



The
**BLACK
PIRATE'S
THREAT**

The beautiful old house situated on the edge of the sun-lit lake was the last place where one would expect to find mystery, and yet there Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, encountered one of the strangest cases of his whole career.

By PETER LANGLEY

CHAPTER I

THE BLACK PIRATE KEEPS HIS THREAT

WHAT a grand spot! The last place where one would expect to encounter mystery!

Noel Raymond gazed about him with appreciation as he brought his car to a halt outside the main entrance to Island View—a picturesque old house situated in the heart of the Lake District.

Built right on the water's edge, the house commanded a perfect view of the shimmering, sunlit lake, and of the small island from which it had evidently taken its name.

Inexpressibly lovely and peaceful was the scene, yet the young detective knew that over it hung the shadow of mystery—sinister mystery, if the urgent summons he had received was to be believed.

He frowned as he recalled the letter which had brought him from London. It had been written in a round, feminine hand, and had borne the signature of

Beryl Weaving, the daughter of the owner of the house.

"Please come at once," she had begged. "These threatening messages are very upsetting, and already I have had proof that the Black Pirate is in deadly earnest."

"The Black Pirate," Noel mused to himself, as he ran up the stone steps to the front door. "A pretty melodramatic name, that. I wonder what the rascal's after?"

He knocked, and almost instantly the door was opened—by a slim, fair-haired girl whom he guessed to be Beryl Weaving herself. At her side was a magnificent-looking Airedale dog, and he greeted the young detective with a suspicious growl—a growl that quickly changed to a bark of welcome as his mistress greeted Noel.

"Mr. Raymond!" she exclaimed. "Oh, thank goodness! If you hadn't turned up I don't know what I should have done. This business is spoiling everything. And it's worrying my guests dreadfully. You

see, I have my cousin and a couple of friends staying with me. But come inside, and I will tell you all about it."

She smiled at him confidently as she led the way across an oak-panelled hall into a bright, cheerful sitting-room overlooking the lake.

"Now," said Noel when they had both seated themselves at the open french windows—"now exactly what is this rascal—this fellow who calls himself the Black Pirate—after?" he asked.

"The Silver Galleon," was the unexpected reply.

"The Silver Galleon?"

Noel regarded the girl in surprise. She gave a quick nod.

"It's been in the family for years. It's a model, you know. Dad—he's in the Navy—gave it to me just before he went on active service. I put it in the bank for safety. It's not worth a lot, but dad would be terribly upset if anything ever happened to it. He values it even more than he does his collection of old frigates."

"Old frigates?" echoed Noel again.

"Yes—old-time ships that dad has built himself. Before the war it was his hobby. He's got a simply marvellous collection. They are kept in the old Temple on Pirate Isle."

As she spoke, Beryl rose and pointed out of the window, across to the rocky island in the centre of the lake. Looking in that direction, Noel saw, amongst the trees, the outlines of an ancient stone building.

"We call it the 'Temple,'" Beryl explained, "though no one really knows what it was built for. It's been there for centuries, and it's in there where dad keeps his models. But unless I do as he says the Black Pirate threatens to destroy them—smash up the whole collection!"

Then as calmly as she could she related exactly what had happened.

It seemed that the first message had been written three days ago. It had ordered her to row across to Pirate Isle and deposit the Silver Galleon in the Temple. The writer warned her of the dire consequences which would befall her if she disobeyed.

Beryl had ignored that first message. Like her cousin, Bob Blake, and the other young people staying in the house, she had regarded it as a stupid joke. But the next day had come a second message—this time threatening to destroy her father's cherished models if the Black Pirate's demands were not fulfilled.

"And he's already started to carry out his threat!" Beryl declared, tears of indignation in her eyes. "Yesterday afternoon—when we went across to Pirate's Isle—we found one of the models wrecked beyond repair. And this morning I was warned that worse would happen if I was not—not sensible."

Her voice broke and her fingers tightened on the collar of the big Airedale that stood beside her. The dog gave a comforting growl and looked up at her with wistful eyes.

"I suppose you have no idea who this Black Pirate is?" Noel asked.

The girl shook her head.

