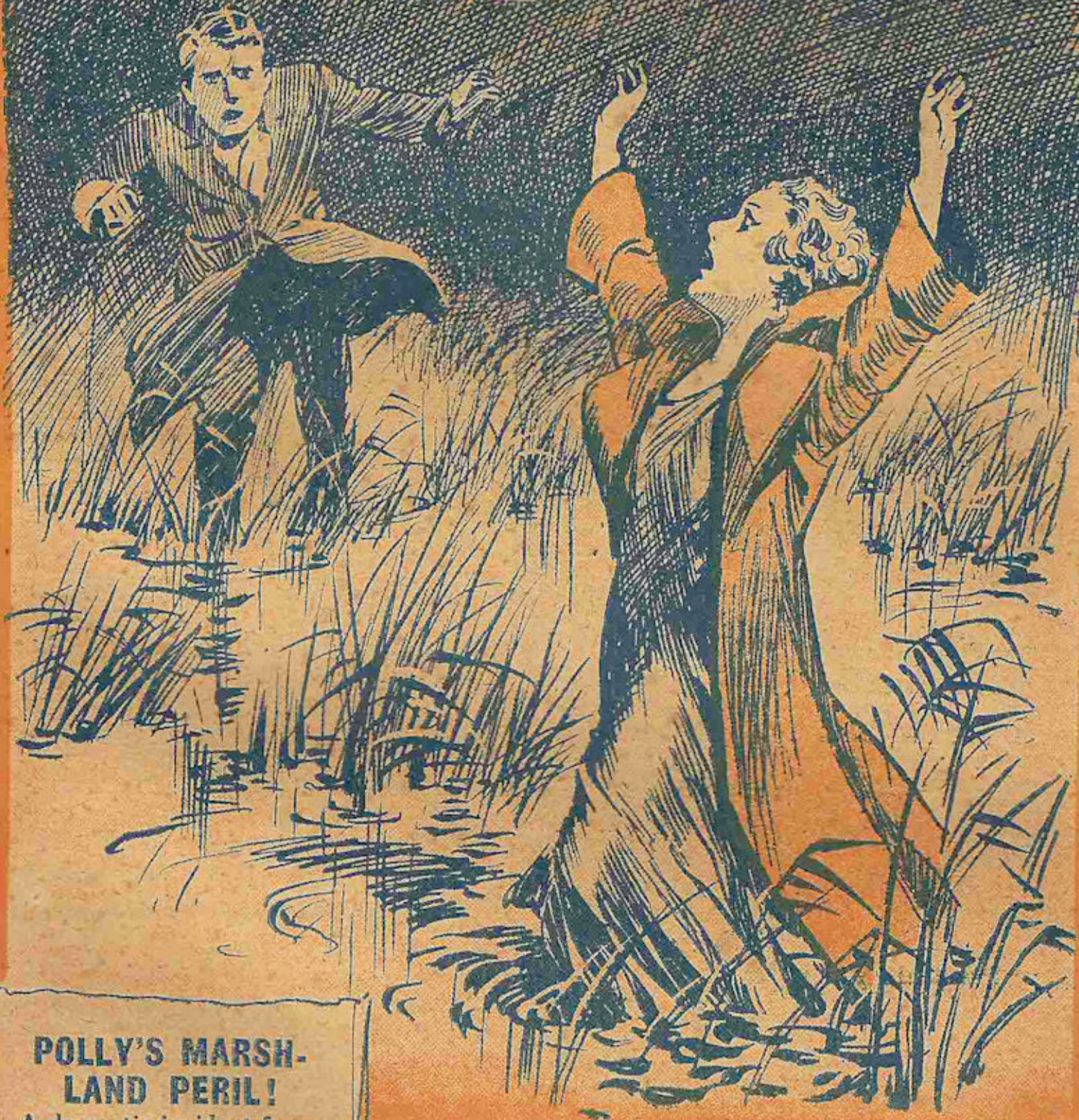


"ADOPTED FOR THE HOLIDAYS" Grand Long Morcove Story Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d

No. 792, Vol. 31.
Week ending
April 11th, 1936.
EVERY TUESDAY.



POLLY'S MARSH- LAND PERIL!

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

"THE CRIMSON SHADOWS" EXCITING COMPLETE 'SECRET SOCIETY' SERIES WITHIN

Enthralling Long Complete Story of Betty Barton & Co.—

ADOPTED FOR THE



Easter Holiday

"IT'S going to be grand," Betty Barton told herself; "an absolutely perfect Easter!"

She was standing alone on a small balcony of the Grand Hotel, Southville. April sunshine was silvering the quiet sea and picking out all the varied colours of the thronged parade—with its newly painted bandstand, occupied by scarlet-clad bandmen. There were quite large crowds, too. The unexpected spell of bright weather had attracted them to the seaside town to spend Easter.

Betty and a few of her school friends were staying at the Grand Hotel for the Easter holidays. Other members of Morecove's chummyery were staying with Pam Willoughby at a house about a mile away along the front. Pam had not yet completely recovered from a riding accident which had kept her away from school for a few weeks, so her parents had taken this house—furnished—to allow Pam to convalesce.

The Grangemoor boys were here, too, staying at the hotel. Needless to say it was an arrangement that suited them all perfectly.

"I say, Betty!"

The cry reached her from the first-floor sitting-room, whose great windows opened on to this balcony. But Betty was in holiday mood, and she only turned to call back a lazy:

"Out here, Polly!"

"Such a strange thing, Betty!" cried madcap Polly Linton, dashing out on to the balcony with characteristic liveliness. "Paula Creel—"

"What about Paula? Gone bairning—to put us all to shame?"

"I can see Paula doing that, with the sea as cold as it is," chuckled Polly. "But, Betty dear—just fancy! Paula has suddenly discovered that there must be relations of hers in Southville.

And," she rushed on as Betty would have spoken, "you know that one of the Easter attractions is to be those speed-boat trials? The name Creel is in the list of entrants; Geoffrey Creel, running a speed-boat called the Silver Swift. He's an inventor!"

"Never!"

Betty's cry was all the more incredulous because that amiable member of the Study No. 12 chummyery, pretty Paula Creel, had always "fawndy" admitted that the "Cweels" were more renowned for beauty than brains—"yes, wather!"

"A Creel an inventor, Polly?"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!" came the unmistakable drawl of Morecove's adored and oft-teased

Good-hearted as ever, the Morecove holiday-makers find a girl to "adopt," and in doing so plunge into adventure.

girl; and now Paula Creel came out on to the balcony.

"Surprised, are you, Betty dear?"

"And you, Paula—feeling rather proud?"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!" beamed Paula.

"They've just put up a fresh bill downstairs about the speed-boat trials," Polly exclaimed. "And we can all get a better idea—how exciting it is going to be! Well, Paula; jolly good luck to you—what is he? Uncle, did you say?"

"Er—lawdly that, goals. I can best describe

—on Holiday by the Sea

HOLIDAYS



BY MARJORIE STANTON

ILLUSTRATED BY L. SHIELDS

him, I fancy, as a wather wemote bwanch of the family; a cousin of dad's, I wather fancy—whatevah that makes him to me?"

"Don't ask me!" shrugged Polly. "Anyhow, as a relation of yours—a Creel!—let's hope he does better in the speed-boat trials than you ever do at school!"

"I can see us all being given free trips to sea in the Silver Swift," Polly rejoiced. "Hundred miles an hour—see—ooosh! rurr! Look, there goes one of them—"

At the balcony rails, all three girls stood spell-bound, fascinated by the sight of a small, strange craft, flashing through the sparkling sea, a mile out from the shore.

