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GRAND NEW "GRANGEMOOR" STORY By Marjorie Stanton  
Commences Within

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

No. 754, Vol. 29.  
Week ending  
July 20th., 1935.  
EVERY TUESDAY



The "Ne'er-do-Wells"  
Risk All—For Bunny  
A thrilling incident from  
this week's long complete  
Morcove story.

"BUNNY'S DAY OF DANGER"—Thrilling Morcove Story in This Issue

*Bunny Trevor Races for Shelter—and Dashes Into the Tightest Corner of Her Impetuous Career at Morcove*



# Bunny's Day of Danger

CHAPTER 1.  
Left Out of the Team

"HERE, how many more of you?"  
"Yes, bai Jove, hev a care, you geals!"  
I—Ow! I'm being simply squashed!"  
"Oh, rabbits! Move up—"  
"We can't!"  
"You must!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Morcove's private motor-bus had turned up at the front porch of the schoolhouse, to take on board a number of scholars who were to be run to Grangemoor School for a most important cricket match.

Accordingly, there was the usual hilarious scrambling for places. By rights, the bus was reserved for Form-captain Betty Barton and members of her team, with one or two reserve players. But a good many other girls belonging to the Form were going to get to Grangemoor this afternoon, to see the match. And they didn't see why they should not attempt to avoid the fag of "biking."

The team, with its prior right to seats, was already on board; but now Betty herself took it into her head to get out of the bus again, on a last-minute impulse. Her struggling to alight, by way of a door which was besieged by half a dozen girls struggling to get in, did not lessen the general confusion or the breathless laughter.

By Marjorie Stanton

"Keep my seat for me, Polly. I want to run and see if—"

"Oh, Betty, don't—don't go!" the madcap and others yelled. "There's not time!"

"No, bekas—what ze diggings, we don't want to have to start ze match as soon as we get to Grangemoor! We shall want time for some refreshments!" insisted dusky Naomer.

Betty, however, executed a sort of escaping dive and was out of the melee. She recovered her breath, laughing, and was off at a gallop towards the cycle-sheds.

There, amongst several scholars who were lugging out machines, she found Bunny Trevor, extricating a bicycle which should never have been slammed away as it had been, considering its brand newness.

"Bunny—just a sec!" was Betty's calling-aside murmur.

"Oh, haven't you gone yet?" was the smiled remark with which Bunny, wheeling the machine, came to where the captain was preferring to have word with her—out of earshot of other girls.

"We're just off, Bunny. I say, it's rotten enough that

Bunny Trevor Sticks  
to her "Ne'er-do-Wells"  
—With Amazing Results



you are not in the team, for this afternoon. I know how keen you are, Bunny, and so—would you like a seat in the bus? I can manage it for you."

"That's awfully sweet of you, Betty, but I have my bike."

"Then—you were intending to get to Grangemoor?"

"I hope to turn up, to see Morcove win."

"I was afraid, Bunny, you were going to—I won't say waste the halfer, but spend it in bothering yourself about that Turner girl again."

"I may be calling at the Turners' cottage. It's almost on the way to Grangemoor. Anyhow," and Bunny smiled her own engaging smile, looking the captain straight in the eyes, "don't you worry about me, Betty. You scoot now, and think only of beating Grangemoor!"

Betty laughed.

"It would be a treat for me to have only one thing to think about as captain! As for the match—how I wish you were playing, Bunny! But there it was, I simply had to leave you out."

"Oh, yes—"

"I owed it to the other girls, as I told you at the time."

"Yes, Betty, and I don't feel the least bit aggrieved—just as if!"

A pause in the subdued talk made both girls all the more aware of an impatient clamour from a short distance away.

"Betty, come on!" various members of her team were yelling. "We shall be—late!"

"Wasting your time on Bunny!" somebody complained at the top of her voice, having glimpsed the captain and the girl with whom she was talking. "Never mind her! Come on!"

"Best of luck then, Betty," said Bunny, with a parting nod.

"Think it will keep fine?" the captain asked, casting her eyes up to the sky as she walked away. "Thunder about, I fancy! Well, see you later, Bunny! Mind you do!"

And so they parted, as cordially as that, Betty with a rush back to the bus, where a scrimmage was still raging.

Madcap Polly, with two or three other joyous spirits in support, was defending the doorway with such success that the attackers were now inclined to abandon all hope of a lift.

Not that there had been any selfish refusal on the part of the team to find room for others. The trouble was that there really was no more room now—even on the floor!

Betty, whose return was greeted with more or less facetious cheering, clambered in again, to find that her reserved seat had shrunk to a width of about four inches. Again some squeezing together was resorted to, and suddenly Paula Creel was altogether squeezed out—as the other girls on that side of the vehicle had playfully made up their minds she should be.

With a slump! and a dismal "Wow!" the elegant and oft-teased member of Study 12 sat down in the lap of a girl already sitting on the floor. That girl was Naomer, who promptly raised a protesting:

"Hi, no you don't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What ze diggings—"

"Owch!" howled Paula, finding herself becoming a footstool for several teasers. "Healp! I—can't move!"

"You're not wanted to," said Polly sweetly.

"That's most comfortable!"

"Comfortable, bai Jove! Ow—oooh! My gwacious—"

Slam! somebody pulled round the door at the back of the roomy bus, whereupon another cheer was raised.

"Hurrah! We're off!"

"Grangemoor, John," Polly jokingly gave orders to the driver. "And put your foot on the gas! Bye-ee, you girls!" was her parting yell to those who had failed to "scrounge" a lift.

"Hope you have a nice ride!"

"Shame," laughed Betty. "A hot day like this. But we simply couldn't manage any more."

"Then why did you go chasing after Bunny?" the madcap mock-grimly asked. "To tell her we could certainly find a place for her!"

"Bunny's—different," smiled Betty.

"She is—Bunny," was Polly's cryptic way of putting it. "I don't see why that should entitle her to different treatment."

"If you mean—favourable treatment, I don't know that she's had any from me?" Betty quietly submitted, with a smile that asked Polly to think a moment.

Polly thought hard for a moment.

"No!" she then agreed. "You certainly were firm enough with her—"

Pop! went a cork at this instant, and Polly glared an inquiring:

"What's that?"

"Zis is me," spoke Naomer, from where she squatted on the floor, with a bottle of stone-ginger starting to foam. "So, look out, Paula—shift away a bit, bekas he is—"

An immediate and horrified yell from Paula, as she found the foam already blobbing over her clothes, testified to the "uppishness" of the bottle of ginger-beer.

And the bus romped along, packed with scholars who were in great merriment again, the screams of laughter growing louder still when at last Polly, trying to get the bottle away from her dusky chum, only succeeded in spilling more of its contents all down Paula's back!

## CHAPTER 2.

### Thunder in the Air

**B**UNNY, at the end of a half-hour's steady cycling, glanced up to the sky as she slowed her machine for dismounting.

The coppery sun had disappeared behind a slow-moving bank of cloud. All the sky now looked murky. She remembered what Betty's remark had been just now: "Thunder about, I fancy?"

"And that," Bunny said to herself, as she dismounted in front of a ramshackle cottage which stood all alone beside the little-used by-road, "is why I am not in the team for this afternoon! I suppose I could have been certain not to be missing when the time came; but it was right of Betty not to take any chance about that."

Had Bunny's own nature been a different one, she might have closed at once with the captain's offer to find her a seat in the bus. A petty disposition would have found a certain amount of malicious delight in going with the team—simply to prove that one might have been included in the team, after all!

But no such idea had occurred to Bunny, although she had known herself to be free enough to accept the offer. Her calling at the Turner cottage again to-day had not been imperative. Another time would have sufficed. She was simply taking in the cottage on her way to Grangemoor, by bicycle.

Nor did it look as if she was going to do any good, after all, by having ridden this way. The lonely little dwelling had a lifeless appearance, as she went along the path to the trellis porch, after leaving her machine at the roadside.

It was a relief to realise that, at any rate, neither poaching father nor the ne'er-do-well son was at home; and once again she felt annoyed by the absence of Kathy as well.

For the cottage girl was not to be found. Bunny looked for her, after a vain knocking at the fastened door, in the ill-kept vegetable garden behind the cottage, but Kathy was not there, doing some bit of hoeing, as the Morcove girl had thought she might be.

After that hasty look-round, Bunny passed out by the wicket gate to recover her machine and ride away. The day of the great match at Grangemoor—and her own brother Tom in the boys' team! Why waste time, then, by hanging about, on the chance of Kathy's turning up?

Inevitably Bunny put that impatient question to herself, thoughts of the match warring with that friendly interest which had survived in her, for Kathy.

In her mind's eye, now, Bunny could see the cricket field at famous Grangemoor, and the boys in their flannels and blazers, with scores of others who were going to look on.

She pictured to herself the arrival of the Morcove "visitors"; imagined so well the friendly chatter-chatter on the ground, then the toss for innings. "Play!"

And yet—no, she could not jump on her bike again and be off at once, after all. Poor Kathy. Most likely she was only away from the cottage on account of that brother of hers, who was still hiding from the police. One could imagine so easily. Alf had found some lair where he was lying up by day, and Kathy knew about the hiding-place and visited him in secret, taking him food.

Only a waster, he; but Kathy was his sister. Only a dull-witted, deplorable-looking girl, Kathy; but—in her devotion to that brother of hers there was something to admire.

Bunny flopped her bicycle against the hedge again, and walked to and fro—waiting. Much as she longed to do the rest of the journey to Grangemoor, full pelt, she felt bound to hang about like this. Kathy might turn up at any moment. And then—a few kind words to her, the girl whom "nobody had liked for long." A chance, perhaps, to do her some little favour; at any rate, the visit would let her see, she was not being forgotten.

Suddenly there came a long low rumble of distant thunder. "Oh, dash," Bunny exclaimed, glancing at the darkest part of the overcast sky. "Rotten for the match! But perhaps they won't get the storm at Grangemoor."