"Nor why he wants the Silver Galleon?"

"Not the slightest. It's only worth a pound or two. The whole business is absurd. It's got me completely baffled."

Noel nodded thoughtfully.

"Perhaps the scoundrel's handwriting will provide me with a clue," he said. "Can you let me have one of these messages?"

To his surprise Beryl shook her head.

"I can't. You see, he writes them on the wall of dad's study. That's what makes it all so frightening, for no outsider could possibly get into the house without being seen. Rufus would soon give the alarm, wouldn't you?"

She bent over the Airedale, and the dog pricked up his ears and gave a loud bark of assent.

Noel frowned.

"Then the Black Pirate must be someone living in the house," he observed.

"But that's impossible!" protested Beryl. "Apart from my cousin and Fay Turner and her brother, there's only Jepson, the butler, and Mrs. Macrae, the housekeeper, and they're both to be trusted implicitly."

Noel made no comment on that. It

would be wise to see all the various people himself before he came to any decision as to their trustworthiness. He rose to his feet.

"Perhaps you would show me your father's study," he suggested.

Willingly, Beryl jumped up, and, with her dog close at her heels, she led the way across to a small room on the opposite side of the hall. The door was locked, but the key was in the drawer of the near-by hall-stand, and Beryl smiled rather apologetically as she took it out, fitted it into the lock, and turned it.

"I wiped off the last message," she said, "but just in case he tried to write another I thought it best to keep the room locked up. You see—"

She broke off and a half-stifled scream rose to her lips as she flung open the door and entered.

Noel darted forward, then abruptly he pulled up, staring in astonishment, for scrawled across the panelling was a startling message in red paint.

"Look—oh, look!" faltered Beryl, the colour draining from her cheeks. "The Black Pirate's been here again!"

But the young detective was already reading that threatening message on the wall. It was brief and to the point:

**BRING THE SILVER GALLEON
TO PIRATE ISLE AT MIDDAY, OR
I SHALL STRIKE AGAIN!**

And underneath was that sinister signature which Beryl had learnt to fear—"The Black Pirate."

Stepping forward, Noel dabbed the paint with a grim forefinger. It was still wet. The message had been written within the last half-hour. He crossed to the solitary window. It was securely fastened. How, then, had the Black Pirate gained access to the study?

"He must have come through the door," he commented. "That means he must have known where the key was hidden. Who knew you had locked the door, Miss Weaving?"

Beryl hesitated uncertainly.

"Only my cousin, Bob Blake," she

replied at length. "He was in the hall when I put it in the hall-stand drawer. But, of course, he may have told the others."

"And where are your cousin and your two friends now?" asked Noel.

"They're gone for a trip across the lake in dad's motor-launch. I expect them back any minute now."

Noel nodded, and asked to interview the two servants. Mrs. Macrae proved to be a motherly old soul, while the butler seemed equally concerned for Beryl's welfare. Both professed themselves eager to help Noel, but it was little information they could give him. Neither of them had visited the study that morning, and neither of them had seen or heard anything suspicious.

Dismissing them, the young detective went out into the garden. Outside the study window was a big flower-bed, and as he examined it Noel gave a grim nod.

"No footprints," he murmured. "That proves it's an inside job. The Black Pirate lives in the house. That means that—"

He broke off as from the near-by lake he heard the noise of an approaching motor-boat. Turning, he was just in time to see a big, cabined launch draw up alongside the private landing-stage. Three people—two young men and a girl—clambered ashore and went hurrying up to the house.

The broad-shouldered, rather surly young man with unruly black hair was Bob Blake. Noel recognised him from the description Beryl had given him. The others then must be Fay Turner and her brother Ralph.

As the young detective strolled through the french window into the sitting-room he heard Beryl telling the others about the Black Pirate's latest threat. From Fay and Ralph Turner came cries of dismay and apprehension, but Beryl's cousin gave an impatient snort.

"It's all a lot of rot—just a caddish practical joke," he declared. "There's no need to worry at all. The Black Pirate has no intention of carrying out his ridiculous threats."

"Oh, Bob, how can you say that?" reproachfully Beryl regarded him. "You

know he's smashed one of dad's models already."