Knifing along at terrific speed, in a few moments it was a diminishing speck not only to these three girls watching from the balcony, but to hundreds of people who, on the parade, had stopped to gaze.

"Marvellous!" Betty gasped. "And is that the Silver Swift itself, I wonder?"

"If it is, Paula—then I should think your second-uncle-twice-removed will just about walk away with the cup! Could anything beat that? Gee, look at her now, going round in that big sweep! Fine!"

"Paula's wishing she were on board!" chuckled Betty, knowing the beloved 'duffer's' dread of being afloat, to say nothing of those fountains of spray which the speed-boat sent up.

"No, thenks, geals! But I would like to find this distant welen of mine; all the more so, geals, as he has a daughter—about our age, too, yes, wather!"

"Oh?" stared Betty.

"And what relation would she be?" chuckled Polly. "Well, let's get a jerk on! All we need to do, inquire downstairs, and they'll be able to tell us where to find Mr. Creel and his daughter."

"That's the idea," Betty nodded, and they all three retired from the balcony, to make their way down to the hotel's spacious lounges.

They knew that a word of helpful information might send them eagerly questing some address in the town; all the same, they did not trouble about hats. Holiday-time—not likely!

"The truth is, geals," Paula began to impart as they hurried downstairs, "this welen of mine has always been a bit of a cwank. I'm afwaid he long ago spent most of the money he inhewited, and the worst of it is, he has always wefused healp fwom the west of the wescue; but a certain pwide, don't you know—"

"I say, though," put in Betty, "How about his daughter—has she a mother?"

"I'm sowwy, geals, but that is another dis-twessing feature of the case," Paula answered. "Her mother died years ago—a sweet woman, I hev always understood. I wish I could hev seen more of the geal, but theah it is, in wecent years father and daughter have quite dwopped out of our lives. I used to send Alice a pwesent ewevy Christmas and on her birthday, but even that had to stop at last. We hadn't the addwess."

"We're going to get it now!" Polly said with gay confidence. "Then you'll be able to make up for lost opportunities, Paula!"

"I do twust so, yes, wather!"

They were coming off the wide, carpeted staircase, into the vast entrance-hall, off which opened lounges, palm-courts, and the great white and gold restaurant. There was an air of activity about which told the girls once more what the Grand would be like for Easter!

Plenty of guests were already in evidence, and more were even now arriving. Perhaps a train had just come in, for much luggage could be seen, waiting to go to the bed-rooms.

First, Betty and her two chums crossed over to look at a notice-board which not only announced the hotel's own Easter programme, but displayed bills advertising the town's special holiday effort.

Next to a gilt-lettered sign—"Dancing in the Ball-room at nine to-night"—there was a pink placard relating to the speed-boat contests. Names of boats entered, and their owners, were given, along with much small print relating to rules governing an event which, as Morcove knew, was attracting world-wide interest.

"There," Polly said, pointing to one part of the placard. "But it only gives his name, not his address. Surely, though, all the compctitors are in town by now? Let's ask."

As the burcau was handling quite a queue of fresh arrivals, they went over to a hall porter and asked him.

To their astonishment he burst out laughing.

"The owner of the Silver Swift, young ladies? Oh, I know the man you mean—'Crazy Creel,' as they call him in Southville! Yes, I see he has entered that mystery boat of his, all right, so we must suppose he means business!"

"But can you tell us where to find him?" Betty asked—all the more hurriedly because it was most "embawwassing, yes, wather!" for Paula to hear her distant relation being laughed about by the hotel porter.

"I can that, missies. Mr. Creel came to Southville—why, six months ago, it must be. He hired a bit of a tumbledown place out at West Dykes—where the creek is, as perhaps you know? He's got part of some buildings that were used during the War, and a little bungalow that was the officers' quarters. And there he's been working away ever since, all secret-like—aye, and very touchy if anybody came prying around! I had better warn you, too, West Dykes is a nasty place to get at, if you're thinking of going looking for this inventor chap."

"We mean to look him up," Polly drily remarked. "He happens to be a relation of—"

"Oh, does he, miss?" And the hall porter nearly collapsed. Even Paula's amiable and forgiving smile could not save him from looking very crestfallen whilst he saluted with a degree of fluster strange to him, as an ex-sergeant major.

"West Dykes—we've seen it from the parade at that end of the town," Betty said as she and her two chums turned to go out into the sunshine. "Some of that land is below sea level, and it must be under water half the winter. Have to pick our way!"

"But there's time—" Polly was enthusiastically saying, when she stopped—staring in round-eyed amazement at some fresh arrivals who had this moment come in.

"Gosh!" she said under her breath. "D'you see, girls?"

Paula's eloquent response was a dismayed: "Bai Jove, yes wather!" As for Betty, there was vast annoyance in her muttered:

"Oh, hang! Cora Grandways and her parents!"

West Dykes

NOT surprising that all three Morcove girls made long faces at this moment.

Other people who were upon the scene were only amused at the stir which a most self-important lady and gentleman, with their daughter, were managing to make, as they came in off the hotel step, attended by a chauffeur carrying jewel-cases and other possessions not to be handled by hotel servants!

But that overdressed daughter happened to be a girl who used to be at Morcove School; a girl who had been—expelled!

"Oh, help!" Polly sighed. "In the same hotel with us!"

Then Cora Grandways, starting to glance about most superciliously whilst her father and mother were signing the hotel register, saw her former school mates.

She no more advanced towards them than they moved to meet her. But it suited her vanity to call across to them—so that other people were bound to give her another glance:

"Hallo! You down here as well?"

Not caring themselves to be so loud, Betty and Co. simply treated the detestable girl to looks which said: "Seems like it, doesn't it?"—and made haste to get outside.

"Ugh!" Polly grimaced. "What foul luck!"

"Take no notice, that's all," Betty smiled. "Simply behave as strangers. We've a perfect right to do that. It isn't as if she ever shows the least sign of being sorry for all the harm she did."

"Pwospewous as evah, bai Jove—I mean, geals, Mr. Grandways!"

"But, of course," Polly said tartly, "he's a great financier, these days. Has a finger in every

pie! I wish"—looking this way and that with eyes half-closed to the sunshine—"we could see something of the other girls—the boys, too. Might get them to come with us?"

"I can tell you where to find Naomer and Tubby, for a cert," Betty chuckled. "At the Ocean Cafe, sampling sundaes!"

"Oh, I didn't mean those two!"

At any moment, during their walk westwards along the promenade, the three expected to fall in with some of those other boys and girls. But nothing of the sort happened—largely, no doubt, because the Willoughby residence was in the opposite direction.

Morcove and Co. had many attractions at that other end of the front, including the chance of a good game of tennis and as much free boating as they pleased.

Beach Place—the name of the Willoughby's hired house—had both hard and grass courts within a stone's throw of the seashore, and a useful lugsail boat "went" with the property.

But this western end of the town beyond the asphalt parade was quite different.

The top of the beach ran farther for another mile or so, as a mere stony bank, growing tamarisk very rankly. Behind this bank was a large area of low-lying land—West Dykes, criss-crossed by some very deep and wide ditches.

In spite of the attempt at drainage, the land remained marshy enough to grow only coarse and tussocky grasses, through which a footpath had been trodden here and there.

One such trail led away from the end of the asphalt promenade, appearing to end on a far side of the dreary waste, where a huddle of low, wooden buildings could be seen.

