Jimmy Cherrol

"DON'T run!" Jimmy clipped out.

"Oh, no," Pam said. "But it's a bull!"

"Yes."

All three of them, in the very instant that they turned and saw the unwieldy creature had realised he never should have been at large like this.

He was dangerous, as every bull is—and never so dangerous as at twilight.

Also they had realised that to run might only make matters worse. There was the barn, not a hundred yards away, crowded with dancers. If he turned aside and made for the barn—

But he was still coming straight for Pam, Tess, and Jimmy. A moment more, and he was so close that they could see a short rope dangling from the ring in his nose.

Vaguely, too, they were aware of the shouters being two farm-hands who had somehow lost their hold on the beast.

With one more furious bellow—that sound which can be as terrifying as a lion's roar even—the raging beast was almost up with the three juniors. Pam and Tess were transfixed, but Jimmy had already off'd with his jacket.

He waved it, and the bull drove at him, head downwards, ready to skewer him with short, blunt horns. But Jimmy flung the coat, and it draped itself over the bull's face, catching in the horns.

Even so, the danger was by no means over. The bull, bellowing with greater fury than ever, tossed his head, about to get rid of the blinding mask which the impaled jacket made.

He had only to shake it off, and then he would make a dreadful, unerring charge at one or another of the juniors.

Jimmy, however, was keeping his wits about him. Instead of backing away, he darted in, made one wild snatch for the curling rope, missed it, snatched again and got it.

Then he bravely stood even closer in, and Pam and Tess saw him haul on the rope, dragging the bull's head upwards by the nose.

Marvellous! Staggering about, and yet managing not to be thrown off his balance, Jimmy kept in close, and kept the bull's head raised, and suddenly the great beast seemed to be quite under control.

Smoking hot, the dangerous creature stood still. He was almost screaming for breath. His tongue licked out wickedly, but Jimmy had him by the rope, and had him the only right way—head up.

"Gosh! Here, Jimmy!" panted Jack, suddenly there to help his chum to hold the beast so.

Then the two farm-hands came up, just as hot and breathless as the bull. They looked goggle-eyed with fright.

"Let's take un agen, sir," one of them gasped. "Tis the maister's new bull, and he be a main arkard customer, seeming. Us went to off-load un at the station, and—why-ho! Nay, no more o' your tricks!" as the beast tried to lunge whilst being led away. "Us knows 'ee now, what a be like!"

They took him away in the direction of the cattle-pens, and then the crowd of juniors that it had become breathed freely again.

"Phew!" said Polly. "Some scare!" "Dreadful!" groaned Paula. "Ow, I shall dwell about it to-night, geals!"

"Pam—and you, Tess!" jerked out Betty. "Weren't you scared out of your lives?"

"More scared than we need have been—at least, I was"—Pam smiled queerly—"with Jimmy at hand."

"Yes," Tess breathed. "Jimmy, you—how on earth did you manage to—"

"Oh, I just knew how, that's all! The thing was to get him and hold him with his head up, that was all."

All! "Medal for this," said Betty. "You deserve one, anyhow."

"Yes, wather!"

"I wonder if dad knows the bull has come?" Dolly Delane exclaimed. "I must run and see."

"I should think he must have heard!" laughed Helen.

"Dave doesn't appear to have heard the com-

motion, anyhow," Tess remarked. "Or, if he has, he hasn't taken any notice."

"Why, how do you mean?" Judy questioned tensely. "Where is he, then?"

"Locked in his room, I fancy," Pam smiled. "Oh, it is all right, Judy dear—only a joke. Some of us knew that he had gone to his room, and what must Naomer do but send Bobby upstairs to lock him in."

"Good! Good!" Jack guffawed. "If only Bobby managed it all right! Here he comes! We'll ask him."

Young Bloot was running up with Naomer.

"Bekas, what ze diggings! I heard such a row! At first I thought eet must be Dave going for Bobby upstairs. And zen I knew eet was out here."

"What about Dave, Bobby?" grinned Jack.

"Did you bring it off?"

"I did."

"Stout fellow!"

"I looked into the room, pretending to see if he was there. Had a word or two from the doorway, and got the key out of the lock on the inside without his noticing. So when I came out again I was able to do the trick."

"Medal for that," Polly commented witheringly. "But there, Dave has been asking for it! Oh, Judy—"

"I must go and see why he is there," Dave's sister accounted for her sudden setting off towards the house. "Why he hasn't come out, when he must have heard that commotion. Don't come, any of you, please."

So they drifted away in the opposite direction, back to the barn.

"Poor Judy!" they were thinking.

BUT Judy, on her way indoors, was not thinking of herself as one to be pitied.