It became startlingly apparent that the first murmur of thunder was to mean a rapid change in the sky, from bad to worse. Electrical disturbances were at work up there, and Bunny did not like the outlook for herself, since she had started off this afternoon in her usual happy-go-lucky manner.

"Best get away and push on whilst I can," she decided. "Kathy hasn't turned up, and I don't want to be caught here by a storm."

She was thinking of the wood-shed, built as a lean-to against the cottage. It was an open-fronted shed, so anybody could dive in there for shelter. But somehow she did not welcome the idea of ultimately taking refuge anywhere upon the Turners' place. The threat of rain might bring back the father, whom she had never met and hoped she never would meet!

The afternoon was darkening rapidly as she pedalled on again, riding hard for distant Grangemoor. It was an eerie half-light, causing the plated parts of her machine to gleam rather vividly.

The wind was down, and all Nature was hushed—except that now and then there came a thunderous mutter from round the horizon.

Constantly casting up her eyes as she purred along the lonely moorland road, she saw how the storm-clouds were tending to mass more and more overhead.

"And I didn't bring a mac!" she laughed. "Dash! This seems a long way to where I ought



"I suppose you had an appointment with the poacher's daughter here!" Fay Denver said sneeringly, while Edna grinned delightedly. Bunny did not even answer. Instead, she walked from the room, refusing to stay a moment longer with the detestable pair.



to come out on the direct road to Grangemoor."

The heathery wastes took on a still deeper gloom under the ever-darkening sky. Down went Bunny's head, low over the handlebars, so that she might press on all the faster. Whirr, whirr! went the pedals—loudly in the hush before the storm.

A few minutes more, and she knew she would soon be emerging upon the direct road. She could see a familiar signpost at some crossways on the moor, the queer light imparting a horrid sort of gibbet-like appearance to the post and its pointing arms.

Suddenly—flash, flash! Lightning.

Bang, crash! the thunder cannonaded, right above her head, and Bunny laughed as she saw how her machine had wobbled. Bit unnerving, though!

Flash! again, and this time it seemed to her as if the lightning drew a reflective shimmer from her bright handlebars. Possible to get struck, because the machine could attract lightning?

"I don't know! They say you're more likely to get struck if you are in motion."

There was just time for the fresh peal of thunder to die away, and then the rain came down.

It began as scattering of heavy drops, but in a few moments there was pelting rain.

Bunny braked up and dismounted. A full quarter-mile short of the crossways she found herself in need of immediate shelter. The lightning blazed again, and with a rather scared laugh she left the bicycle to take its chance, leaning against a gorse bush.

Then she cast her eyes about, hoping to be able to decide instantly which way to run. A third crash of thunder was scarcely dying down when the storm-darkened scene was lighted up for a fourth time by vivid lightning.

This time it was a prolonged streak, forking down the sky. It seemed to leave Bunny blinded for a few seconds; but when at last she got over

the dazzling effect she seemed to be able to see a little better in the gloom. And then, to her vast relief, she saw, not far off, shelter of the most welcome kind.

A house—far better than any huddling under some tree or other. Nor, indeed, did the stony wastes grow trees to any size. It would have been a stunted holly, at best, for Bunny to snuggle against, if she had not sighted brick-and-mortar just then.

As it was, she could set off for the building with a glad sense of its being shelter really worth running for.

Her quickest course lay across a tract of heathy ground, for the dwelling-house stood well back from the road. Trailing brambles and close-growing trees of a scrub kind did their best to impede her, but she got along quickly, taking more than one big leap over a bit of twisty-stemmed gorse.

That she was getting wet almost to the skin as she ran, Bunny woefully realised; but to stay out meant getting half-drowned. It was a deluge, and all the while an incessant boom and crash of thunder, following flash after flash of lightning, made conditions really appalling.

At Morcove, it was always said by the girls that when their district did get a storm, they got one that seemed like the end of the world!

With a last floundering rush, Bunny gained an ivied wall bounding part of the grounds of the house; but no shelter was there. Breathlessly she ran along by the wall, hoping for a gateway.

She came to one and had no difficulty in passing through, for the gate was wide open, hanging by one hinge only.

A few seconds more, and she was at the back door of the house, having rushed across a very weedy patch of garden.

That she was making for a house that had stood empty and neglected for many a year, Bunny had known. Often she had gone by it, at a little distance, on the direct road from Morcove to Grangemoor. Chums of hers had told her what an ill-fated place it seemed to be.

The original owner had been deemed crazy to put up such a fine house in such an "unhandy" spot. When he died, his "folly," as it had been called, had found no purchaser.

Falling into a state of neglect, it was doomed to stand untenanted; and untenanted it had remained, whilst the passing seasons wrought their own destruction.

So now, Bunny had not the slightest scruple about making her way into the ruinous building. She did so by climbing in over the low sill of a broken window, the back door being nailed up.

She found herself in what had once been the large, rafted kitchen, and instantly felt the hurly-burly of the storm to be more nerve-racking than before. It was as if this empty old house were being bombed and shelled.

Whenever the lightning blazed, it took ghostly effect upon the gloomy interior, where cakes of plaster were ready to fall from the walls, and where, too, floorboards showed many a hole gnawed by rats. The thunder hurtled into the house and drew tremendous echoes from remote rooms and passages.

"Might be worse!" she said to herself, and laughed, picking away parts of her damped frock to ease the uncomfortable sensation of its going to stick to her skin. "Oh, and it will soon be over, perhaps. The sun out again, so that I'll soon dry off!"

Yet she certainly was, but she was forming no idea of getting back to the school, as soon as a chance offered. Oh, no; push on to Grangemoor, after all; that would be the thing to do.

Anxious to detect the first sign of the storm's passing over, she stayed by the window which had admitted her to the building. Every other second the lightning made her blink, and although the thunder was just as frequent, she somehow caught the loud hissing of rain upon some pavement just outside the kitchen window—heard it, also, gurgling and plopping in stopped-up down-pipes.

"What a soaker! The Grangemoor pitch will be unfit for play after this, even if it gives over soon enough! Shame!" she deplored, having been so keen about the match—even though the team had done without her!

Suddenly she gave a violent start, turning sharply about so as to look across the kitchen to its inner doorway. Voices!

She had heard them only faintly, and what with the sombre nature of her surroundings and the nerve-racking noise of the storm, conditions were favourable to a vague feeling of alarm. For a moment or so she was in a state of suspense; then she heard girlish laughter, of a half-hysterical kind, and she guessed, with a feeling of relief:

"Oh, only some other Morcove girls sheltering here."

But any idea that they would prove pleasant company was dispelled an instant after it had arisen.

With more laughter as they came scuttling along a gloomy passage leading to the kitchen, two

Morcover girls suddenly appeared in the doorway. And it was Bunny's appearance to recognise them as the Denver sisters—the Form's most disliked girls and the declared enemies of all who were connected with Study 12.

## CHAPTER 3.

## Bunny's Dire Peril

"HALLO! Oh, how very funny—ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, so it's you, Bunny Trevor!"

Fay and Edna were promptly noticing, with malicious delight, that Bunny had got wet in the rain, whereas they were quite dry.

"You look uncomfortable, Bunny Trevor," grinned excessively pretty Edna.

"I don't feel in the least uncomfortable," was Bunny's tart response. "Think I mind a drop or two of rain?"

"A drop or two is good," chuckled Edna. "Why, you must have got soaked, ha, ha, ha! We got in before it came on."

"Making for Grangemoor, don't you know," Fay imparted airily. "Must see the match, we felt! Morcover might win for once—it might!"

"You weren't asked to play, were you?" Fay said to Bunny, as if that fact increased the chances of a win for Morcover. "I suppose you had an appointment with the poacher's daughter here—was that it?"

This allusion to Bunny protégée amused both sisters greatly. They went off into fresh peals of laughter.

Then Bunny, without a word, crossed the bare, lightning-lit kitchen, to go out by the door through which Fay and Edna had entered. Detestable pair! What a sickener, this, to find herself cooped up on account of the thunderstorm with two such obnoxious schoolmates as these! Only thing to do—put herself as far from them as the rambling building would permit.

Out in a dark passage that led towards the main hall, Bunny heard the sisters joking about her and laughing over their malicious jokes. She would have banged the kitchen door behind her, but it was not to be banged; not closed even! The wretched door was jammed open.

Thinking they might decide to force their company upon her, simply for the sake of twitting and teasing her about Kathy Turner, she made her way up the wide main staircase of the old house to the topmost floor. She was determined to find some room or other where there would be a door that could be slammed shut against the sisters—and kept shut.

Slam!

"Oh, do you hear that?" Fay chuckled to her sister. "She's shut herself in somewhere upstairs—he, he, he!"

"She's furious," grinned Edna. "But, really, it is a scream—this! I say, can't we have some fun with her? It's a bore, simply standing about waiting for the storm to pass."

"Wouldn't it be a joke," Fay suddenly smiled, "to make her stay where she is—unable to get out for a good while, even when the rain has stopped and she knows we are gone?"

Edna gave a little clap of delight.

"Lovely! I suppose she was meaning to turn up at Grangemoor presently?"

"Oh, yes—if only to see her brother, Tom!"

"Then that's what we'll do, Fay; prevent her from getting to Grangemoor. She's flouted us; refused to speak to us—"

"Like her cheek!" grimaced Fay. "So we'll

just pay her out nicely. And don't forget, Edna; we already owe her a grudge. We know it was Bunny who had a lot to do with our secret society getting smashed up the other evening."

"Come on, then!"

Along the kitchen passage they went, back to the stark hall. With wide grins of expectant triumph, they mounted two flights of bare stairs.

Then they had to do some prowling this way and that, on the first floor, where the bed-rooms were very large. One or two of these rooms had closed doors, but there was no locked door. Fay and Edna could enter anywhere and find only an empty room, so delapidated as to be past all restoration.

"What a state the place is in, Edna! Only fit to be pulled down!"

"Not worth the expense of pulling down, either! But where is she, Fay? On the floor above, I suppose?"