Betty and her two chums, setting off along this seldom-used footpath, reckoned that there would be at least an old railway-sleeper to bridge each of the ditches, and so it proved. But more than one of these plank bridges was very wobbly, and without any handrails it was an acrobatic feat to get across in safety. Betty and Polly laughed just as much as Paula squealed at some of their narrow escapes from toppling into stagnant water.

And yet timid Paula would have made this excursion, even had she known how difficult it was to prove. Hers was a heart of gold, although it was given to timid palpitations.

That distant cousin of hers—she longed to find her, feeling sure that here was someone who could do with a surprise treat.

"She is a perfect little bwick, I am sure," Paula breathlessly remarked, with difficulty keeping to the brisk pace set by Betty and Polly. "Pwobably a twemendous heap to her father. Mind you, he is a kind man; but, being a bit of a dweamer—"

"I get you," said Polly. "We must persuade Alice Creel to come to the hotel now and then, whilst we are all there. In fact, we must all adopt her!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

"It will be a change for her—after this!"

Betty said it, taking keen notice of the dreary spot for which they were making.

The low, wooden buildings were now seen to be lined along the bank of a salt-water creek served by only a narrow inlet from the sea. There was obviously no depth of water, and the place could never have been any use as harbourage, except for the very smallest craft.

A last plank-bridge had to be crossed by the girls, spanning a very wide ditch, and then they

had only to flounder over another reedy patch to be almost at the sheds.

Suddenly they heard a sweet, small voice singing; the voice of a young girl whose spirit was evidently proof against such depressing surroundings.

"Bat Jove!" Paula beamed; "that's Alice!" But she was not yet in sight to them. They went on faster than ever, and caught sight of her just as she was returning indoors.

The girl herself did not see them as she disappeared into a ramshackle dwelling of the bungalow type.

So the Morcove three were thinking, and of one accord they ran the rest of the way to the trellis-porch which served the front door of the lonesome abode.

"Dweadful place—positively howwible!" comfort-loving Paula said with a shudder, as she and her chums reached the porch. "Oh, deah! How I wish my own pawents were at the hotel. If dad and mother could know about this—"

She had rapped upon the door as she was speaking, and now they heard a lively step bringing Alice to answer the knock.

Even as the inner knob of the lock was being turned Betty for one was noticing how brightly someone kept the outer brass knob.

Then the door came wide open and they had Alice Creel confronting them; her pretty face expressing a kind of shy delight.

They understood instantly. She took them to be merely some holiday-making schoolgirls who had strayed this way and wanted to be given directions. In other words, to her they were simply three girls with whom it would be such a rare joy to exchange a pleasant word.

"Er—er—how are you, Alice deah, after all this time?" faltered Paula, with a nervous smile.

The other girl's brows went up.

"What!" she jerked. "You—you're not— Oh, but of course, and how wonderful! You're my—my—sort of a cousin, Paula!"

A Contrast

"YES, wather, bai Jove; that's wight, Alice! Er—we are wather a cwowd in Southville—for Easter, don't you know. Er—heah is Betty Barton, one of my chums; and this is Polly Linton—"

"So glad to meet you, Alice!" voiced Betty and Polly heartily. "So glad we have found you out—"

"Yes, bai Jove! It is going to be a gweat pleasure, Alice, to see a good deal of you during the hols. Your father—quite well, I twust? That's good! Er—you're busy, pewhaps?"

"Busy!" And Alice laughed in a way which suggested she was never anything

else. "But do come in! Dad's not at home. He's another busy one."

"He has a speed-boat entered for the races, hasn't he?" Betty made conversation as they crossed the wooden threshold into a sitting-room with match-boarded walls. "We do hope he does well!"

"Thanks," Alice responded ardently. "Dad deserves success, anyhow. He has worked so hard! Night and day it has been, these last six months."

"And you keep house for him!" Polly smiled admiringly. "How do you manage, though, about school?"

"Oh, I go to the Council school, but they have chosen Easter-time for closing it for a couple of weeks, to do a lot to the buildings. So we've all got an extra holiday!"

"Not much of a holiday for you!" Betty smiled feelingly.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that! I'm all the more with dad. At least, I can see after him all the more. I don't know that I see more of him; but we understand each other, and we're quite happy!"

"Weally, though!" Paula put in, "this is most distwessing!"

"What is, Paula?"

"Your living heah, bai Jove, like this!"

"Oh, but this place is just right for dad! It was a wonderful find—the creek, and the use of lots of sheds that have quite valuable machinery in



"You're my—my sort-of-cousin, Paula?" Alice Creel said in delighted amazement. Paula smiled as she introduced Betty and Polly. The Morcove party meant to ensure that Alice shared all the fun of their own holiday by the sea.

them still! And then this bungalow—I hope it doesn't seem too untidy?"

Untidy! The three visitors were to go on thinking how wonderfully neat Alice managed to keep the humble home, whilst they drew her on to talk about herself and her father.

There was very little furniture, and that only of the cheapest. But there was every sign of thorough-going housewifery—all carried on with one pair of hands, and those hands, such a young girl's!

Alice took "Morecove" to see the adjoining kitchen, where a deal table had its covering of tile-pattern shiny cloth.

Cooking-pots and kettles were kept bright, each in its place when not in use. The cement floor had been washed over within the last hour or so.

Her father, it transpired, would be coming in presently for the midday meal with her. That was not his speedboat which had been seen doing a trial trip, a while ago. It must have been one of several others which had come to Southville for the great event.

"Dad only takes his boat out at daybreak, and always gets back before people are about," Alice chatted on. "You see, it is what he calls his Dark Horse! He doesn't want anybody to know what it can really do, until the day. Then those who laughed at some of the gadgets that are his own invention will wish they hadn't."

"Why, has he ever offered his invention anywhere, and had it turned down?" Betty asked.

Alice, of a sudden, looked mournful—even a little bitter.

"He approached certain people, hoping they would take the idea up and help him to carry it out. It was proving such a desperate fight for him—not to have enough money for the work to go on. But they said he had better come to them again when he had proved his invention's worth."

"Shame!" Polly exploded.

"Well, it was—a bitter disappointment for dad. You see, he wants our country to have the benefit of his invention. He could easily have gone to a foreign country to complete the construction. He was approached——"

"And he refused?"

"Oh, yes."

Betty and Polly exchanged glances. As for Paula, she beamed afresh.

"Bai Jove, the pwoper spiwit—yes, wather—just like a Cweel! But, Alice deah, I feel vewy cwoss! I am going to be fuwious with your wespected father, fow not appwoaching the family!"

"Oh, are you!" laughed Alice. "But don't upset him to-day, will you? He will be so worn out when he comes in!"

Then Paula chortled.

"Nevah fear, Alice deah! Merely my way of expwessing myself—yes, wather! Look heah, though, I twust you have no objection to my wemaining on for a bit?"

"To miss the lovely lunch at the hotel and take pot-luck with me and dad?"

"Yes, wather! Nothing I would like, bettah. Alice, except to take you along to the hotel, stwaight away! Howevah, that, I pwesume, is impossible?"

Very definitely it was! Betty and Polly, joining with Paula in all sorts of good-natured proposals, found themselves up against an inflexible desire of Alice, to "see after dad."

They found, too, that it was not simply a case of her wanting to minister to his needs in the humble home. She hinted at a strange, self-appointed task of watching, when he could not

watch for himself, lest strangers should come prying into what he wished to be kept so secret.

But Morecove was insistent, and it ended in an understanding about which Alice was grateful beyond words.