Bob Blake gave a derisive laugh.

"That was an accident. I expect the wind blew it off the shelf. I don't want to appear unsympathetic, old thing, but there was no need to engage a detective. He can't help——"

He stopped and went a little red as he noticed Noel Raymond standing there. There was a moment of embarrassment, then, when the young detective had been introduced, Beryl Weaving looked at him appealingly.

"Please tell us what you think," she urged. "Bob says I'm silly to worry. He believes the Black Pirate's only joking."

"I don't think it's a joke at all," Noel said at once. "We must take steps to prevent the scoundrel from carrying out his plans. But first of all I would like to ask you all a few questions if I may."

Fay and Ralph Turner seemed delighted to respond, but the other young man, although he answered all that Noel asked him, seemed still to resent the detective's presence.

"You say you all left the house over an hour ago," commented Noel, surveying them all keenly.

There came a succession of nods.

"And none of you has been back since?"

Fay Turner shook her head.

"No—we've all been cruising on the lake. None of us has left the boat since—oh!" She finished with a rather startled gasp, and looked quickly across at Bob Blake. "Why, you went back—don't you remember, Bob?" she asked. "Just after we set out you realised you hadn't your cigarettes and went ashore for them."

"And what time would that be?" asked Noel.

"Oh, about ten, I suppose." It was Bob Blake himself who answered. "But look here, Mr. Detective, if you think I wrote that tomfool message you'd better think again, because I didn't—see?"

He scowled belligerently, and Beryl, knowing how touchy her cousin was, quickly intervened.

"Don't be silly, Bob!" she cried. "Of course Mr. Raymond doesn't think anything of the kind. Don't be so resentful. It's his business to ask questions."

Noel himself said nothing, but he was thinking a lot. He glanced at his wrist-watch.

"A quarter-past eleven," he announced. "Good! Then we've still time to act." He turned to the two young men. "Are you willing to assist me to capture the Black Pirate?" he asked.

Bob Blake gave a sullen nod, but Ralph Turner was enthusiastic.

"Rather! What exactly do you want us to do, sir?" he inquired.

Swiftly Noel explained. His plan was for them to go across to the island and wait in ambush. If they were careful they must capture the unknown intruder when he arrived, hoping to collect the Silver Galleon.

Noel's scheme was eagerly adopted, and the girls insisted on going, too. So off they went down to the landing-stage, Rufus barking excitedly at the side of his mistress.

There was plenty of room for them all in the roomy motor-boat. Noel and Beryl remained on deck while the others went into the cosy little cabin. As the Pirate Isle drew near the young detective scanned it with keen eyes.

Skilfully guiding the boat through the rocks and boulders surrounding the island, the young detective beached it, then helped Beryl ashore.

"First of all we'll make a thorough search—just in case the rascal has already arrived," he declared. "Ralph, you'd better stay here with your sister and Miss Weaving. Keep the dog. He will give you all the protection you need. Mr. Blake"—he beckoned to the other young man—"will you come with me, please?"

He led the way up the cliff path, and together he and Beryl's cousin explored the island. First of all they visited the "Temple." There was no sign of the Black Pirate there, but the young detective lingered in order to admire Commander Weaving's collection of old-time ships.

Each model was perfect in detail, and he could readily understand how alarmed Beryl was at the prospect of any more of them being destroyed.

Shutting the oaken door behind him, he and Bob Blake continued their tour of investigation, but they failed to find any trace of any intruder, and it was cheerfully that Noel rejoined the others.

"There's no possible hiding-place, so we're bound to catch him if he does dare show up," he declared. "Miss Weaving, with your permission we'll put your dog inside the Temple. He will see that nothing happens to your father's models. The rest of us will split up and take up our positions at suitable points around the island."

As skilfully as any Army officer Noel disposed of his little force of watchers. The Airedale was shut up inside the ancient stone building. Bob Blake volunteered to guard the little cove near the tethered motorboat. Ralph Turner and his sister hid themselves amongst the rocks on top of the cliffs, while Noel and Beryl took up their position amongst the trees.