In her eyes, Dave's extraordinary behaviour from the very day after he and she had arrived at the Manor was to be most deplored on account of the way it affected the holiday party as a whole.

The others could not be the fine, chummy lot they were without feeling hurt by the way Dave was going on.

Especially she sympathised with Jack and Jimmy and Bobby.

Those three boys, schoolfellows of Dave's, had thought all the world of him up till now. For him they had not merely the affection that he would have earned by being just an all-round sport and a jolly good chum at that.

Dave's serious, reticent nature had compelled a respect such as fellows of his age seldom come in for.

And now he had forfeited that respect—undoubtedly he had. The old, hearty comradeship, capable of taking all the strain of good-natured chaff, was at an end between him and his three schoolfellows.

Then there was Polly. Last girl in the world to be "soft" about a fellow, Polly had yet been very fond of Dave always. Strange, and yet not so strange when you allowed for the old saying: "Extremes meet!"

Just as madcap Polly, with such a fun-loving brother, had yet grown so very fond of serious Dave, so he, with a serious sister, had always been very fond of Polly and her tomboy nature.

Judy went up the darkening staircase, thinking most of all about Polly. There, perhaps, was the one to be most pitied. Polly was accustomed to be the life and soul of the party. She could not be that at present. Considering how her naturally

happy spirits had been dashed by Dave's recent conduct, it was a marvel she had flared up as little as she had.

There was nothing in Polly's make-up that rendered her good at bearing disappointment. She liked things to go right, and, above all, she hated people to act in a puzzling manner. But the holiday so far had provided this big disappointment, providing the baffling puzzle: Why was Dave going on like this?

It was being said, Judy knew, that the Curtis girl had simply turned Dave's usually steady head. But was that the case? Was it?

He certainly was putting in a lot of time with Thelma Curtis. But Judy had noticed this, at any rate; observing the pair of them when they had come strolling back from some walk or other, Dave had not looked stupidly infatuated, so to say.

Besides, how was it possible that he could be thinking anything of a girl so obviously shallow, so unfriendly to other girls, and

But here was his door, closed, and the key in the outer side of the lock.

Judy rapped with her knuckles.

"Dave! You in there, dear?"

No answer came.

"Dave!"—rapping again. "Aren't you coming out for a bit? You should see the barn, with the lanterns alight."

Again no response.

She realised then that to be reading he must have switched on a light. Yet no light showed along the bottom of the door.

Asleep? But why—why should he be asleep at such a time as this? Surely, too, her tapping and her calling out must have awakened him even from a heavy sleep.

Suddenly she felt wildly alarmed on his account—panicky. He was ill! He must be in there, too, for Bobby had playfully locked him in, and the key was still here on the outside.

She twisted the outer knob of the door.

Yes, locked!

Then she turned back the key and threw the door wide round, rushing in.

"Dave, darling—"

But the room—the room was empty!

JACK LINTON, doing his best to read the title of a gramophone record by the dim light of Chinese lanterns, shouted a delighted:

"Hooray, boys! Here's a good 'un! Wind her up, Jimmy, lad! That's the idea! Now, ladies and gentlemen—"

And he put on the disc.

"Whoa! Wait ze beet! Bekas—refresher first!"



"If Dave doesn't stop this silly nonsense—making Judy unhappy—then he and I'll be coming to blows, that's all!" Jack raged.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Naomee, drawing Bobby with her by one hand, was making for a jug of home-made lemonade.

"Last dance to-night, boys!"

"No-o-o!" Moreovee dissented strenuously.

"And before our very talented orchestra—secured at great expense!" Here Jack bowed to the gramophone. "I say, before the band plays this last dance—"

"Booh! Out him!"

"—it gives me much pleasure to announce the winners of the prizes."

"What prizes?" asked Polly.

"First prize for the best professional dancer," Jack joked on—"John Linton, Esquire! First prize for the best amateur dancer, Mr. John Linton!"

"Booh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Prize for the spot-light—er—Mr. John Linton!"

Loud applause.

"Prize for the best-dressed dancer, Mr. John Linton!"

"Hooray!"

"Sweendle, bekas—"

"Prize for the best solo dance, Mr. John Linton!"

"Hit him!" said Polly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, the last dance, so make it a good one. Touch her off, Jimmy! Whoa!" Jack untreated, and changed instantly from gay to grave.

Judy Cardew had rushed in, white and breathless.

"Where's Dave? Where is he?" she panted. "I want to know! I must—at once! He's not in his room! I can't find him anywhere!"

"What!"

"He must have climbed down from the open window, and now it is dark out of doors, and he is—where?" Judy almost moaned. "Oh, do help me to find him!"