Paula was to stay on with Alice, now, at the bungalow, whilst Betty and Polly returned to the hotel to let others know what had come about this morning.

Then, this afternoon, two or three of Paula's chums would turn up at West Dykes, to take on there, thus enabling Paula to take Alice to the hotel for tea and give her an altogether jolly time.

If her father would also go along, so much the better. But this was doubtful; the only certainty in regard to him being, that he would be glad of a treat for Alice.

As Betty and Polly went picking their way back over the ditchy wastes, they heard faint tinkering sounds, coming from one low-roofed shed that was nearest of all to the edge of the creek. Glancing that way, it seemed to them as if part of the shed covered in a few square yards of water.

They guessed that he was there, with his mystery boat afloat in a tiny covered-in dock.

Again and again they looked back, each time with a thought of how dreary and desolate the whole scene was.

Such a short distance from go-ahead Southville, with its fine parade, its great hotels and its grand pier; and yet—what a contrast.

They had heard that faint metallic clink, clink! of steel against steel, telling of the patient, unflagging work upon the mystery boat. Now they heard the band on the sunny front, bam-bamming away—playing the last piece, before thousands of care-free holiday folk went flocking back to hotels and boarding-houses. And again, between the one sound and that other—what a world of difference!

But the greatest contrast of all was to get to the Grand Hotel and there see Cora Grandways once more.

She was going to the restaurant with her parents; a perfect picture of a pampered, conceited girl.

The Artist Who Wasn't!

"JACK! Dave! Oh, all you boys, what have you been doing?"

"Bekas—most eggspensive! Chocolates like those—gorjus!"

"It is good of you fellows, really!"

"When we know how fast the pocket-money goes!"

It was half-past two in the afternoon, half an hour since the Grand Hotel "contingent" of Morecove girls and Grangemoor boys had come away from the luncheon table. And in that half-hour Jack Linton and Co. had been away to the shops, spending freely.

Now they were back, and it was the surprise handing over of lavish purchases which had thrown Betty, Polly and Co. into great excitement.

"Alice will be terribly grateful."

For the boys had clubbed together to buy these cartons of cakes, and a mammoth box of chocolates, and a bag of fruit, for young Alice, now that they had been told all about her and her father.

"Smatter of fact," Jack made light of the generous deed, "it's simply to get round her! Dave and I, anyway, mean to go across to West Dykes with any of you girls who are going. Hoping Alice won't resent it!"

"Just as if," cried Polly. "But about her father—we don't know! It isn't as if you can be of any use. You're only boys!"

"You're only a girl, Polly-wolly, or you wouldn't talk such utter tosh," her brother gaily retorted. "I can use a spanner as good as the next man. Many's the time I've had a go at the jolly old bike. So why shouldn't I help to tinker with the works of this Silver Swift contraption? As for Dave—"

Jack paused to single out Dave, and as portly Tubby happened to be in the way, there came a "Not you, ass!" So fat Tubby lounged to one side and, lest Naomer should fear there were to be no chocolates for her, casually produced some.

"Dave here has the brains," said Jack, patting his serious chum upon the top of the head. "Bump of invention, well developed! If the Silver Swift is giving any trouble—doing a last-hour sulk in her shed—Dave's the man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Betty, after all, was not going back to the creek this afternoon. There had been a message from Pam, at lunch-time, saying she did so hope Betty would be looking in by-and-by to join them at tennis.

As there was no reason why one of the other girls should not go, in place of Betty, to West Dykes, it was to be tennis for her out at Beach Place. And Polly would have Judy Cardew instead for companion.

Jack and Dave, subsequently left to wait all by themselves, just outside the Grand Hotel, had all those cakes and sweets and the fruit to mind. Nor was Jack without a dismaying belief that he and his chum had got to carry the things all the way to the bungalow. Hence some mock-gloomy murmurings by Jack, about the necessity of being polite to girls.

Then Polly and Judy came out, and it could be seen why they had to go indoors for those few minutes. Not to get specially dressed! They each carried a substantial brown-paper parcel, the making up of which had cost time and trouble.

Jack's original dismay now changed to vocal horror.

"Good law!" he gasped. "We chaps have got to carry those parcels, too?"

"You needn't come at all," Polly witheringly stated. "Any rate, I wouldn't let you carry THIS parcel, even if you wanted to!"

"Oh, let's hang on to it,

and I won't crush it." Jack handsomely promised.

For he had guessed, and so had Dave. These sisters of theirs had been looking out things for Alice to wear. Quite likely there were nice holiday frocks, as yet unworn, in the parcels, and Alice was to be allowed to think that they had been bought for her, so it would be no use her refusing to accept the gifts!

All this rendered Jack extraordinarily jovial, as he took part in the trudge out to the creek. Dave was probably just as delighted, but Dave, whether

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grave or gay, was not demonstrative. Jack whistled all the way, and fooled about whenever there was one of those sleeper bridges to cross, trying to frighten Polly into fearing that he was going to lose his balance and fall in—splish!—parcels and all.

Polly, however, knew him too well! All he drew from her was not scream after scream of alarm, but a constant flow of comment, stigmatising him as a brother of whom to be ashamed. But that is not to say that Polly really was ashamed of him.

At the bungalow they found Paula and Alice and also the girl's father. He had filled a pipe after the midday dinner, waiting for a good talk with Paula. She could tell him about members of the family who were very dear to him, although he had dropped out of their lives.

Nothing could have been nicer than his reception of these fresh visitors; but even as the newcomers took to him, they were also pitying him. So worn out he looked, his shabby clothes hanging loosely upon his tall, gaunt figure. Still quite a young man, he was already greying about the temples.

"Grangemoor," he said dreamily to Jack and Dave, when presently they had answered questions about themselves. "I know the school, of course—ah, a fine school! Just such a school as I went to when I was a lad—"

"If some of us end up only half as well as you, sir?" Jack cheerfully submitted. "I mean to say, you have done something big!"

"I'll admit to wanting to do something big, my lads. But it is still on the knees of the gods. Ah, well, only a few more days, and then—"

Pausing, he tapped out another finished pipe. The girls had gone into Alice's tiny bed-room, and much excitable talk was going on in there, now that those parcels were being undone.

"You two boys must come along with me and have a look at the Silver Swift."

"That's jolly good of you, sir! We didn't think you'd want us to!"

So out they went, at a moment when Alice, in her bed-room with the Morcove girls, was quite entranced by one frock which had just come clear of tissue-paper wrappings.

She first held it at arm's length, then laid it against herself, her gaze still rapturous.

"Ever so much too good for me!" she sighed. "How could you girls be so extravagant? How can you expect me to wear it?"

"Well, we do," chuckled Polly, out of whose holiday wardrobe that particular frock had come.

"Put it on straight away, and then go along with Paula to the hotel."

"But—"

"Tea there, and then Paula will take you to Beach Place, to be introduced to lots more of us! And then back to the hotel for dinner—"

"That's wight," Paula beamingly confirmed, whilst Alice still strove to demur. "And then, bai Jove—"

"Concert on the pier!" Judy chimed in. "They say it's awfully good."

"But—"

"Do you ever get to the pier concerts, Alice? Or to the cinema? No, never!" Polly inferred. "So don't look like that!"

"What about dad, though? Whatever time shall I be home?"

"That's all arranged! So not another word, Alice—"

"Or we shall be weally cwooss with you—yes, wather!" chortled Paula. "Haw, haw, haw!"

Pway considah yourself adopted for the holidays, yes, wather!"

That look in Alice's face, which Polly was asking her to banish—it was one of great emotion, of gratitude too deep for words.