Ten minutes went by—a quarter of an hour went by. Another five minutes, and then from across the silvery lake came the distant chimes of a church clock. Involuntarily Noel stiffened.

"Middy," he breathed. "Time for him to keep his appointment. I only hope he didn't spot us coming here. I don't want him to suspect—"

He broke off and leapt to his feet. As for Beryl, she gave a gasp of fear. Both of them stared across at the near-by Temple.

From within had come a sudden savage bark.

"Rufus!" Beryl clutched Noel by the sleeve. "He's heard something. There's someone in there with him!"

"Impossible!" Noel shook his head. "We've been watching all the time and—"

But the barking of the Airedale had become more ferocious than ever, and then, even as the young detective burst from amongst the trees, there came a long drawn-out whine of pain, followed by—silence!

"Rufus!" Beryl gave a scream of



"Look—oh, look!" whispered Beryl, and with a quivering hand she pointed to the threatening message on the wall.

dismay, and madly she went racing forward. "Something's happened to Rufus!" she cried.

Racing across to the Temple, she flung open the door; then she gave a horrified gasp.

The first thing that met the eye was the heap of wreckage on the floor. Three of the most elaborate models had been tossed there and smashed.

The Black Pirate had kept his threat!

But that was not all. Not only was there no sign of the ruthless destroyer, there was also no sign of Rufus. Both he and the Black Pirate had vanished!

CHAPTER II

HER PET IN DANGER

"I SAY, what's all the commotion about?"

"Yes, what's happened?"

It was Fay Turner's brother who shouted out as anxiously they came running into the Temple. But at sight of the wrecked models they pulled up, aghast.

"Great Scott, then the blighter's been here!" exclaimed Ralph, his handsome face a mixture of indignation and bewilderment.

Beryl gave a muffled sob.

"Yes, and—and he's kidnapped Rufus!" she gulped. "We heard him cry out! Oh, he's been badly hurt! I know he has!"

Fay put a sympathetic arm around the distressed girl and tried to comfort her, while Ralph turned to where Noel was grimly examining the splintered remnants of the three frigates.

"But I can't understand it, sir!" he ejaculated. "Fay and I were watching the lake. I'm positive no boat landed. Then how did the scoundrel manage to get here? And where is he now?"

Noel shook his head.

"I don't know—yet," he replied.

He was staring at a broken spar. It was greasy, as if the boot that had trodden it had been smeared with oil. What was more, on the floor were greasy footmarks. The young detective frowned thoughtfully as he remembered that there had been grease on the deck of the motor-boat.

Carefully Noel followed the trail of footprints. They led right across the stone floor of the Temple, then ended abruptly beside the carpenter's bench that had been fitted against one wall. Dropping to one knee, Noel brushed aside the sawdust that lay there. Another smear of grease caught his eye, and as he pressed down on the flagstone he felt it give.

"I guessed as much," he commented.

"There's a trapdoor here."

"A—a trapdoor?"

Ralph Turner surveyed him in surprise, and Noel nodded.

"Yes—the Black Pirate had a secret way of getting in and out of here. Half a minute——" He pressed down on the

slab of stone, then gave a grunt of satisfaction. "I knew I was right," he announced, for suddenly the flagstone had tilted up, revealing a short flight of ancient stone steps leading down into a dark, stuffy tunnel.

Whipping out a pocket torch, the young detective clicked it on. Its bright beam revealed greasy footmarks on the steps.

"Come on!" he snapped. "If we hurry, we may overtake the rascal. He hasn't had much of a start."

With Fay's brother following close at his heels, he set off along the tunnel. It seemed endless, but at last Noel saw a patch of light ahead. He raced towards it, to find that the underground passage gave access to the rocky cove where he had left Bob Blake on guard.

There was no sign of Beryl's cousin now. The cove was deserted.

Ralph Turner gazed around in bewilderment.

"Where's Bob?" he asked. "Unless he deserted his post he must have spotted the Black Pirate when he emerged from the tunnel. You don't think that anything's happened to him——"

He broke off and they both turned, for from the top of the cliff excited voices had hailed them, and descending the path were not only Beryl and Fay, but also Beryl's missing cousin. He looked sheepish as he saw Noel.