"We'll soon see."

The stairs leading to the top floor were much narrower—more like flights of attic stairs. The landing and the bed-room passages had meaner dimensions, whilst there were far more signs of the havoc wrought by the weather.

Even now, whilst Fay and Edna continued their search, they had to skirmish past pools of storm-water that were due to holes in the roof. In some places the rain was simply seeping in, to run all down patches of rotten lath-and-plaster.

Suddenly the sisters came to one closed door which refused to open when they tried the knob.

They had been walking very softly, and now felt sure they were outside the room into which Bunny had gone.

Another peal of thunder died away. It was not quite so deafening as some of the first peals had been. Then, in a momentary lull in the noise of the storm, the sisters heard a movement inside the room.

Good enough!

"We've got her!" said the exultant looks which the sisters exchanged.

Edna nudged Fay to come away from the closed door, so that they might talk without being overheard.

"She's locked herself in," Edna whispered. "Like her cheek, to show us rudeness."

"But if the key is on her side of the door, how can we prevent her from coming out as soon as she likes? The door opens inwards, so we can't wedge it shut."

Edna grinned.

"Easy! All we've got to do—find a piece of wire and wire her in! Pass one end round the knob of the door and make the other end fast somehow, and then— Oh, I'll soon show you! Quick, it's a bit of wire we want!"

They soon found some. Downstairs they noticed the rusty wire which had served one of the old-fashioned bells which were all in a row in the kitchen, each suspended by a spring.

Edna's starting to pull away a length of the wire set a bell jangling weirdly in the empty house, and she chuckled.

"Fire!" she jested as the bell went on ringing violently.

"What a row!" chuckled Fay. "Anyhow, it proves you haven't got hold of any lightning conductor by mistake."

"Should hope not," tittered Edna. "With all this lightning about! I say, though, isn't the storm inclined to give over now?"

Fay ran to a window to look out.

"It's not raining nearly so hard. Looks like stopping in a minute."

"Knew it was too heavy to last," Edna commented. "But here's all the wire we want, so come on upstairs again."

Five minutes after this, their malicious deed was completed. They were going to leave the door so wired up, on the outside, that it could not be opened from within after the key had been turned back.

One end of the wire was securely bound round that outer knob and the other end was tied to the knob of another door exactly opposite. Edna, who had done everything, had taken care to stretch the wire as taut as possible.

Now she invited her sister, by a triumphant gesture, to observe how nicely the device would serve their purpose.

"Splendid!" Fay whispered gleefully. "She'll get in a terrible rage and end by smashing the door to bits, no doubt. Doesn't matter! The whole place is a wreck. And in case she hasn't been able to get out—we'll look in on our way back from Grangemoor, and let her free then."

"That's it! Something else to tease her about afterwards," tittered Edna. And as they tiptoed away, to go downstairs:

"Now, I'm awfully glad, Fay, there's been this storm."

"The rain has stopped now—just right for us," the elder sister further rejoiced, glancing out of a landing window on the way downstairs with Edna.

"Do a spurt on the bikes, Fay, and get to Grangemoor in time for tea, after all?"

"That's the idea. Shouldn't wonder, if it turns out bright again, they play the match—after tea."

"It's getting lighter. There must be a break in the clouds somewhere. Goodness, though!" And Edna stopped dead on the stairs, making a rather frightened clutch at her sister.

Fay also was feeling startled. A sound had come—from which part of the empty house they could not be certain, except that it had not come from the top floor; and it had been a sound which they could hardly associate with the storm.

After standing mute and still for a few seconds, hearing no repetition of the noise, they looked at each other uneasily.

"Somebody else about the place, then?" Edna inferred. "It sounds as if—"

"Yes, that's what I thought; a sort of stumbling noise."

"Had we better go back, then, and—and unloose that wire?"

"Oh, no!"

"But—"

"If there is someone, it's certain to be only some other Morcove girl, driven to shelter on her way to Grangemoor. There have been lots going over by bike. Let's get away, and leave it at that!"

"After all, that noise—it may have been only a bit of plaster falling down. The rain, soaking through somewhere—"

"Yes, of course!"

All the same, from that moment their movements were as stealthy as they could make them, whilst creeping the rest of the way down to the ground floor, and then to the dining-room, where they could clamber out by the same window which had admitted them.

The rain had ceased. They had only the dripping branches of trees, and the flopping foliage of overgrown shrubs, to avoid as they picked their way through the jungle which a once lovely garden had become. Then, having altogether escaped any wetting, they recovered

their machines from where they had abandoned them just before the storm burst.

Using their handkerchiefs, they wiped dry the saddles and the grips of the handlebars.

"What about it?" Edna uncertainly asked, casting up her eyes to the sky. "Is the sun going to come out again or not? Storms have a way of coming back, Fay."

"Oh, it's all right now. Chance it, anyway. We can easily shelter somewhere else. We don't want to hang about here!"

A nod from the younger sister implied that that was her opinion, too. They wheeled their machines through the heather, out to the direct road to Grangemoor.

Then, mounting, they rode away, going off into a final burst of laughter as they thought of Bunny and the spiteful trick they had served her.

#### CHAPTER 4.

#### Her Spite Again

"THERE they go, so now I can be off, too!" Bunny was speaking to herself as she watched from a grimy window of the semi-attic bed-room to which she had withdrawn a few minutes since.

Thankfully she had noticed what was at any rate a lull in the storm and a complete cessation of the rain. As yet there was no definite break in the clouds, but some of the deep gloom had passed off. Guessing that Fay and Edna would be glad to get away at the first possible moment, she had decided to let them have the start of her.

It was, she felt, worth the irksome delay—not to encounter them again in this wretched place. Annoyingly, they had sought shelter here in time to escape the first downpour, and so they had been able to draw attention to their own preserved smartness, in contrast with her, Bunny's, rained-sopped state.

"But I shall do as I said, and still go on to Grangemoor," she muttered, crossing over to the locked door. "Hallo! What on earth—"

A furious stamp of the foot attended Bunny's sudden infuriated cry. She had turned back the key and had instantly discovered that the door would not come open.

"Won't it, though!" she muttered between her clenched teeth, and started to wrench and drag at the door. "If they think I'm going to stay here until they choose to come back and let me out— Oh, bother it!" she was reduced to sighing, a few moments later. "It's wire—not string. I see what they've done."

The door would come open to the extent of an inch or two, and no more than that. Through the chink Bunny was just able to make out the wire attached to the outer knob, but she could not manage to get her hand through.

More maddening than ever this! There was something particularly tantalising in her being able to see the wire, and yet not be able to cope with it. She thought it looked badly rusted, and wondered if it would be possible to snap it, by pulling on the door with all her strength. But, no; the wire still held. Two or three minutes of great exertion only left her hot and breathless—still a prisoner in the room.

"Ugh!" she raged, stamping across to the window again. "And no means of getting out this way, of course? Too high up," she realised glumly. "Must be forty feet to the ground, and nothing to climb down by—dash it!"

Then, when another moment would have found her going back to the door, she stood arrested at the window by a returning gloom.



The large area of moorland country over which the eye could range, from that high window, was darkening again. She peered up to the sky. Where there had been a promising milkiness between one cloud and another, there was now one vast inky pall.

Turning round at last, she saw how dark the wretched room had become. But she found a reason for laughing quite merrily.

"Those wretches will get soaked, after all, perhaps! The storm isn't over. We're going to get another deluge."

At that very instant the empty room was vividly illumined by a flash of lightning that forced an "Oh!" from Bunny, whilst she clapped a hand over her eyes. A terrible flash—blinding.

And, almost synchronising with that flash, there came such a hurtling crash of thunder, directly over the house, it seemed to shake the place to its very foundations.

"Goodness!" Bunny laughed. "And there's the rain again. Coming down in stair-roads! Those Denver girls now! Well, that's their look-out."

Leaving the storm to rage on again, unwatched, she went back to the door. How to cope with this barrier which the sisters had so craftily devised?

"For I am not going to stay cooped up here, just because the rain has come on again. I want to be ready for riding away, as soon as the next break occurs."

So her mind ran, whilst she frowned at the door, realising the uselessness of repeating the former method of attack. Break the door down—or, at any rate, smash out enough woodwork to enable one to wriggle through? The room, although it contained not a scrap of lumber even, should provide her with something that would serve as a makeshift battering-ram.

Her gaze went about, looking for a fireplace. Only then did she realise that there was no fireplace. The attic-like room had been intended for servants, in an age when nobody gave a thought for the comfort of servants.

"What a sickener!" Bunny raged anew. "Oh, dash!"

Had there been a stove, she could have hoped to wrench out some bit of iron bar or other iron-work to serve her purpose. Now, as her gaze roved around the whole room, she had the exasperation of seeing nothing of any use to her.

So those detestable girls had got the laugh of her, after all! Ugh! She really was—helpless. Of course, they would come back by-and-by and let her out; but by that time—

"Too late to go to Grangemoor then. They'll all be coming back by then. Oh, and fancy still being here when Fay and Edna turn up again!"

Bunny strode back to the window. Rain was still pelting down, but the lightning was not so vivid and the thunder seemed to rumble from some distance away.

"Passing off again," she decided. "The sun will be out presently—I'm positive. Thunderstorms have a way of clearing off like that. And I shall still be here."

Presently she heard a peculiar noise in the house that seemed to have nothing to do with the storm. It was a queer crackling sound, as of damp wood newly kindled.

She wondered—had Fay and Edna turned back during the thunderstorm's second bout, arriving soaked to the skin? Were they lighting a fire downstairs, to get themselves dry as best they could? Come to that, somebody else might have turned up, thoroughly drenched, and might be getting a fire going.

Once more she went over to the fastened door.



Bunny pulled the door open as far as it would come. Then a kind of horror gripped her. Dense spirals of smoke were curling round the edge.

The old house was—on fire!

By holding it open to the extent of that inch or two, she should be able to hear voices from below, if Fay and Edna were down there. They were bound to be all hysterical chatter and laughter.