During the next few minutes, when she was changing into things which these fairy-godmothers of hers had provided, she often made little pauses as if still wanting to say quite a lot—and still her tongue failed her.

Then she was ready to be off with Paula. Polly and Judy meant to go just a short distance with them, as these two who had "taken duty" would have nothing to do until it was time to lay tea at the bungalow.

All four girls, as soon as they came out into the warm sunshine, could tell what had become of Jack and Dave. The lads' voices were faintly audible from that shed which housed the Silver Swift.

"Dad has taken to them," Alice happily commented. "I'm so glad they came along. He can talk to them as he can't talk to me, about his engines and all that. Hallo, though!"

And her face fell now that she had suddenly noticed a stranger upon the scene—a tweed-clad man, half-hidden to view because of the tall grass where he sat on a tiny camp stool.

"Who's he, then?" Polly wondered aloud, sensing Alice's uneasiness at his being there. "An artist—going to sketch?"

He had no easel, but he had taken on to his knees something that looked very like a large, flat colour-box, with a lid to adjust so that it could support a sketching-block.

Next moment the girls were convinced; he had indeed come there to sketch. They saw him setting out a bottle of water for his water-colour brushes.

Judy glanced at what, according to the position he had taken up, would be the scene he meant to sketch. Part of the buildings would come into the foreground, with the creek and some of those rotting boats in the background.

"Shouldn't have thought that would make much of a picture," Polly grimaced. "But you never know. Our Tess Trelawncy chooses strange bits, sometimes, for practice."

"I hope he is all right," Alice quavered. "I mean— Oh, look here, I don't think I'll go into town after all, girls! I'll be just as grateful, even though I have had to miss the treat! I—"

"Alice, don't be such a stupe!" Polly pleaded. "You must go! Won't Judy and I be here?—and the boss!"

"Besides," murmured Judy, "why get jumpy, Alice, just because of that man? He's only an artist."

"I know what dad is—so fidgety," was the sighing answer. "But perhaps the man will finish and pack up before dad secs him. Good-bye, then, you two. You had better not come any farther. And I am never going to forget how good you have all been to make this treat possible for me."

Polly, as she turned back to the bungalow with Judy, was all chuckles.

"Alice spoke just then as if she thinks to-day's treat is to be the only one! We'll watch it!"

Meantime, she and Judy were busy watching the artist.

Whenever they sent a peep in his direction, during the next half-hour, he seemed to be absorbed in his task. But they could tell that he was not working with the rapidity that Tess, their artist chum, always employed.

And this surprised them, for Tess had often said that you must work very rapidly at a sketch made in the open air, because of changing effects of light and shade.

Then suddenly, just as Polly and Judy were setting out the tea-things, they realised that he had left his camp stool and materials, to come across to the bungalow.

"Goodness!" Polly frowned. "What does he want here!"

"Tea, perhaps?" smiled Judy; but her smile held some uneasiness.

As soon as his approaching step sounded from just outside the porch, they both went to the door. It was set wide-open to the afternoon sunshine.

"Afternoon, young ladies!" the middle-aged artist amiably greeted them, doffing a felt hat which matched his Harris tweeds. "Warm,

Polly jingled a few spoons into saucers, whilst Judy gave an eye to the kettle, to get it to come to the boil. Then they both went to the porch again, to stare across and see the artist resuming his camp stool.

"I can't help thinking," Polly muttered. "If anyone did want to pry around—sketching makes a jolly plausible excuse! And now, here's Alice's father, with the boys."

The three had just emerged from the shed. Geoffrey Creel instantly noticed the man sketching; stopped dead and stared in an annoyed way.

It would not have surprised Polly and Judy had the inventor gone striding across to manifest an interest prompted by suspicion. But he came on with Jack and Dave to the bungalow, and at first it seemed as if he had decided not to be stupidly uneasy.

"I see we have an artist working away out



"That chap's no artist. He can't paint for toffee!" Dave Cardew reported to the others. Like Dave, they were all instantly wondering, was the stranger a genuine artist or—a spy?

isn't it? Like summer! I wonder if you could oblige me with a little clean water for my brushes? I'm afraid I've used what I had?"

He held out a wide-necked bottle, and Polly took it. His trifling request so disarmed suspicion as to his bona fides, both she and Judy wanted to be cordial to him in return. But they felt they had better not encourage him.

"Thank you, thank you! Soft water—splendid!" the artist exclaimed, receiving back his replenished bottle. "Very pretty, round here? I find quite a number of bits I want to do! Good-afternoon, and much obliged!"

He went away, and his not hanging about talking might have left Polly and Judy free from further uneasiness, only—

"I didn't like his saying that about lots of bits to sketch," Judy frowned.

"No! Bother him; is he going to be here tomorrow and the next day? If so, he'll soon get on Mr. Creel's nerves!"

there," he casually remarked. "Holiday-time; so I suppose we must expect to lose some of our privacy!"

But a minute later Geoffrey Creel, asking the boys and girls to excuse him, took up his teacup and saucer, and a laden plate, and went away—back to the shed!

"There now!" Polly gasped, as soon as the inventor was out of hearing. "It's because of that artist!"

Dave hitched back his chair and stood up. "Just pour out a cup for the artist, will you?" he said to Judy, who had the teapot.

"Old Dave," winked Jack, with an understanding grin. "Let's know what you think of him as an artist, Dave!"

"I will," promised the over serious brother of Judy; and he came back presently to where the others were waiting near the doorway.

"That chap's no artist. He can't paint for toffee," he reported tersely.

"Eh, what!" exclaimed Jack. "My hat!"
 "Then what else is he?" Polly questioned tensely.

"But," Judy shrewdly observed, "people sometimes think they can paint when they can't!"

Dave nodded.

"That is so. All the same—he wants watching."

"Good!" said Jack. "There are enough of us to do that?"

"And that, then," was Polly's prompt rejoinder, "is what we've got to do!"

"Alice—In Wonderland!"

"BRAVO! Ha, ha, ha!" and great clapping.
 "Bravo!"

The velvet curtains of the pierhead concert stage had fallen together as the lined-up troupe ended their final chorus.

Now a pianist started the National Anthem, and the audience stood up, singing heartily.

"Well, Alice dear?"

"Oh, I have enjoyed myself!" the inventor's daughter assured those who had come with her to the variety show. "What an evening it has been—what a lovely time!"

Everywhere wraps and pretty scarfs were being put on, and some menfolk were shouldering into light overcoats, for the night air off the sea was going to strike keenly. On the other hand, who would want to hurry along the deck of the pier when there would be the whole sea-front of Southville to admire, festooned with coloured lights, and showing all the thousand brilliant windows of hotels and boarding-houses?

Wrap up well and dawdle—thing to do, this wonderful evening in holiday-time!

But Alice, before she got outside the concert-room with her friends, noticed the time by a wall clock. Ten!

"Gracious!" she said, quite agitatedly. "What will daddy think of me? I haven't once been away from him for so long, this last six months!"

"Eet ees all right: you won't get ze sack, don't you worry," shrilled Naomer, who was in the mood to dance all the way along the pier. "Now you have got to come back to ze hotel—"

"What!"

"Yes, wather!" chuckled Paula. "Fow a few minutes, anyhow, Alice deah!"

"Just to have a squash," suggested Tubby Bloot, "or an ice, or both."

"And a look-in at the ball-room," added Betty. "You must do that, Alice. The dancing will be in full swing now!"

"Remember, Alice, we have adopted you for the hols!"