Once, They Were Friends

THE moon was up, shedding a silvery radiance upon all the wide hillsides from which the sunset light had died away half an hour ago.

Madge Minden and Jack Linton were wandering alone together over one of those moonlit slopes. Not quite by chance had these two paired off when, twenty minutes since, there had been the prompt decision to break up into small search parties for the purpose of finding Dave.

Madge and Jack were another instance of how so often we like the opposite to what we are ourselves. Sedate Madge had always been particularly fond of Jack in an undemonstrative way. She knew that his love of fun was blent with something that was very downright and fearless.

And he, who was not simply a clown and nothing else, found a lot in her earnest nature that appealed to him.

They were talking about Dave as they wandered on in the bright moonlight, often peering around in the hope of seeing him. Madge was very sad about it all, Jack more inclined to be angry.

"The Delanes won't like it, Jack—our having to scatter in search of him as late in the evening as this."

"I don't like it, anyhow—and so I shall tell him! No harm has come to him. Is it likely? No; he's just put us to a lot of trouble—put a damper on the jolly time we were having. I wouldn't have bothered to get up a search for him, only there was Judy so upset."

"You can't wonder, Jack"

"No. I'm dashed sorry for Judy. She's having a lot to put up with. I mean to say, she and Dave have always been so much to each other."

"He must have gone down, I'm afraid, in the opinion of so many of us. And our opinion of him was so high."

"Well, you know what I've always thought of Dave. I think Jimmy's a ripper, too, and, of course, I'm only rotting when I chip Bobby Bloot about his stuffing."

"Just as we tease Naomer, and yet we love her for being exactly what she is."

"That's exactly it, Madge. Let people be just what they are, I say, and then you know where you are with 'em. But when a fellow like Dave goes off at a tangent—and all on account of a girl, too! For it is that Curtis girl, you know, who has upset him."

"Surely, Jack, he's not simply out for a walk with her now?"

"She wasn't about the place when we came away, was she? Fancy a chap mooning after a girl—literally mooning about with her in the moonlight!"

"Oh, you don't know yet," Madge was demurring gently when she stopped dead.

Her dark head craned forward slightly, evidencing the eagerness of her peering to some distance in the difficult light.

"That's not them, Jack?"

He was already staring hard in the same direction.

"That is them! I'm hanged, Madge, if that isn't Dave, strolling back now with Thelma Curtis!"

"Oh, then, we can turn back."

"No fear!" Jack said fiercely. "You mustn't go back alone, Madge, and I—I want a word with Dave."

"If Thelma is with him—"

"She can be blowed. If anyone has a right to go for Dave, I have. And I'm going to go for him—I am!"

"But, Jack—"

"Madge, will you just think what his goings-on have meant in total to the lot of us? Will you remember Judy just now—"

"Very well, Jack."

So they waited, observing that Dave and Thelma were coming downhill on a course that should bring them to this spot. But a minute later Madge and Jack had to walk across the dewy grass, for the two others had started to make an avoiding detour.

"Dave!" was Jack's sharp shout.

"Yes? What?"

"He'll know what when I get to him!" muttered the fiery brother of fiery Polly. "Now then!" After a short run that left him confronting his schoolmate, with Thelma Curtis standing close by, faintly smiling. "Is it playing the game, Dave?"

"Is what, Jack?"

"This!"

"It's not late."

"That's not the point. Even if you can't be a mixer, like you used to be, can't you let us enjoy ourselves?"

"I thought you were having quite a jolly time, dancing in the barn."

"So we were—until we had to come out, the whole lot of us, to see what had become of you!" Thelma laughed.

"Oh, is everybody looking for us? What a scream!"

"It may seem funny to you!" Jack clipped at the girl. "You, of course, don't care a hoot for his sister's feelings, and you're doing your best to get him not to care! But—"

"Here, that will do," Dave struck in gently.

"It won't do—and I'm telling you!" Jack dissented, raising his voice. "You're spoiling everything for all of us, Dave. The holiday plan will fall to bits, all through you! Next thing we shall all be breaking up to go to our different homes, and so the Delanes will be losing us, like they've lost other guests. You're not being considerate. You're being selfish. You're being a silly ass!"

"Am I?"

Madge interposed. She knew perfectly well that Dave's marvellous composure would only anger Jack all the more.

"Jack, it's no use. Nothing you are likely to say—"

"But I may not be simply going to say things!" he cried out furiously. "If it doesn't stop now, I reckon Dave and I will be coming to blows! There! I warn you, Dave!"

"Oh, don't get to fighting about me!" smirked Thelma.

Jack turned to her.