Bunny pulled the door open as far as it would come, then peered through the extremely narrow aperture whilst starting to listen eagerly.

Then a kind of horror gripped her.

The landing outside her fastened door was full of smoke.

It was smoke so dense that even now it was starting to creep in round the edge of the door in dark coils.

At the same time, the splutterings of burning wood were becoming much louder.

She was not forgetting that a few bits of damp wood lighted on a hearth can crackle and snap very sharply. She realised, instantly, that a fire kindled by someone downstairs might easily be smoking badly. Chimneys must be stopped up after all the years the house had been in disuse.

But such reasonings as this could not dispel her sudden dreadful conviction that the house was on fire.

Then she remembered the lightning. "That terrible flash, just now! The house got struck by it; that's what it means!" she gasped her understanding. "And then the place took fire—"

She closed the door, so as to keep the mounting smoke from entering.

But although she had shut out the smoke, she had not shut out all noise of the fire. It still came to her, past that door—the door which held her a helpless prisoner in this room, and fire—fire spreading rapidly through the whole building!

She rushed to the window and tried to open it.

The old-fashioned sashes were stuck fast. Wasting no more time in the effort, she whipped off a shoe and used it to smash out the lower pane.

Four or five times she drove the heel of the shoe against the glass, until almost all of it had broken away in fragments which she heard smashing to smithereens on some stone paving far below.

"Fire!" she shouted from the broken window, whilst her eyes wildly searched the wide prospect, near and far, in the hope of seeing somebody.

"Help! Fire! Hi! I can't get out, and this place is on fire!"

Through the falling rain she saw a vast area of the gloomy moorland, and several short sections of roadway. But not a soul was in sight.

Tragically she realised that no one was likely to be going by on the distant road whilst the storm raged on like this. Motorists could keep going during a thunderstorm, although usually they preferred to pull up and wait for the worst to be over. But motors were very few and far between on the rough and narrow roads which criss-crossed the moor. As for cyclists or pedestrians—they must have been driven to shelter where they could.

Sheer desperation made her shout again, however, and again after that.

"Help! This way, somebody—help! Fire!" Then, glancing round, she stared through the thin haze of smoke to the other side of the room.

That door, fastened against her on the outside, and fire spreading through the house! There had been torrential rain in the last half-hour or so, but that would make no difference, she knew. Here and there some bit of wall or floor might have been swamped by an inflow, but in the main the building was tinder-dry at this time of year. To-day's storm had been preceded by a heat wave.

A dreadful fascination lured her across the room, back to the door. She had to fight off the temptation to open the door by just that inch or two, so as to peer out again and listen. It was a frantic desire to know what was happening—to find out if the fire itself was yet coming up the stairs.

But she had the presence of mind and the courage to keep the door shut. She had smashed the window, and she realised that this would increase the inevitable draught. When a house was on fire, the staircase nearly always served as a flue up which the heat rushed in a fierce draught, drawing the flames after the suffocating smoke. "Then what am I to do?"

She could not help beating her hands together in a half-despairing way as she put that question aloud to herself. What could one do? It was the height of the bed-room from ground level which made the place such a death-trap.

Listening, close by the door, she heard sounds which were bound to leave her all the more appalled, for they proclaimed the unchecked progress of the fire. It seemed to her that the whole place must soon be a raging furnace.

Then she went over to the window again, telling herself not to lose her head and jump to certain death, rather than wait for the fire to reach her. But she must go back to the window, in spite of

the temptation it was in such a desperate extremity.

Her only hope, now, was in her being able to attract somebody's attention in time. She must shout on, and shout her loudest, hoping to be heard.

And then, back at the smashed window and peering out once more, she thrilled with surprise.

Down below, in the very grounds of the house, there were two persons who seemed to have rushed out of the burning building only a moment or so ago.

A girl and a lad they were, poorly dressed—even sordid in their appearance.

"Hi, help! Hi!" Bunny yelled down to them. "I can't get out; I can't get out!"

They heard her, and they stopped dead to look up to her, and then she knew them instantly.

Kathy was the girl, and the lad—her wastrel brother, who, for days and nights, had been in hiding from the police!

## CHAPTER 5.

### The "Ne'er-Do-Wells"

"KATHY! Alf! Help me, can't you?" Bunny cried down to them again. "I daren't jump, and the door is fastened against me!"

For a moment their faces remained upturned to her; then, where they had stood arrested in their flight from the burning building, she saw them exchange excited looks.

She could tell; they were asking each other what was to be done about her.

It became Bunny's desperate belief that there was nothing they could do! Very likely they had only got away just in time. In a flash she was understanding; this empty old house had been Alf's secret hiding-place, and Kathy—the only one who knew—had visited him in secret, to supply him with the necessities of life.

It all made her feel sorry for them both, somehow. She had the thought:

"Now what will he do for himself? What can she do for him, after this—"

With those pitying thoughts there was the resigned feeling that she herself was doomed. Trapped as she was at this height from the ground, how could they be expected to save her? What attempt could they make? It needed a fire escape, or a forty-foot ladder to serve as one.

And yet, next moment, she saw Alf give his sister a quick nudge, as if to imply:

"Come on with me!" as he took returning steps at a run towards the doomed building.

Kathy ran with him; and then Bunny lost them both in the thick smoke which was rolling away from the broken windows of the house on the ground floor.

She stood away from her own smashed window by a pace or so, telling herself to wait now—calmly.

But the suspense—it was terrible. There she stood, with her hands clasped together against her pounding heart. Any hurly-burly of the storm was now overwhelmed by the ominous noises in the house.

Violent splutterings and cracklings were mingling with a bellows-like roar of the fire as it acquired an ever stronger draught from those broken windows below. Now and then there came a rattling crash, as of half-burnt fabric falling down, and once a boom! like that of a great quantity of woodwork falling, smote her hearing.

Most appalling sound of all was the murmurous shuddering of the room door, which she had kept

shut against the raging conflagration. She went back to it and turned the key, for it seemed to her that the force of the fire—the pressure caused by terrific heat at the top of the house—was tending to burst open the door as far as the wire would allow.

How long she stood helpless like this, making a desperate struggle to keep calm, she did not know. It seemed as if a whole life-time were crowded into those few minutes. But at last—

Thud, crash—thud! a new and deafening noise began, right above her head. At first she thought it must be thunder, bursting directly over the house again; but, in any case, she looked up to the ceiling, and then she saw that the dirty and cobwebby plaster was breaking away.

She had some of the plaster even falling upon her, and she jumped aside, dipping her head in fear of further falls.

Was the house starting to collapse? Had some chimney stack fallen, all but smashing through the tiles above the ceiling?

There was hardly time for more than that wondering thought, when a fresh fall of plaster was followed by a crashing-in on rotten laths. Her terrified eyes were watching—for she could do no more than stand to gaze at what was happening—when she saw a booted foot come right through the hole smashed in the ceiling.

The foot was quickly withdrawn, but it reappeared to her instantly, trampling and slashing here and there to make the hole bigger.

Alf!

It was he, getting to her by way of the roof!

Now that the smashed opening in the roof was big enough for his purpose, she saw his head and shoulders hanging over it. His grimed face hung above her, and it grimaced in a way that could only be called ugly. But in this moment of life or death Bunny knew him for a hero, as handsome as the thing he was doing!

He was lying upon some beams now, reaching down his right arm for her to catch at, so that he could haul her up.

By standing on tiptoe she could just reach up both hands to clasp that saving one.

"That's our right," she heard his husky, breathless shout, above all the noise of the fire. "Nah then, 'ang on, miss! I got yer!"

"Oh, Alf," she panted, as one hand of hers held his, so grimy and yet so strong, whilst her other gripped him at the wrist. "You'll never do it!"

"Yuss, I got you! Arf a mo', though! Kathy!" he bawled.

Then Bunny knew that his sister was with him, out there on one of the highest bits of the roof. Kathy, too, had come with him upon the daring mission; Kathy was his girl-partner in this deed of supreme heroism.

Another moment and there was just a glimpse of Kathy's face through the ragged hole in the ceiling. She was lying beside her brother, reaching her right arm now.

The next, Bunny knew, they both had her and were drawing her up. They lugged her through the jagged hole into a kind of attic. Then followed a scramble to a kind of window set sloping in the roof, and through this into the open air. There was a lot of smoke blowing about, yet she felt the air to be fresh after that, which she had just been breathing. A few moments of violent gasping and she was greatly revived.

Kathy was crying now in an unstrung way; but Alf was leering as if half-amused. "Ow's that?" he chuckled. "I knoo we could, if we kep' our 'eads. Don't mind Kaff crying,

miss; she always do cry. O'ny, she come wiv me, anyhow—didn't you, Kaff?"

How easily could Bunny herself have cried just then! But she took a grip upon her feelings.

"I can't say anything now," she faltered. "I mean—what I think of you both for doing this. I—"

"Best not ter say anyfink," Alf grimaced, "seeing as we got to look sharp and git down from here. Nice fink if we can't get back the way Kaff and I climbed up." "Gaw!" he said as the billowing smoke thickened and was shot with a lurid light. "Burnin' like fun! So come on, aht o' here!"

He stood up awkwardly in some guttering at the base of the sloping roof and reached a hand for Bunny to take.

"No," she smiled. "You see after your sister, Alf. You two go first, and don't bother about me now."

"But kin you manage?"

"You'll see."

He very evidently had a poor opinion of Bunny's ability to do the climbing and scrambling about that was now to come. During the next minute or two, whilst she was creeping and sliding after him and Kathy, working across some lower bit of flat roof and then dropping down to another part, he constantly looked round to see if she, Bunny, was all right.

In spite of her agility and athleticism, as a Morocco girl, there were "cat creeps" to be tackled that left her heart-in-mouth, only the raging fire supplied its own spur. By now, parts of the roof were falling in, allowing tongues of flame to leap towards the lowering sky.