"Oh!" cried tantalised Alice, "you are—all of you! But think of Polly and Judy, with Jack and Dave, still at the bungalow; missing everything!"

"They'll get it another time, Alice. We all get things when you can't," Madge pointed out. "Doesn't the front look pretty, girls?"

"Gorjus! And zere is our hotel—enormous! Well, I shall want a refresher when we get in, if nobody else does!"

All the chatter-chatter which followed made it clear to Alice that her consent was taken for granted. She was to put in a half-hour or so at the hotel, and then one of the boys would see her home to West Dykes.

"You warm enough, Alice?" asked comfort-loving Paula, who was swaddled up to the ears. "That's wight!"

"You lent me such a lovely warm wrap, Paula!"

"Er—I didn't weally mean to lend it, Alice—"

"What! Oh, oughtn't I to have—"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! The twuth is, Alice deah, you didn't quite gwasp my meaning. I—er—I weally meant you to have the wrap as a twisling pwesent, don't you know!"

"But— Oh, dear!" Alice sighed, betwixt laughter and tears. "Am I dreaming all this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I must be Alice in Wonderland at present," she said. "Well! No more treats after to-night! You do so laugh—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I mean it!"

"All wight then, you mean it, yes wather!" chuckled Paula, who had never been so happy in all her happy life. "Just as we othahs mean to hev our own way—yes, wather!"

The turnstiles let them off the pier on to a glamorous parade that had thousands of holiday folk still sauntering about. A plunging of waves came melodiously up from the beach.

And they had only to cross over, dodging the many motors, to exchange all this pleasant medley of out-of-doors for the hum of life in the great hotel.

She had called herself "Alice in Wonderland," but she was more like Cinderella at the ball—forgetting the flight of time! Some "Morcove" parents made her sit down in the crowded lounge with Paula and the rest. Waiters flashed up, then flashed away to fetch what was ordered; and Alice soon found herself served with something delicious, in a tumbler with two straws.

The lounge, thronged with people who either did not dance or had come from the ball-room for a rest, was a scene of life and laughter. But the climax for Alice came when Betty and others took her to the ball-room doorway.

A "spot dance" was in progress, and whilst Alice was gazing, enchanted by the rhythmic movements of so many couples round the floor, the fine band broke off—abruptly.

She saw some lucky pair picked out by the M.C. and taken to receive a prize, everybody else clapping. Then the band struck up again; and suddenly Alice found Tom Trevor—brother to Study No. 12's "Bunny"—saying roguishly:

"My dance, I think?"

"Go on, Alice!" laughed several of the rest. "Yes, wather!"

"Bekas, queek—you may get ze next prize!" shrilled Naomer, starting to take the floor with Tubby. "Bekas, you never know!"

And, when the band stopped again— Oh, but this really was Alice's lucky hour! Fortune, as it were, coming to her to-night with both hands full! She and Tom were "on the spot." Chocolates for Alice—and cigarettes for him.

From the edge of the ball-room the others applauded delightedly.

"I'll mind the cigarettes for you, Tom," his sister sweetly offered, "until you're old enough!"

"Not in the hols!" grinned he. And then, as he saw two or three of the girls being quite hustled by somebody's pushing past: "I s-s-say!"

"See who it was?" Betty frowned, after they had all angrily watched the rude person hurry away. "Cora Grandways."

"She is excited," said Madge.

"She is in a temper, if you ask me," Bunny gurgled. "Not getting asked to dance, I suppose!"

But Madge's was the correct comment. Excitement over a sudden daring idea had accounted for Cora Grandways' decision not to dance any more.

For she was going out; but first she must change into suitable things.

Making her way to her room, she kicked off her expensive dance shoes and clapped on a pair of brogues. With the same haste she put on a dark rain-coat over her light-coloured dance frock. Hat and scarf—they also were dark. She switched off the lights and stood in front of the full-length mirror, and, hardly able to see herself, she laughed exultantly.

"Away from all the town lights—I'll not be seen!"

Another minute and she had secretly made her way out of the hotel, emerging from a side door on to a quiet by-street.

A little after this, she became a slinking figure following Alice Creel and Tom Trevor as they made the walk out to the bungalow over those nightbound wastes.

There was only the starlight to help them upon their way, and Tom, feeling very responsible, had thought they ought to keep off the marshland. He reckoned that there must be a roadway, however bad its present state might be, that had once served the creekside sheds. But Alice told him that, although there was a road, where it ran beside the creek it was cut by a broken bridge.

"Dad can never have anything brought right to the door, on wheels," she chatted on. "Lorries can only come as far as where the bridge used to be—just a jumble of broken-down timber now, mostly under water! I could do it blindfolded!"

So they plodded along the mere trail trodden in the bowed, dead grass of last year. No light glimmered at them from the bungalow, although that humble dwelling was only a short distance away. The waste land was still waterlogged after winter rains, and some mist was rising.

Halfway across, girl and boy were suddenly caught in a thick band of this cold, white fog. But Alice was never at fault. Where a stranger might easily have gone astray, because of trampled trails that branched away from the one they must follow, she was not to be so easily misled.

Always, when they came to one of the intersecting ditches, there was a plank bridge to take them across. As she said to Tom, it would not have been so if they had got by mistake on to the wrong path.

Eagerness to pick up the lights of the bungalow kept them peering ahead. Yet even if they had glanced behind, they would have seen nothing of Cora Grandways, although she was following at a safe distance—step for step!

Two-thirds of the way she meant to keep after Alice and Tom. Then she would turn back; and, wherever she had one of those plank bridges to re-cross, there she would spend a minute or so, up to such mischief as always gave her delight!

A grin, full of cruel delight, curved Cora's lips as she plodded on in the wake of the Morcovians. Anything to give trouble or misery to Betty and Co.!

That, in her old days at Morcove School, had



"I can wade as well as you, Tom!" Polly declared. "Put me down!" But Tom only chuckled. "When we get to the other side," he retorted. "Don't wriggle or we'll both go flop!"

been Cora's ruling passion. And it was the same now.

"A light at last, Alice!"

"Yes, Tom: that's the bungalow."

"Cheers! You'll be glad to get indoors out of this cold, damp air. Queer," Tom muttered, peering round in the darkness, "how the mist goes about in wisps and patches."

Then, greatly startled, he stopped dead, voicing a surprised:

"Hallo!"

"Why, what, Tom?"

"I'm hanged—look! There he goes, so it wasn't my fancy!" Tom amazedly exclaimed whilst pointing. "Someone out and about on this marshland—a man—"

"A man?" jerked Alice, peering her hardest in the direction indicated. "I don't see him—oh, yes, I do! But now he has vanished—got into the mist over there."

Tom looked at her to realise that she was suddenly deathly pale and very agitated.

"There's nothing to fear, Alice. You'll be all right."

"Oh, it isn't that," she quavered. "But I'm afraid he is hanging about because of—the Silver Swift. What other reason could he have for being out here at such a late hour? No!" Alice answered herself. "Yet if I tell dad, he will stay up all night—he will! I know what dad is."

"Then listen, Alice," was Tom's prompt entreaty. "Don't say a word to him. Leave it to us to arrange about an all-night guard—as we can, Alice! Polly and Judy must get back to the hotel, of course; but one of us chaps is all they need to go with them. That leaves two fellows for remaining on."

"All night?"

"Yep. So, Alice, not a word when you get indoors. Just rely on me to fix things up with Jack and Dave, after we have said good-night."

"How awfully kind you all are," Alice said again, emotionally. "Now I feel that you have been sort of sent to protect daddy and his invention, just when the danger is greatest. I know he does fear greater danger than ever these last few days and nights before the display."