"Why did you leave your post?" Noel asked grimly.

Bob Blake flushed.

"I heard shouts, so I ran up to investigate. Suppose it was a foolish thing to do. If I'd stayed here——"

"You'd have been sure to have spotted the blighter," Ralph finished for him.

Noel interrupted before Bob could make an angry retort.

"Well, it was bad luck," he said soothingly. "I was only wondering how he managed to get into the tunnel without being seen. But I suppose you must have been looking the other way. Anyway, it's my opinion he's still on the island. Perhaps you and Ralph would search around and see if you can find him."

The two young men departed, but

Noel made no attempt to join in the search. Instead, he made a thorough examination of the beach. Owing to its pebbly nature, the vanished intruder had left no footprints there, but near a pile of rocks, where Bob Blake had been on guard, he found one solitary heel-mark, and it also bore a trace of oil.

There was nothing of special significance in that, for Noel himself had stepped on the greasy deckboards of the motor-boat, but, taken in conjunction with other facts, it made the young detective frown wonderingly.

Had Bob really only left the beach when he had heard his cousin shout out?

Noel could not forget that Bob had been in the house when that last threatening message had been written. He had also resented his cousin calling in outside aid. In addition, he had been the one person who had had the opportunity of using the secret tunnel.

Noel's thoughts were racing as he paced up and down the beach. They were interrupted, however, by the return of the two young men. They glumly announced that, although they had searched every inch of the island, they had found no trace of the Black Pirate.

As there was nothing to be gained by remaining on the island, they all climbed back aboard the motor-boat, and five minutes later found them back at Island View. Once they were in the house, the young detective drew Beryl aside.

"Would you give me a note to your bank," he asked, "instructing them to let me examine that Silver Galleon? I have a special reason for wanting to see it."

Beryl looked up eagerly.

"D'you think it will provide you with a clue?" she gasped. "Oh, I hope so, Mr. Raymond. I can't stand any more of this unpleasantness. The loss of Rufus is the last straw. Suppose that scoundrel ill-treats him? Suppose——"

She finished with a shudder, and Noel gave an understanding nod. He knew what she feared—that the Black Pirate might kill her pet. He did his best to reassure her, then, as Beryl set to work to write the letter he had asked for, Jepson the butler entered the room.

"What time would you like luncheon, miss?" he asked.

"Oh, the usual time, I suppose!" the girl replied, listlessly. "But I'd like some coffee first please. I've got a horrid headache."

The butler cast her a sympathetic glance and withdrew, promising that it would be served immediately.

However, the minutes passed and still the coffee did not arrive, so Bob Blake volunteered to go and see what had happened to it. He had left the room only a moment or two, when Noel, in the act of taking the letter from Beryl, suddenly stiffened. His well-trained ears had heard a tell-tale click from the direction of the hall.

"Hallo, what's that?" he exclaimed. and like a flash he was across the room.



Beryl and Noel pulled up in the doorway. On the floor lay the broken remnants of three of the model ships. The Black Pirate had kept his threat!

While the two girls stared in wonderment, he flung open the door, then his face became grim. Before the study door crouched a broad-shouldered figure, fumbling with the key. Bob Blake!

"And what might you be doing?" demanded the young detective, stepping out into the hall. "I thought you went to get the coffee?"

Beryl's cousin swung round, his face red with confusion.

"So I did, but I noticed that the key was in the door," he muttered. "That struck me as queer. I knew Beryl always keeps it in the hall-stand, so I thought I'd just make certain that that Black Pirate, or whatever he calls himself, was not up to some more of his games."

"The Black Pirate!" The cry came from behind Noel, and Beryl Weaving darted agitatedly forward. "Oh, goodness, don't say he's left another threatening message!"

She pushed her cousin aside, and, unlocking the door, thrust it open. Instantly a cry of horror left her lips.

"Oh, Rufus!" she gulped, and with a shaking forefinger she pointed to something which was pinned to the far wall by means of a paper-knife.

It was a dog-collar!