At last they were all three safely to ground, and they did a breathless run together, to get well clear of the burning building. When, at last, they paused, Bunny was the first to speak, after a lung-clearing:

"Whew! So—so here I am, after all," she panted. "Thanks to both of you! And even now I—I don't know what to say, how to find words—"

"You don't need to say nuffink, miss," Alf struck in hoarsely. "You keep your mouth shut about this, 'cos the fact is, as I dessay you can tell, I were a-hiding in that house, not to let the police git me."

He stood staring ruefully at the smoking building.

"Comfor-ble as anyfink, I was, and now—look at her, burning herself out. Well, I never done nuffink to start the fire, anyhow."

"That was the lightning," Bunny exclaimed. "But, look here, I can't be silent about all this!"

"Why not, miss?"

"Why? Because you've both saved my life, of course! And do you suppose I am not going to see that you get credit for what you did? You must—yes, you must both come with me now—"

"No, fanks," Alf dissented very strenuously. "I've kep' out of the way of the perlice up till now, and so I'll go on doing. Kaff, you git back to the cottage—"

"Yes, Alf—"

"Nothing of the sort!" Bunny countermanded. "I won't hear of it! Come with me to where I left my bike, and then we'll— Oh!" she broke off, becoming very round-eyed at the sight of somebody floundering towards the three of them.

"Bother, I know who this is!"

"Whoever it is, I'm off," mumbled Alf.

"There'll be a lot o' people turning up, after seeing the smoke, and I—"



"But stop!" Bunny insisted. "This is Miss Merrick, my Form-mistress!"

### CHAPTER 6. Bunny's Triumph

THE sun was out again at Grangemoor, shining so fiercely after the heavy thunder-storm, the cricket pitch could be seen steaming itself dry.

And out again were all the scholars who had been forced to waste the afternoon under cover. As a relief to the boredom of waiting for the weather to clear up, tea had been served at the unusual hour of half-past three. Now it was hoped that the match could be played, after all, Morcove obtaining permission over the phone to stay on until eight o'clock.

The toss gave Morcove the choice as to innings. And Betty, with vague notions about fast-drying pitches, decided that her side should go in first. Jack and his lot seemed to think this a great joke. They cheered as if they had already won the match; but Betty and Co. decided that they were only cheering to keep up their spirits.

Then word came that "old Tony," and the groundsman, both considered that the pitch should be given another half-hour, and so there was more mock-moaning and a resort to banter. The boys exulted in their superior knowledge about pitches after thunderstorms, giving the visitors to understand that they didn't stand an "earthly." But it was all good-natured back-chat, suddenly cut short by the sighting of an arriving car—Miss Somerfield's Rovers.

Instead of continuing upon its way to one or another of the schoolhouses, the car stopped half-way along the main carriage-way, and then—

"Gosh!" Polly, for one, gasped amazedly. "Do you see, girls? With Miss Merrick!"

"Yes, what on earth!" yelled others.  
"Bekas—zere is Bunny Trevor!" shrilled Naomer. "And, what ze diggings—zat other girl; zat boy—"

"Surely, the girl is Kathy Turner?" jerked Betty. "And the boy is—Kathy's brother? But why—why are they here? Why have they turned up—in that car!"

"Oh, come on, all!"  
"Yes, queek—queek!"

Miss Merrick and her three companions had started to hurry across the grass of the cricket field. Only a couple of hundred yards had all the girls to run and they were within speaking distance of the ill-assorted batch of newcomers. As Miss Merrick had been almost expected, she was little more than glanced at. Excited eyes could only gaze first at Bunny, then at the cottage girl and the shock-headed lad, and then return to Bunny in a stare of utter bewilderment.

Yet it was Miss Merrick who spoke first.  
"I was on the way here from Morcove, to make it all right for you girls, if you wanted to stay on to play an after-tea match. That old house on the moor was on fire, and so I left my car and ran to see if anything could be done. And there I found— Well, Ann Trevor! You had better tell them all."

"Miss Merrick turned up just after I had been got out of the burning house by Kathy and Alf," came the explanation none the less astounding to the listeners, because Bunny was speaking quite calmly. "I had taken shelter from the storm in the house, and I could not get away after the lightning had struck the building and set it on fire."

"Couldn't get away!" cried several of the girls, finding their voices at last. "But why ever not, Bunny?"

"Oh—as I've explained to Miss Merrick—a door wouldn't open to let me out! So I owe my life to Kathy here and her brother. They were wonderful! I want you all to understand, as I've been telling Miss Merrick; I'd have been burnt to death for a cert, only—they got me out in time."

Bunny was raising her voice as she spoke on, realising that she had far more listeners than at the start. Jack and the rest of the Grangemoor team had come swarming around, and there were other Grangemoriens rushing up in batches of four or five to swell the crowd.

"Miss Merrick has been awfully decent about it all," Bunny further imparted, with a sudden radiant look. "At first she was for running me back to Morcove, but I begged her to bring me on here—keeping Kathy and Alf with us—and at last she gave in!"

"Yes!" Miss Merrick laughed a little queerly. "And perhaps it won't matter so much, after all. Bunny can change out of the damp things she has on. As for this girl and her brother—"

"But I wanna clear out!" Alf gruffly shouted, looking self-consciously at the crowd which hemmed him in with his sister. "We never wanted to come, did we, Kaf?"

"But I was determined to bring them along," Bunny smiled, whilst Kathy started crying, "and Miss Merrick helped me to persuade them. I tell you, they saved my life, and so now I want you to say—aren't they two of the best? Don't they deserve a cheer? If only you knew; if only you'd all been in my place—"

She got no further. Of all the thousands of times in Grangemoor's lengthy history that this cricket field had held a cheering throng, never had there been louder cheers than now.

"Hurrah-h-h!" Morcove dinned along with Grangemoor. "Cheers for Kathy and her brother; hip, hip, hooray-y! Hip, pip—hoorah!"

"Bekas, zey can't be such washouts, after all!" Naomer's shrill voice gave what was in the mind of so many. "What ze diggings, eet ees about ze splendidest thing anybody could do!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Twuly hewoic!"

Jack and other Grangemoriens tended to concentrate upon Alf, who found his grimy hand being shaken heartily, time after time, and his shoulders slapped. As for Kathy—in vain Naomer asked "what ze diggings" there was for her to cry about; something emotional in the cottage girl's nature kept her in tears.

Bunny suspected that all the time there was a great anguish about Alf. That errant lad's sister could not believe that to-day's brave deed was going to cancel out any past misdeeds.

But Bunny's own spirited determination was that it must all result in that. Her own feelings were of great happiness now on account of her "protégée" and Alf. After all—after all, one's faith in some good resulting from her, Bunny's, friendly interest in Kathy had been justified.

There were those who had said it never would be—and they had been wrong! Nor were some of the pessimists going to be slow in acknowledging that Bunny's obstinate attitude over the poacher's daughter had achieved wonderful results—after all. At this very moment, girls were telling Bunny, with their eyes, how they saw in all that had happened to-day a marvellous vindication of her stubborn policy.

"Kathy and Tom must have some tea," Miss Merrick said, whilst other tongues were rattling away. "You, too, Bunny."

"Yes! But I hope the match won't be starting until—"

"The match won't be starting without you, Bunny," came Betty's laughed interruption. "I've half a dozen girls, each offering to stand down for you!"

"But—"

"We're going in first. D'you mind taking your innings second wicket down? The pitch is in a tricky state. When you go on to bowl for us, by-and-by—"

"Oh, I can imagine; but I've learned from Tom how to deal with a drying pitch."

"Wow!" howled Jack. "Chaps, we've got to pull up our socks! Somehow, the outlook is not so good now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I won't be ten minutes getting changed into some things Mrs. Challenger can find for me," Bunny promised.

"About Kath and Alf," said Pam! "I've been telling dad, and he says that he will gladly have them over at Swanlake, Bunny; a job in the house for Kathy, and a job with one of the keepers for Alf."

"Oh, Pam dear, that's awfully decent of your father, but it isn't necessary, really! My own dad has promised me, over the 'phone—a job for each of them at home on our place. He is a bit uncertain about Mr. Turner—whether he'll be able to get him to give up poaching, and all that!"



As they made their desperate bid for safety, Bunny and her two companions expected the old house to collapse beneath them every moment. Yet go on they must, for the fire was raging more fiercely with every second that passed.

"But there's heaps of time, Bunny! Half an hour nearly!"

"There is? Oh, then, I can do some telephoning as well."

To those who fondly escorted her to Challenger's House, Bunny explained that she wanted to trunk-call her father about Kathy and Alf.

"Dad must do something for them—I mean, something that will take them out of their present life altogether. Oh, and dad will, when I explain."

"If he doesn't," rejoined Pam serenely. "I know somebody else who will."

She meant her father, the Squire of Swanlake—who, as it chanced, turned up a few minutes later, having strolled along from Swanlake to the school, as he very often did on match-days.

As a result of what Pam told her father, she was soon in a position to take some delightful news to Bunny, where that live-wire was hastily drinking down a second cup of tea.

"But your father needn't bother about Mr. Turner," Pam broke in serenely. "Dad will give him a job after his own heart. Official rabbit-catching!"

Bunny crashed down her empty cup and jumped up.

"Now for the match! I say, though! About the police being after Alf? You know, Pam, dad isn't quite sure that he can—"

"Oh, that's all right; dad is on the Bench, and he says it will be all right. It was only for some very small offence. He says he will resign from the Bench if there is any idea of going on with a prosecution, after what Alf did to-day."

Bunny sparkled her eyes.

"Now," she said, "I feel ready to knock up fifty. Touch wood!"

\* \* \* \* \*

But Bunny's boasting utterance did not cost her any bad luck. She made a very useful seventeen, anyhow, with her own brother, Tom, trying his hardest all the time to get her middle stump.

Second-best innings on her side, Bunny's—not so bad, considering the wear and tear she had suffered during the afternoon!

It was, however, when Morcove went out to field—after a desperately achieved total of sixty-nine, Betty carrying her bat—that Bunny best served her side.