Tom said nothing, but gave her arm, that he had taken, a reassuring pressure.

At the same time, he peered aside once more in the direction that phantom-like figure had gone, vanishing so suspiciously into the misty darkness.

Danger Lurks!

IN that same misty darkness, only a few minutes later, some whispered good-nights were exchanged.

Then Jack and Dave, who had come away from the bungalow with Polly, Judy and Tom, retraced their steps.

Those two lads, unbeknown to Alice's father, were going to be at West Dykes all night—on guard!

Turn and turn about; two hours on and two hours off, so Jack and Dave were going to pass the night.

Polly and Judy heartily approved of what was being done by their brothers, and it was certain that all "Morcove" grown-ups at the hotel would applaud the action.

Only the first hundred yards had the two girls and Tom gone upon their homeward trudge, when they could see nothing of the bungalow lights by looking back.

The night mist had spread itself, and Tom, for one, was aware of its having thickened.

"But we have all three come this way before, so we shan't be long about it," he cheerfully remarked. "Take it gently, though, over those planks that cross the ditches! Some of 'em—a bit wonky!"

"That's what we thought, coming," Polly laughed. "And who would ever imagine that just here we are so close to a big town like Southville! Can't see or hear anything now!"

"The town was lively enough, up to an hour ago," Tom chuckled. "Everybody having a great time—including Alice!"

"How she must have enjoyed herself, from what she said," Judy murmured. "A dear girl! I wish we had her at Morcove. And her father—he's splendid, in his own strange way. Must be a real genius. Jack and Dave say that the Silver Swift is simply——"

Suddenly all three of them stood still, with a six-foot wide ditch in front of them—and the plank bridge gone!

"Gosh!" Polly gasped. "Now what!"

"But there's the plank—lying along the opposite bank," Tom exclaimed, as his eyes just made it out in the foggy darkness. "By heck, girls! It has been pulled away to put us in a fix!"

"We're in a fix all right," Polly raged. "Dash! If we can't keep to the path we know——"

"But we've got to," Tom instantly decreed. "I'm not going to have any blind floundering about in a place like this—a night like this, too!"

"No," Judy quickly agreed. "But what about the other foot-bridges? They are all so makeshift, anybody can have served them the same?"

"Oh, Tom!" cried Polly, for he was stepping down to enter stagnant water, the depth of which had yet to be known. "Be careful!"

Next instant a first dull splosh! attended his impulsive action. Both girls gasped dismayedly, if only because of the discomfort it meant for him and the total ruin of clothes. But Tom laughed.

"We've got to get home! Wait just a bit, you two."

He waded across, with the water above his knees. Then, when he was going to lay hold on the dislodged plank, he changed his mind and came back.

"Not worth the bother, girls! One of you—come on, and I'll carry you both across in next to no time."

"You're not going to carry me!" Polly proudly declared.

"Why not?"

"Because I believe in managing for myself! If you can wade, so can—— Oh, Tom, you wretch! Put me DOWN!"

"So I will," he chuckled, having suddenly taken her about the knees and lifted her clear of the bank; "when I get to the other side. Whoa, now—don't wriggle, Polly—or we'll both go flop! And Judy, if you don't wait for me to fetch you, I'll report you to Dave in the morning!"

Being about as submissive as Polly was headstrong, Judy waited, hearing the madcap's rebellious utterances during the crossing.

Polly was saying that she did hate being treated like a kid! He was not, anyhow, going to do the same for her at the next ditch, if the bridge had gone!

And to make sure of doing without him, no sooner had he set her down than she ran off to be in advance at the next ditch.

It was after she had scurried on, alone, for a couple of hundred yards, that she realised, with a horrible sense of humiliation, that she had missed the way. In front of her was another of those tiresome ditches; but there was no bridge—there never had been one just here.

Tom and Judy were calling out for her in the darkness and the fog. She shouted that she was all right—"coming!"—and started to flounder across trackless, reedy ground, to get to them. But suddenly—splosh!—she almost fell headlong, her hurrying feet plunged down into black ooze.

Then she knew the really deadly risks of this swampy place by night. It seemed to her as if she were being sucked down.

Frantically she dragged up one foot, then the other, trying alternately with each to find firm standing; but she could do no good for herself. Suddenly she was knee deep.

She thought she had turned so as to be facing the way she had come just then, but apparently she had either turned not far enough or too much.

"Idiot that I was!" she raged against herself. "Where am I? Where have I got to? Oh, is that you, Tom! Help, help!"

"All right, Polly! We're coming!"

How rare it was for Bunny's jolly brother to speak in such a grave tone. But his face, dimly visible to Polly in the misty darkness as he raced

towards her, showed that he saw nothing in their plight to laugh about now.

"You shouldn't, Polly," was all he said as he plunged to her aid.

He lifted her up to get her out of the ooze, and she was a different Polly all at once, meekly admitting:

"I know I shouldn't, Tom. But—I always do!" "Judy!" he breathlessly called out. She answered promptly, guiding him with his human burden back to where he had told her to wait.

For how long after that all three of them were still contending with unexpected difficulties, they had no clear idea.

The darkness, the dense night mist, the absence of all guiding sounds—and then, wherever there should have been a makeshift bridge, some unknown had contrived to remove it!

"This has something to do with it all—I mean, with Mr. Creel and his invention," Polly broke out at one moment during the desperate groping and floundering along. "It is to make us afraid to come this way again, ever!"

"Well, it won't do that," Judy muttered spiritedly.

"Not it!" her chum agreed fiercely. "But who would it be? That man, and no one else?"

"One person could easily drag away the planks," Tom remarked. "They've never been fastened down—simply laid from bank to bank."

"It's made you in an awful state, Tom," Polly deplored. "Mine's nothing—just wet shoes and stockings."

"There's one thing about me," he cheerfully responded; "I can't get much worse, no matter what comes next."

It was a wider ditch, with even deeper water, which came next. But it was the last! Manfully he carried both girls across, although they implored him to let them fend for themselves.

Then they made a stumbling rush up a grassy bank, knowing that another minute would find them on the sea-front—their ordeal ended.

All lights were out along the esplanade. For the first time they heard a town clock faintly chiming.

"My hat!" Tom chuckled. "Midnight!" "I suppose lots of them will be waiting up for us, worrying," Judy murmured.

"Then you must say good-night to them for me," Polly jested. "I would rather slip in some side way, thank you! But, do you know," she changed to a serious whisper, "I do believe— Listen!"

"Way, yes!" Judy pant ed. "There is someone now, floundering about like we've been doing, back there on the marshes!"

Muddy Shoes

"THAT man?" Tom wondered softly. "But how can it be? He should have been ahead of us surely—that is, if he is the one who monkeyed about with those planks? He would only shift them after he himself had got across them?"

Late though it was, they felt bound to stand still, listening eagerly for further splashing sounds; but none came. Instead, and quite suddenly, approaching footsteps clacked on the parade asphalt, and a mumble of boyish voices was also heard.

"Jimmy and Tubby!" Tom exclaimed joyfully. "Hey—that you, chaps?"

"Yes! What's made you so late?" was Jimmy Cherrol's eager inquiry as he and Tubby ran to meet the three. "We reckoned we'd better come

and look for you. And where are Jack and Dave? The state you are in, too!"

Some very rapid explanations followed. Then Jimmy and Tubby said excitedly:

"That's funny about those bridges!"

"Is it?" Polly bleakly returned. "Glad you think so!"