Noel compressed his lips as he saw it, for he knew that the Black Pirate must have put it there. But what had been the unknown's motive? He quickly knew, for, as he entered the room behind the white-faced Beryl, he saw that yet another startling message had been painted on the panelling. Like the previous one, it was brief and to the point:

"Unless you bring the Silver Galleon to the island by five o'clock, the rest of your father's collection will be destroyed, and—you will never see your dog again! This is your last warning."

And underneath was the sinister signature of the Black Pirate!

CHAPTER III

THE GALLEON'S SECRET

"I'll have to give him the galleon. I must. For Rufus' sake I'll have to do as he asks!"

As she gasped out the words, Beryl

sank weakly down on to a near-by chair.

Crossing to the wall, Noel placed a finger on the paint. It came away wet. Obviously it had only just been daubed there, and little drops of paint on the carpet told the detective that the unknown vandal had worked at furious speed.

Noel looked around thoughtfully. His keen eyes detected another spot of paint by the desk. He darted forward, and stooping down, groped in the knee-hole of the desk. When his hand came out it was grasping a paint-pot and a still saturated brush.

"Seems as if the Black Pirate didn't have time to hide his tools this time," he commented, his eyes on the brush. The handle was daubed with wet paint, and quickly Noel looked across at Bob Blake, seeking any red stain that might be on his fingers. As he did so, the butler appeared in the doorway.

"I'm sorry I've been so long with the coffee, miss," he said, "but——"

Then he caught sight of that dramatically pinned dog-collar and the even more dramatic message painted above it, and his voice died away, while a look of horror crept across his kindly face. His hands trembled on the coffee-tray and one of the cups crashed to the floor.

But Noel was hardly conscious of the smashed cup. There was a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes, for, as he turned away from his covert scrutiny of Beryl's cousin, he had discovered the clue he was seeking.

Swiftly he crossed to where Beryl sat, and laid an urgent hand on her shoulder.

"Now don't you worry, Miss Weaving," he said softly. "I promise you no harm will befall your pet. As for the Black Pirate, I'll have him under arrest before tea-time. I'm off to the bank now, but—whatever you do—don't take any action until I return."

Silently she nodded, and, followed by wondering glances, the detective left the house and hurried down to the landing-stage. A small speedboat was moored there; in it he meant to race across to the small town on the far side of the lake.

But he did not depart immediately.

First of all he clambered aboard the big cabined launch, and for ten minutes he busied himself there. When he emerged from the cabin there was a grim smile on his face.

"That solves one mystery," he told himself. "Now I know who the Black Pirate is and how he managed to get to and from the island without arousing suspicion. Next I must discover why he's so anxious to lay hands on the Silver Galleon."

On reading the letter of authority Noel had brought with him, the bank manager in the neighbouring town soon handed over the Silver Galleon.

Taking it to the window, the young detective examined it with interest.

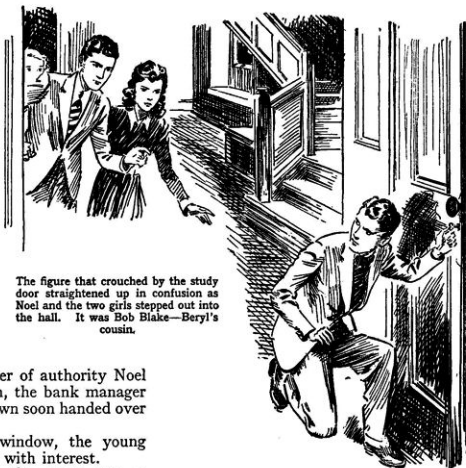
Jutting out from the prow was a strangely shaped figure-head, and as he looked at this through a magnifying-glass Noel gave a little nod of satisfaction.

"A crest!" he exclaimed, and whirled on the curiously staring manager. "Have the Weavings lived in these parts for long?" he asked.

"For generations," the bank manager assured him. "In fact, Island View dates back to the time of the Spanish Armada. It was built by Admiral Weaving—one of Drake's right-hand men."

Noel's eyes gleamed. Handing back the ancient Silver Galleon, he thanked the manager and departed—making tracks for the local library. There he inquired for all the books on the history of the neighbourhood that were in stock.