The overs that came to her were one example after another of demon bowling. In the hot sunshine of that early evening in high summer, she never tired. She sent down really wicked deliveries which Grangemoor had all it could do to counter.

Jack was dismissed for a deplorable four; one fine boundary hit, and after that—"Wow!" Other trusted run-getters did little better. At six wickets down, and all the best men gone, Grangemoor had still to get nineteen to have their visitors "whacked."

Then Tubby Bloot was out for a duck. Grangemoor received him back into the fold with howls. Tom went in, grimly aware of having to take his sister's bowling at the very start, and of her having vowed vengeance for denying her an aimed-at twenty.

He hoped he'd last out the finish of her over; but he didn't! A minute later Bunny had the unholy joy of volleying her brother's middle stump clean out of the ground. Another round-O for the scorers to put down. Hurrah, Morcove!

"We'll manage!"

And with a sensational rush the end came.

Grangemoor, all out for fifty-nine—ten runs behind the visitors.

Morcove had won—in an away match, too. Not on its own ground at Morcove, but here at Grangemoor it had beaten, trounced, absolutely whacked the boys; a defeat for them never to get over, as Morcove itself would never forget such a famous victory!

Not until Bunny was coming off the field, feeling that this somehow was the happiest hour in all her life, did she catch sight of Fay and Edna Denver.

Their rather sickly grins for her, as she came scampering with the rest of the team to where a

Grangemoor crowd was cheering itself hoarse for the victors, did not imply callousness. That, Bunny knew, as she glimpsed the two girls whilst looking out of a window of the car, more than two hours ago.

They had caught sight of her, and so they had been spared the terror which the tricksters must have suffered, had they been left in the belief that she was still in the burning house. Now they had turned up like this, simply to show bold faces; but Bunny could tell that, in secret, they felt a bit dithery even now.

She did not go across to speak to them. Why let a useless squabble with girls of that stamp spoil the entrancing delights of this last half-hour before the home-going to Morcove?

Her brother, shouldering into a blazer, came up to her, grinning.

"Been getting your own back, haven't you, Bunny?"

And she, thinking more about Kathy and Alf, and the fire, and the Denver sisters, than about her part in the match, smiled, her sauciest smile.

"I rather think I have!"

Bunny's day of danger had ended in an evening of triumph, and her thoughts were happy when the setting sun found her back at dear old Morcove, with Betty and all the others.

And the day was one which had been fated to be looked back upon by Kathy and Alf, in the time to come, as the turning point in their lives.

The world knew now what real worth there must always have been in the poacher's son and daughter. But would that worth have been discovered if there had been no Bunny Trevor to stand by Kathy as a friend, no matter what the cost to herself?

Study 12 admitted that they had been wrong when they had told Bunny not to waste her time with the Turner boy and girl. Bunny's time—Study 12 now declared—had been well spent, and she could be proud of the fact that she alone had been loyal to the girl "who nobody had liked for long."

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

## Galloping Horses Through the Night—Cloaked and Veiled Riders—

In their Midst a Girl Captive—And the Girl is Pam Willoughby—of Morcove School. Borne across Leagues of Burning Desert Sands to a Distant Hiding-place. Such is Pam's fate—on Holiday.

Be sure to read what happens to her and the rest of the chums of Morcove in

**PAM'S DESERT PERIL**  
by Marjorie Stanton

It appears in next Tuesday's  
"Schoolgirls' Own"





Opening Chapters of a Story That's Different. The Chums of Grangemoor in a New Role



# Grangemoor to Guard Her

BY MARJORIE STANTON

## The New Tea House

"SING as we go!" whistled Jack Linton. He and four of his best pals of Grangemoor School were ripping along on their push-bikes, after a useful hour at the batting nets. "Where's dat tiger!" sang Jack. "Dere's dat tiger; hold dat tiger!"

That was how Jack, the jolly brother of Morcove's madeap Polly Linton, felt on such a grand afternoon, with no more work to think about this side of "prep."

"Which way, Dave—this lane on the left, isn't it?"

"That's it," responded Dave Cardew.

A certain precision about this answer was typical of him, this studious and seldom-speaking brother of Morcove's Judy Cardew.

"Let's try it," said Jimmy Cherrol. "We've not been down it for ages—"

"Company!" roared Jack, doing his own turning aside into the lane. "Left wheel!"

And then—ping!—went somebody's back tyre, and hefty Tubby Bloot, coming last in the covey of cyclists, shouted:

"I've got a punc-ture, chaps!"

"Oh, can't stop now, Tubby! Ride on the flat!"

They all, riding slower now, looked round at him. Dave conferred a half-serious smile that was at least consolatory. But Jimmy Cherrol and Tom Trevor—the latter an only brother of Morcove's sparkling "Bunny"—grinned and chuckled.

"Can't stop to mend your puncture when we want our teas!" Jack said. "No, sir! And it wasn't a puncture. That was a burst, boys—of course it was a burst! He's always bursting something; buttons, and bootlaces, and back tyres. The marvel to me is that he doesn't burst alto-

gether. Careful, Tubby; watch that front wheel now, old son. It looks to me—"

"You look the way you're going, Jack," chipped in Tom gaily, "and then you'll see—"

"Wha-a-t!" yelled Jack, now sending his gaze down the leafy lane. "Morcove? The girls? Gosh, chaps—it is!"

And he frantically worked the trigger of his cycle-bell.

Instantly the two Morcove girls who had been sighted, on some open grassland at the end of the lane, were joined by several others, and all began waving excitedly.

"Hallo, Morcove!" said Jack, the first to dismount within speaking distance of the girls. "Tubby will be pleased to see you; you're good at mending punctures, aren't you?"

"As a matter of fact," said Polly sweetly, "we've got two flat tyres of our own."

"Wow!" Jack wilted. "Er—come on, chaps! Good-bye for now, girls—"

"That's why we all pulled up here," Polly further imparted. "There seems to be a sort of tea-garden."

"Yes, gorus!" came Naomer's shrill interruption. "Bekas, eet looks a lovely place, wiz ze river to look at! Come on, Tubby—queek!"

"Tubby wants to do more than look at rivers. So do I," Jack said thirstily. "Come on, boys"—meaning the girls as well as the boys—"this

is on me! Seven—eleven—and Tubby requires two portions, that makes thirteen," he reckoned up.

A certain amount of chummy pairing off took place, during a general trending towards a picturesque cottage which had been enterprisingly converted into a refreshment place.

"Just fancy our meeting you boys!" said Polly to her brother Jack. "We thought we'd try to find out a fresh run, when we came out after school. First time we have ever come this way; but isn't it jolly just here? And there's a punt you can hire."

"Dave had to come out to this place, this afternoon, Polly, so we other chaps jumped on our bikes to go with him."

"Dave had to come, Jack?"

"I think so—but I don't know why. You know what Dave is, Polly. When he doesn't want to tell you a thing—he can keep you guessing all right—'Scuse me!"

He was suddenly darting to be first inside the trellised enclosure—where tea-tables were set upon the mown grass—having observed a girl coming out of the cottage to deal with the sudden influx of patrons.

She was—as all the boys and girls were noticing—a girl of no more than seventeen, tall and very pretty. In the sunshine her black hair took on the purplish reflections of a raven's wing—very beautiful hair indeed, going well with her olive complexion. Altogether, with her tasteful dressing and ladylike air, she seemed to vouch for the quality of the place.

Jack's way of asking if they could all be served with tea caused her to smile; but—and some of the Morcove girls noticed this—the young lady, whilst paying heed, let her eyes single out Dave Cardew.

Finding her looking at him, Dave raised his cap to her, from a short distance away. She responded with an inclination of her fine head, then gave her entire attention to Jack.

In a few moments that joyous lad rejoined the party, amongst the little round tables, whilst the young lady hurried towards a corrugated iron annexe to the cottage.

Obviously, this additional building was reserved for "service." There would be an oil-stove in there, for boiling water, and racks for the crockery, and a large larder and a marble-clothed counter.

"Company—sit!" Jack breezily commanded.

"Boys, this is an O.K. place! Tea's coming for all—she can manage it! You know, it seems to me a girl like that should have a nicer name than Joab."

"Joab!" echoed some of the others.

"Over the porch of the cottage," Jack softly imparted. "'Ezra Joab, licensed dealer in tobacco."

"But Joab isn't her name," said Dave quietly.

"Oh, isn't it?" Morcove caught him up, with looks which asked: "How do you know, Dave?"

"She's only a niece of his, or something—not his daughter, anyhow," said Dave, turning down the bottom of one trouser-leg to shake out the dust. "Her name is Morland—Hetty Morland."

"But, Dave," persisted Polly, "how do you know all this?"

"Oh—"

Dave seemed to be going to answer when he had finished with the other trouser-leg. But he didn't. And Jack suddenly chuckled. "That's all you'll get out of him!" the chuckle implied.

Already there had been faint sounds from the "service" shanty, telling of Hetty Morland's

briskness in attending to the order recently given. Now there was some distant jingling of teaspoons into saucers, causing Jack to clack his tongue.

"It's a lot for her to have to do," was the feeling remark from Betty Barton, the Morcove captain. "Hasn't she any help at all?"

"Yes—listen; that sounds as if Uncle Ezra were lending a hand now," Jack remarked, as a man's voice became faintly audible. "How's Morcove these days?"

"How's Grangemoor?" was the counter inquiry. "All tongues got going. There was so much to be said on either side, with laughter to punctuate a good deal of the latest news, quite ten minutes slipped by unnoticed."

Then, however, looks began to ask, if voices didn't: Was the tea never going to show up? Was there to be, anyway, no delivery of a first instalment, so to speak?

"Good gracious!" Jack exclaimed at last, and jumped up to go and see about it. "Gone to sleep, I should think!"

As he neared the service shanty a man's voice was audible to Jack as a surly growl, and it was a pained "Oh!" which the lad heard the girl give, in the shack-like building.

Jack dived into the place, and was next moment witnessing such a sight as made his blood boil.