"But, look here, the strange thing is," Jimmy rushed on, "just now Tubby and I saw Cora Grandways."

"What!"

"She was walking back to the hotel as we set out," Tubby put in. "Didn't seem to want us to recognise her, either."

"She went in by a side door," Tom continued. "I s'pose she couldn't have been the person who dragged away all those planks?"

"Couldn't she!" Polly exploded. "That Cora—the very girl who would serve us any mean trick, give her half a chance! Oh, come on! Talking about it only makes me—wild!"

EASTER BRINGS US SPRING CLEANING

THERE is an old saying to the effect that a thing worth doing is worth doing well. There's even more in it than that, for a thing done thoroughly means time and trouble saved all round.

This is true in the home no less than in office or workshop, and the good habits formed in the tasks of the home often stand one in good stead in a business or other career.

Even the simplest tasks can be done just that little bit better with a little care and forethought. Now that Easter's so near and "spring cleaning" is in the air, it's as well to be methodical if you mean to help mother—and goodness knows, she needs all the help she can get at such a time!

Washing up must be done, spring-cleaning or no spring-cleaning. It's much pleasanter and simpler when done properly.

First clear all the pieces off the plates, empty tea-leaves into the sink-tidy and so on. If plates are very greasy, it is a good plan to wipe them over with pieces of paper which can be promptly burned.

Let all flat objects stand against a basin, cup or other upright object until ready to be dried. And, by the way, always wash glassware, silver and cutlery first, taking care to keep knife-handles out of hot water. Next wash cups and saucers, jugs, etc., and lastly greasy plates, dishes and pots and pans. And if you dry the first batch while more water is heating for the second you will be surprised how quickly and efficiently the job is done.

Spring-cleaning a room is a job that calls for method to prevent repetition of labour.

Start with the fireplace and hearth. Even when there are no fires going it is surprising what collects there. Everyone seems to regard it as a legitimate place to dump spent matches, cigarette ash and ends, bits of paper, and so on.

Next give the carpet a good sweeping or brushing, having first taken out the mats to be shaken. Then comes the job of dusting, and the rearranging and shaking-up of cushions and finally the tidying out of drawers.

For the last-named it is better to spread a cloth or paper on the table, empty the drawer completely and dust and re-line it with fresh white paper. Then the contents can be sorted out and replaced tidily with ease and thoroughness.

In cleaning the kitchen, by the way, it is usual to start from the top and work downwards. That is to say, dust or wash the shelves and their contents, then stoves, ranges, sinks, etc., and lastly the floor, which is first swept, then washed or scrubbed.

A good slogan for the home might well be:

"Method means more leisure for mother!"

But Polly's fury was to reach an even greater pitch before another ten minutes had sped.

By slipping in at the side door of the hotel, she was able to make her way upstairs without encountering any of the many guests who were still about. This was doing much to restore her lost temper, for she would have hated to be seen in such a muddy, bedraggled state.

Her idea was to get to her room, spend just a couple of minutes in making herself presentable, and then run down to show herself to her parents and others, who were doubtless holding an inquiry in the lounge.

But, still unseen, she was hurrying along an upstairs corridor to the room which she shared with Betty, when suddenly a door opened, letting out—Cora Grandways!

And Cora was—in striking contrast with Polly—such a picture of ball-room dressing.

The girl might have been dancing all the evening, up to a few minutes since; might even have been going down again, to get a last dance. And, of course, as she met bedraggled Polly, she grinned derisively.

"Hallo!" said Cora. "You been paddling? And now you want a bath—he, he, he!"

Then Polly saw red. She very nearly flew at the ill-natured mocker who was flaunting past.

Very likely, too, Cora felt she had better hasten away. There was the sound of the lift, discharging people on this floor, and that served as an excuse for running to be in time to be taken down.

Polly, giving a furious stamp that reminded her of the sopping state of her shoes raged away to her bed-room and started the lightning change.

Betty came in whilst the unhappy madcap was dragging off wet stockings. The two chums had much to say to each other, and it was all said very rapidly. Betty, as one of those who had waited about downstairs, had heard the first account given by Judy and Tom. She approved Polly's idea of going down again, just to say good-night, and said she would go with her.

So, almost immediately, they came away from their room together, meeting a few grown-up guests who were trailing off to bed some minutes in advance of the boisterous finish-up in the ball-room. Dance music was still faintly audible.

"Whatever must these people think of us?" Betty chuckled. "Up as late as this! But our own people, anyhow, know what good excuse there has been for it."

"Excuse is right!" Polly nodded grimly. "I'm not saying anything about that mean trick with the bridges on the marsh; that was just the old spite of Cora Grandways, I reckon. But it is dashed serious about the Silver Swift!"

Morcove and Grangemoor

are determined that Mr. Creel shall have a sporting chance with his speedboat!

Don't miss next Tuesday's enthralling long story of their adventures, entitled—

"MORCOVE'S STRANGE SEASIDE TASK"
By Marjorie Stanton

"It is!" Betty gravely agreed. "Rivalry! There must be somebody who wants to see Mr. Creel's speedboat do no good on the great day. And I'm so glad Jack and Dave have decided to stay on guard all night. Even if that artist chap, this afternoon, meant no harm—it seems that some other man was hanging about at West Dykes to-night."

"So we know what we've all got to do, don't we?" Polly rejoined. "Between now and the day for the speedboat races; keep our eyes open, do all we can for Alice and her father, and—"

And there Polly's voice, subdued though it had been, abruptly broke off.

She had reason enough for not letting another word pass her lips at this moment. For it was the moment when she and Betty, advancing clear of their bed-room corridor, found two men in eager talk on a large landing, and one of them was Cora's father, Josiah Grandways.

Betty, needless to say, recognised him in his immaculate evening dress, as quickly as her chum knew him. The other man, however, was a stranger to Betty.

Yet she felt excited about him, noticing that he was in holiday tweeds, and that he was very wet and muddy about the feet.

As for Polly, she knew that other man instantly, as well as she knew Mr. Grandways. Expecting to have to go with Betty close by both men, to get downstairs, she made a big effort at outward calmness. But now Mr. Grandways and his companion, noticing the girls, rather hurriedly walked away, making a pause in their talk.

They passed into one of the corridors, and so Betty and Polly could stand still, exchanging astounded looks.

"That other man, Betty!"

"He has just come off the marsh. Yes, I noticed the mud."

"Oh, but that isn't all," Polly whispered. "You weren't to know, because you were not at West Dykes this afternoon. But, that man is—the artist!"

Betty, as she heard this, fell back a step.

"You mean it, Polly? You are sure? Then—then—Whew!"

"He is staying at this hotel evidently. He's friendly with Cora's father—who will stoop to anything to make a bit more money. For all we know, Betty dear, Mr. Grandways may have an interest in one of the rival speedboats? He may even be plotting—"

"Sh! Not so loud, Polly!"

"But," Polly spoke on under her breath, "are you going to say it isn't possible? When that other man hangs about at West Dykes by day as an artist, and by night—he goes there in secret!"

"And he gets back to this hotel—to report to Grandways?"

"That's about it!"

"Then there it is," Betty whispered conclusively. "A plot! A conspiracy against Alice's poor father, to ruin his chances with the Silver Swift!"

"A chance for Morcove, Betty?"

"A chance," Betty nodded, "to do something! And—whatever their game is, those schemers had better look out!"

And, by that terse answer, Betty said enough to satisfy even headstrong Polly, causing her to give one of her grim smiles as she thought of all that Morcove and Co. would yet do!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]