Surrounded by musty tomes, he got to work. It was an hour or more before he found what he sought, then, as he turned over one of the yellowing pages, he gave a whistle of triumph. For there, before him, was a drawing of the same crest that had



The figure that crouched by the study door straightened up in confusion as Noel and the two girls stepped out into the hall. It was Bob Blake—Beryl's cousin.

appeared on the model of the Silver Galleon.

Eagerly he began to read the letter-press under the picture, and as he read his excitement grew, for now he knew for certain that his theory was correct.

"Treasure!" he exclaimed. "Spanish treasure, hidden unsuspected all these years on Pirate Isle! So that was why Beryl's father guarded the Silver Galleon so well. Perhaps he suspected its secret, perhaps he hoped one day to find it."

Ruminating on what he had discovered, he hurried back to the bank. But when he asked to be allowed to take possession of the Silver Galleon, he received an unpleasant shock.

The manager shook his head.

"I'm afraid you're too late, Mr. Raymond," he said. "Miss Weaving herself has already collected it."

"Miss Weaving?"

Noel gave a gasp of alarm.

"Yes. She called at the bank about

an hour after you left, and she took it away with her. She said she must get it to Pirate Isle by five o'clock!"

"Pirate Isle!"

Noel gave a horrified gasp, then, ignoring the bank manager's wondering questions, he turned and went racing down to the quay.

Uncertainly Beryl Weaving stood at the foot of the cliff path, clutching the small parcel she carried.

"It's no good relying on Noel Raymond now," she whispered. "It's nearly five, and unless I obey the Black Pirate——"

She shivered again as she remembered his threat.

Abruptly her agitated thoughts came to an end, for suddenly footsteps sounded on the pebbles behind her. Thinking it might be the young detective, she turned, then a scream escaped her lips, for it was not Noel Raymond who confronted her, but a tall figure enveloped in a sombre cloak.

"The Black Pirate!" she gasped.

Next moment ruthless hands had grasped her arms, and, as she struggled, the parcel was torn from her grasp.

"Got it!" the muffled voice breathed in triumph.

"Oh, no, you don't!" cried another voice, and from the speedboat, which unnoticed had been drifting inshore, there sprang a lithe, muscular figure.

Noel Raymond!

The cloaked figure turned to flee, but in a flash the detective was on him. A fist like granite lunged out, and the unknown crashed to the beach.

Swiftly Noel stooped and whisked away the cloak, revealing a silvery head and wrinkled, kindly features. Beryl shrank back in amazement.

"Jepson!" she gasped.

Noel gave a chuckle of assent.

"Yes, your dear old butler," he agreed.

"This melodramatic stunt was his cunning way of trying to rob you of your father's treasure."

"Treasure?" She gazed at him incredulously, then a new thought occurred to her. "But how did he manage to get to and from the island without anyone spotting him?" she asked.

Noel chuckled again and led the way across to the cabined motor-launch. Once aboard, he entered one of the cabins and pressed against the panelling under one of the bunks. A section of the panelling slid aside, revealing a secret cavity—and there, drugged and still asleep, but otherwise in no way harmed, lay Rufus, the missing Airedale.

As the delighted Beryl fell to her knees and flung her arms around the dog, Noel grinned.

"A nice little hiding-place, eh?" he commented. "And to think that none of us suspected! When we went to lay an ambush for the Black Pirate, we actually gave him a free ride over, and when we returned we unwittingly carried him back again. But never mind him. His rascally career's at an end. Let's go and collect the treasure."

"Treasure?" echoed Beryl again.

Noel nodded.

"Yes—treasure from the Spanish Armada. Your famous ancestor hid it on the island, and this little toy"—he held up the model of the Silver Galleon—"is the key which opens the door. Come on!"

By now Rufus had begun to stir. Soon he was licking his adored mistress' hand, and when he had sufficiently recovered, Beryl and Noel set off on their thrilling quest—to find, as the detective had expected, a secret room in the underground tunnel—a room crammed tight with brass-bound chests filled with rare silks and satins, with gold and jewels—treasure captured from the Spaniards in days long ago.