He saw Hetty Morland in a drooping state, with a dropped tea-tray at her feet, only saving herself from falling by catching hold of the counter's edge with one hand.

Her other hand was clutching her shoulder, as if it was there that she had been struck by the clenched fist which was even now menacing her again; the flourished, clenched hand of a tall, repulsive-looking man, who glared as he growled on at her.

Jack, firing up, strode into the kitchen.

"Here, that's enough of that! What the dickens!"

The ill-favoured man swung about to face the lad. Ezra Joab must have had more ruffianism in him than reason, or he would have controlled himself instantly, realising that here was a Grangemoor scholar, and Grangemoor meant business to his teashop.

He saw Jack looking ready to set about him, and, as if he had never yet failed to get in the first blow in a likely brawl, he let fly with his right fist, just about lifting Jack off his feet by a blow under the chin.

Jack sat down. But he was up again in a moment. He unhooked a cut lip from a loosened tooth, and then started to take off his coat to the man.

"Uncle!" the girl now intervened, in an agonised voice. "Oh, how could you, uncle! Stop—both of you—no fighting, please!"

### With Grangemoor's Aid

TO all those who, seated at the tea-tables on the grassy plot, were filling in the wait by chatting blithely, there came a sudden shout from Jack:

"Chaps! Just a moment—over here!"

So Dave and Jimmy, with Tom and Tubby, went over to the outbuilding from which Jack—without showing himself in the open—had hailed them.

To their surprise, they found him all by himself in the kitchen-like annexe. To their still greater surprise, they found him dabbing a blood-bespotted handkerchief to a raw lip.

"Gosh, man!"

"Now, shut up," he requested cheerfully. "It's

all right. But, Morcove mustn't know, so you chaps have got to pretend to be taking out the tea to them, just for fun—savvy? Tubby, you put an apron on. I'll be seeing to things in here, whilst you chaps act as waiters."

"But—that girl—what's become of her?"  
 "Gone in," Jack pointed across the passage-way, to the cottage, "to get over an upset. 'Sh! She'll be out again in a minute."

"You been having a fight?" asked Tom.  
 "Wish I had," was the rueful response. "But how could I—with all the girls out there? He's gone indoors, too. I don't know, but I rather fancy it's worrying him a bit. After all, it's hardly the way to get the place liked by Grangemoor, is it?"

"D'you mean to say, Jack, that—"  
 "Don't mean to say any more now," Jimmy was answered by him of the cut lip. But that lip had already stopped bleeding, and so the handkerchief could be put away.

"Get the cups and saucers out to them, anyhow!" Jack rattled on, going behind the counter.  
 "Trays—there they are—can't you see! Tubby—yes, you look all right like that; good man, Tubby," the white apron was approved. "Jump to it, then! Cakes—out of the tins!"

Suddenly, however, Hetty Morland was back, still pale after the great upset, and with eyes red-rimmed after some quiet weeping, but she managed to raise a smile at sight of what all the boys were doing.

"It is good of you all," she exclaimed, a little emotionally. "You must think we've a strange way of—of treating customers. But—uncle so easily forgets himself."

"Right, then; you'll take on here, and we can help with the waiting?" Jack gaily commented.  
 "Come on, chaps!"

There was a glimpse of Ezra Joab, looming in a back room of the cottage, as they went out into the sunshine, carrying the laden trays. But he did not come away from the main building, and Grangemoor inferred that he was feeling ashamed to show his face.

Altogether, with the Morcove girls tricked into believing that they were only being waited upon by the boys, so as to end all the delay, and cheering accordingly, everything was soon going quite gaily. Jack's swollen lip was cheerfully accounted for by him, as being a mere "accident."

After the pouring-out had started, Dave went back alone to the "service" shanty—for more sugar," he said.

Hetty Morland was setting another kettle upon the oil-stove as he entered. Taking up a spare sugar-bowl, he paused, and after a moment his serious gaze met hers.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said very gently. "You have a hard time with that uncle of yours. But I and my pals will always do our best to help you."

She gazed at him in fervent gratitude, but did not speak. After a moment, Dave resumed:

"I came along this afternoon, meaning to return those papers which you asked me to look at and try and read. I've got them on me now, but I'd better keep 'em for the time being."

"Yes, yes," she agitatedly responded; "with uncle on hand! I have kept those papers by me in secret for ever so long, feeling sure that they had something to do with me—might even affect my whole future. My trouble has been that up till now there has been no one I could—trust."

She continued in a deep whisper:  
 "Then, the other day, you dropped in here for that glass of lemonade, and somehow your looks seemed to tell me that you could be trusted. That's why I was seized with the idea—to let you have the papers. I've been wondering since, though, how you could be expected to translate them. The foreign language—"

"Only French—and some of it is print. I could tackle the language all right. What puzzled me, at first, was to see anything that might relate to you."

"Only at first, you were puzzled?" she caught him up, in great excitement. "Does that mean that you have, then, spotted something which—"

An assenting nod from him was accompanied by a raising of a finger, warning her to be silent. He tiptoed towards the passage way, as if to make sure that no one was hanging about, to listen. Reassured, he came back.

"But we can't go into it all now," he said very softly. "I was down this way, last evening—"

"Were you? I didn't see you!"

"No, well—I wasn't needing any lemonade that time." He gave his rare, dry smile. "There was a senior from our House at Grangemoor—I think I saw?"

"Oh, yes; he hired the punt for an hour, and then got me to serve him with a dry ginger. I don't care for that fellow very much. In fact—I don't know why," she shrugged distressfully, "but he seems a bit too—inquisitive."

Dave gave an understanding nod.  
 "I'm not surprised. Ralph Gayner is a pre-who isn't liked in our House. Never say anything to him about the papers. You'll find he is—most inquisitive. And I expect he will come again. In fact—"

There was no time for more. The slouching step of Ezra Joab had sounded in the covered way, and so Dave now moved off, sugar-bowl in hand.

Next moment Dave was out in the sunshine, hurrying across the grass to rejoin his high-spirited companions.

Ezra Joab drifted to the service counter, behind which Hetty was finding much to do. She hoped if she ignored him, he would drift away again; but he sullenly asked:

"You been complaining to that schoolboy about me?"

"No, uncle."  
 "Then wot was keeping him here talking to you?"

"Oh, uncle, I've ever so many things to see to," she spiritedly protested. "And I won't have another upset. How can we expect to make the place pay, if—"

"Upset!" he scowled. "And who but yourself was to blame if I did lose my temper just now? You, thinking to put me in my place!"

"I only said I wouldn't be bullied, and neither will I!" she flashed. "I was busy, and you were not helping—only hindering me."

"And now—you're showing me more of your cheek!" he surlily caught her up. "You saucy minx, you! After all the care I've shown you; after my bringing you up and then taking this place at last, so as to give you a living."

**SCHOOLGIRLS**  
**WEEKLY**

Every Wednesday.



She sighed in a hard-driven way, saying to herself:

"A living! Drudgery—that's what it is—as it always has been—"

"And still you're not content—"

"Uncle, that isn't fair! I would be quite content to run this place for you; only you never have a decent word for me. You get worse and worse—you do! I would have gone away from you before this, if—"

"Ay—if!" he twitted her exultantly. "If you weren't like a bird in the net, my pretty!"

The taunt caused her to stand quite still, her dark eyes darting a reproachful look at him.

"Isn't that cruel of you, uncle, to remind me again? As if I need any reminder! Haven't you been telling me, ever since I was old enough to understand, how you've got that hold over me! I long to know, as any girl in my position would long, who I really am. I've a father still living, you always say, and naturally I want to find him. And all this mystery—it must be ended some day, if I am still under your roof!"

"You've got it," he laughed harshly. "What you'd like to do, o' course, is to have it both ways. You'd like to cut adrift from me, and yet find your father after all and be a grand young lady. Well, it can't be done, for the simple reason that I am not letting you—see?"

He filled his pipe and then fumbled out a box of matches, eyeing the spirited girl sideways as he held the lighted match to the bowl.

"Not on your life," he said, flourishing out the match. "I haven't got much to gamble on; but I have got that secret. My secret—until it suits my book to get full value for it, but that time's not yet."

He slouched away, and she thought to herself: "So you think; but I have someone on my side now; someone who may soon be telling me what the secret is!"

That schoolboy. Not the one who had so fearlessly intervened, just now, to save her from another angry blow; he was a splendid lad—they were all splendid! But, where the actual mystery of her origin was concerned, it was of that quiet, clever-looking schoolboy she must think, Dave Cardew, as he had said his name was.

Some other time he would tell her why he thought the papers concerned her past—which surely meant that they held promise for the future.

The future—and an end to this unhappy life with Uncle Ezra—"if he really is my uncle; and how often have I doubted it!" The start of a new life with someone to call "Father!" Such a father as some instinct had taught her to picture; a father to look up to and love, because he was straight and true.

Suddenly she had to pause in her work, overcome by thoughts and emotions which forced her to sweep a hand across her eyes.

"If only I had been older at the time, so that I could remember better now! But there, young as I was, I did have the wit, at any rate, to keep those papers to myself. Year after year—a long, long time it has been; but it's different now. I am full of hope! That boy and his friends—it is all their doing!"

#### Placed Out of Bounds

"I SAY, we simply must be off now!"

"I suppose we must, Betty!"

"Yes, bai Jove! Time has been getting on!"

So, now that tea was over, a lively uprising took place at the various open-air tables.

Already Jimmy and Tom had dealt with the two Morcove bicycles which required attention. And so, with much final levity and many cries of "See you again soon!" away rode the girls.

More than once they looked round and waved to the fellows, who stood to watch them until they vanished round a bend.

"And now, Tubby, about that back tyre of yours," Jack broke out. "We must tackle it for you, I suppose! After such a tea as you made—"

Hallo, though!" with as much sudden amusement as surprise. "Here's a pre., chaps! See him?"

Dave, with the others, looked round.

"Yes," he said. "Ralph Gayner."

"Booking our names, is he?" muttered Jack. "Well, let him!"