"Fight about you! The fight, if there is to be one, will be about Judy, his sister! Get that!"

"There mustn't be any fighting," Madge said quickly. "I shan't allow it! Dave, listen to me! Your sister really has had a nasty scare on your

account. She went up to let you out of your room, knowing that Bobby had locked you in for fun, and she found you had climbed out by the window. That, naturally, seemed a desperate thing for you to have done, and so—"

"Oh, Bloot locked me in, did he?" Dave exclaimed. "I see! It was a mere jape."

"Why, what else do you think it could have meant?" Jack stared.

Dave did not answer. Thelma side-glanced him as he remained silent.

"Let's all get back to the Manor," Madge staidly suggested. "And we must try to let the others know who are out."

Although she greatly disliked the idea of accompanying Thelma if they should all four walk back together, Madge gave that girl and Dave each a look, inviting them to return in that fashion.

But Thelma airily sauntered aside, and then Dave stepped after her, to be only with her.

"Look at him!" Jack growled thickly, slowly turning to go with Madge. "Did you ever know such a change in a fellow? Baty over a girl! Gosh, that sort of thing, Madge, just makes me tired!"

DAVE and Thelma dawdled, letting the other two get more and more in advance, on the downhill walk to the Manor.

Thelma did most of the talking, and it seemed as if she regarded it as "good form" not to say anything about the bit of a row there had been. She commented on the loveliness of the night, and wished she could have stayed out longer.

"It was going to be so marvellous up there at the top of the hill, where you met me," she purred.

"Yes, you get one of the best views from that hill where the water-reservoir is," he agreed carelessly. "I like it myself up there."

"So that's why you chanced to turn up there—not because you thought I would be there!"

"Why should I have thought that?" he returned, with his calm smile. "Didn't you tell me, before tea, you would be going in quite the opposite direction after dinner this evening?"

"I know I did, and—shall I tell you something?" she said winningly. "I looked for you, an hour or so ago, to let you know I wouldn't be going that way after all."

"Oh, did you? Anyhow," and he, Dave, laughed—rare thing for him to do—"it didn't matter. I did meet you, up there on the hill."

"Yes." She wanted it to be a light laugh, but it sounded rather mirthless.

"You didn't tell me you had had to climb down from your window to be able to come for your walk," she remarked, a little later. "Fancy one of them locking you in like that. And at the time you didn't take it to be a jape? I hope you didn't think I turned the key on you!"

"Oh, no!"

That was all, and she did not like to probe him further. Terse, as usual, he, although he was always turning up as if he hankered to be with her. Had she better be more on her guard with him? Was it only by a fluke that he had gone up to the top of the reservoir hill for his twilight stroll, thus baulking her—a second time!

If this sort of thing continued, she would begin to think that he must have formed some SUSPICION—was shadowing her. And yet, how could he have formed any mistrustful theory?

The uneasiness so clung about her mind, last thing that night she consulted her mother particularly about him.

"You know, mother, I've been thinking about that Cardew boy—"

"Well?"

"I don't believe I'll get a chance to do that business up there at the reservoir."

"If you can't do it, Thelma, then I must," her mother said darkly. "Tampering with things about the house is all very well—the more upsets the better—but we want an upset that will put the Delanes in a permanent fix, put them to an expense so great that they really won't be able to find the money."

"I can't be sure, mother; he's a strange fellow—deep and silent. But it was odd, his turning up like that again, this evening. You know, I told him I would not be going that way. It looks as if he guessed I would be, after all."

"Ah!"

"Yet why he should suspect anything—goodness knows. It isn't as if he knew that we are relations of the Delanes, really."

"Can he have found out, Thelma?"

"But how could he, mother! Anyhow, if you think I had better leave it to you, then—oh, I have it!" bringing her hands together with a little clap. "There's a picnic for all of them to-morrow. Mother, supposing I make myself nice to them, suddenly, and hint that I'd like to go?"

"To make sure of his going with them?"

"Yes. I can easily say that I've decided I'd like to have done with all this squabbling, so can't we all be friends? They'll jump at that, if only to get him back to them."

Thelma lowered her voice still more.

"And then, mother, whilst I'm away at the picnic with them all, including Dave Cardew, it will be quite, quite safe for you to do the trick, won't it? If that boy has found some reason for feeling that he ought to keep an eye on me—well, he will be doing that to-morrow, at the picnic!"

"Very well, Thelma. Go to bed now, anyhow, for it is late."

"Or shall I, mother—shall I stay up and creep down presently, to go up to the reservoir and—"

"No; I forbid you! It is almost as light as day in the moonlight, and the top of that hill can be plainly seen from here. He might be watching at his window."