They had first noticed the tall senior, standing



Jack scrambled to his feet, undeterred by Ezra Joab's cowardly blow. He was determined to stop this man bullying his niece once and for all.

to make pencilled jottings in a notebook. Ralph Gayner now closed and pocketed the book, and came striding towards the Five in an officious manner.

He was a well-built youth, and good-looking. Things were known about him in Challenor's House at Grangemoor which rendered him mistrusted and disliked; but one might seek in vain for any outward signs of bad traits.

He neglected sports, yet he looked athletic. He was a known liar, yet his dark eyes were as steady as they were handsome. He was a bully, but he looked as if he scorned any mean action.

Now, he took no more notice of them, but strolled on towards the river's brink, evidently minded to put in a half-hour on the river.

Jack glared after him.

"Was he spying, even before the girls went off?"

"Oh, yes," said Dave.

Jack jumped round, staring.

"You saw him, Dave?"

A nod.

"I spotted him, skulking amongst those willows over there."

"Then why the— But that's like you," Jack sighed. "Well, come on; Tubby's bike now! Dash you, Tubby, for not being able to get on a jigger without busting an inner tube."

Many hands make light work, and Tubby's puncture was soon mended, and then the chums hurried back to Grangemoor.

Prep had to be tackled, and they were busy at it, when about eight o'clock that evening a message came to a certain study in Challenor's House at Grangemoor: "Linton to report to the Head at once!"

"Good," said Jack, with even a thankful look



at having been spared further wrestling with prep. "Wish me luck, boys!"

"I say, though," cried Jimmy. "The Head!"

"That's only because Old Tony is out for the evening."

Mr. Challenor, the Housemaster, was young enough to have been married to a former Morcove mistress only a year or so; but he was always affectionately referred to as "Old Tony."

"But who's reported you, and what for?" asked Jimmy Cherril.

"Gayner—I'll wager," answered Jack with a grin. "But for what reason—well, I've got to find that out!"

"Your name has been reported to me, Linton," the Head boomed at him, as soon as he had come to attention in the sanctum of sanctums. "You have been in a fight!"

"No, sir."

"Outside the school, according to my information!"

"No, sir!"

"Linton! When a swollen lip of yours confirms my information!"

"Oh, that, sir," Jack engagingly conceded. "Yes, I did get a bash before I had time to put 'em up. But it never became a fight."

"It is reported to me, Linton, that you and four other boys were found at a newly-opened resort for refreshments and boating, about which, at present, I know nothing. And it was there that the brawl—since you say there was no fight in the strict sense of the word—took place? You will explain, Linton!"

"I—yes, I'm sorry and all that, but I'm afraid I must—er—refuse, in fact."

The Head instantly turned away to a bookcase, reaching up a hand to take down a cane kept out of sight on top of that mammoth piece of furniture.

"I, Linton, must be sorry, too," said the Head. "But I have no time to waste, and certainly no inclination to try any other persuasion but this!" The cane swished in the air. "Now, boy, are you going to tell me?"

Jack, with what he considered to be a very important reason for declining to explain, shook his head.

"Very well, then, Linton. The right hand first."

The Head raised his cane. Then he gave Jack an experienced cut across the hand, asked for the other hand, and caned that one, too.

"That, Linton, is for refusing to explain. I don't require any explanation now. I draw my own conclusions. Go away, boy—wait!"

So Jack, after a first retiring step, halted.

"This place down by the river—Joab's, I think it is called. It will be out of bounds to the school until I have seen what it is like. There will be formal notice to that effect in the morning, Linton. Meantime—it might be as well to let the other four boys know who, I understand, were with you!"

"Yes, sir."

Outside the sanctum, Jack breathed upon his tingling fingers. "Two stiff 'uns!" But he bore the Head no grievance. There was Jack's cheerful expression to make this self-evident, when he had returned to Challenor's and the study where his four best pals awaited him.

"Something to do with Gayner?" Jimmy voiced the general inference bitterly.

"Course!"

"Then why didn't the Old Man send for all of us?" Tom raged.

"Oh, you chaps—you hadn't been in a 'fight,' as I was supposed to have been," Jack drily explained. "That's what had got the Head on his hind legs. I've been scrapping out of school grounds with members of the British public! That's my crime, sir!"

Dave looked straight at Jack.

"It wasn't a fight, Jack. You could have told the Head just how—"

"No, I couldn't! How could I?" Jack impatiently argued, "when it would have meant letting him know that the Joab ruffian landed me that dot on the chin?"

"But why shield Joab?" asked Tubby, nibbling plain chocolate.

Jack glared round upon him.

"You silly ass! Hadn't I got to do my best not to get the place put out of bounds? 'Smatter of fact," Jack spoke on glumly, "it didn't make any difference after all. The Old Man put the place out of bounds, even without knowing that it was Joab who landed me one."

"Um," said Toth.

Dave walked to the window and became the most thoughtful of all, calmly regarding the sunset.

After a few moments, he turned back to the table, put his books away, then picked up a letter that was ready for the post.

"Going to take this down," he tersely remarked, and passed out of the study, closing the door behind him.

The others looked at the closed door.

"Off alone again," said Jimmy. "What's his secret?"

"He doesn't say anything," Tom deplored.

"Does he, ever? And isn't it always for some thumping good reason?"

"Every evening, this week, he's put in a lot of time in the school lib," Jimmy commented.

"Has that anything to do with it all?"

Again a helpless silence prevailed, ending when at last Jimmy was taking a look out of the window. He emitted a startled:

"Here, come and look! Dave's gone out again!"

"Wha-a-at!"

Jack bounded and Tom darted across to the window. Tubby, shying away the half-finished apple, rolled thither. All four chums became round-eyed with amazement as they saw Dave beyond the great gateway whizzing alone down the road on his bicycle.

Then they turned to one another with under-standing looks.

"Joab's!" whispered Tom.

"But he heard you say it's out of bounds now!" jerked Jimmy.

"That's the fellow he is—old Dave!" Jack exclaimed. "Not a word to us—don't you see?—in case we should want to break bounds as well!"

### Gayner's Curiosity

**D**AVE CARDEW dismounted from his machine midway down the by-lane which led to the riverside and "Joab's."

He wheeled the bicycle into some screening hazels and left it there, going on again with somewhat cautious steps.

The leafy lane was beginning to grow dusky, but he could see how the last of the sunset light lingered in the open, where the river wound lazily through some broad meadows.

He felt sure that Ralph Gayner had returned to the refreshment house. Dave had suddenly observed the senior from the study window, just now, going out again, and had promptly decided to keep after him.

Why? But that was one of those questions which only Dave could answer.

At the far end of the lane he paused, before advancing to let himself be seen by anyone at the refreshment place. But Joab's seemed to be in an after-hours state of solitude. Not a sound came to Dave's attentive ears.

Then he noticed a bicycle "parked" between two larches, and he became not at all excited, although he recognised the machine as being Gayner's. So often was Dave saved from being startled or surprised, because he had known what to expect.

He was a few yards short of the trellis-porch of the cottage when he stopped dead, hearing faint sounds from within which keenly interested him. After a moment, he nodded to himself, as if thinking: "Quite likely—"

Then he went on tip-toe into the porch. The front door, which opened straight into the sitting-room, was ajar. He peered through the narrow

opening, and he saw that Gayner was alone there, and, being alone, was inquisitively looking into one drawer after another of an old bureau.

Gayner happened to look round at that moment and caught sight of Dave. He stopped his searching, and literally rushed across the room at the Fourth Former.

"You can get out of here as quick as you like!" the senior raged. "Clear out!" he said wildly, and made an infuriated lunge at his schoolfellow. "What's the game? Spying?"

"Why should I be?" Dave returned.

The very calmness of that retort seemed to enrage Gayner all the more. With a pounce he gripped Dave. Dave was not going to stand for that, and he tried to shake Gayner's grip off. Before either quite realised it, it became a desperate set-to, Gayner showing an insensate rage.

Gayner, his superior size giving him an advantage, had also the intensified strength which mad anger confers. He finally hurled Dave off his balance, thud to the turf.

Then the senior, seeing his opponent struggling up again, struck him back.

At that instant, there was a jangling crash as of several bicycles being allowed to fall to the ground after a hurried dismounting by their riders. The voice of Jack Linton roared:

"Hi, stop! Gayner, you cad—you rotter! Hitting him when he's down, chaps! Come on!"

"Out him!" was Jimmy's cry of indignation.

"The river!" Tom roared. "Chuck the blighter in the river for a thing like that!"

Tubby was here—unable to express his anger vocally, as a bit of toffee had just then stuck in his throat. This, however, by no means prevented the hefty one from dashing in with the others.

In a roaring pack they surrounded Gayner. Another moment and they had him pulled down—overpowered, struggling furiously, but in vain. Then they hauled him to the river's brink. By his ankles and shoulders they swung him. "Fall—in!" bellowed Jack, as they determinedly pitched him headlong into the water.

The prefect fell into the shallow river with a tremendous splash!

There on the bank stood all five juniors, for Dave had taken his full share in what had been done. They saw Gayner's dark head as the centre of ever-widening circles upon the surface, and then saw him begin to flounder up. His waving hands dripped a blackish ooze.

"Ha, ha, ha!" the juniors accorded him the laughter he deserved. "And now—report that! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, chaps," Jack bleated at last, "we're all out of bounds. So let's beat it now."

Only then, when they turned away to recover their bicycles, were they aware of a fine car drawing out of the lane slowly, to pull up in the open.

But, in the very instant that the motor did meet their gaze, they recognised it; and Jack was only voicing what his pals knew to be the appalling fact, when he whispered:

"Jumping snakes, chaps—it's the Head!"

**A**S Jack himself would say, the Grangemoor chums are now "properly in the soup." There'll be ructions with a vengeance. You'll be longing to know what happens to the chums as a result of their doughty championship of Hetty Morland, so be sure to read next Tuesday's chapters of this grand new story. You should order SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN well in advance.