"Oh, all right then, I won't!"

But Thelma, as she went away to her own room, was privately making up her mind to do something else before the night had far advanced. Humiliating, to have to leave mother to do the trick up there on the hill.

Meantime, as some consolation—and also as a bit of pure spite all on one's own account—how about that hoarding, down the road!

Don't Tell Judy

DOWN before six next morning, Tess Trelawney sought her bicycle where it was slammed away, with all her chums' machines, in an old coach-house.

Away she went, skimming down the valley road, all by herself. Glorious morning! What a day it was going to be for the picnic, and she must be in that, of course. Hence this hurrying out so early to put the finishing touches to the roadside advertisement for the Cromlech Manor Hotel.

Tess had been first up this morning, she knew; but she was making a big mistake if she imagined that she would see nothing of Betty and the rest until she got back to the manor for a late breakfast.

Barely five minutes after she had started off

many another bicycle had been hauled out of the coach-house. Spirits were high, and it was with a merry chiming of cycle-bells that Betty and Polly and other members of the Morcove "chum-mery" went speeding down the road.

"We simply must get her to come back with us for brekker," Betty gaily stressed. "Other-wise—we know what Tess is; she'll work on and on, forgetting the time."

"Besides, we want to be off by ten at the latest," Polly cried. "And whether the hoarding is finished or not, Tess must come with us."

"Oh, Tess means to come," Pam said happily. "She was as keen as any of us for the picnic, overnight."

"Bai Jove! Gwand morning, geals, what?" "Corjus! Eet makes you want to go off and never come back again!"

"Well, you may," Polly sweetly gave permission.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But all this levity endured only for the few minutes that it took the girls to spin down the valley road to where it joined the main highway.

Then came consternation—burning rage.

For they found Tess gazing angrily at what was no longer a work of art. Someone, in the night, had ruined the attractive hoarding.

Not only had a good deal of the pictorial part of it been defaced, whilst the paint was still wet, the lettering had been shamefully treated.

Tess had left the paints here when she knocked off last evening. By resorting to those paints and one of the brushes, the mischief-worker had been able to dab in lettering that altered the original wording.

"DON'T Stay at the Cromlech Manor Hotel," one line now read. "Every DIS-Comfort," said another line.

The direction for motorists advised them to "Turn BACK—it's less TROUBLE!"

Finally, as a crowning insult: "Dancing in the Barn" had been altered to "RATS in the Barn!"

Letting their bicycles fall to the grass, the girls swarmed nearer. From a hundred yards away the mischief done to the hoarding had hit them in the eye, as the saying is, it was so violently done. Now, after a closer look, they turned to poor Tess.

"No use asking you who did this?" Betty broke out, passionately. "Oh, Tess dear, but what a cruel shame!"

"Outwageous, bai Jove!" "Abominabubble, yes! Bekas—"

"Done for—ruined, utterly!" Polly stormed. "After the way we all worked yesterday—after the way you, Tess, stuck at it for hours on end!"

"Would it be somebody with a grudge against the Delanes?" Helen wondered.

"Can you imagine anyone with a grudge against the Delanes?" Pam said. "I can't!"

"Then just who was it?" fumed Polly. "Who did it? We've got to know—got to find out! How about that Curtis girl? You'll say I'm jumping to conclusions as usual, but there is someone who might have done it out of pure spite against us!"

"Yes, bekas!"

"She has a room to herself," Betty nodded, "so she could have biked down here in the night without her mother knowing."

"If she did, then she wasn't alone," Tess said, causing many pairs of brows to go up.

"Why, what?" clamoured Polly. "Then you do know something, Tess; you have found a clue?"

"Before you girls turned up," Tess answered moodily, "I had time to look about for tell-tale footprints or anything else that might help. Judy isn't here now, and so I suppose it's all right for me to—to show you what I found. But you'll promise not to tell Judy?"

"Yes, Tess—yes!" was the chorus. "But why mustn't she be told?"

"This is what I found in the grass, where it must have fallen off, or got kicked off a bike that had been laid flat in the grass—like your bikes are lying now."

Tess was holding out her right hand, palm upwards. On it lay a red glass reflector, of very good make. The glass itself had facets, like a cut diamond.

Polly was who ended the sensational silence.

"I know that reflector," she said fiercely. "I know whose bike that belongs to. There is no other like it, amongst all the bikes at the manor."

"Dave's bike, yes," Tess nodded. "And that is why I say—not a word about this to Judy!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

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Next Tuesday's Powerful Long Complete Morcove
Holiday Story is Entitled:—

DISAPPOINTED IN DAVE!



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BY
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